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CONTENTS FOR
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Number
6

- Cover Design** **Hannes Bok**
"Lords of the Ice": horrors of a war-mad world
- Glamour** **Seabury Quinn** 5
An intriguing story of modern witchcraft
- The Considerate Hosts** **Thorp McClusky** 22
The man and his wife told their guest that they were ghosts
- Lords of the Ice** **David H. Keller** 30
A war-mad world, and a strange city in the Antarctic
- Nymph of Darkness** . **C. L. Moore and Forrest J. Ackerman** 49
A tale of Northwest Smith and a weird woman who appealed to him for help
- Night Gaunts** **H. P. Lovecraft** 59
Verse
- Escape from Tomorrow** **Frank Belknap Long, Jr.** 60
A tale of the distant future—an artificial brain rebels against its enslavement
- Mannikins of Horror** **Robert Bloch** 71
A story of dreadful doom, and tiny artificial men who actually lived
- "Deep Night, Dark Night"** **Virgil Finlay** 79
Pictorial interpretation of an excerpt from Shakespeare's "King Henry VI"
- Dead Man's Schooner** **Andre Linville** 80
An arresting tale of a radio broadcast, and a sailor who played the Flute of Death
- Bacchante** **Clark Ashton Smith** 84
Verse
- King of the World's Edge (Conclusion)** . **H. Warner Muun** 85
Saga of a weird voyage to America in King Arthur's time
- Weird Things** **Vivian Stratton** 111
Verse
- Weird Story Reprint:**
The Copper Bowl **Major George Fielding Eliot** 112
A grim tale of torture—from an early issue of WEIRD TALES
- The Eyrie** **119**
Our readers exchange opinions

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

Dead Man's Schooner

By ANDRÉ LINVILLE

A short and unusual story, an arresting and interest-gripping tale of a radio broadcast, and a sailor who played the Flute of Death

“HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is the radio station of the liner *Acadia*, of the Cunard Line. Lieutenant Howard speaking. . . Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is the radio station of the liner *Acadia*, en route from New York to Southampton.

“We are now southeast of the Grand Bank of Newfoundland, at 42 degrees north latitude and approximately 52 degrees west longitude.

“Everything is going well on board, except that there is a heavy fog which is slowing us up considerably.

“Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is the radio station of the liner *Acadia*.

“We are about to broadcast the concert which is to be given on board for the benefit of the widows of our sailors.

“The expense of the concert has been generously taken care of by Mr. Ralph Glennor, the well-known New York manufacturer, who we understand is giving a reception at this time in his Fifth Avenue mansion.

“We have the honor to number among our guests on this trip, Duke Philippe de Ballancourt du Saussaye and his bride. The Duchess was, until her marriage a few days ago, Miss Edith Glennor, daughter of Mr. Ralph Glennor.

“In a few moments we will turn the microphone over to the Duchess, so that she can talk to her family and friends. But we wish to know first whether we are being heard distinctly in New York. We shall now tune in to the wave length of

Mr. Ralph Glennor's private station, and listen.

“Hello! . . . Hello . . . This is the radio station of the liner *Acadia*. We are listening. . .”

“HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is Ralph Glennor's private station in New York City. Ralph Glennor himself speaking.

“Hello! . . . Hello! . . . We have been hearing everything Lieutenant Howard said, very distinctly, and we are glad to learn that the *Acadia* is having a good passage.

“We hope that the fog that is slowing you up will lift soon.

“Here in our drawing-room, in front of the loud-speaker, are all our good friends from all over New York City. They are all anxious to hear your dear voice, Edith, my daughter.

“Hello! I hope you can hear me well, my dear little girl. I am sending you our best love, sweetheart. Give our kindest regards to your husband. I hope he's well and happy.

“Hello, Edith! . . . Now we want to hear from *you*. We are listening.”

“HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is the radio station on the liner *Acadia*. Lieutenant Howard, station chief, speaking.

“We heard everything Mr. Ralph Glennor said, and it was all perfectly distinct.

“Now I will turn the microphone over

to the Duchess de Ballancourt du Saus-saye."

"Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Edith speaking. It's wonderful that I can talk to you like this, sweet old Daddy. Philippe is happy about it, too. Would you believe that we haven't had a quarrel yet since we were married? It has been all of four days, now!

"Hello, Daddy! . . . It's a shame I can't hear your voice right back, so I could tell if you are hearing everything I say perfectly well. But it's awfully nice to be able to talk to you at all, away out at sea, hundreds of miles away from you.

"I can see you all sitting around in the drawing-room in front of the loud-speaker. I know Clara Whitechurch has a wonderful new gown on. Give her a kiss for me, won't you, Daddy—sweet Clara! And tell her I will do all the things for her in Paris she told me to.

"Hello! . . . I just can't wait to get to Paris and get acquainted with Philippe's family.

"We've been having such a nice passage, but there is a horrid fog just now, as Lieutenant Howard told you. It's just like pea soup, you might say.

"Can you hear that roaring sound: *Muhb—uhb—uhb—uhh*? That's the boat's siren, to warn any other boats that might be in danger of running into us. I'm sure you can hear it, can't you? It makes an awful noise here on board, but they say that in the fog it can't be heard far away.

"Then there's a big bell on board that tolls when the siren isn't blowing. Listen, Daddy—can't you hear the bell, too?—*Dong, ding, dong, ding*. . .

"It gets on my nerve a little, I must say. But now I can hear the orchestra tuning up. You are going to listen to our fine concert, now. After the concert they'll play jazz, and we are going to dance all night.

"Now I'll give my place in front of the microphone back to Lieutenant Howard."

"Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Lieutenant Howard, chief of the radio service on the liner *Acadia*.

"I am extremely sorry, ladies and gentlemen, that I can't guarantee you perfect reception of our concert this evening, and I hope the Honorable Ralph Glennor and his guests will excuse us if they don't hear well. The siren and the alarm bell are making such a hubdub that I know our music will be hard to hear. Of course there is nothing we can do about it, for the fog is getting thicker and thicker every minute. It is true that there is nothing unusual about this in this region and at this time of the year, and the *Acadia* is in absolutely no danger of any kind. This is not the time of the year when the icebergs drift down from the north. So you mustn't feel the slightest alarm about the ship.

". . . One moment. The Duchess of Ballancourt wishes to say a few words more to her father."

"Hello! . . . Hello, Daddy! . . . This is Edith, again. I wanted to ask Clara Whitechurch—oh! that wretched siren . . . it's just simply awful. . .

"Hello! . . . Clara, can you hear me, darling? I wanted to say to you . . .

"Good gracious, what's the matter? . . . What's that awful, piercing whistle for? . . . They're shouting and crying, up on deck. . . . And the engines have stopped all at once, stopped completely. . . . Oh, Philippe, is anything the matter? Call Lieutenant Howard back here, quick. . . ."

Frr-it . . . Fr'it . . . Tac . . . Tac . . . Tac . . . Tac . . . Zzz . . . Zzz . . .

"HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is Ralph Glennor's private station. . . . Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Ralph Glennor's private station. . . .

"Will the station on the *Acadia* please communicate with us at once? We haven't been able to hear anything from you for half an hour.

"We are very much alarmed by this silence, and we hope Lieutenant Howard will reassure us by sending us some sort of word at once.

"Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Ralph Glennor's private station. . . .

"We hope the *Acadia* . . ."

Frr'tt . . . Tac . . . Tac . . . Frr'tt . . .
Zzz . . . Tac . . . Tac . . .

"HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is the radio station on the liner *Acadia*, Lieutenant Howard, chief of the station, speaking.

"We are very sorry that we have not been able to make ourselves heard for some time, and we know that through no fault of our own, we have alarmed and worried Mr. Ralph Glennor and his guests.

"Everything is going perfectly well on board the *Acadia*, and I haven't the slightest idea what happened to interfere with our emission.

"I can't see any explanation in the sad accident which happened at the moment when the emission stopped.

"I will tell you what this accident was. The *Acadia* had the misfortune to cut in two one of these Newfoundland fishing-dories whose lantern could not be seen because of the fog. One of the two sailors who were in the dory was drowned. We were able to save the other. He was taken to the infirmary on board, and he is being given the very best of treatment. The Duchess de Ballancourt insisted on going to the infirmary to help the nurses. But I see she has just come back, and here she is. . . . She will tell you about the unfortunate accident, herself. . . ."

"Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Edith in front of the microphone again. Oh, Daddy! it's terrible! . . . Those poor men! . . . Lost in the fog and run down by the *Acadia*. . . .

"The fisherman in the infirmary is not injured. He has regained consciousness, but he seems to have lost his mind. He is

a Frenchman—a Breton. His name is Yves Le Flanchec. He is very young.

"Oh! If that terrible siren would be still just a minute! . . .

"I want to tell you, Daddy. . . . Yves Le Flanchec told the most frightful story in the midst of his ravings. . . . He said he and the other fisherman had been lost for two days. They were just floating around in the dory, and they hadn't the slightest idea where they were going. And this young Yves says they met in the fog—you wouldn't ever guess it in the world. . . . He says they met the Dead Man's Schooner, a phantom vessel with a crew of lost souls, that is condemned to roam the ocean for all eternity. What a crazy idea it is! It seems that all the Bretons believe in the Dead Man's Schooner. They tell the story to the little children, and the children never forget it, no matter how old they live to be. . . . But if you had heard Yves' poor, frightened voice when he told about it, and if you had seen the ghastly look in his poor feverish eyes! He described every part of the phantom vessel just as if he had really seen it through the fog. . . .

"We tried to do everything we could to soothe him, and to tell him he was safe now and nothing could happen to him. But whenever we said anything like that, he would answer back that he knew he was lost, because he had heard the Dead Man's Flute. . . .

"Because he said . . . isn't it the strangest story, Daddy? . . . he said that up in the bow of the phantom ship one of the sailors who has lost his soul sits and plays a flute made of the shin-bone of a man who was drowned. And he says that anybody who hears that awful flute has only a little while to live. He says it never fails. . . .

"Isn't it all crazy, and yet horrible, dear old Daddy? I think the whole thing is ridiculous. But I can't help feeling a little

bit creepy about it. Just suppose *we* should meet the Dead Man's Schooner and hear the Dead Man's Flute! . . . Brrr! . . . Of course I'm only joking. I don't believe one word of the poor boy's story. But that siren is getting on my nerves, more and more! I'm sure you must be able to hear the siren, too. And then that stupid bell—it sounds as if it were tolling for somebody's funeral. . . .

"Well, here comes Lieutenant Howard back. Good-bye for a little while, dear Daddy!"

"HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is Lieutenant Howard, chief of the radio service on the *Acadia*.

"I am sure I don't need to reassure our hearers about the absurd cock-and-bull story that the shipwrecked fisherman told the Duchess de Ballancourt. The poor fellow seems to have lost his mind temporarily, which is not to be wondered at after all the experiences he has gone through. No doubt he *did* see a Newfoundland schooner, and he imagined the ghosts, when what he really saw was a real everyday boat with solid flesh-and-blood sailors.

"The Honorable Ralph Glennor and his guests have no reason to be in the slightest degree uneasy over the situation on the *Acadia*. It is true that the fog is unusually dense, but every sort of precaution has been taken to prevent every possibility of an accident. It is known that there is no danger from icebergs in this region at this time of the year. And as far as collisions are concerned, even if one should occur, which is extremely unlikely, it could not do any serious injury to a great liner like the *Acadia*.

"And as for phantom boats, everybody knows they are harmless. . . .

"And now I will surrender the micro-

phone again to the Duchess de Ballancourt."

"HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . This is Edith once more. I was interrupted just as I was about to send a message to Clara Whitechurch. . . .

"Oh! That frightful, frightful siren is splitting my ears! . . . I don't know whether I can make you hear me at all or not. . . .

"I wanted to ask you, dear Clara. . . .

"Oh, oh! . . . What's the matter on deck? . . . They're blowing a whistle over and over again like mad. . . . A ship's officer just ran by here as fast as he could. . . . Oh, heavens! How the siren screams! . . . They are rushing back and forth on deck, and crying and shouting! . . . Oh, what was that? . . . A terrible shock. . . . Daddy! I'm afraid . . . I wonder if—

"Help—oh, help! . . . Philippe! . . . Philippe! . . . Save me, Philippe, save me—"

"HELLO! . . . Hello! . . . Hello! . . . Hello! . . . This is Ralph Glennor.

"Edith, little Edith, my own darling, tell me what is the matter! It's your old Daddy talking to you, your old Daddy that loves you. . . . Tell me what happened . . . tell me. . . .

"Hello! . . . Hello! . . . Speak to me, tell me something! I'm listening. . . .

"God in Heaven! . . . Lord have mercy on my child, my Edith . . . Oh! . . . Oh! . . . Listen, all of you. I hear the flute, the flute of the lost souls, the flute you can't hear unless—"

(*And Ralph Glennor, the hale and cheerful New York captain of industry, fell to the floor lifeless, in his magnificent drawing-room, before his radio. It is true that the doctors had been warning him for some time that his heart action was imperfect.*)