

# MONSTER

PARADE

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**IRWIN STEIN**  
*Publisher*

**M. J. SHAPIRO**  
*Editor*

**L. T. SHAW**  
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*There are Beings who slumber beneath the earth whom even we here fear to disturb . . . but Marty dared to call them forth to do his selfish bidding . . . and he paid the lingering, hideous price*

By  
**CHARLES D. HAMMER**

# DEMONS OF CTHULHU

**S**OME pathways are too dark; they should never be explored. Some dust-covered books should never again be opened. Certain slumbering gods, their dark powers shrouded by sleep, should never again be permitted to walk in the light. For the price of boldness is death, hideous and lingering.

Marty wasn't looking for any trouble, at the start. Trouble came and found him. Marty was seventeen and worked in the library of Miskatonic University as a stock boy. He wore a white smock and wheeled books around from place to place, fetching them as the pro-

fessors requested them, putting the books back on the shelves at the end of the day. Marty wasn't interested in books at all. He was interested in girls, and in sneaking drinks, and in basketball. But he got \$42 a week from the University for taking care of its books, and that much was okay. The money came in handy when he wanted a new muffler for his souped-up modified 1938 Ford, or when he wanted to make a big splash with one of the town girls, or when he and some pals got together over a bottle of booze that somebody had bought with a phony ID card.







## DEMONS OF CTHULHU

Marty liked money. Money could get you nice things. So Marty pricked up his ears and listened, one day near closing time in the library, when Mr. Vorys came over to him and said, "Listen, Marty, how would you like to make an easy ten bucks tonight?"

Marty's eyes widened. Mr. Vorys was a graduate student who worked in the library to help pay his university fees. He was a tall, stoop-shouldered young man of about twenty-six, with a hollow chest, thick glasses, and a dried-out, corpse-like look about him. His first name was Theophilus, but everybody called him just Mr. Vorys. He was Marty's immediate superior in this particular section of the library stacks.

"Ten bucks? How?"

"Come in here," Mr. Vorys said, beckoning Marty toward a quiet alcove where the encyclopedia sets were stored. "Sit down."

Marty sat down facing Mr. Vorys, wondering what this was all about. He knew it didn't look good for two library employees to be sitting down so close to the end of the day. If the library supervisor came along right now and looked into the alcove, there would be trouble.

But what the devil, Marty thought. Mr. Vorys was his superior. *He* would be blamed. Marty stared into Mr. Vorys' weak, watery, washed-out-blue eyes and said, "What's the proposition?"

Mr. Vorys licked his thin, pale lips. "First promise me this: in case you decide not to go along with me, you won't reveal a word of this conversation to anybody. Is that all right?"

Marty shrugged. "Sure. I'll keep mum."

"Good." Mr. Vorys steepled his fingers. "Briefly, here's the scheme. There's a certain book in the Special Collection of the library that I want to consult. I mean, I want to take it home and consult it. But you aren't allowed to take Special Collection books out of the library, of course. So I've obtained the key to the Special room. What I propose to do is go in there after closing hours, wrap up the book I want and tie it with twine, and lower it out the window. You'll be outside waiting. You pick up the book and go away. I'll meet you at the campus coffee shop in twenty minutes and give you your money. Well?"

Marty smiled. He knew all about the library's Special Collection. He had never actually been *in* the little room, but he knew it contained forbidden books. Marty understood the pitch. Mr. Vorys had a hankering to consult one of the forbidden books in the privacy of his own bachelor flat.

It didn't seem very risky. And Vorys was eager, all right, if he was willing to pay an accomplice ten bucks. Maybe he wasn't just *borrowing* a book, Marty thought. Maybe he was heisting a rare one with the idea of selling it at a profit. A new thought glimmered in Marty's head. He winked conspiratorially at Mr. Vorys, who was waiting with great anxiety for Marty's answer.

"I'm with you," Marty said. "It's a deal."

AT CLOSING time that night, when the last scholar had left the library, when Marty had hung up his smock and punched his time-clock card and checked out, he went downstairs into the little garden that fronted

the library. It was late autumn, and shadows wrapped the garden in a shroud of black. A cold wind whisked through the university grounds. Marty waited.

He looked up. The window of the Special Collections room was three stories above him, a small lead-inset window that opened outward. As Marty watched, the window opened. A hand appeared, holding a package wrapped in brown paper. A stout piece of twine had been tied around the parcel. With great care the hand extended the package out over the window ledge and began to lower it. Marty watched, checking to see that no one else was around. Inch by inch the package descended.

He waited until the package had touched the ground. Then he jerked three times on the twine and sliced through the cord with his pocket-knife, as arranged. Immediately Mr. Vorys, upstairs in the Special Collections library, began to reel the dangling twine in.

Marty picked up the package. It was heavier than he had expected. The book inside the wrapping paper was about the general dimensions of a telephone directory, only thicker. Vorys had sure picked out a big one to grab, Marty thought. He figured the book weighed at least ten pounds, maybe more.

Thoughts with dollar-signs attached revolved pleasantly in Marty's head, as he trudged along the campus with the package innocently tucked under his arm. He reached the coffee shop where he was supposed to meet Vorys and give him the book, but he kept on going, out the main exit of the university and along the city streets toward





his home.

There was no point in handing over the book for a measly ten bucks, Marty thought. Not at all. A book rare enough to be kept in the Special Collection might be worth fifty or even a hundred bucks. Instead of turning it over to Vorys, he would take it home and read it himself, and then one weekend he would take the train down to New York City. In New York there were lots of rare book dealers who would buy anything without asking questions about it. All Marty had to do was tell them he had found it in the attic of his house, and that would be that.

A pleasant glow illuminated Marty as he made his way home. Let Vorys squawk! He couldn't do much about it without admitting that he had stolen the book in the first place.

Marty lived in a big old house in downtown Arkham. He shared it with his aunt, his father's eldest sister—a woman of close to seventy years, who paid no attention to Marty except to provide meals for him. Which was the way Marty liked it. His father had been an instructor at the University until six years ago. He and Marty's mother had been killed in an auto crash then. The house was full of his father's old books, but Marty never bothered much to go near them. Books didn't interest him much. But the Dean of the University had arranged for Marty to get a job at the library, out of friendship for Marty's father.

He trotted upstairs to his room, lugging the heavy

book along. He closed the door and began to rip the brown paper away from the book. He wondered what the book was.

Hurriedly stripping away the wrapping, he laid the book bare. It was thickly bound in black leather that had begun to wrinkle and corrode. The title was stamped into its front cover in letters of gold: THE NECRONOMICON.

Marty frowned and lifted the heavy cover. The title page read:

THE NECRONOMICON OF  
ABDUL ALHAZRED

*Translated from the Latin version of  
Olaus Wormius as printed in Spain in  
the seventeenth century.*

Shrugging, Marty turned the thick, parchment-like page and found a heading on the next: *A Warning To Those Who Peruse This Book.* He skipped that and started to flip through the book.

It was very disappointing. There was a lot of gabble about witchcraft and Elder Gods, and some stuff in a language Marty had never seen before. Certain names kept popping up on many of the pages: Yog-Sothoth, Cthulhu, Nyarlathotep. Marty began to wonder just why Mr. Vorys had been so keen on getting it out of the Special Collection.

He kept skimming, in hopes that he would come across something interesting. But the whole book seemed to be about witchcraft and stuff like that. Hundreds and hundreds of pages rambled about the Elder Gods who sleep in other dimensions and who yearn to break through once again to this world. Marty was getting bored.

Then his eye fell on one particular passage near the middle of the book:

*... lightest of all are the slumbers of Narrathoth, who may be wakened by the veriest novice in the art. Narrathoth lies drowsing beyond the Great Gate, hideous in form, servant to the sleeping Old Ones who wait for their day once more to dawn. But Narrathoth may be summoned from his blasphemous dreams and forced to serve. One who achieves control over him has access to the wealth of the world; but great care must be exercised, for fear of Narrathoth's wrath, for even he shares the might of the Old Ones, and pity be upon he who summons him and loses control.*

*"Narrathoth is called by simple incantations. The blood of a male cat is needed, and the undergarment of a woman and . . ."*

Marty read with deepening interest. He had once seen a movie in which an old book such as this had given a formula for conjuring up a spirit, and the spirit had been forced to bring food and drink and gold. Maybe there were such things, Marty thought. And maybe that was why this book was kept under lock and key, and why Vorys was so anxious to get hold of it.

Just as he was getting really deep in what he was reading, there was a knock on the door—the timid double knock of his aunt. Hastily Marty shoved the big book under his pillow and dumped the wrapping paper into the wastebasket. He didn't

*(Continued on page 50)*





# DEMONS OF CTHULHU

(Continued from page 17)

went the old lady to ask embarrassing questions about the book.

"I'm coming," he grunted, and went to the door. His aunt stood there, frowning slightly.

"There's a gentleman here to see you, Marty. His name is Mr. Vorys and he says he's from the library. He looks upset. You haven't done anything wrong, have you?"

"Not that I know of," Marty said glibly. "Okay, tell him to come up."

Aunt Martha vanished and a moment or two later Mr. Vorys came bounding up the stairs and into Marty's room. He was panting and badly out of breath. He looked as if he had run all the way from the coffee shop.

"Well?" he demanded immediately. "Where is it? Where did you put it?"

Marty grinned. "Put what?"

"The book, the book!" Vorys whispered harshly.

"Book? Do I have a book of yours?"

Anger flared in Vorys' washed-out eyes. "I don't know what sort of game you're playing, young man," he said in a cold, waspish tone. "I waited for you for nearly an hour, and you didn't show up." He took a ten-dollar bill from his pocket and held it out toward Marty.

"Here," Vorys said. "Here's the money I promised you. Now give me the book."

"What if I don't?"

Vorys looked ready to explode. "What do you want with it, you young hooligan? It's a book of scholarly interest. It doesn't even have any pictures in it."

"I've decided to have a look at the book myself. Maybe it's worth more than ten bucks, Vorys. Why should I had it over to you?"

"I'll notify the authorities!" Vorys blustered. "You won't get away with this! You —"

"You stole that book from Special Collection," Marty reminded him. "I was only your accomplice. You start howling to the authorities and they'll throw you out of the University so fast you won't know what happened for a week. You can't touch me, Vorys. So scram."

The skinny scholar drew in a deep breath, puffing up his skimpy chest. "I ask you for your own sake. That book is dangerous. There are things in it that aren't for your eyes—not for the eyes of anyone who isn't properly prepared. I implore you —"

"Scram!"

"You don't know what danger the book has!"

"I know I can get a good price for it in New York. Now, will you get out, or do I have to —"

Vorys got.

AFTER HE was gone, Marty pulled the book out of hiding. So it was dangerous,

eh? Maybe some of the crazy formulas in it really worked, then. And that was why Vorys wanted it so badly. Maybe you could call up demons with it. It was worth a try, Marty decided.

Tonight was Tuesday, the night Aunt Martha's sewing circle met. After dinner Marty drove her over to Mrs. Jamieson's place, arranging to pick her up around half past ten. Then he returned home. He fetched *The Necronomicon* from its hiding place once again and opened it to Page 638, where the instructions on summoning Narrathoth were printed.

It wasn't really very complicated. Six or seven ingredients were necessary, and the right sort of circle had to be drawn in chalk, and certain words pronounced. If what the book said could be believed, that was all that was needed to fetch old Narrathoth from his age old slumbers.

Quickly Marty gathered the ingredients. For the woman's undergarment, he borrowed one of his aunt's slips. As for the blood of a male cat, that gave Marty a bit of trouble at first. He felt squeamish about it. There was a mangy old tomcat who prowled the back fence, making noise at night and keeping people up. He came running when Marty called. Marty told himself that the tomcat would never survive the cold Arkham winter anyway, and stuffed the beast into a pillowcase.

Taking the protesting animal upstairs, Marty slit its throat—it died with a single loud squeawk—and sprinkled the blood as indicated. He lit the candles, arranged the chalk properly, put the necessary props in their place, and switched off the light in the room.

Squinting by candlelight to make out the words, Marty began to read the passage from *The Necronomicon* that would summon Narrathoth. After two minutes of pronouncing he incomprehensible syllables, Marty began to feel faintly foolish about the whole thing. It was stupid to believe in things like witchcraft and demons and Elder Gods. All this rigmarole was a waste of time.

But he felt a chill creeping through the room, and it was not altogether the coldness of Arkham autumn, but a different sort of coldness. He kept reading:

*"Ph'nglui mglw'nafh Cthulhu R'lyeh wgagh'nagl shtagn. Ia! Shub-Niggurath! Narrathoth! Narrathoth! Narrathoth!"*

On the final repetition of "Narrathoth!" a bolt of lightning leaped across the sky and thunder sounded like doom's crack in the front yard. Marty smelled ozone in the house. Everything was very quiet.

A strange light was shimmering in the five-pointed star Marty had drawn on the floor of his room. The light was now red shot through with greens, now a vivid blue, and it wavered and swayed and slowly solidified into—into a thing

that gibbered and moaned within the confines of its chalk prison, and which finally spoke in a deep bubbling voice that seemed to come from the bottom of the sea.

"Who is the rash one who disturbs Narrathoth's sleep?"

Marty gaped at the apparition in his room and stepped back a few feet. So it really worked! In a dry voice he recited the formula: "I have called you by your True Name, Old One, and I command you to do my bidding."

The thing in the pentagram howled and grimaced, but it bowed down to the words. Marty stared at it. It was bigger than a man, all white and loathsome, with a ghastly bulging head and a single three-lobed eye that burned with baleful fury. Scabrous scales covered its body, and the stench it gave off was that of life older than the pyramids, life as old as the stars. Marty trembled but kept control of himself. Narrathoth could not harm him so long as the chalk barrier remained intact.

"What is your bidding, you who have captured me?" Narrathoth asked sourly.

"Get me food and drink," Marty ordered. "A bottle of champagne, make it. And a thick steak, smothered in onions."

"I obey, foolish one."

Again the lightning, and the hideous thing vanished for an instant. When Narrathoth returned, a table had been set in the middle of the room. On plates of gold rested a meal beyond Marty's powers of imagination to describe. Champagne in ice buckets, succulent meats, sherbets and salads and all else.

Marty's eyes gleamed. "Where does all this come from?" he asked.

Narrathoth replied, "Conjured from the fabric of space and time, stupid one. Foolish it is of you to use the mighty resources of Cthulhu and the Elder Ones for fleshly things and food, but if such is your wish, I obey."

"This food—it's safe to eat?"

"I am bound by the spell you cast to serve you and to keep you from harm," the creature murmured. "So long as you control me, I cannot harm you in any way."

Marty's mouth watered. "Let's have a few dancing girls, then. Just as entertainment before dinner. And—oh, better make sure that nobody interrupts me tonight." This was going to be good! Real good!

The dancing girls appeared—three of them who looked as if they had been plucked from a Minsky chorus line. They wore only necklaces round their waists, and they danced for half an hour while an unseen musician played weird oriental music. Then Marty grew bored, clapped his hands, and they vanished.

IT WAS nearly ten-fifteen when Marty finished his evening's enjoyment. In fifteen minutes he would cast Narrathoth back to the darkness and go down to Mrs. Jamieson's to pick up his aunt. But his heart beat exultantly. With Narrathoth at his command, the world was his! No wonder Vorys had been so desperate to have the book!

Marty ordered the creature to whisk



away all scenes of the feast. Then, replete, satisfied, Marty stretched out wearily on his bed and stared at the unutterably grisly thing in the middle of the room.

"Where did you come from?" Marty asked. "I mean, how is it I was able to call you?"

"I am one of the lurkers at the threshold of the universe," Narrathoth rumbled. "In aeons gone by mighty Cthulhu and his hordes from beyond the stars ruled this world and all others, and I was of the company of Cthulhu. Now we sleep in outer darkness, waiting for Cthulhu to wake and lead us back to the worlds we ruled."

Marty shuddered. "How about this book—*The Necronomicon*?"

"The mad Arab, Alhazred, divined many of our secrets and wrote them therein. Many men have opened the gate to Cthulhu and peered beyond. But few mortals have walked the reaches of antique and shadowy Khem and long have lived thereafter."

"What happens to them?"

"They die," the demon said malevolently. "They fail to control the powers they have unleashed. But I weary, boy. My time is not yet come to walk the human world again, and I long to return to the slumbers you have disturbed. Free me, so I may sleep once more."

But Marty would not free Narrathoth. He made the creature talk: of Yig, Father of Serpents, and of the monstrous nuclear chaos beyond angled space that *The Necronomicon* cloaked under the name of Azathoth. The creature told of dead Cthulhu sleeping in his palace at R'lyeh, and of the Outer Ones who waited for the day of their return to Earth. Marty's jaw sagged open in wonder. He understood only the merest fraction of the being's story, but even that fraction filled him with awe and terror.

But time had come to dismiss the demon for tonight, and return to the prosaic world of aunts and sewing circles. Marty rummaged through *The Necronomicon* for the spell that would send Narrathoth back to his slumbers until called once again. There was plenty of time to examine the book carefully and discover its riches.

He began to recite the spell. Strangely enough, Narrathoth did not fade as the words continued. Instead, the Elder Demon grew brighter, larger, more repellent of appearance. Several times rumbling laughs escaped Narrathoth's fleshy, drooling lips. Marty felt terror rising inside himself. The smell of ozone became strong in the room. Narrathoth still remained imprisoned within the chalk star, but he was growing more frightening of aspect every moment.

Suddenly Marty heard footsteps on the stairs. The door burst open. Vorys came running in, his face white, his eyes nearly popping from his head.

"You idiot!" Vorys exclaimed. "What have you been doing?"

Marty growled, "Get out of here!"

"You've been casting spells, but you don't know what you're doing! You've opened the Gateway! My God, you should see the sky over this house! Purple and

swollen with the Thing hovering waiting for the gateway to open!"

"I'm reciting the spell that sends Narrathoth away," Marty said. He was angry that Vorys had dared to break in on him.

The scholar rushed across the room and peered at the page from which Marty was reading. "You teenage madman!" he exclaimed. "That's the wrong page! You're reading the Invocation of Yog-Sothoth—opening the gateway to the most blasphemous of—"

But it was too late. A tremendous roar of laughter rose from Narrathoth.

There was the sudden sound of smashing glass. Marty whirled in horror and saw something long and blunt at the tip come writhing through the window of his attic room. It was green and barnacle-covered, and looked like the monstrous tentacle of a giant squid or octopus, with great suckers along its foul-smelling underside.

Falling to his knees, Vorys began to chant in a panicky monotone, as if to drive away the creature that Marty had accidentally summoned up. But it was to no avail. The mighty tentacle, as thick through as a man's body, moved with deadly purpose, eradicating the chalk pentagram that restrained Narrathoth. The barriers removed, Narrathoth cried out in glee, bounded up, and vanished.

Still Vorys chanted, while Marty clung to the book and shivered in terror. Marty realized what had happened now; inadvertently turning to the wrong page, he had recited a spell that invoked one of the most malignant of all the Elder

Gods—and now it had come to claim its revenge!

The ghastly tentacle groped through the room, reaching out for its summoner. Marty shrank back, cowering against the wall, but the tentacle sought him out, the dread suckers fastened themselves to his body.

Slowly, it drew Marty out through the shattered glass of the window. Opening his eyes for a moment, Marty looked up to see a creature whose eyes were flaming beacons the size of dinner trays, whose loathsome beak loomed disgustingly above him. . . .

There was a single loud shriek, and that was all.

When Marty's aunt, tired of waiting for his arrival, gave up and accepted a lift back to her house, she found a strange sight awaiting her. The entire upper story of her house had been caved in as by a mighty hand. Crouching in the splintered ruins of the upper story was Vorys, unharmed but utterly mad, clutching to his bosom a thick book bound in black leather and muttering incomprehensible things about The Whisperer in Darkness. And stunned neighbors, unable to credit the evidence of their eyes, whispered to each other that a vast thing with tentacles and blazing eyes had hovered that night on the gables of the dead boy's home, splitting the night with obscene laughter and greedily devouring the raw and bloody doll that once had been a human being. . . .