

# Weird Tales



MAY, 1952

Cover by Virgil Finlay

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D. McILWRAITH, Editor

# Father's Vampire



*BY ALVIN TAYLOR and  
LEN J. MOFFATT*

*Father collected things—but he  
wasn't at all in a rut as to  
what he collected.*

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**F**ATHER is a little mad, of course, and someday I suppose I will have to have *him* put away too. He is quite harmless right now, however, and as long as I'm around to keep an eye on him he shouldn't cause anyone any real trouble.

Father collects things. Even when we were poor as church-mice and Father was earning a meager living for Mother and me by digging wells, cesspools and graves around the town . . . yes, even when we

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Heading by Vincent Napoli



were on relief during the depression years Father collected things.

One thing about Father, though. He wasn't in a rut like many collectors are. He didn't specialize in any one thing. He would bring home odds and ends, old books, torn halves of magazines, bits of string and rope, used ice cream sticks, pieces of metal from worn-out machines and so on.

And, of course, after we became fabulously wealthy there seemed to be no end to Father's collecting. We became wealthy when Uncle Henry died. Uncle Henry was Father's brother who struck it rich in Texas or some such God-forsaken place and for some reason or other (we were never on very friendly terms with Uncle Henry) he willed us his vast fortune. It was a little disconcerting because we weren't used to having all that money and we didn't quite know what to do with it. It was then that Father went a little mad.

Oh, he was practical enough at first. We had the old house done over and he bought Mother a pretty new cotton dress and gave me a ten-dollar bill to do with just whatever I pleased. I gave some of it to Mother to buy groceries with and am afraid I spent the rest of it rather foolishly on a girl.

Then Aunt Mabel came to live with us. She was Uncle Henry's widow. The lawyer who came with her (he didn't stay very long although Mother was polite enough when she invited him to stay for supper) said we had inherited the money all right but there was a provision in the will which said we must look after Aunt Mabel until she died if we wanted to *keep* the money.

Mother said, "I knew there was a catch to it, but of course, Mabel is welcome here anytime."

Father said, "I always did dislike you less than I did Henry, Mabel." He gave me a look which meant I was supposed to say something nice to Aunt Mabel so I told her she could have one of my pet rats. Not the pregnant one, however, as I wanted the little rats from it to use in my home laboratory experiments.

Aunt Mabel didn't seem too happy with us at first but I think she got used to our dull, normal way of living after a while. I suppose she was used to a more adventurous life in Texas and just didn't feel at

home with us right away. Anyway she didn't have to live with us very long because we found her dead in bed one morning.

Father sent for a doctor right away. As I said he can be practical when he wants to be and he knew a doctor would have to pronounce her dead, make out a certificate, and so on. The doctor called in the constable and some other authorities because he said Aunt Mabel had been murdered.

This made Mother hysterical. She began to scream that she didn't do it and no one could prove she did it. But the constable claimed that the tiny pricks in Aunt Mabel's throat were caused by Mother's hatpin and the doctor said there was hardly a drop of blood in Aunt Mabel's body.

They were a little put out though because there was no blood on the bedclothes or anywhere in the room. They searched the entire house and grounds, but they couldn't find Aunt Mabel's blood anywhere.

So Father signed the papers and had Mother put away in the asylum just up the road from here. We buried Aunt Mabel in the old churchyard. We asked Reverend Worthy in to say a few words over her as Aunt Mabel had been a religious woman, always quoting the Bible or a bit now and then from the Decameron of Boccaccio.

**I**T WAS several days after the funeral when Father called me into his study and gave me his best chair to sit in. He perched his lank frame on the edge of a table and smiled knowingly. I smiled knowingly back at him. I know how to humor Father.

"Being a bright and intelligent young man you no doubt have some idea concerning what I am about to reveal," said Father.

I kept on smiling.

"Of course," he said. "Your own Father's son. Well you realize then that it wasn't your Mother who killed poor dear Mabel."

"Oh?" I said quietly.

"Of course not," said Father. "It was the vampire I am keeping in the cellar. I couldn't very well tell the authorities I had collected a vampire, coffin and all, now could I? Your mother knew about it, naturally. It was always hard to keep secrets from her. But then that is the way it is with people who are a little—er—demented? I'm

afraid the strain of Mabel's demise was just too much for your poor Mother, so it is just as well that she is where she is and that things have turned out so nicely without me having to give up my vampire. . . ."

I was fascinated. Vampires have always fascinated me. I couldn't control my eagerness as I questioned Father.

"What does it look like? Is it in the form of a man or woman or what? Is it thin or fat? Does . . ."

Father raised a thin hand to ward off my questions.

"Please, son," he smiled. "One thing at a time. I really couldn't tell you about the nature of the vampire as I haven't seen it yet."

"You haven't? Then how do you know it killed Aunt Mabel?"

"The markings on her throat and the fact that we could not find the blood she obviously lost," said Father, impatiently. "Why it was so obvious that I was sorely afraid the authorities would suspect the presence of a vampire. They did not, however, or perhaps they assumed that your mother had gotten rid of the blood in some other way or drunk it herself. Authorities being what they are—politicians—are generally a stupid lot. Clever at times, but always stupid."

"If you really have a vampire, Father, I want to see it. I must see it!"

"Whatever for? They are dangerous, you know. I just collected this one for the curiosity of having one about. Besides it doesn't seem to get out of its coffin, lazy fellow that it is. Except for its escapade with Mabel. It is probably a very old vampire who prefers to sleep most of the time and needs little nourishment. Just as well though, as I considered inviting tramps and other such riff-raff in to supper now and then so it would not starve and thus not give us any trouble. One must be practical, you know."

"Of course," I agreed. "But I really do want to see it and talk with it. I have always wanted to interview a vampire. I could write it up for the local paper and then maybe Editor Stanley would put me on his staff."

"Why on earth do you want to write for that two-bit rag?" frowned Father. "And if you did write such an interview you would have to present it as fiction and use a pseudonym. I don't want notoriety, you

know. I want to be alone with my collection."

Father was beginning to weep. I handed him my handkerchief and tried to change the subject. One of Father's pet peeves is the town's weekly paper which stirred up such a fuss when we inherited the money. Such inaccurate reporting! If Stanley had let me write it up as I wanted to and offered to but . . .

"Look, Father," I said. "Please let me visit the vampire. I'll be very polite and I'll write the interview for some other publication. One of the 'little magazines', perhaps. They don't pay much but they are awfully literary. Lord knows we don't need the money."

"Well," said Father, managing a weak smile. "I guess it will be all right. I doubt if you will get to see it, though. I admit I was a little curious when the coffin arrived. I even tapped on the box and asked it to come out but nothing happened at all. I tried to lift the lid but it is evidently locked or bolted from the inside. Very clever vampire. The coffin is made of wood which must be six inches thick. I thought once of prying it open, forcing the lock or bolt or whatever it is but I was afraid of ruining the coffin itself. It's a wonderful piece of wood-carving. I know there is a vampire in there all right because I have the papers that go with the box—a kind of written guarantee. And then, of course, there was Mabel. . . ."

I waited impatiently for Father to dismiss me. He had given his permission and there was nothing on earth I wanted more to see than a real undead vampire. I thought of all the questions I could ask and of other things, too, for I must admit I have peeked into some of Father's old books when he wasn't around. . . .

Finally Father let me go with a parting warning to be very careful, and above all, to be polite. I thanked him heartily and left him playing with his collection of hand-painted cockroaches. He painted them himself—all the colors of the rainbow. Father really has the soul of an artist.

AS I DESCENDED the cellar steps I thought I heard a bumping noise but wasn't sure where it was coming from. I was carrying a flashlight, my notebook and

ballpoint pen and two cold cans of beer. I had thought of wearing some garlic or a crucifix but decided that wouldn't be very polite though it struck me as humorous at the time. I knew the vampire wouldn't hurt me any. I have made a study of vampires and although I hate to appear immodest I believe I probably know more about them than any other being in the world. Even more than Father because I know he hasn't read all of his books.

The coffin was indeed beautiful, obviously hand-carved. It was covered with engravings depicting all sorts of fascinating rites as well as scenes from the private lives of famous beauties of history. There were also some very patriotic scenes showing the battle of Bunker Hill, the Spanish-American War and so on with a likeness of George Washington in bas-relief smiling down upon it all.

I knocked quietly on the coffin lid. There was a noise inside.

"Maybe just an echo," I thought, but I knocked again—harder.

"Oh, go away and let me sleep!" said a voice from inside the coffin.

"You're there!" I shouted with joy. "You're really there! A real true vampire at last! Please come out and talk to me."

"Why should I?" muttered the voice, definitely masculine.

I decided to fib a bit. It seemed the only way to get it out of its coffin.

"I've heard a lot about you, Mr. Vampire. I understand you have lived a fascinating life and that when you died your life after death—if I may call it that—was even more fabulous. But I would like to hear the details from your own lips. I'm sure you are a genius at story telling and can thrill me with tales of the places you have been, the women you have known, the people you have dined with and dined on. . . ."

I could hear it moving about inside its coffin.

"Naturally," came the voice. "But why do you want to know?"

"I have always been fond of vampires and vampire stories," I replied promptly. "But most of the stories were silly fiction and I want to hear the truth from a real vampire. I want my facts from an authority. In short, I want to interview you. I can

promise you a very nice write-up in all of the Sunday papers. If you wish, I'll use a pseudonym and will not reveal your location so no one will come around and bother you. . . ."

I heard a clicking sound inside the coffin and then the lid raised up. The vampire, in the form of a fat, healthy-looking man, climbed out, stretched and yawned.

"So you want the story of my life and un-death," it grinned, showing white, pointed teeth. "Aren't you afraid I'll attack you?"

"Why should I be afraid?" I smiled, ever so innocently. "You belong to my father and besides you have recently dined on Aunt Mabel who must have had enough blood to satisfy you for weeks to come."

"Perhaps," said the vampire, sitting down on the coffin's edge beside me. "You look like an interesting morsel though . . ."

"Oh, skip that nonsense," I said. "Let's get to your history. Now, first give me the basic facts, statistics, you know. Birthdate. Where born? And so on up to time of death, cause of same and the like. You just talk away and I'll take it down in shorthand. . . ."

"Very well," it said, trying to keep its eyes away from my neck. They were rather nice blue eyes, though. "I was born on April 9, 1652 . . ."

It began to give a very boring account of its life in a small Hungarian village going into some detail regarding its various conquests of girls and the amount of wine it could consume in one evening. But I patiently took it all down. While it talked it kept gazing at me as though hypnotized and when it began to drool I moved away a little.

It must have noticed my moving for it immediately stopped talking and edged closer to me.

"Do not sit so far away," it whispered, placing a cold hand on my shoulder.

"Please continue your story," I said as quietly as possible.

"Another time," murmured the vampire. "You can best enjoy it when you become one of us. Your poor aunt is having the devil's own time trying to get out of that churchyard, but perhaps you will be more fortunate. In fact, I will take the trouble to instruct your father to let your coffin rest

here with mine. We can be death-long companions. But first you must let me . . ."

His face was close to mine now and I could feel his cold breath on my throat. This wouldn't have been so bad but he had a bad case of halitosis. I stood up and stepped away from him, fingering the flashlight and letting the notebook and pen drop to the floor. It arose and moved towards me.

"The light will not help you," it smiled. "It won't hurt much, really. Just a little nip, a little pressure and you will be dead and I will be fed. Then you will evolve into un-deadness and join me forever. . . ."

"Not interested, really," I said, insistently enough.

"But why not? You said you have always been fascinated by vampires. Why not become one? It is so easy and so much fun after all. . . ."

"I am not going to be a vampire," I told it firmly. "I have a definite interest in them but I would never think of being one, believe me. I'm happy the way I am."

"Please do not be difficult," said the vampire. It was close to me now and I could feel the wall behind me. Somehow it had got between me and the stairs. "If I want to I can force you into submission. I am stronger than a mere mortal man, you know."

I smiled right into its leering face.

"You may as well know," I said. "It is impossible for me to become a vampire. The most powerful vampire in existence cannot harm me. I know."

The vampire began to look a little unsure of itself. But it managed a grin combined with a sneer.

"And why can't you become a vampire? All I have to do is attack you, drink your blood . . ."

"You just can't do it," I said. "Perhaps you're not as bright as I thought. But surely all vampires know about *druds* and have learned to fear them."

The vampire shuddered.

"*Druds!* There are no *druds* here. *Druds* are rare; perhaps one is born every few centuries, but . . ."

"I'm a *drud*," I said. "I found out by reading one of Father's old books. Even Father doesn't know about me or about *druds*, for that matter, as he doesn't read

half the stuff he collects. I might never have known if I hadn't read that book. Or perhaps I would have learned about myself naturally once I met you or some other vampire. I know I have often felt the hunger, the thirst but I always tried to satisfy it with a sandwich or a glass of beer. I assumed it was an unusual hunger but I hate to bother with doctors and as I appeared to be quite healthy otherwise . . ."

THE vampire was leering again. "You are not a *drud*," it said. "You may have read about the accursed creatures in some old book but you couldn't be a *drud*. A *drud* is a vampire's vampire. It drinks the blood of vampires after the vampire has dined on some mortal being. *Druds* have the disgusting taste for distilled blood . . . the blood of my kind after we have taken it from some human. But you are not a *drud* and now I shall have your life!"

I ducked just in time to avoid its grabbing arms and clicking teeth.

"I am too a *drud*!" I shouted. "What makes you think I'm not? You better look out or I'll have *your* blood. I'm awfully thirsty, you know. I didn't come down here just to get a story from you. That was just to get you out of your coffin so I could get at you!"

"You cannot be a *drud*," grinned the vampire, closing in again. "You have eyebrows. *Druds* do not have eyebrows!"

"Of course, they haven't," I said, reaching up and pulling off the fake eyebrows I had been wearing. I advanced on the vampire.

It screamed horribly, I'm sure, and ran from me to its coffin. I raced madly after it but stumbled over an empty beer can. By the time I got to my feet the vampire was in its coffin and I could hear the lock clicking on the inside.

"You can't reach me now!" It cried. "You'll never get me! I'll stay here forever! You can't reach me now!"

I hammered heavily on the coffin lid and could hear it weeping hysterically inside. Finally, I picked up my notes and pen and found my way to the stairs. As I climbed up into the house I smiled and thought that I really hadn't gotten much of a story for all my trouble. Shaving off my eyebrows had



been a nuisance but, oh well, they will grow back in a little while.

Father is peeved at me for frightening the vampire so that it won't come out of its coffin, but he'll get over it eventually. Of course, we'll have to find some other use for the hobo Father invited in to supper tonight.