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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.



**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**



"The tree sprang into his path to stop him."

# Glamour

By SEABURY QUINN

*An unusual and uncanny story—who, or what, was that Lucinda Lafferty who lured men to the destruction of their immortal souls?*

**T**HE wind tramped round and round the fieldstone walls of the clubhouse, muttering and moaning; seemingly it maundered threats and wailed pleas alternately. Rain sweated on

the recessed windows, glazing them with black opacity until the mullioned panes gave back distorted mirrorings of the gun-room, vague and indistinct as oil paintings smeared with a rag before they had a

chance to dry. In the eight-foot fireplace beech and pine logs piled in alternating layers upon the hammered iron firedogs blazed a roaring holocaust and washed the freestone floor and adz-cut oaken beams of the ceiling with ruddy light. From the radio a bass voice bellowed lustily:

"Then all of my days I'll sing the praise  
Of brown October ale . . ."

Harrigan felt like a cat in a strange alley. Newly come to Washington as a member of the scientific staff of the Good Roads Bureau, he had permitted himself to be talked into joining the Izaak Walton Gun and Rod Club, being assured he would find some kindred spirits there. "None o' your dam' lily-fingered pen-pushers an' desk-hoppers there," Jack Bellamy had told him. "They're men like you an' me, son. Two-fisted, hairy-chested sportsmen, capable o' handlin' liquor or an argument like gentlemen. Lawyers, bankers, doctors, scientists; not a Gov'ment clerk in a car-load of 'em."

Used to outdoor life and with some experience with both rod and gun, Harrigan had risen eagerly to the bait, but already he began to have his doubts. The station wagon from the club had met him at Vienna Junction, depositing him on the clubhouse porch a little after five. Bellamy, whom he had expected to meet him, had not shown up; there was no one there he knew, and the members gathered in small cliques at dinner and in the gunroom afterward. No one but the white-jacketed colored waiter seemed aware of his existence, and he only when an upraised finger signaled orders for a fresh mug of old musty.

"New feller here?" The booming challenge at his elbow startled him. "Didn't remember seein' you before. My name's Crumpacker, Judge Lucius Q. Crumpacker. What's yours? Mind if I sit by you?"

The big man dropped into the vacant

hickory chair between Harrigan and the fire-warmed hearth and beckoned to the waiter. "Double Scotch and soda, Jake," he ordered. "You know my brand—and no ice, remember. When I want ice-water with a little whisky in it I'll tell you."

He lit a cigar which seemed almost half a yard in length, blew a series of quick, angry smoke rings like the pompons of exploding shrapnel, and turned again to Harrigan, bushy eyebrows working up and down like agitated caterpillars.

"Had a dev'lish mean experience this evenin'," he confided in a voice that sounded somehow like an angry mastiff's growl. "Ordered off an old hag's land. 'Pon my word, I was. We ought to run the old hadrian out o' the county. She has no business here, ought to be in the poor-house, or jail. Devilish old virago." He worried at the end of his cigar until it flattened and unraveled like a frayed-out rope, then flung the ruin in the fire and lit another stogie. "Umph. Land wasn't posted, either."

"But I thought all that was taken care of," ventured Harrigan as the silence lengthened. "I was told the club had made arrangements with the local land owners to let us shoot on their land for a stipulated yearly fee and a guarantee to reimburse them for any damages they might sustain."

"Right. Quite right. There is such an arrangement, and by its terms the yokels have a right to post their land whenever they get tired of takin' money from us, but that old scold down by Gunpowder Creek refuses either to post her land or sign a contract with us. She's got nothing but a weed-patch and a flock o' moultin' hens. You could ride a regiment o' cavalry across her place, and all you'd trample would be goldenrod and ragweed, but the old she-devil won't let one of us set foot across her line. She's the last one of a family that settled here in 1635, and though there's nothing but the cellar and chimneys

of the old mansion left she still puts on the high and mighty air with us and treats us like a lot o' trespassers and interlopers.

"Her place adjoins the Spellman farm. Spellman's glad enough to collect from us for the shootin'-rights, and I'd flushed up a covey his side of the line. Must have been a dozen birds in it. I knocked down four of 'em and saw 'em take covert in the next field. That would be her briar-patch.

"Maybe I had no business trespassin', for after all we've no agreement with her, but she'd not posted signs, either. So Xerxes—that's my wire-haired setter—and I just kept on goin'. We'd walked two-three hundred yards across her mangy patch o' crab-grass when Xerxes started actin' queerly. First he'd run around in circles, as if he had the scent o' something; then he'd come lopin' back to me with his tail down, and look up in my face with that peculiar questionin' way dogs have, and when I'd tell him to go smell 'em out he'd run off for a little distance, then start circlin' back again.

"Then he did a thing no well-trained bird dog ever does, gave tongue and rushed at something. Sir, you could have knocked me over with a stalk o' rye-straw. There he was, the best bird dog in seven counties, actin' like a damned coon dog. I followed him and found him belly-down before a patch o' briar bushes, barkin' and whinin' and growlin', as if he didn't quite know whether he was more frightened or angry.

"**I** POKED my gun into the bushes, for I thought perhaps he'd run a skunk to cover, though usually a polecat won't give ground for man or devil. Well, sir, what d'ye think I saw?" He paused rhetorically and drew a deep draft from the bubbling amber liquid in his glass; then, as Harrigan raised politely questioning brows:

"A cat, sir. A dam' old mangy green-eyed tabby-cat crouchin' in the heart o'

those blackberry vines and lookin' poisoned darts and daggers at my dog. I hate cats like the Devil hates the Scriptures—thiev-in', slinkin', skulkin' bird-killers! So I pushed the vines away still farther and bent down to get a better aim at it. I was goin' to let the beast have both barrels, but—believe it or doubt me, sir, it faded out o' sight!"

"Cats are wonderfully agile," Harrigan agreed as Judge Crumpacker looked at him, obviously awaiting comment.

"This one wasn't," Crumpacker exploded. "This beast didn't slink away. It vanished. One second it was there, lookin' at us like a basilisk, and next moment there was nothin' there, but——"

Again he paused to take refreshment from his now half-empty glass, and: "But just as that dam' feline disappeared we heard a rustlin' in the patch o' briars to our left, and there, lookin' twice as poisonous as any cat, was old Lucinda Lafferty."

"Lucinda Lafferty?" echoed Harrigan. "You mean——"

"Precisely, sir. She's the old hag who owns that patch o' worthless land. I don't believe that she has half a dozen teeth in both her jaws, but she was fairly grindin' those she had when we turned round and saw her, and if her eyes weren't flashin' fire I never saw the light o' hell in human optics. And I've been on the bench for thirty years, passin' sentence on the most desperate criminals ever brought to justice."

"So she threatened you with suit for trespass?"

"Not she. She knew she'd never have a chance before a court or jury in this county. The country folk don't bear with *her* kind round here. She cursed me."

"She swore at you?"

Judge Crumpacker was stout, gray-haired and ruddy-faced. In his red-suede waistcoat and tan flannel shirt, with corduroy trousers thrust into high-topped boots, he looked the perfect picture of a Georgian

innkeeper from a Jeffery Farnol novel, or, perhaps, a Regency three-bottle man. Harrigan had a momentary, slightly comic mental picture of a slattern farm-shrew pouring billingsgate upon him. But the other's answer swept the vision away.

"I said exactly what I meant. She cursed me. Aimed a skinny finger at me and called down maledictions on my head. It may be that her lack of teeth prevented her articulatin' clearly, but it seemed as if she interjected words in heathen gibberish between the English as she cursed me.

"Xerxes was absolutely terrified. I've had that dog for five years, raised and trained him from a pup, and I never saw him lower his tail for anything before, not even when he ran across a rattlesnake or bobcat, but today his spirit seemed to fail him utterly, and he whined and put his tail between his legs and shrank against me like a mongrel cur. I tell you, sir, it almost made me believe what they say about that devilish old hadrian—the way she looked at us, the threats she made, the uncouth jargon that she spewed at us—Jake!" He crooked his finger to the attendant. "Another of the same, and see you put some whisky in it this time. What say? What do they say about her?" he turned back to Harrigan. "Why, damme, sir, they say that she's a witch!"

Harrigan had difficulty keeping a straight face. Abetted by the potent Scotch, galled by the memory of his wounded *amour-propre*, the dignified old gentleman was working himself into a towering passion. "A witch?" Harrigan repeated. "How's that, sir?"

"A witch," Judge Crumpacker reiterated. "Precisely, sir; a witch. Judge Petterson dismissed a case against her only last term of court when a neighbor sued her on a charge of malicious mischief, alleging that she'd caused his pigs to die by overlooking them. The pigs were dead, there was no doubt about that. Apparently a herd of

forty fine swine were dead of poison, but the veterinary who examined them could find no trace of any known hogbane, and they couldn't prove that old Lucinda had access to the pens. Indeed, the testimony was that she had never been upon her neighbor's land, but merely stood out in the road before his house and called a ban down on the swine for rooting in her garden several days before. There's no doubt about her malice, but the statutes of this state ignore the possibility of witchcraft, so she had to be discharged. There's not a Negro in the county who will pass her place at night, and most of the white folks prefer going around the other way after dark. If she'd lived two hundred years ago she'd have been hanged long before this, or sold as a slave in Barbados or Jamaica."

Absent-mindedly he reached for his glass, found none, and raised a querulous complaint:

"Jake, confound you, where's my drink?"

"'Scuse me, Jedge y'honor, suh," the servitor appeared around the corner of the bar, his face a study in embarrassment and latent fear, "Ah didn't mean ter be slow erbout fetchin' yuh yo' licker, but Joseph jest now called me to de kennels, suh, an' tole me ter tell yuh—what Ah means, suh, is——"

"Yes?" The red in Judge Crumpacker's ruddy cheeks grew almost magenta. "What the devil are you drivin' at?"

"Jedge, y'honor, suh, hit's erbout yo' dawg, suh, please; he's done gone an'——"

"What's he done? I saw him locked up in the kennel myself, and saw that he had food and water. He's not hungry, and he never goes out foraging. Don't tell me that he's gotten loose and stolen something from the kitchen——"

"Oh, no, suh. He ain't stole nothin', Jedge y'honor, suh. He's daid!"

"What?" The question snapped as sharply as a whip. "How?"

"Pizened, Jedge y'honor, suh." The Negro swallowed hard and nodded solemnly. His eyes appeared to be all whites. "Ah heerd as how yuh an' him wuz on ole Mis' Lucindy's place this evenin'——"

"Come on—out o' my way!" the judge burst in, and, Harrigan and Jake behind him, stamped out to the long shed behind the clubhouse where members' dogs were quartered.

JAKE had not been guilty of an overstatement. The pointer, a big, rangy dog, lay on its side, legs stiff, lips curled back and foam-flecked, eyes bulging almost from their sockets. Its sides and stomach were distended till the skin was stretched like drum-parchment about them.

"I left him less than half an hour ago," Crumpacker almost sobbed. "He was well and healthy then, just finishing his dinner. Poor old Xerxes—poor old pal!"

"He might have picked up something in the fields this afternoon," soothed Harrigan. "Dogs often——"

"Not this one, sir," Crumpacker thundered. "I've had my eye on him all day. He's eaten nothing but the food I gave him, and I brought that up with me—*ha!*"

"What is it, sir?" asked Harrigan, but even as he asked he knew the answer. There was a feeling of malaise about him, a sort of prickling of the short hairs on his neck, and a chilly, eery feeling, as of horripilation, on his forearms.

"That infernal old Lucinda Lafferty—that devilish old witch. This is her doing! She killed my poor dog just as she killed her neighbor's swine, by witchcraft. She got away with it that time; Petterson dismissed the case against her, but this time she has me to deal with. I'll track her down and brand her for the foul sorceress she is or die in the attempt. By Gad, I will, sir!"

It might have been a foraging crow disturbed in his foray in the clubhouse kitchen

yard, or routed by their voices from the shelter he had taken in the kennel shed. Whatever it was, there came a sudden flapping of strong wings against the shadows, and a hoarse, derisive croak of laughter as something took flight from the overhanging roof into the soot-black darkness of the rain-drenched night.

MORNING came with bright, cool air and sunlight sparkling on wet trees and grass. Harrigan was among the first at breakfast, but early as he was he found Judge Crumpacker finishing his ham and eggs as he came in the breakfast room. Apparently the judge had not had a good night, for his face was lined and puffy and there was a sort of gray, unhealthy pallor underneath his ruddiness. The contrast reminded Harrigan of rouge smeared on a corpse. The old man's eyes were swollen, too. If he had been a woman Harrigan would have thought he had been crying.

"Mornin'," rumbled Crumpacker, nodding as he looked up from his plate. "Ready to go with me?" He filled a tumbler a third full of whisky from the bottle at his elbow, and drained it at a gulp. "I want somebody with me when I have a showdown with that old hag." His hand was just a thought unsteady as he replenished his glass. Some of the whisky slopped across the rim and settled in a little puddle on the polished table.

Harrigan was on the point of refusing. He had come up here to shoot, not listen to the maunderings of a bibulous old gaffer. Then, abruptly, "Yes, sir, of course," he returned. The choleric old judge had worked himself into a state of sustained, choking anger, he was roweled by a spur of rage and hate, and in the last three minutes he had drunk enough neat liquor to fuddle anyone. It would be inviting murder to permit him to accost a poor old woman by himself in this condition.

They walked along the surfaced road

until they reached the Spellman farm, then cut across a wide brown field set with long rows of corn-shocks like the tepees of an Indian encampment, and jeweled with plump golden pumpkins.

"Ought to be some rabbits here," the judge remarked. "Little devils like to hang around the shocks—here, Xerxes, smell 'em out, boy—oh!" The exclamation was almost a wail, the mourning of a man for his old hunting-comrade, and the look that followed it was grim and hard and merciless as a bared knife.

The rail fence separating Spellman's farm from the next land was ruinous, overgrown with creepers, fallen almost away in some places. The field beyond was a fitting complement. Turf which had not felt a plow in twenty years gave way to bramble patches, and these in turn were choked by rank growths of ragweed, goldenrod and burdock. Devil's-pitchfork bushes grew waist high, and the barbed seed-stalks clung to their trousers like a swarm of parasites as they pushed through them.

Beyond the orchard lot of gnarled and dying apple trees they found the owner's shack, a single-story, two-room structure of unpainted clapboards stained a leprosy gray by long exposure to the weather. The door sagged drunkenly on rusted, broken hinges; several of the window-lights were broken and the holes were stuffed with wadded burlap sacking. The two planks of the stoop were warped until their edges curled up like old boot-soles, and water from the rain of last night gathered in their concavities. The kitchen yard was littered with tin cans, discarded, broken pots and dishes, scraps of rag, a rotting mattress and a broken, rust-eaten bed spring. Stark as a skeleton of the dead past, two ivy-smothered, moss-grown chimneys reared their broken tops from crumbling foundations and a cellar overgrown with sumac, all that remained of the once-noble mansion

whither Washington and Jefferson had come as guests and General Lee and Stonewall Jackson had been entertained. Fire, neglect and ruthless time had laid it in the dust as low as Nineveh and Tyre. The bloodless hand of utter, abject poverty lay on everything, and yet there was a brooding, threatening quality of silence there. Almost, it seemed to Harrigan, the place was waiting. . . . What it waited for he had no idea, but that it was something violent, tragic and abrupt he was sure.

Crumpacker strode through the rubble littering the yard and beat upon the weather-blasted door with his gun-butt. The rotting panels sagged and shivered at the impact, and a hollow, vibrant booming echoed through the empty shack. Otherwise there was no answer.

"By Gad, I'll stand here hammerin' till the old crone comes, or knock her devilish door in!" Crumpacker declared, but Harrigan broke in with a relieved laugh.

"No use, Judge; can't you see the door's closed with a hasp and padlock, and the lock's been fastened on the outside? Whoever lives here has gone out and locked the door behind—good Lord!"

Around the rusted, tangled wire of the hen-coop had come a great dog, almost large as a mastiff, but heavy-furred, like a collie or shepherd. Obviously, half a dozen breeds or more combined to make its lineage; just as obviously it combined the worst features of each. Mange had eaten at its pelt until it showed bald patches of blue hide between the matted, flea-infested hair; its tail was stubby as a terrier's; its paws were disproportionately large and armed with long, cruel, curving claws which might almost have been a bear's; its eyes were small and deeply pitted in its wide face, rheumy with distemper, and its mouth combined the wideness of the bulldog's with the heavy-toothed long jaw of the Alaskan husky. It made no sound, but stood there snarling silently, black lips curled back in a

ferocious grin, long, yellowed fangs exposed, and a look of absolutely devilish malevolence in its sunken eyes.

"Ha?" Crumpacker turned at Harrigan's ejaculation. "Hers, of course. Like mistress like dog, eh what?" He brought his gun up slowly, cradling the barrels in the crook of his left arm as he snapped back the hammers with his right thumb. "Maybe she loves the lousy beast. I hope so. Let's see how she'll like seein' it dead——"

The brute glared at him balefully, and showed no sign of fear as he raised the gun to take deliberate aim, but Harrigan jumped forward. "No, Judge, no!" he shouted. "Your quarrel is with her, not with this poor brute. It hadn't anything to do with Xerxes' death——"

Crumpacker's jaw set truculently. For the first time Harrigan saw all the latent, vengeful cruelty which the usually jovial ruddy countenance concealed. These were the features of a "hanging judge," a man who found a grim pleasure in sentencing other men to die.

"Her quarrel was with me, not my dog," he answered harshly. "I'm goin' to blow that ugly beast to hell. Stand aside, sir."

The roar of both barrels discharged in quick succession was like the bellow of a field gun, and Harrigan fell stumbling back, shocked, blinded, all but deafened by the blaze of fire and detonation of the discharge, but in the instant Judge Crumpacker fired he had thrust his hand out, driving up the shotgun muzzle and sending the charge through the overhanging branches of a sassafras tree. As the shot went whistling and crashing through the brilliant red and green leaves the big dog turned and trotted around the corner of the house, moving, for all its size, with cat-like quietness.

Crumpacker glared at Harrigan. Bitter, rageful hatred smoldered in his eyes, making the brown pupils glow like tarnished

garnets. "Damme, sir, men have been shot for less impertinence!" he burst out. Then, seeming to cool as suddenly as he had blazed, "Never mind; perhaps you're right, lad. My quarrel's with the old woman, not her dog. I reckon anger made me childish for a moment." He shook his heavy shoulders in disgust. "Come on, let's leave this filthy hole."

THEY recrossed Spellman's well-kept land and came out on the highroad just as a small roadster swung around the bend. "Good morning, Judge; good morning, sir," the driver called as he brought his car to a halt. "Give you a lift back to the club?"

"Yes, thank you, we'd appreciate it, Doctor," Crumpacker answered as he introduced Harrigan.

Dr. Clancy was a man in early middle life, somewhere between forty-five and fifty, Harrigan surmised, smooth-skinned, clean-shaven, with a youthfulness and vigor which denied the nests of little wrinkles at the corners of his eyes and the streak of white that ran with startling contrast through his smoothly brushed black hair. His eyes were blue and kind and very knowing—"true Irish eyes" thought Harrigan—but there was an indefinable something about him which was puzzling. Men without women—priests, explorers, sailors, some soldiers—bear the mark of their denial stamped on them. Dr. Clancy seemed to have it. He would have seemed more properly attired in a Roman collar and black cassock vest, rather than the corduroys and flannel shirt he wore. The little satchel on the seat beside him seemed more like a small suitcase than a medicine kit, too, but . . .

He broke his idle speculations off, for Judge Crumpacker had been pouring out the story of his grievances to Dr. Clancy, not omitting his suspicions of witchcraft, and Dr. Clancy was not laughing. "Be-



cause the law does not admit a thing is no reason for denying its existence," he was saying. "Lee Deforest was threatened with prosecution for fraud when he introduced the ionic current detector for radio, and there are many people who remember when the Patent Office refused to consider applications for heavier than air flying-machines, just as it rejects claims for perpetual motion devices today. The Lafferty family's history is not good. The founder of the local branch was prosecuted twice for cruelty to his Negroes, and finally deported from the colony on a charge of trafficking with Satan. An ancestress of theirs was burned as a witch in England in the reign of James I. Miss Lucinda was a noted beauty in her day, but though she had three romances none of them was ever consummated. All three engagements were broken, and all three lovers died shortly after their estrangement—each in exactly the manner she had foretold."

Harrigan laughed. "You think that she's a witch, too? Perhaps the cat the Judge saw yesterday was really Miss Lucinda—" The seriousness of the other's face halted him.

"The Lord forbid that I make any accusations of that kind lightly," Dr. Clancy answered, "but if we admit for the sake of argument that she has the power of witchcraft she might have been the cat, or even the strange mongrel that you saw today."

"Lycanthropy?" laughed Harrigan incredulously. "You mean you really think that there are people who can change to bestial form at will—in the Twentieth Century?"

Dr. Clancy drew his brows down in a thoughtful frown. "No, I wouldn't quite say that," he returned. "It might be due to what the mediæval churchmen called glamour, the power to mislead the beholder. The line between witchcraft and magic, and that between magic and the prestidigitator's mumbo-jumbo, is far from

sharply drawn. Every mythology tells of fairy gifts — chests of jewels or money which the recipient gloats over at night, and finds nothing but withered leaves or worthless stones next morning. That's silly, childish superstition, you say. Perhaps. But what about the Indian jugglers' rope trick? Hundreds of credible witnesses testify to having seen a rope thrown up into the air and apparently hanging there on nothing, but so securely fastened that a man could climb it. Yet on one or two occasions when motion pictures have been surreptitiously taken of the trick the films showed nothing happening——"

"I get it," Harrigan broke in. "Fakery. Mass, or at least multiple, hypnotism."

Dr. Clancy nodded assent. "Whichever you prefer to call it. Magic, mesmerism, hypnotism. Terminology varies with the times, but facts remain the same. These things were understood in the East long before Mesmer introduced his theory of animal magnetism. Probably much longer than we suspect in the West, too. However, that's unimportant, really. The fact is that if it's possible for a Hindoo fakir to make people think they see a rope suspended from infinity it's quite as possible for someone in the West to make a person think he's looking at a cat when none is there, or at a dog when he is really looking at a woman. You know how Sir Walter Scott puts it:

"It had much of glamour might  
To make a lady seem a knight."

"Glamour—or hypnotism, if you prefer a modern scientific term—might quite as easily make an ugly old woman appear to be a dog or cat."

"But d'ye think Judge Crumpacker's dog could have been hypnotized into thinking that he saw a witch-cat?" Harrigan persisted.

"Or made to die, apparently from

poison, through the power or suggestion?" added Crumpacker.

"I don't *think* anything," responded Dr. Clancy. "I'm only guessing, and taking the most charitable view. I'd rather think that old Lucinda Lafferty possesses hypnotic power and uses it to gratify her malice—for she is a malicious, vindictive old woman, according to all accounts—than believe she's entered into a pact with the Devil and signed away her soul."

He brought the car to a stop by the clubhouse porch in a long skid and leaped out with his little satchel.

"See you in a little while," he called across his shoulder. "Give me time to take a shower and get some breakfast."

THE western sky was burnished rose-gold and blush-pink, smoke rose in tall straight geysers from the chimneys, and the windows of the sparsely scattered houses reflected the last rays of sunset. Blue haze hung in the valleys, softening the burning reds and golds of autumn leaves, but on the rounded backs of the mountains the trees were blatant, flaunting flame-hued oranges and garnets.

Harrigan drew a deep lungful of the limpid evening air, glanced at his wrist-watch, and set out along the highway toward the clubhouse. His afternoon had been successful. He had managed to avoid Judge Crumpacker and, on his own, had ranged the fields clear to the river, bagging four fat rabbits and half a dozen quail. Now he was pleasantly tired, wolf-hungry and completely lost. How far he'd come he had no accurate idea, he knew only vaguely which direction to take for the club. The soft blue dusk of evening crept across the sky, the moon showed a thin crescent, and a few bright stars began to twinkle.

"The Lafferty farm must be about here," he told himself as he trudged past a hedge of clipped hornbeam. "Too bad it's posted.

I could cut across the meadow to the Spellman place and—hullo?" He started with an exclamation of dismay as a great raindrop struck him in the face.

He glanced up wonderingly at the sky. Five minutes earlier it had been dead calm and crystal clear, but now it was black as an inverted kettle, and the rain fell with a frantic fury, while a sudden wind whined like an animal in pain. He bent his head against the buffeting blast and stinging drops, turned up the collar of his shooting-coat and plodded on. "If I can make the Spellman place before I'm soaked through," he began, then, in spite of his discomfort, stopped stock-still in amazement. Through the waving branches of the birch-tree hedge a light shone with a steady invitation.

"It can't be old Miss Lucinda's shack," he reasoned. "That lies too low to be seen from the road. H'm; seems to me that would be just about the point the ruined mansion stands, but—pshaw! I'm confused by the storm. I've never been this far along the highway. Of course, there's a house there."

He swung along the surfaced roadway, found a gate pierced in the hedge and started up the avenue of honey locusts, chuckling at his luck. "Eddie, my boy, don't look a gift-house in the door," he advised. "If the Devil offers shelter on a night like this you'd better thank him kindly and accept it. Perhaps there isn't really any Devil. It's a dead sure thing pneumonia's no myth."

The house was larger than he'd thought, and older. Of red brick, built in Georgian style, it had tall windows, a deep, roofless porch with fluted white balustrade, and a cobweb fanlight above its wide front door. Through the transom shone a cheery glow of welcome, lamplight filtered through the curtained windows, mocking at the stormy blackness outside. This was no farmhouse, but the home of "quality" he realized as he

drew the silver knocker back and struck a loud alarm on the door.

Shuffling footsteps sounded as he repeated his summons; the white-enameled door swung back and an aged Negro smiled at him from amiable near-sighted eyes through the pebbles of a pair of gold-bowed spectacles. He wore a black dress coat with broad bright silver buttons, a tucked and frill-edged linen shirt, and an antique black silk stock bound round his neck.

"Good evenin', suh," he greeted. "We's jes' settin' down ter dinnah, an' Mis' Lafferty's supremely proud an' happy to receive yuh."

Harrigan started. This cordial greeting, as if he were expected . . . "Mis' Lafferty . . .?" A sudden gust of wind shattered the canopy of branches hanging by the porch and drove a chilling downpour on his neck. "Thank you," he answered, and stepped across the threshold.

Candles set in mirrored sconces stained the shadows of the wide hall with faint orange glows which faded out along the polished floor, but as he crossed the corridor behind the dusky major-domo Harrigan had glimpses of old waxed mahogany, carpets from Shiraz and Hamadan, blurred portraits in deep gilded frames and the upward graceful sweep of a wide balustraded staircase.

She rose to greet him as he stepped into the dining-room, and as definitely as if he had been listening to its rhythm, he felt his heart skip a beat. Between them stretched the long polished mahogany table with its sparkling crystal and bright-gleaming silver under the soft light of candelabra, but the opulence of Georgian silver and the blurred mulberry tones of old china were forgotten as he saw her. Tall, slender, exquisite she was in a dinner dress of blue brocade lamé with silver shoulder straps, with lovely, slightly slanting, brooding eyes, and lips that slashed across the

pearl-pale whiteness of her face like spilled fresh blood. Her hair was so pale that he could not tell if it were white or silver-blond, and she wore it swept up from the temples and the neck with waves of little curls massed high upon her head. A wide bracelet of white gold or platinum set with emeralds and rubies circled her left arm above the elbow; a string of matched pearls hung about her throat, and the creamy skin beneath was almost the exact color of the pearls.

"I—I'm sorry to intrude," he began huskily, unable to take his gaze from the vision outlined by the candle-glow, "but I was overtaken by the storm, and——"

"Oh, I'm glad you came!" she interrupted with a soft, enticing laugh. "It's lonesome here, especially when it rains. You're from the club? Harrigan, I think Elijah said your name is? I'm Lucinda Lafferty."

He blinked at her in utter, stark amazement. "I beg your pardon, did I understand your name is——"

Her laugh, deep-pitched, a little husky, began in a soft chuckle that ended in a gay, infectious peal. "I know what you're thinking—that poor old woman down the road. Yes, we have the same name, and she's everlastingly receiving my mail. Only the other day she came here, almost burning up with rage, and threatened dreadful things—said she'd put a curse on me unless I either moved away or changed my name. She's really quite harmless, poor old creature, but they say she has an evil reputation. The country people, white as well as colored, firmly believe she's a witch. Imagine that in this century!"

Served by the velvet-footed old butler, they ate clear golden consommé spiced with a dash of lemon juice and Angostura bitters, bass fried to saddle-brown in country butter, roast wild duck gamed to perfection and served with stewed green celery tops and mint-quince jelly, and spoon

bread yellow as the sweet butter which melted on it.

Lucinda barely touched her glass, but Harrigan showed due appreciation for the vintage burgundy with which the butler kept his crystal goblet filled, and as he ate and drank his admiration for his hostess grew.

**A**FTER dinner they sat in the drawing-room before the fire, and while she poured coffee from a Georgian silver pot in eggshell Sèvres cups and brandy from a cobwebbed bottle into bubble-thin inhalers he looked at her as Abelard might first have looked at Héloïse or Aucassin at Nicolette.

She was a brilliant conversationalist, seeming to divine his thought before he put it into words, and following his verbal lead as a skilled dancer responds to her partner's lightest touch. She knew and loved the things he knew and loved—the bookstalls by the Seine, the pastry cooks' stands on the Ile de France, sunrise over the Grand Canyon, the flower market by St. Paul's in London, twilight on Fifth Avenue with lights beginning to appear in a soft veil of dusk.

But more than her quick sympathetic understanding and the wit and culture that her talk displayed, more than the beauty of her slim exquisite figure with its long and tapering arms and legs, flat back, firm, pointed breasts and head set gracefully upon a round full throat; more, even, than the beauty of her exquisite pale-ivory face with its vivid scarlet mouth and long moss-agate eyes, he found her voice compelling. It was deep-pitched, velvety, with that peculiar throaty quality one sometimes hears in southern countries, and its husky, bell-like timbre seemed to strike vibrations from the very keynote of his being. When, discussing poetry, she took down a slim vellum volume and read from a Persian songster dead for a long thousand years:

"O my beloved,

O thou pearl among women,

If all other women in the world

Were gathered in one corner of the East

And thou alone in the dim West,

I should surely come to thee,

Even wert thou hidden

In the deepest forest

Or on the highest mountain top,

O my beloved,"

he felt tears of something close akin to adoration welling in his eyes.

The storm had stopped and the silver boat of the moon's crescent rode a sky-turf tremulous with clouds when he left her. Her face was like jasmine blossom in the argent light as she bade him good-night on the porch. "May I see you again soon, please?" he besought as she laid her rosy-tipped, small hand in his. "Tomorrow—in the morning?"

"Not in the morning, Edward"—they had come to first names already—she denied. "Tomorrow night, if there's a moon, you may come to me, but I'm a different person in the day—I mean I like to lie abed till late," she added as he stared at her in bewilderment.

Acting on impulse, he raised her hand to his lips, and when she accepted the homage as if she had been used to it since infancy, he felt absurdly happy . . . grateful for her understanding acquiescence.

**R**AIN dripped from the locust trees that hemmed the avenue which led down to the highway; great drops fell splashing from the wayside branches as he walked along the road, but before he'd gone a hundred yards he found himself treading in dust.

"Great Scott, I'll have to kick the door down to get in!" he exclaimed as he looked at his wrist-watch. "Half-past one. It didn't seem as if I'd been with Lucinda more than an hour." Suddenly he was

hungry, famished. Despite the hearty dinner he had eaten he was as ravenous as though he'd tasted nothing since breakfast.

The clubhouse was ablaze with lights, and in the gunroom were gathered knots of members, talking in the hushed tones people use in church or at a funeral. "What's up?" he asked. "Somebody ill?"

"Not now," Dr. Clancy answered soberly. "It's Judge Crumpacker. He's dead."

"Dead? Good heavens——"

"I don't believe that heaven had a part in this," replied Clancy. "He died in frightful agony, sweating blood like a hemophilic."

"Sweating blood? What caused it?"

Clancy's gaze was level and uncompromising as a pointed bayonet. "You remember hearing of his encounter with Lucinda Lafferty yesterday? Did he tell you that she cursed him?"

"Yes, but he wasn't specific, merely said——"

"I went to him when Mr. Marsten heard him groaning in his room," broke in the other.

"He was sinking fast, but trying to say something. I bent over him and heard him whisper, 'She said I'd die this way; my joints would stiffen and my eyes go blind, and I'd die in bloody sweat.' His knees and elbows were as stiff as if he had been frozen when I found him, and every toe and finger was as rigid as if it were cast iron. When I held a light before his eyes he couldn't tell the difference."

ALL night he dreamed of her. Sometimes she put soft hands against his cheeks; when she spoke to him the vibrant bell-tones of her voice thrilled through him till they struck responsive echoes from the smallest cell and fiber of his being. Once she leant above him and kissed him, and at the contact of her satin lips with his

he felt his very spirit melt in him with longing and desire.

Troubled and unrested, he rose early and despite her refusal to see him till the evening set out for her house. This was a new experience for him. In all his thirty years he had met no woman with whom he would care to link his life; now, as he walked across the frost-jeweled fields he knew that whether for an hour or a lifetime he was hers without reserve or withholding. It was almost like an ecstasy, this strangely mingled sense of exaltation and abasement; such a love was epic, like that of Hero and Leander, Pyramus and Thisbe or Romeo and Juliet . . . too wonderful, too marvelous to have come to any prosaic scientist like him . . . yet there it was. The vision of her pale, exquisite face seemed outlined in the bank of fleecy cirrus cloud that burned with rose reflection of the morning sun. A snatch from an old song, rescued from oblivion by radio, came unbidden to his lips:

"I dream of you all the day long,

You run through the hours like a song,  
My dearie."

He crossed the Spellman field and then vaulted the snake fence that bordered old Lucinda Lafferty's poor land. The house of his beloved, the other, the beautiful Lucinda, must lie beyond the weed-grown orchard and the ruined mansion of the farm.

Now he was in the old crone's apple grove, and the gnarled boughs and bent boles of her trees rose round him like menacing figures in a Doré engraving. Strangely, too, the trees, bereft of leaves, shed far more shadow than he had thought possible. The sun seemed banked behind a rack of sudden storm clouds; the air was permeated with an unreal, brassy twilight, confusing, threatening. Perhaps it was the odor of the rotting windfalls on the leaf-

mold round the twisted roots of the old trees, he could not say, but the very atmosphere of the place had a damp, dank chilliness. It smelled a little like the brackish water round the rotting piles of old wharves; there was something in it that made breathing difficult. A low-swinging branch knocked off his corduroy cap; as he leant to pick it up a limber twig snapped back and struck him on the cheek, not as if it were an accident, but viciously and purposefully.

He jerked his cap down low above his eyes and instantly another bough caught it and seemed to fling it off.

Something rustled in the undergrowth and flickered across his path. A squirrel? A rabbit? Possibly a cat, he could not be sure, but somehow it did not seem frightened; rather, it seemed to him, it was merely shifting position as if to get a better view of what was happening.

There came a sudden pattering. At first he thought it falling leaves, but there were few leaves on the withered boughs, and the pit-pat-patter grew into a steady rhythm, the beating of small feet, scores, hundreds of them, on the frost-dried leaves. Were they coming from the rear or in front? Or from the sides? It seemed at first as if they came from one direction, then another, finally from all around. Then something else cut straight across his path, and this time there could be no doubt. It was a rabbit running with the speed of panic, and as it passed him it seemed saying, "Get out of here, you fool—get out before it is too late!"

Now there seemed a little wind . . . no, it was no wind, it was a chorus of shrill, piping laughs, soft as chirping insects' cries, but spiteful and malicious as the cachinnation of a horde of mocking fiends. He took a running step forward, and brought up sharply with a startled grunt of pain. He had run full-tilt into a tree trunk—and he could have sworn there was no tree

there. Turning, he plunged to the right. This time there was no mistake. The tree sprang into his path to stop him. It happened quicker than a wink, faster than the flicker of a bacillus beneath the eyepiece of a microscope, but he saw it! The way was open when he leaped; then it was blocked by a tree trunk, and he was lying flat upon his back, the wind knocked out of him, his hat gone one way and his gun another, and round about him, from the earth and trees and air, the high, thin cachinnating screams of rancorous laughter sounded in his ears.

He rose and blundered on again, saw bright sunlight showing at the end of a short vista, and made for it in stumbling haste. Now he was at the orchard's edge; in ten yards he would be clear of it. He set his teeth and drew a deep breath, put his head down and sprinted.

The blow was like the hammering of a loaded bludgeon. Whether it were falling limb or shifting tree trunk he could not be sure. He knew only that something struck him on the head with devastating force, that a brilliant blue-white light flashed in his eyes and that he tripped sprawling down into black oblivion.

THE sun had sunk almost below the hog-backed ridge that broke the western horizon, and little feathers of dusk were drifting through the autumn leaves when he awoke to find Dr. Clancy standing above him. "Hullo," he greeted as he rose and felt his head with tentative, exploring fingers, "I must have slept here since morning—"

The half-jocular, half-embarrassed words died still-born on his lips as he looked into the other's face. "What's wrong?" he ended lamely.

Dr. Clancy's steady gaze bored into his. "That's what I'd like to know," he answered in a toneless flat voice. "I've been looking for you since this morning, and

only just found you." Then, irrelevantly: "Where were you last night?"

A quick flush of resentment burned in Harrigan's cheeks. Who the deuce did Clancy think he was, putting him on the witness stand this way? "Why?" he jerked back. "What difference does it make?"

"It may make much. I sat with Judge Crumpacker's body last night, waiting for the coroner. It seemed unchristian to leave him alone, and sometime after three o'clock this morning I heard moans in your room. You'd been with him the day before; if he'd died from some strange infection—though I don't believe he did—you might have been stricken too. So I went to you.

"You were crying in your sleep, like a homesick lad, but when I bent above you I distinguished words between your sobs." He paused a moment; then: "I'm used to confidences; this won't go any farther, but"—his blue eyes fairly seemed to blaze as they burned into Harrigan's—"you were begging someone named Lucinda to have pity on you, to let you touch her, kiss her, even if it were only her dress-hem or her shoes; pleading with her to accept you as her slave. "Where—were—you—last—night—Edward Harrigan?"

Sullenly at first, then defiantly, finally with the ardor of a lover talking of his mistress, Harrigan retailed his night's adventure. When he told of the tempestuous rainstorm that drove him to seek shelter at the mansion Dr. Clancy crossed himself, muttering something in quick Latin which he could not catch, but which ended with *per Deum Patrem omnipotentem*.

"It's odd that lovely girl should have the same name as the old wi—the old woman," Harrigan concluded. "She tells me that they're constantly mistaken for each other by——"

"I don't doubt it," Clancy broke in; then, abruptly, "I don't suppose there's any hope of dissuading you from visiting her to-night?"

"Not the slightest," Harrigan replied. "I'm going to see her tonight, and tomorrow night, and every night she'll see me. If she'll have me, I'm going to marry her."

Dr. Clancy's hard gaze softened for a moment. "Would you care to tell me how you came here—under these trees?" he asked.

"I wouldn't," Harrigan snapped.

"I thought not," Clancy nodded understandingly. "Well, if you're set on seeing her, you're set on it, my boy. I've had enough experience to know that one can't argue when a man's in love."

HE HAD no difficulty finding the house now. Clear and sharply defined against the moon-brightened sky its chimneys rose to guide him like a landmark as he hurried down the highroad. Odd that he hadn't seen them in the morning. True, he'd approached from a different angle and his view had been obscured by the old apple trees . . . those trees! He laughed in recollection of his fight with them. Of course, he'd suffered an attack of vertigo. That was the answer. Up too late the night before, dream-troubled sleep, the shock of Judge Crumpacker's death. . . . Never mind all that, he was going to Lucinda; he'd be with her in five minutes . . . his pulses quickened at the thought.

She was sitting on the couch before the fireplace in the drawing-room as the butler Elijah announced him. The crackling fire put faint rose tints in her ivory skin, darkened the green in her long eyes.

"Edward!" Lightly as a tuft of breeze-blown thistle-down she rose to her feet and held out soft bare arms in greeting. Once again he went completely breathless at the sight of her. Tall, graceful, altogether lovely she was, a being from another world, a sprite released from dark enchantment. Her coral-colored sleeveless gown was cut low and belted tightly at her slim waist with a corded silver girdle; her silver-shin-

ing hair was piled in clustering little curls upon her head. She wore little silver sandals on her bare feet, and the scent of gardenia mingled with an overtone of sandalwood that wafted to him from her mounted to his brain as if it were a potent drug from Araby or far Cathay.

Was she young, mature or ageless? It was as impossible to estimate her age as it would be to determine how old a statue is. A marble by Praxiteles or a bronze cast by Cellini is as young today—or in five hundred years—as when it left the master's hands. His eager, ravenous gaze took in the grace of her slim throat, the lovely contours of her outstretched arms, the softly glowing green lights in her half-closed eyes. Here was enchantment old as magic, potent as immortal beauty's self—and she was holding out her gracious hands, filled with the offer of her matchless loveliness, to him! He felt himself grow weak with longing. His heart beat with a hurrying, frenzied rhythm, like a madman on a drum, then seemed to stop entirely.

She moved across the room so lightly, so effortlessly and so silently it seemed that she was wafted by an unfelt breeze. She flowed toward him until he felt her breath upon his cheeks and the perfume of her silver-glowing hair in his nostrils. Then swiftly, hungrily, she kissed him. The flame of her raced in his blood like wildfire in a pine wood and crashed against his brain like an explosion. He swayed drunkenly, reaching out unsteady hands.

But she slipped back before his questing fingers found her. "You love me, don't you, Edward?" she asked, and it seemed to him amusement flickered in her green eyes. "You love me very, very much?" She drawled the question in her husky, bell-toned voice, and the magic of its timbre seemed to set his nerves aquiver, like taut violin strings.

His breath rasped in his throat. "Love

you?" he echoed hoarsely. "More than anything on earth——"

"Or in the heavens above, or waters underneath?" she supplied, and an acid mockery seemed to underlie her words.

"Or in the heavens above or waters underneath," he repeated like a formula.

"You want me to be yours, and you'd be mine forever—to the end of time, and beyond?"

He found no words to answer her; a gasp was all he could achieve, but with his tortured spirit looking from his eyes he nodded.

"Then place your hand upon my heart while I put mine on yours, and swear"—she took his hand in hers and held it to her bosom, and he felt the rondure of her breast beneath his fingers as she laid her free hand on his chest—"swear without reservation or withholding that as it is with me so it shall be with you; whom I serve you will serve, where I worship you will worship——"

Dimly, like a voice heard in a dream, or from a great distance, the command came to him: "Breathe on her, Edward Harrigan; breathe on her in the name of God!"

She drew away from him and raised her lovely arms as if in evocation. Her lips were redder than blood, and lights like green lightning-flashes flickered in her eyes.

"No!" she forbade, and now her voice had lost its bell-like resonance and was shrill and thin with terror. "No, Edward, pay no heed to him. *Astarte, Magna Mater*——" Tiny wrinkles seemed to etch themselves about her eyes, her sweetly rounded throat seemed shriveling, withering, the silver-luster faded in her hair.

**H**ARRIGAN felt a shiver light as frosty air run through his body. Something terrified him—it was as if an awful unseen presence had come to the quiet firelit room, a thing of dreadful,



everlasting chill and terror and wickedness.

Again the far hail sounded, fainter this time: "Breathe on her, Edward Harrigan; breathe on her in the name of God for your immortal soul's sake!"

Scarce knowing what he did he pursed his lips and blew into her face saying, "*In nomine Dei!*"

She turned her great eyes on him sadly, reproachfully. He'd seen a dying deer look so at the hunter.

"Wretched man," she whispered, and now her voice had all its old-time vibrance, "what have you done? Hear me before the end comes, Edward Harrigan. My shadow is upon you. Never shall you free yourself from it; it shall come between you and every woman whom you look on; you shall see me in the sunshine and the moonlight, hear my voice in wind and flowing water——"

A roaring like the thunder of Niagara filled his ears. The room was sliding past him, breaking up, as if it were a painting on a china plate smashed by a sudden blow. He fell, rose to his knees, then fell again. Then he sat up and looked about him dazedly.

Around him was a creeper-covered, ruined wall of crumbling brick. Sumac bushes grew in rank profusion from the piles of earth and rubble. To right and left he saw the outlines of a broken chimney, topless, shattered, smothered in a growth of whispering-leaved ivy and pointing like a broken monument to the pale sky from which the stars had been wiped by the half-moon's light. "Good heavens," he exclaimed, "have I been dreaming?"

"Pray Heaven you never have another dream like it, my son!" The voice was at his elbow, and as he started round he beheld Dr. Clancy, vested in surplice and stole, an open prayer book in his hand.

"Dr. Clancy—Father!" He blinked at the vested man in astonishment.

"Yes, my son, I am a priest," replied

Clancy. "Most of the members of the club are non-churchmen, and because it might embarrass them to know there was a priest present, I've used my university degree when I came up here for a few days' shooting every autumn. Judge Crumpacker knew about me; so do half a dozen others, but to most I am just Dr. Clancy. I was on my way from early mass at the village church when I met you and the judge that morning."

"But—but——" stammered Harrigan.

"I know, my son, you can't understand how I came here," Father Clancy smiled. "I've suspected old Lucinda Lafferty for a long time, but one doesn't talk of witchcraft nowadays. It does no good, and only gets one laughed at. I've had my eye on her, just the same, and when the judge told me about his experience it worried me. Not enough, though. I didn't realize how malignant—or how powerful—she was until too late. Then I found you lying in her orchard, and what you told me made me fear for you. She had killed Judge Crumpacker's body. She would kill your soul, unless I could prevent it. But what could I do? You were a victim of the glamour she cast about herself and her house by her devilish arts; it was futile to attempt to reason with you. So I followed you.

"I saw you come to this old ruin, saw you greet the cursed witch, and heard you prepare to forswear your Christian birthright of salvation. I could exorcise the foul fiend that aided her, but you had to save yourself. Only the victim of a witch's glamour can dispel the haze that binds him. Had I sent her off with a curse you would have remained her victim all your life, believing that the things you'd seen were really there and that she was a young and lovely woman——"

"She was—she is!" cried Harrigan. "I've seen her, kissed her, held her in my arms——"

"You think so?" interrupted the priest. "Look there!" He pointed to an object half visible in the moonlight, half obscured by shadow.

At first he thought it was a scarecrow or a pile of old discarded clothing, but as Harrigan looked closer he saw it was a woman's body, old, emaciated, clothed in filthy rags. The face was incredibly wrinkled, bone-pale and hideously ugly. Even in death there was no dignity about it, only a kind of reptilian malignancy. The hands, claw-like, with broken, dirt-filled nails, were like the talons of a vulture, red, cracked, swollen-jointed; between the slackly opened bloodless lips showed a few broken, yellowed teeth, long, sharp and pointed as the fangs of a carnivore. The whole appearance of the corpse was horrible, revolting, frightening. Yet—he caught his breath in sudden sickness—as he realized it—underneath the ugliness, the filth, the squalor, was a faint resemblance to the lovely creature he had caressed. Like a devilishly inspired caricature Lucinda Lafferty the witch had a resemblance to his beloved silver-blond Lucinda, as a skilled cartoonist's drawing may suggest, though not look like, the subject which it parodies.

"Thank Heaven you were not too dazed to hear me call to you, and to obey me," Father Clancy told him kindly. "Had you not acted when you did, and blown upon her as I ordered, we dare not think what might have happened——"

The laugh that interrupted him was dreadful, as unexpected and as shocking as a strong man's scream of pain. It was a laugh of disillusionment, abysmal, stark, complete.

THESE things Edward Harrigan remembers as vividly as if they'd happened yesterday. He is a dour and silent man, efficient in his work, but utterly unsocial. He calls no man his friend, no woman interests him. His little world is bounded by his laboratory and his suite at the hotel, he shuns the parks and country, no one ever sees him strolling in the sunshine or the moonlight. Usually he works till late with his test-tubes and reagents, and there is a standing order at the hotel desk to call him every morning at five.

For, as he shuns the beauties of the woods and fields, and eschews woman's company and man's companionship, Edward Harrigan shuns sleep. Dreams come with sleep, and his dreams he sees the vision of a fragile Dresden-china figure in a coral-colored gown cut in the Grecian fashion, with silver-gleaming curls piled high upon her dainty head and soft, bare arms held out in invitation. Sometimes he speaks to her; sometimes he reaches out to grasp the slender, rose-tipped hands in his.

But she never answers, and when he stretches out his hands to hers she fades slowly from his dream-sight, like moonlight fading just before the sky begins to brighten in the east.