

*Modern day Faustus raise hell among  
the skyscrapers of Manhattan — and  
conjure up daemons in the heart of  
downtown New York!*



# Hell



## *1. Devil's Brew*

“LET me ask you a question,” said my visitor. “Would you go to hell for ten thousand dollars?”

“Brother, just show me the money and tell me when the next train leaves,” I told him.

“She stood surrounded by the bobbing, weaving shapes . . .”

# On Earth

HIGH VOLTAGE NOVELETTE OF  
SATAN IN TUXEDO—

BY ROBERT BLOCH



“. . . and behind her was caged the figure of Satan!”

“I’m serious.”

I sat back and did my goldfish imitation—staring with my mouth open. I’m pretty good at it.

But Professor Keith was pretty good at looking serious. Too good. After a minute I closed my mouth and just stared.

“Wait a minute,” I said. “You haven’t got a cloven hoof. You didn’t appear out of a cloud of smoke. You’re not crazy, and you don’t take drugs. You’re Professor Phillips Keith, Associate Director of Rocklynn Institute. And you’re offering me ten thousand dollars to go to hell.”

The pudgy little man with the graying hair adjusted his spectacles and smiled. He looked for all the world like a kindly bishop as he answered, "I'd rather see you go to hell for me than anyone else."

"That's very flattering of you, I'm sure. But, Professor—perhaps you could explain yourself a little more fully before I decide. A man doesn't get an offer like this every day."

Plump fingers held out a newspaper clipping. "Read this."

### *SCIENTIFIC INSTITUTE TO BECOME WITCHCRAFT DEN*

The world-famous Rocklynn Institute will be transformed into a rendezvous for goblins and demons, according to the plans of Thomas M. Considine, wealthy philanthropist.

Considine has authorized a donation of \$50,000 to be used in what he describes as a "scientific study of sorcery and Black Magic."

Professor Phillips Keith today announced that Rocklynn Institute is "seriously contemplating" the possibilities of the project. Scientific basis for ancient magic is by no means improbable, Keith declared, and such a study may yield valuable results.

Vendors of black cats, dried toads, and love-philtres might find it worth their while to apply at the Rocklynn Institute in the near future.

"Lousy piece of writing," I commented, handing the clipping back to Keith. "Now, what's the real story?"

Keith rose.

"Why not come along with me and find out for yourself?" he asked.

"Don't mind if I do." I grabbed my hat and followed Keith down to the waiting car. We weaved into traffic before I broke the silence again.

"So it's no gag, then," I mused. "Not just a publicity stunt. You're really going through with something like this?"

The eyes behind the spectacles were penetrating in their gray intensity. "I've never been more serious about anything in my life," declared Keith.

"It was I who badgered Thomas Considine into donating that money. For years it has been my ambition to conduct experiments along this line. Too bad the papers got hold of the story—but from now on there will be no publicity. No one must know that Rocklynn Institute is attempting to raise the dead and conjure up daemons in the heart of downtown New York."

Now if there is one thing I have learned in this Vale of Tears, it's this—you don't tell a man he's crazy when he has fifty thousand dollars to spend. Particularly if he has just offered you ten thousand of that fifty.

So all I said was, "That's fine. But where do I fit into this picture?"

Keith smiled, as he swung the car towards a parking lot.

"Simple. Your name was given to me as a writer of so-called horror-fiction. As such I expect you to be more or less conversant with demonology and witchcraft lore."

"Right. But I certainly don't believe such bunk."

"Exactly! That's my point—while you are in a position to understand what we're attempting, you still don't believe. In other words, you are an average, skeptical representative of John Public. That's why you were chosen to act as official eye-witness and historian of our endeavors. You know what's going on, but you don't believe in it. You will be shown. In other words, you're being hired as a witness."

"You mean ten thousand dollars for standing around and watching you play witch? Ten grand to see you ride a broomstick?"

Keith laughed. "You're almost too skeptical. Come on. I think you need an immediate example."

We entered the skyscraper, purred upwards in the private elevator, stepped briskly across the business-like outer lobby of Rocklynn Institute's spacious quarters on the penthouse floor. Keith led me along the hall to a door marked *Private*.

He pushed it open, beckoned.

Usually I hate such doors. I hate the smugness of their curt warning. *Private!*

But if ever a door deserved such a marking, this one did. For it barred madness.

**B**LACK madness, in a velvet draped room. Red madness, in the flickering braziers winking demonic eyes from shadowy niches.

We stood in a dark chamber, hidden in the topmost recesses of a modern skyscraper—a dark chamber, reeking of blood, musk, hashish, and the tomb.

It was a room torn from the Fifteenth Century, a room torn from ancient dreams.

True, the tables and shelvings were modern, but they groaned with the impedimenta of forgotten nightmares. I looked down at the first ledge beside me, and a casual glance convinced.

A rack of test-tubes reared from the surface. Modern Pyrex, but labeled with inscriptions old as wizardry. "Bat's blood." "Mandrake root." "Deadly nightshade." "Mummy dust." "Corpse fat." And worse. Much worse.

There were shiny new refrigerators in one corner, but they bulged with unnamable carcasses. There were queerly bubbling vats near a small open fire. One long shelf held alchemic instruments. Jars of herbs stood amidst vials of powdered bones. The floor was crisscrossed with pentagons and zodiacal designs drawn in blue chalk, phosphorescent paint, and some substance that yielded a dull, rusty red.

One wall held books—books I didn't like. The light gleamed on musty tomes once hugged to the withered bosoms of

witches, once grasped by the bony, trembling talons of long-dead necromancers.

For just an instant I stood at Professor Keith's side, as the iron door closed behind us. For just an instant my eyes ran their spidery pattern across the red glare and black shadow of that room.

And then something rose out of the farther gloom, something wheeled and scuttled from the darkness, something moved in shroud-white silence across the floor.

I jumped two feet.

"Meet Doctor Ross," said Keith.

"Ulp!" I commented.

Doctor Ross's oval face moved toward me. A slim hand darted out. "Charmed," said Doctor Ross.

"Ulp!" I declared again.

"Can't you say anything but 'Ulp?'" inquired Doctor Ross, with some curiosity.

"Well, you'd 'Ulp' too if you were dragged into a chamber of horrors and had a zombie come at you and the zombie turned out to be a pretty girl with—"

I stopped. But it had slipped out, and I wasn't too sorry. Because Doctor Ross was a remarkably attractive young lady. Her blond hair was not marred by any medical severity of coiffure, and her piquant features were very adequately rouged and decorated. Even the white surgical gown did not wholly conceal features which would make Will Hays foam at the mouth if he saw her in a sweater.

"Thank you," said Doctor Ross, without embarrassment. "And welcome to Rocklynn Institute. I presume you are interested in witchcraft?"

"If all witches are like you—" I began, but Keith cut me off.

"Lily Ross isn't Circe, you know," he remarked, but his eyes twinkled. "And you aren't being hired to pass out compliments. There's work to do. We've got a demon to raise this afternoon."

Right then and there it stopped being funny.

Here I was, yanked into a weird chamber atop a skyscraper, in the hands of two lunatics whose avowed purpose was to experiment in Black Magic, and ordered to stand by and watch them evoke a demon. It was confusing, to say the least. In my agitation I stepped back a foot and bumped into something that clicked. I turned around, stared into the grinning visage of a dangling skeleton, and uttered my familiar "Ulp!"

I got my voice back at once. "Now look here—are you really serious about all this?"

Keith took a sheaf of papers from his pocket and placed them on a table near an inverted crucifix bearing the impaled body of a dried bat, hanging head downwards. He produced a fountain pen, waved me over.

"Sign," he ordered.

"Sign what?"

"The contract. Calling for your services as eye-witness for three months. Ten thousand dollars. Five now, five at the conclusion of our experiments. Serious enough for you?"

"Very." My fingers trembled as I scribbled a signature on both sets of contracts. They fairly shook with palsy as Professor Keith extended his check. Five thousand dollars right now! It was quite serious, no doubt about that.

"Well, then." Keith pocketed the papers. "Are we all ready to proceed, Lily?"

"Everything is in order, Professor," said the girl.

"Then draw the Pentagram," purred Keith. "You'll find the blood in the refrigerator still fresh enough. Recite the chant and light the fires, my dear. And don't worry—I'll keep you covered with the revolvers. If anything goes wrong I'll shoot to kill."

With a bland smile, Phillips Keith drew two guns from his vest holster and leveled

them into the darkness of the curtained room.

## 2. Up Pops—

"SILVER bullets in here," explained Professor Keith. "Very good against vampires, werewolves, vrykolaks, or ghouls. Don't know how effective they are against a *draconibus*, though."

"What?"

"A *draconibus*. Flying cacodemon of the night. Sort of an incubus. If Abbot Richalmus is correct. We're using his spell from "*Liber Revelationum de Insidia et Versutiis Daemonum Adversus Homines*." He says the things are black and scaly, quite human in appearance except for the wings and fangs, but on a low order of intelligence. Something like the elementals. If the bullets don't work, there's always the Pentagram. You know what it is; a five-pointed star, two angles ascendant and one pointed down. It represents Satan, Goat of the Sabbath."

"Are you crazy?" I had to say it.

"See here." Keith's face was stern in the red glare. "We might as well understand each other once and for all. I don't mind your skepticism in the least, but please don't cast doubts on my sanity or sincerity."

"But it all seems too absurd—mingling science and sorcery."

"Why?" Keith snapped. "Yesterday's magic is today's scientific fact. Voodoo witch doctors and medieval savants tried to cast out demons. Today psychiatrists attempt to cure insanity by hypnosis, suggestion, and shock treatments, in almost the same way.

"Once alchemists attempted to transmute base metals into gold. Today that effort constitutes the basis of scientific research along identical lines.

"Are not scientists attempting to find the Elixir of Youth in their laboratories, using

animal and human blood in their experiments like the mages of old?

"Don't scientists concern themselves with the vital problems of Life and Death—and keep chicken hearts and dog heads alive when severed from the dead bodies?"

"Men died for that at the stake in ages past. They died for dealing with the very mysteries we scientists now openly attempt to probe. Science is sorcery, I tell you—except that in some cases, the ancient wizards might have been more *successful*."

"You mean that you believe thaumaturgists once actually did revive the dead and call upon elementals?"

"I mean they tried to do it and may well have succeeded. I mean there was nothing wrong with their theories, but their methods were at fault. And I mean that modern science can take those same theories, apply the proper methods, and meet with complete success. That's what we're going to do."

"But—"

"Watch."

I watched. The slim figure of Lily Ross weaved a white pattern across the far side of the black chamber. Flame blossomed in her fingers as she bent over the braziers in the niches and re-kindled their dying fires. From a pouch at her waist she scattered fine dust upon the embers.

The fires flared upward—not red now, but green and blue and purple. A kaleidoscope of diabolic luminance flooded the vast room.

Red tongues rose from candle tips and lapped at the darkness. Thick, bloated candles, like the puffy fingers of a gigantically swollen corpse—thick, bloated candles, fed by a slim white priestess.

White witch!

**S**HE stooped over and drew a silvery design upon the floor, and its five luminous points were bathed with a crimson fluid poured from a canister.

"Blood," whispered Keith. "Type B blood."

"Type B?"

"Naturally. Didn't I tell you we were using modern scientific methods in witchcraft?"

"Let's get down to cases. Sorcery in the Middle Ages was almost a racket. The average goetist was a charlatan. Some wizards hung around the courts of small nobles or petty princes, dabbling in astrology and palmistry, and fawning on their patrons like court jesters. They were ar-rant fakes.

"Others were like modern confidence men, forever asking money to perfect wild plans of transmuting lead to gold, completing an Elizir of Youth, or finding the Philosopher's stone. Just grafters.

"A third class were quack doctors—boys who took little shops in the side streets and sold phony love philtres, promised to put curses on enemies for a small fee, and attempted to cure everything from epilepsy to the French disease.

"Mixed in with these impostors were the psychopathic cases. Demonomaniacs and diableptics who pranced naked on the hilltops during Walpurgis Eve, claimed to ride broomsticks to the moon, or converse with the dead, and have infernal lovers. Inverted religious mania.

"But always there were serious students of the mantic arts. From their records—their spells and incantations—we are working here."

Keith pointed toward the bookshelves. "It took me years to gather this collection. Manuscripts, parchments, fragments from treatises, secret documents from every country and every age. Much of it is locked away in those files. In cunabula. Cost a small fortune, but worth it."

"But aren't they filled with the same fake gibberish as all the rest?" I objected. "I've read some of that stuff, and it's usually pretty silly."

"True. But there are kernels of truth. It's easy to discern. Some of the spells are known frauds; others are genuine."

"You mean if you read a spell aloud that it might conjure up a ghoulish or a ghost?"

"If you read it *correctly*," answered Keith. "There's the whole point. That's where science steps in."

"In many cases the spell has not been set down completely, due to fear. In other instances, the incantation has certain word changes, due to imperfect translations, or incorrect interpretation of the medieval Latin or Greek. The Church burned as much of the genuine stuff as could be found over centuries of time. We've had to spend months of preparation—weeding the genuine from the spurious, piecing together fragments, studying contemporary sources. It's been a lengthy job for Doctor Ross and myself, but we're now assured of one thing—we have on hand nearly one hundred actual, authentic incantations for the evocation of supernatural forces. If spoken correctly, the proper vibrations will be set up as in ordinary prayer, and responses will be made.

"Also, some of these incantations require ceremonies, such as this one. We've spent a goodly sum acquiring the necessary instruments and materials for our experiments. It's hard to buy a Hand of Glory, or baboon's blood; hard to secure enough cadavers. Grisly, too—but important."

I shrugged. "But Class B blood?"

"Merely an illustration of our thoroughness. We're going to attack the supernatural with modern aid. Consider the reasons for the failure of ancient sorcerers.

"For one thing, as I pointed out, many were admitted fakes. And serious students often got hold of the wrong translations, as I have demonstrated. Naturally, they didn't succeed.

"Again, they were balked by lack of proper materials. If the spell called for

baboon's blood, they might have had to use the blood of a rhesus monkey, for example. It spoiled the mixture, by simple chemistry. We're experimenting, when we use human blood, with all blood types—because it might well be that a spell only works with a specific chemical compound. That's something the ancients didn't know.

"Similarly, they often were taken in by frauds. Perhaps they attempted brewing a philtre calling for 'powdered unicorn's horn.' Naturally, when *we* see such a recipe, we know it's a fake and throw it out. They weren't so fortunate, and again they failed.

"So there you are. It may look like hocus-pocus to you, but it's the result of applied scientific reasoning. We've sifted our spells, we've checked our formulae, we've gathered together only the most authentic ingredients, we're working by trial and error and modern logic.

"Under such conditions we cannot fail, if there is any truth in the supernatural lore which has dominated all nations and all religion since the dawn of Time.

"SURELY there is a basis of truth underlying this tremendous mass of legend and theory that is older than any other form of worship. Science has recognized today the pathological existence of the vampire and werewolf and ghoulish in mental cases. Science has recognized today many practises which were once called witchcraft. Now we shall take the further step and discover whether the ancients were wiser than we knew. We shall reconstruct—correctly—the enchantments of the magicians and evocators.

"Today, using Class B blood, we are performing the Richalmus rune to evoke a draconibus. Doctor Ross has drawn the Pentagram. She has placed the five candles at the points, and fed the fires with the Three Colors.

"Now she will read the invocation in

the original Latin. If the conditions are reproduced correctly, we shall soon see the veritable flying daemon of the night which the good Abbot describes so graphically. Mayhap we shall capture it and offer our living proof to the world."

"You'll *capture* it?" I murmured.

Keith smiled. "Why not? That's the kind of evidence we need to confound the smug skeptics, the pompous figures who delight in shaming poor old women at seances and ridiculing sincere students of the occult. Why, when Tom Considine put up the money for all this, he laughed at me! I wonder what he'd say if I sent a *draconibus* into the office in a packing-case."

Keith chuckled as he pointed at the ceiling.

"Of course, if the thing does appear, and is dangerous, I've got the silver bullets to stop it. But I'd much prefer to take my apparitions alive. There's the scientific means."

I followed his directing finger. Suspended by chains in the shadowy heights above was a square sheet of transparent glass.

It hung directly over the spot where the Pentagram gleamed upon the floor.

"Notice the lever at the door," Keith said. "Turn that, and the glass cage drops down. Fits over whatever appears in the circle, fits like a cage."

"But your demon would surely break out of it at once," I said, half-ashamed at even using the word.

"Not from that," Keith assured me. "There are repelling crosses ground into the glass itself—including the *crux ansantor*. Tubes of holy water in the paneling along the sides. Besides, it's the modern 'unbreakable' glass, for added precaution, and there's a little tubing at the top which extends inside. It admits air—and it can also admit enough monoxide to turn that glass cage into a lethal chamber within

thirty seconds. So if anything appears, just you pull that lever."

So there it was. I stood in the dark chamber as the white witch wove her spell, and heard the wizard instruct me on the fine art of demon-catching. If it hadn't been for that five thousand dollar check in my pocket, I'd have quit there.

Not because it was silly.

Because it was serious. Too serious. Keith had spoken wildly, but he had spoken with conviction. He was Professor Phillips Keith, associate director of a recognized scientific institute. He was a known scholar and savant, not a crackpot eccentric.

Lily Ross was nobody's fool, I felt—and she wasn't giggling behind her hand, either. She was going about her preparations like a trained scientific assistant. *Or a witch.*

Witchcraft! The Black Arts of legend, the hideous whisperings creeping through-out history and leering madly through all barriers of reasons. Satanism, the Black Mass, trafficking with the dead and the masters of the dead.

Here in this room, the reek of the grave. The corpse-fat candles, and the flames that burned with a blue light, a green lividity, a purple pallor. Blood trickling across an ancient symbol on the floor. Silence and darkness, and now a rustling, a Lily Ross took the yellow parchment in her hand and stepped toward the light of the blue brazier.

She stood there, poised and statuesque, a blond handmaiden of Evil. Her oval face was dedicated to darkness as her red lips shaped the first syllables that broke the utter silence.

Keith's face was pudgy and prosaic in the glare, but his eyes shone with the fanatic zeal of a Puritan warlock.

Sweat beaded my forehead.

"*Would you go to hell for ten thousand dollars?*"



Here, in this skyscraper tower, I was nearer to hell than I would be in the bowels of the earth.

Here stood the magic circle, the witch, the wizard. Here was the source, the linkage between Mān and Mystery.

Lily Ross spoke the first sentences of the incantation.

I thought that her mouth was a scarlet flower, emanating corruption. I thought that her lips were heaven, but her voice was hell. I saw a beautiful young girl, and I heard the withered croaking of a crone.

It can't be explained. There was nothing wrong with her *tone*. It was what she *said*.

The words were Latin, but they didn't seem to be words as much as sounds, and not so much sounds as *vibrations*.

Not college Latin. Not words with meaning in themselves. Not words spoken as sentences. Just sounds, constructed for a purpose. An evil purpose.

I knew that. I knew it as strongly as I knew my own existence.

Lily Ross was reciting an incantation, and for the first time I realized what an incantation meant.

It was a call to a demon.

It was the use of human tongue in a peculiar way, to set up certain vibrations, certain forces that touched, or impinged upon, other worlds. Sound-waves, reaching across planes and angles of existence, commanding and guiding. Sound-waves shatter glasses in modern laboratories. Sound-waves shatter buildings, if properly pitched in volume and intensity. And sound-waves, over and above radio frequency vibrations, can pluck the harps that sound in hell. Can knock upon the gates of the Pit and call forth Presences.

Her voice was but an instrument. The meaningless drone was rising, almost uncontrollably.

Now I knew what truth there was in the power of the word. The word used in

prayer, and the word used in black summons.

The drone blended with the blackness. The blackness mingled oddly with the green, the violet, the blue fires.

The Pentagram became a wriggling, phosphorescent serpent, swaying amidst green, purple, and blue words of flame. The shadows droned. The girl burned and flickered.

Suddenly the pulsing began.

It shook the walls. It rose with the words the girl recited, blended with them, then emerged stronger, triumphant. Smoke spiralled up in a sudden jet from the braziers, as a great wind filled the chamber.

I shook before the icy blast that was not air—shook as though a dental drill buzzed through my nerves.

I looked through water at a shimmering, slim figure, a slithering silver line on the floor, a wriggling spiral of colored fires. And then the light came up, the roar came up, the voice came up to a single, sustained note.

"Wake up!"

"Somebody was shaking me. It was Keith. Slowly the roaring died away.

"You're out on your feet, man!"

I looked around. There was no shimmering. No wind. No noise. Lily Ross—a girl, not a witch—stood silent and dejected.

Keith scowled at me. "We've failed."

"But I felt something—something—"

"Pure self-hypnosis. It didn't work."

Lily Ross stepped over.

"Let me see this copy of the incantation," Keith demanded, wearily. He took the paper from her hand.

"Damnation!"

Lily's eyes widened to a deeper blue. "What's the matter?"

"Matter? Here's a perfect example of what I was trying to explain. You've made a mistake here. This isn't the proper invocation at all. This isn't the Richalmus

ritual. It's that other one almost like it—Gorgioso's Invocation of the Devil!"

"How did that happen?" asked the girl. "I could have sworn—"

"I'll do the swearing," snapped Keith. "You've recited the Invocation of the Devil by mistake. No wonder nothing happened!"

He turned to me, but didn't say anything. There was no chance to speak.

For the roaring started again, and this time there was no question of self-hypnosis involved.

The rumbling shook the room as though the building was clawed by an earthquake. Lily and Professor Keith stood swaying beside me as the wind rose, the flame flared, the thunderous crescendo swept through our bodies, tore at our brains.

Gleaming with lambent fire, the Pentagram writhed at our feet. Within it a black shadow—a black shadow, coalescing, blurring into an outline—an outline in the Pentagram of Satan, Black Goat of the Sabbath!

Out of the corner of my eye I saw Lily Ross's trembling hands move out, saw the crumpled scrap of paper fall from her fingers. It was the parchment from which she had read the incantation—the *wrong* incantation. The one that summoned up the Devil.

And now—a figure stood in the Pentagram!

### 3. *Speaks of the Devil*

**WE STARED**, all of us. Lily Ross gave a tiny gasp, lost amidst the crackling of the braziers. Keith was numb. I found myself trembling, unable to lift my hands and shield my eyes from a vision that seared and burned with a flame from the Pit.

The Presence crouched there in the Pentagram, its black goat-face gleaming in the glare of the fires. The shaggy,

tousled head with the stumps of goat-horns, the fiendishly familiar visage, the cloaked body—I saw them all, merging into a sharper focus of actuality.

The Presence *gathered* itself as I gazed, as though revelling in the actuality of its new physical existence. Like a child being born and *realizing* it.

But this was no child. There was nothing youthful in the ancient smirk of relish on that ageless face. The fires in those slitted eyes burned long before the gases which created Earth.

It was a tableau born in a daemonic dream. And like a dream, it dissolved into sudden, terrible action.

The goat-body moved, black arms extended. Claws, talons, call them what you will, emerged swiftly from the cloak. They reached across the Pentagram.

One foot moved out. Black, misshapen. Hooflike. *Cloven!*

My own feet moved then. Moved in desperate swiftness. As the Presence lumbered forward I raced for the doorway. My outstretched arms tugged frantically at the lever Keith had shown me. I wrenched it down.

From the ceiling the iron chains grated. There was a thunderous crash, and then the great glass cage dropped down squarely over the black body of Satan, Prince of Darkness.

The creature in the cage beat black claws against the glass and suddenly recoiled.

"Good Lord!" These, the first words spoken, were Keith's contribution. They sounded most appropriate.

I began to laugh. I couldn't help it.

"What's that for?" Lily Ross whispered.

"I was just thinking," I gasped weakly.

"I've—I've matched wits against Satan himself, the Arch-Enemy. And won!"

Lily calmly reached out with one slim hand and slapped my face. Hard.

I sobered. "Thanks," I whispered. "I couldn't control it."

"No hysteria," she said. "If you'd kept that up one minute more, I'd have started to scream myself. It's too much—we've got Satan locked up in a skyscraper!"

"Are you still skeptical?" Keith asked.

"Skeptics don't sweat," I answered, dabbing my forehead. "But if I'm not skeptical, I'm practical. What do we do now?"

"Turn on the lights, for one thing." Keith pressed the rheostat. The room blazed up into prosaic outline. Fluorescence turned the darkness to daylight, and we stood in the draped chamber—ordinary figures once more, in an ordinary room.

Except for that glass cage, and the horror it held.

It was bad enough in the firelight, but now the nightmare quality of our captive was accentuated ten-fold.

The black figure stood proudly in the center of the glass enclosure—stood proud as Lucifer. Unbidden, the three of us drew closer.

Under the lights I saw every detail. Too much detail. The monster was shaggy, a goat-headed Aegypan figure with human eyes and mouth. The skin was jet-black, but dull. I stared intently at one gnarled talon—horrified at its microscopic detail and the total absence of visible pores in the skin.

Lily's blue eyes, Keith's gray ones, followed mine.

"It's incredible," muttered the pudgy professor. "Just like the mental image I'd formed. The beard, the mustache, the monocle. And the red skin."

"Red skin?" I snapped. "It's black!"

"Scaly!" insisted Lily.

"No scales," I said. "What are you talking about? And what do you mean, monocle? Why, he's like a black goat."

"Are you crazy?" Keith said. "Why anyone can see that he's a man in evening dress with a red face and a monocle."

"What about that forked tail?" asked Lily. "That's the worst."

"No tail at all," I retorted. "You two aren't seeing straight."

Keith stepped back.

"Wait a minute," he protested. "Let's consider this." He cocked his head my way. "You claim you see a sort of black goat, with human features, wearing a cloak?"

I NODDED.

"And you, Lily?"

"A scaly creature with a forked tail. More like a gray lizard."

"And I see a red fiend in evening dress," Keith announced. "Well, we're all correct."

"I don't get it."

"Don't you understand? No one really knows what the Devil looks like. Each of us has his own mental picture, drawn from imaginative illustrations in books. Throughout known history, Satan has been pictured in several ways by his worshipers and enemies. To some he appeared as the Goat of the Sabbath, the primitive fiend of the oriental nomads, the Father of Lies known to the Bible.

"To others he is essentially the incarnation of the Tempter, the Serpent. To moderns, he is the red gentleman. We three each visualize him in our own way, and the focal thought of millions throughout the ages materializes him in whichever aspect seems most natural to the beholder.

"We're all looking at the same figure. We all see different concepts. What he really looks like, we cannot say. He may be gas, or light, or simply a flame. But our thoughts give him the material body."

"You may be right," Lily hazarded.

"Why not? I don't want to blaspheme, but does anyone know what Christ really looked like? No—all we have to go by is the standard concept, which was invented by medieval painters. And yet, He is always pictured in one way, and we have come to think of Him in that way. We

couldn't see Him in any other form. So it is with the Enemy."

"That's all very interesting," I interrupted. "But what do we do now—phone for the papers?"

"Are you joking? Do you know what would happen if the world learned that we had—him captive in this room? Can't you see the panic, the madness that would be loosed on earth?"

"Besides, we must experiment. Yes, this is our opportunity. Providence must have guided us when we made that mistake!"

"Are you sure it was Providence?" asked Lily, quietly. "This gift did not come from Heaven."

"Don't quibble. My girl, just realize what we have here in our midst! Why, it's the greatest thing that's happened since—"

"The capture of Gargantua, the gorilla," I finished for him. But I didn't smile when I said it. "Keith, this is dangerous. I don't like it. We've apparently got our visitor bottled up under glass, but if he ever gets loose—"

"He won't get loose," Keith barked. "Are you a coward, man? Can't you see that here, in this very room, we hold a proof of witchcraft, a proof of the existence of the supernatural, of evil?"

"I agree with you about evil," I answered. "And I'm afraid. He who sups with the devil must have a long spoon."

"You talk like—"

"A priest," I finished again. "And perhaps they are wiser than you scientists think. They have been fighting this creature here for long centuries, and their wisdom should be heeded."

"Why, you said yourself that you matched wits with the Devil and beat him," Keith protested. "We, with the weapons of scientific research at our command, are going to study our guest. Why, we'll give him a blood test, we'll examine

the skin, we'll isolate cells under the microscope, we'll use X-ray, we'll—"

I turned away. It was madness. I sought sanity in Lily Ross's blue eyes. But she was babbling too. The scientific spirit.

"Maybe the creature can speak. What about an intelligence test? We'll get our dope from the staff. Take pictures."

"You'd think it was some new sort of guinea-pig. But I didn't. Not when I saw the black body crouching there, huddled up away from the cross-etched glass, but with flaming evil in its eyes. They had the Devil in a cage, and they wanted his fingerprints!"

"Success!" Keith trumpeted. "Success beyond the wildest dreams of man. We'll conduct a scientific study of all evil—of incarnate evil. The nature and principle of evil. The evil men have known of, feared throughout the ages since Creation. It's there. We all see it differently through our own eyes. All men do, but it exists. Like electricity. A force."

He stood beside the glass enclosure, gesturing like a circus barker.

"Behold the Great God Pan! Yes, and behold the Serpent, the Tempter, the Fallen Angel! Behold Satan, Lucifer, Beelzebub, Azriel, Asmodeus, Sammael, Zamiel, Prince of Darkness and Father of Lies! Gaze on the Black Goat of the Sabbath, gaze on fabled Ahriman, on Set, Typhon, Malik Tawis, Abaddon, Yama, Primal Nodens, the archetype of evil, known to all men by all names!"

Once again I felt the urge of hysterical laughter. This was too much. Only the girl saved me.

"Let's get out of here," she suggested. "At once. We've had a shock. Tomorrow we can sit down and reason this thing out clearly, if we're not crazy already. We can make plans sensibly then. Let's rest."

"You're right. I'm sure that—he—"

will be safe behind the glass. And this room is locked, sealed. No one must suspect."

Keith moved toward the door and we followed. He snapped out the light as the door opened, plunged the room into Stygian night.

We went out. I looked back once. There was nothing but blackness, and two red coals burning. Eyes. Eyes in the darkness. The eyes of Satan. The eyes that saw Faust.

#### 4. *Hell Breaks Loose*

"SO THAT'S my story," I concluded. "Now, what's yours?"

Lily Ross raised her glass, tinkling the ice in rhythm to the music from the orchestra.

"Just a little astro-physics and bio-chemistry," she smiled. "A job at Rocklynn as Keith's assistant."

"Don't kid me. You're a blonde in a green evening dress, the prettiest come-on girl in this supper club. And you're going to dance with me, because you never heard of chemistry or physics, but you can La Conga all night."

She could, too. One whirl around the floor convinced me. Clinched me, in fact. That noise like a ton of bricks was me falling. But I didn't care. I had the Devil by the tail and Lily Ross in my arms, and I was sitting on top of the world to-night.

But when we got back to our table, Lily sobered for a moment.

"I say," she said. "I'm worried about Professor Keith. That excitement today, our experiment, unnerved him. Hope he's going to be all right tomorrow. He went home in a taxi and went to bed."

"Calm yourself, Lily," I said. "If he isn't all right tomorrow, he'll merely be suffering from a hangover."

"What do you mean?"

"Take a squint at that table near the orchestra," I grinned. "If Keith got in a taxi he wasn't going home."

Lily took her squint, and then her eyes went wide. "Why, he's here—and he's with a woman!"

"That's putting it mildly," I told her. "He's got a woman and a half there. It's Eve Vernon, the singer in *On the Beam*. Never thought he was such a man-about-town."

"He isn't!" Lily gasped. "Why, he never goes anywhere at all. I've never heard of him escorting a woman. And that's champagne on his table, too. Why—"

"Live and learn," I said. "He's just relaxing, that's all. Shall we join him?"

"Certainly not. It might embarrass him. Besides, there's something strange about this—"

I shrugged, but subsequent events bore me out. Keith was relaxing to a point where it was necessary to bear him out. He danced. He drank two quarts of champagne, solo. He laughed. He reddened. He tried to dance with the girls in the floor show. When Lily and I slipped out he was singing drunkenly at the top of his lungs, to the delight of the surrounding tables.

"Disgusting," Lily commented.

"Forget it," I advised.

I forgot it in her good-night kiss. I forgot everything. All I knew was that tomorrow, at ten o'clock, she would be waiting down at Rocklynn.

She was. I entered the outer lobby and took her arm.

"Where's the Professor?" I asked.

"He didn't show up."

"He *must* have a hangover, then! Did you call him?"

"Certainly. His housekeeper says he hasn't been in all night."

"Strange. What shall we do?"

"Let's go into the laboratory and wait. We must inspect our—specimen."

Lily led the way down the hall, to the barred doorway. She fumbled with a key.

"Why—it's open!"

We entered.

The room was dark, and only a single brazier burned. A single brazier, and the red eyes in the glass cage.

A figure huddled before the cage.

"Keith!"

I shook him. He struggled to his feet.

"Oh—I must have dozed off. Been here almost all night. Watching to see what he would do—"

Keith's face was haggard, his clothing rumpled. He spoke thickly, as though half-asleep.

"Better get home and get some rest," Lily suggested. "We'll stay here. If you feel up to it this afternoon, we can make our plans then."

**S**UDDENLY the Professor drew himself up. He seemed to visibly shake off his fatigue.

"Nonsense! I'm all right. Feel splendid, perfectly splendid. But no time for a conference, my dear. I've got to find Considine. Need more money from him, at once.

"Got a great idea, a great idea. Tell you all about it. Must find Considine, though. You stay here, keep your eyes open. See you tonight at the Test Tube Ball. I'll arrange to meet Considine there, and some of his friends."

He was gone. Lily's mouth was a red oval of astonishment.

"Test Tube Ball?" I repeated.

"Yes. Society masquerade. Patrons of Rocklynn Institute hold it every year. Collect funds there, you know. But what does Keith want at such a gathering? He never dances or goes in for social affairs."

"You forget last night."

"That's just the point—I can't forget last night. That Professor isn't well, I'm sure of it. Something has happened."

"He isn't the only one who isn't well," I said softly. "Look into the glass."

Lily turned and we surveyed the cage together.

Satan squatted, half-slumping, on the floor. The red eyes flickered, but they were suddenly fainter in their fire.

"Sick?" Lily murmured.

"No air—or no food. What does His Majesty eat?" I began. But something about the aspect of the creature cut me short.

"I wish Keith were here," said Lily. "We ought to do something."

We peered into the glass.

Suddenly Satan opened his eyes. He sat up and stared back. All at once he rose to his feet, stepped forward. His upraised claws almost touched the glass, but not quite. The gesture was one of appeal. And in those eyes I read not hate, but—recognition!

Lips curled, disclosing yellowed fangs. They moved silently behind the glass.

"He's trying to talk to us!" Lily gasped. "I'm sure of it!"

"Watch!"

The black fiend was gesturing wildly. Its eyes rested first on Lily's face and then my own.

"If we could only find out—"

"No use."

Evidently it was true. His Unholiness suddenly slumped to rest once again on the floor, head buried in the long black arms.

We stared at one another for a long moment.

Once more there was activity within the cage. The creature had bent down on its knees over the floor. One claw held a tiny sliver. With a start, I recognized it. It was chalk—the phosphorescent stuff used to draw the Pentagram with. And the Devil was writing!

From time to time eyes rested on our faces in a strange appeal. The bony fingers

continued to move: slowly, painfully.

Letters traced upon the floor. Words. Sentences. And then it was done.

"Turn out the flame of the brazier," Lily whispered. "Then we can read it."

I clicked it off, plunged the room into utter darkness. I advanced through that darkness to her side, stared into the dim glow on the floor. A glow that brightened.

Letters. Letters of fire. Silver fire on the floor. I read the words.

"Quickly! Stop him before it's too late. He got into me this morning and I know what he means to do."

That's when I gasped.

I gasped again at the sight of the two words beneath the message. They were a signature.

"*Phillips Keith*," I read. Letters of silver fire in my brain.

Lily was shaking at my side. I pulled her to her feet.

"Come on," I said.

"Where?"

"After the Professor, of course. We're going to the Test Tube Ball."

### 5. *The Devil Dances*

THE Lone Ranger never had a mission like mine. Nor a costume like mine, either. Lily's hunting outfit was more appropriate. We were out to get our man—if man he was.

There was no dancing in mind for us tonight. Not if what we suspected were true. It might have been cunning on the thing's part—the cunning of a fiend. But anything was possible in a world gone mad. We had the Devil in a cage. Who in this room would believe that? Yet it was true. And these dancing, babbling digits of the Four Hundred hadn't the faintest suspicion.

I smiled grimly at the thought. Suppose

His Hellishness should walk suddenly into this very ballroom?

I imagined the screaming, the dismay, the horror. They'd dance to a different tune if *that* happened!

But—*it did*.

Lily and I stood by the door waiting. We'd been there for ten minutes, ever since our arrival, eyes scanning the dancers for a glimpse of Keith. He was on his way, the housekeeper had said, when our frantic call had come through. He should be here now, any minute. So we stood there, and Satan walked in.

It was Keith, of course, in a Mephistocles disguise. Red suit, false beard and mustache. But he'd added a grisly touch. Red chalk on face and hands. *His* concept of Satan.

I HAD never realized he was so tall. Tall and slender. He looked the part, looked it too well.

We weren't the only ones to notice it. The orchestra had just finished a number, and the crowded hall was a perfect setting for his entrance. He came down three stairs, and all at once the conversation seemed to die away. Women stopped talking in mid-screch, and the fat paws of business men tightened about their cigars in astonishment as Phillips Keith walked into the room.

My mind shuttled back in memory to a similar scene. Red Death! That was it—Lon Chaney as Red Death in *The Phantom of the Opera*! It terrified me as a child, and now my spine tingled anew. Phillips Keith as Satan, Master of Evil.

"What a disguise!"

"Perfect!"

"Even the club foot!"

I could have choked the thin matron who said that. She would have to call *that* to my attention. The tingling in my spine became a pulsation of dread.

For Phillips Keith limped.

"Dropped something on his foot," Lily whispered. "He must have—"

Club foot. Or cloven hoof?

The red figure of Mephistocles stalked through the parted lane. Proudly he walked, despite the limp. Proud as Lucifer.

I saw him beckon to a stout man in pirate costume.

"Considine," said Lily, dully. "That's Thomas Considine."

Keith said a few words. Considine appeared to be laughing, commenting on the disguise. He walked at the Professor's side, then beckoned to a companion. The party moved toward a side door.

At that moment the orchestra struck up. Dancing started once more, conversation rose suddenly, and the red-clad Mephisto and his two companions disappeared from the floor.

I grabbed Lily's wrist and jostled through the crowd.

"Hurry," I commanded. "Something's up!"

**WE REACHED** the door just as the red cloak whisked into the elevator. The door closed, the car moved down.

"Stairs!"

Three flights down in nothing, flat. The red cloak flicked tantalizingly out of the lobby.

We reached the street just as the black car rolled away.

Heaven sent a taxi around the corner.

I pushed Lily inside, to nurse her black and blue wrist.

"Follow that car—" I began. Then, "To blazes with that! Just take us to Rocklynn Foundation. I know where they're going."

Lily knew, too. We didn't say anything, just stared at each other, and I'm afraid my eyes were as frightened as hers.

Hurtling down the black, gaping mouths of midnight streets, riding the wind behind

the red cloak of Satan—this wasn't New York, but ancient Prague.

Then, climbing the dark tower of the skyscraper, up toward the hidden chamber—this wasn't the twentieth century, but a scene set in medieval nightmare.

As we paused before the door marked *Private*, we heard a voice. It too was filtered through a black dream. Keith's voice—partly.

I don't like to admit that it was only *partly* Keith's voice, but what else can one say? It was a voice coming from his throat, using his larynx, but there was a deep, burring overtone that was altogether unnatural in any human throat.

It might have been imagination. As we stood before that door, I hoped it was imagination.

Maybe Keith had a cold. That's why he sounded that way. But cold or no cold, I couldn't help hearing what he *said*. That was by far the worst of all.

Whispering huskily from that black room—

"So now you see what I have accomplished, gentlemen. You, Considine, and you, Mr. Wintergreen, can no longer doubt the evidence of your own senses."

"But it's monstrous!" Considine boomed. "The Devil in a cage!"

"Monstrous, you say? Glorious! Don't you see the possibilities here?"

"I suppose it's all very interesting scientifically, but what do you intend to do—exhibit this creature to the public or something of the sort?"

Keith laughed. Or rather, that voice laughed.

"Considine, you talk like a fool. Can't you realize we have something here that can become the most powerful force on earth?"

"Powerful?" interrupted the nasal tones of Wintergreen.

"Yes, all-powerful. Consider, gentlemen, for a moment, what our captive can



mean to us. Have you ever heard of the Black Mass, of the worship of Satan?

"For centuries men have gathered to pay homage to the Devil. Believing that the Kingdom of Heaven is ruled by God, they claim that earth is ruled by Satan, and choose to worship him. If he grants them happiness here on earth, they are willing to forsake celestial joys."

"What utter rot!"

THE voice droned on, contemptuous of the interruption. "They meet in hidden places—the cellars of ancient houses or ruined churches—on Walpurgis Eve and other unhallowed nights. Candles, fashioned from the corpse-fat of unbaptized infants, light their devotions to the Prince of Darkness. An unfrocked priest presides over the altar; the altar which is the naked, living flesh of a woman. All boast of their sins, and confess penitently their good deeds.

"Then, as the Lord's Prayer is recited in reverse, a parody of the Mass is held. The Mass of St. Seaire, the unholy ritual of Gilles de Retz and the Marquis de Sade. A sacrifice is given to Satan, and celebrants drink of a red wine which is truly human blood. All do homage to the Father of Evil, who grants them then their dark desires."

"Don't talk like that," Wintergreen begged, in nervous protest. "We're not children, to be frightened by bogey-men."

"Neither are the thousands of secret Satanists who carry on these rites. They believe. Many of them are the victims of charlatans, frauds who prey on the neurotic rich.

"And I'm not offering you a bogey-man. I'm offering you the actual physical entity of the Fallen Angel, the Master of the Great Black Lodge.

"That's why I brought you here and showed you our captive. Your money enabled me to summon him. It is only fitting

now that you be given the opportunity to profit thereby."

The droning voice held cunning. Devilish cunning. Lily grasped my wrist, but I shrugged her into silence again as we crouched, listening.

"We have here the opportunity for power. For undreamt of wealth. We, and we alone, are the masters of Satan. Let me tell you my plan.

"I shall become the High Priest of the Satanists. You, Considine, and you, Wintergreen, shall go out among your friends and proselyte. Bring the rich old women, the eccentric old men into the fold. Bring them to the Black Mass, spread the word that a new day is at hand for those who would pay the price to the Powers of Darkness. Tell them that there are ways to obtain eternal youth, ways to obtain more wealth, ways to wreak revenge.

"Can't you see? We'll build an empire out of what was once only an old wive's tale! We can control nations, master the earth!"

"Have you gone crazy, Keith?" Considine's deep voice trembled. "Are you utterly mad? First you show up in a Mephisto costume, then you bring us to look at this freak, this animal hybrid of yours, and now you babble insanities."

"Yes," Wintergreen amended, weakly. "I'm getting out of here."

"No you don't. You know the secret, and it's too much. Neither of you leaves this room until you've agreed."

I don't know what I intended to do. I only realized that there would never be a better cue for my entrance.

I flung the door open and marched in, Lily Ross at my side.

Considine and Wintergreen stared with open mouths. In the glass cage beyond, the black figure gestured frantically in the red glow of the braziers.

I ignored them all. I had eyes only for Keith—for the man in the red cloak, the

man with the red face and the spade beard.

As he turned to face me, I read his eyes, read the blazing message there. His hands swooped up, claw-like, as I charged.

Sheer instinct drove me on; the same instinct that guides a man to crush a wriggling serpent, even though he knows it is about to strike.

Lily screamed as my hands closed about Keith's scarlet throat, rose to rake his face. I almost screamed as I felt that face.

I was tearing at his disguise, at his false beard. Tearing and tearing—and it wouldn't come off.

For Professor Phillips Keith was *not* disguised at all. He was Satan in red flesh!

The dragging club-foot, the cloven hoof moved up, butting my thighs. The claws razored my chest. The deep growling from the creature's throat welled horribly. I punched out at the fiendish visage, and my hands hammered against iron.

Considine and Wintergreen, Lily and the creature in the cage whirled crazily by. Red arms encircled me, and began to crush.

To crush and break. Pudgy little arms bent me back until I felt my spine bending like a white-hot wire of pain. Pudgy little arms—but they held strength. *The strength of a demon.*

Demon arms crushing. Demon breath searing my face. Demon face glaring into my own. My senses ebbed, and a chuckling rose from the grinning thing that crushed me like a rag-doll, crushed me down into darkness and a swirling mist of pain.

I tore my left hand free, somehow; got it up to my pocket. I wrenched the flask out, ripped the cork with frantic fingers. The creature grabbed for my arm, twisted it, but the flask was open. I jerked it up.

A white stream spurted against the red face. With a howl of agony, the thing's arms flew up to shield its head. Breaking

free, I spattered more of the fluid on the head and shoulders. Rocking on its feet a moment, the creature staggered, fell to its knees. A hideous stench arose. Smoke seemed to pour from the redskin.

As the thing fell, I was upon it. I tore the hands from the ravaged face, for there was no strength in those red talons now. I jammed the flask up against the pain-contorted mouth, tilted it. The liquid gushed forth, gurgled down the crimson maw.

In a moment it was over. I rose and faced the three at my side. Lily sobbed.

"I—I thought it would kill you," she gasped. "Until you threw the acid in its face."

"Acid?" I echoed. "Acid, hell—that was *holy water!*"

## 6. Getting Behind Satan

"YES, the holy water did the trick." It was Professor Phillips Keith who spoke—spoke weakly, through ashen lips—but spoke, and in a voice unmistakably his own. Considine and Wintergreen knelt at his side, propping up his gray head.

It had taken ten minutes to bring him around. At first we had thought the red thing dead—and it was Lily who noticed the *change*, and pointed it out with a murmur of astonishment.

The redness of the skin faded out, slowly. The contours of the body altered subtly, almost before our eyes. It was like the Jekyll-Hyde transformation accomplished by a movie camera, but the reality was ghastly.

When we saw Professor Phillips Keith lying on the floor in an incongruous red cloak, when we saw his eyelids flutter weakly, some measure of composure returned. By the time the familiar, "What happened?" came faintly from his lips, we were prepared to answer. I told him the story.

"Yes, it was the holy water, all right,"

he repeated. "Pure inspiration on your part to think of it."

"Pure desperation," I corrected.

"I must have been pretty bad."

"You were—evil," Lily interjected slowly. "Utterly evil."

"But what does it all mean?" Considine asked.

"It means that I was possessed of the devil."

"Do you really believe—"

"You saw me," Keith continued. "It was a clear case of what the ancients called *demonic possession*. From Bible times down, literature and history is filled with recorded instances of men and women who were 'possessed.' Such a condition overtook me.

"I don't know how it started. When we evoked that thing in the cage, I suppose. The shock of our success weakened my mental resistance. The barriers went down in a wave of enthusiasm. You remember my harangue before the glass, don't you?" Keith turned to me.

I nodded.

"That night I came back. I wanted another look at our captive. I got it—guess I got too much. The creature hypnotized me. I didn't know. I looked at it and I became *elated*. I felt exhilarated, half-intoxicated. What religious maniacs describe, and what the old priests of Pan used to call—*ecstasy*.

"That was it. You and Lily saw the effect it had on me. I went out that night, can't even remember how. Another will than my own seemed to command me, drive me. Working through my senses, the creature broke down my volition. Satan knows the flesh.

"After that night I came back. I came back at dawn, under a compulsion born of intoxication and the inner urge upon me. I came back to stare at the creature in the cage, stare at the red eyes in the darkness which glistened like two distant whirling

worlds of evil. Two distant worlds that came closer, merged and blended with our own world, blended with my own brain. You and Lily found me asleep beside the cage this morning. The change had occurred.

"I don't remember much of today. It must have worked very fast. I have only two distinct memories—one, of looking into a mirror late this afternoon and seeing my skin assume a reddish tint, as though I had been deeply sunburned. The other memory is vaguer still. It concerns writing something with a piece of chalk in a dream."

I told Keith about our experience with the strangely cowed creature in the cage.

"Part of me must have entered into it when it took my body," he said gravely. His face clouded again in recollection. "My body! By nightfall it wasn't my body any more. The leg dragged. I seemed to know what was happening, but I didn't care. I had this ecstasy, this force, driving me. I went to the ball, and you know the rest."

There was silence. Somehow Considine's muttered "Incredible!" sounded mawkish and inappropriate.

"Professor, you should get some rest," said Lily. "The shock—I think it would be best if you spent a few days in the hospital until—"

A white hand waved.

"I can't, my dear. I can't. Don't you see? We have *him* to deal with."

The hand leveled toward the glass cage. Our eyes followed.

THE slumping figure behind the glass was gone. In its place once more was Satan, Lord of the Sabbath. Black, erect, and menacing, with the yellow, rotted fangs sneering in malignant fury. There was no mistaking the hate, the thwarted desire in those burning eyes. Considine and Wintergreen saw it for the first time. They

breathed through their mouths hoarsely.

Yes, Satan was back. Satan waited again, waited to spring.

"We thought we had him trapped, but you see—we haven't," Keith whispered. "He has found the way to get out. He can take possession of the human body and walk the earth as a man. For a day or so, anyway. Then the human body changes and the man becomes outwardly, as well as inwardly, the image of Evil. We must get rid of him once and for all. We must!"

"Take it easy," I said. "We understand."

"But you don't understand, you can't. Not until you've been through what I've been through. God!" Keith shuddered. "I'll never rest until we've found a way to send him back to Hell."

"You'll rest. Lily and I will get to work, I promise you." The girl nodded agreement.

"Send him back," Keith whispered. "You can't kill him, there is no way. Send him back before—"

The gray head slumped.

"He's passed out," Wintergreen said.

"Good! Phone for an ambulance. We'll carry him out to the lobby. Say it's collapse from overwork or something. Our word is good. He needs hospital attention."

We carried Keith out, carried the plan out.

Lily and I faced the two industrialists.

"Not a word of this now, to anyone," I cautioned. "We alone share the secret, and we alone must solve it. Keith was right. We must find a way to send this creature back."

"I still can't believe it," Wintergreen said. Considine scowled in perplexity.

"Neither do I, but I can feel it, all right. I don't pretend to understand all you've told me, but I know that you're right. It's a mistake to pry into these things. Send that thing back to wherever

it came from, use any method you want, and charge the bill to me."

"You'll keep silence?" I reiterated.

"We will." Considine walked heavily toward the door. Suddenly the big man turned. His beefy face worked with unwanted emotion. "And may God help you in the task," he said softly.

The two went out. I faced Lily.

"There's a job to do," I said grimly. "Are you game?"

"You know I am."

"After what happened to Keith, I'm almost afraid to let you help," I murmured.

"You'll have to. I'm the only one who knows the formulae."

"We'll be playing with fire," I persisted.

"Hell fire," added the girl. "But we won't be burned."

### 7. *Devil May Care*

"ANY luck?" I asked dully.

"No," sighed the girl. She rose from the desk, one slim hand brushing back the golden cascade of her hair. "I'm afraid it's no use. There are no formulae here to get rid of him."

"But there has to be one," I insisted. "There must be a way to send him back."

"Not by incantation." Her hopeless glance met mine, melted. For a moment we stood together—then turned, by common impulse, to the glass cage in the center of the room.

Black, brooding, baleful, the Goat of the Sabbath crouched on the floor. The leering, beady eyes rested scornfully on our own. Yellowed fangs menaced in a derisive grin.

Lily shivered. "Can he hear us?" she asked.

"It doesn't matter. He knows. He's waiting, too."

"That's what I'm afraid of. Darling, we can't go on like this forever. It's been two days already. We can't keep on hid-

ing it always—and if anyone should suspect—”

“There must be a way out!” I scowled, my eyes restlessly searching the room.

“Wait a minute. I’ve got it!”

“What?”

“Didn’t Professor Keith say something about tubing in the glass cage? Something about lethal gas?”

“You’re right!” Lily’s smile became animated. “That tank over there under the table—it’s got the tubing attached. We just plug into the panel at the side, and the gas is released. Hand-pump. Come on, I’ll show you.”

We did the job. It wasn’t easy to brave the ghoulish stare of the creature in the cage as my hands fumbled with the nozzle of the hose and screwed it into place.

It was easier to feel the reassuring firmness of the efficient hand-pump handle, once things were in readiness.

“I hope it works,” Lily whispered.

“It must work. We have to kill this thing somehow,” I answered. “Here goes.”

I pumped.

There was a hissing, the inflated tube writhed like a serpent. I watched the nozzle in the panel.

A cloudy vapor poured into the glass enclosure.

I pumped harder, as the black figure vanished suddenly in a whirl of poisonous fog.

“It’s working!” exclaimed the girl. “Keep it up—nothing can survive this stuff.”

Billows of whitish smoke writhed in miniature Inferno behind the glass. Inferno for a demon.

The pump sighed emptily.

Together we advanced toward the clouded glass pane.

“See anything?” I asked.

“No. Not yet.” Lily pressed her forehead against the glass of the cage, wrinkled it in straining scrutiny. “No—

wait a minute. The smoke is clearing.”

“Clearing? There’s nowhere for it to go!”

“But it is!”

And it was. Even as we watched, the white vapor thinned into spirals, shreds, cumulae.

Behind it crouched the black, goatish body.

Crouched, not slumped.

Satan was alive! And yet the gases cleared—*because he was inhaling them!*

“Good Lord, he’s absorbing the stuff into his system! He *breathes* poison!” I murmured.

Malignant, triumphant, the black goat pranced. Its eyes shone with evil merriment, with a sort of added animation.

“He thrives on the stuff,” Lily sighed. “Now what?”

“Water,” I said.

The details don’t matter. We used the same tubing, and a new pump. Filled the glass enclosure to the brim. Enough water to drown anything inside.

He absorbed it, of course.

I was afraid to try an arc-welder.

“You can’t kill the Devil with fire,” Lily told me.

That was that. Bombs were out—anything was out which entailed the risk of releasing His Satanic Majesty.

We were back to where we started.

“Give me another day,” Lily said. “I’ll find an incantation. There must be something here. Some variant on a spell for casting out demons, perhaps. Just put a twist on it. We must get one.”

“I must get some sleep,” I added. And meant it. Devil-killing is hard work.

“Go home,” commanded the girl.

“And leave you here alone with that? Not on your life! Remember what happened to Keith.”

“Well, go into the private office down the hall and take a nap. There’s a couch there. I’ll keep on working.”

"I don't know," I said, slowly.

"I'll be all right. I won't even look at our friend here. Besides, you know what Keith said. He was almost out on his feet, his mental barriers were down. I'm no pushover. Go ahead now, run along and get your rest. I'll promise to get out of here in an hour or so."

"Promise me that?"

"Of course, darling."

"And you won't look at him?"

"Not when I can look at you." She stood very close. I put my arms around her, held her. Over my shoulder the fiend grinned. But her smile warmed.

"All right. But I'm coming back within an hour. And if I catch you flirting with Old Nick here, you'll be sorry."

Abruptly I sobered. "You really think there's a chance of finding a way?"

"I do. We *must*. Now, off with you."

I left the room. Lily Ross sat down, ran her hands through her golden hair, and opened the black book on the desk. In the dancing light of the braziers she looked as she had when I first saw her—like a white witch.

She *was* a white witch in my dreams.

### 8. Hell Hath No Fury—

SHE was only a girl when she awakened me.

I grinned sheepishly through a shroud of sleep. "Sorry. Guess I broke my promise and overslept. Didn't know I was so tired."

"You were tired, darling. Know how long you've been sleeping?"

"No."

"Three hours."

"Really?"

"Uh huh. Feel better now?"

"Certainly. I'm ready for anything. What about you?"

"Still bright." She looked it, too. Her eyes sparkled with gaiety.

"You look as though you had some luck. Find anything?" I asked.

"Well—yes and no. There's a chant in the Prinn *Saracenic Rituals* relating to djin and efreet that could be used, I think. But the German translation is bad. I'm going to check it against the Latin."

"Now?"

"No, silly. Tomorrow. Now I'm going to relax. And you're going to relax with me. Let's go out and take in the town tonight; forget all about this crazy business."

"But what about—"

"Quit scowling, dear. It's all right. We need a vacation. The strain is too much, sometimes, when you think about what we're doing, what's in that room."

"Don't you think you'd be better off if you went home and rested, Lily?"

"No." Her eyes met mine. "It's dark, and I don't like the dark. It makes me think too much. It makes me dream about—*him*. Don't you see? I want light, people, something to make me forget."

She was shaking underneath her smile. Hysteria, nearly.

"All right. Did you—lock up?"

"Certainly. Stop fretting. The room is barred."

I rose to my feet.

"We'd better stop in at the hospital and see how Professor Keith is resting," I suggested.

"Please—not now. I'm all on edge. I just want to forget everything connected with this, for tonight. Let's not think about anything except us."

The suggestion was pleasant. Alluring. Alluring, as Lily was. She did sparkle. Her golden hair, the scarlet of her lips, the turquoise of her eyes—all seemed accentuated by inner fire. She slipped one arm in mine, possessively. I felt a tingling as her bare flesh met my wrist. We swept into the outer lobby of Rocklynn. I almost laughed.

Here was a crowd of bustling, officious

clerks and directors. White-coated chemists stepped briskly in and out of the long series of offices along the further corridors. Well-dressed visitors and patrons—giggling stenographers—bearded doctors who might have advertised laxatives in the popular magazines—a typical *Kildare* atmosphere about the place.

They didn't suspect what was going on in the private chamber down the hall. They didn't suspect that the golden girl on my arm was a white witch.

Again that white witch thought had crossed my mind. White witch. Why did I think of Lily that way? Was it because here in the afternoon sunlight she positively glittered? Her hair was *so* golden, her skin had such a milky texture. Ah, she was a pretty girl—nothing more.

"Supper?" I said. She nodded.

We glided down to the lobby, stepped into a cab. She snuggled close. I liked it.

But when I looked at her again, the semi-darkness of the cab's interior had wrought another change.

She wasn't a white witch any more. Her hair seemed darker. The golden tint was gone. The locks were almost brunette; brown with darker tones. The scarlet of her lips had turned to rose. A trick of late afternoon light.

"What are you staring at?" she giggled.

I got personal for a while. A good while, as we were tied up in traffic. By the time we neared the chosen destination it was almost twilight.

IT WAS twilight in the taxi.

And Lily's hair was gray. Not gray, exactly, and not platinum. There was a bluish tint. Her lips were purple.

Her lips were purple—or I was crazy.

Seeing things. A girl who changed in light and shadow. What was that? White witch—black witch—blue witch. What did they call it? Adaptation. Chameleon.

But the term in sorcery. *Glamour*. Sympathetic magic. The ability to conform with surroundings. The attribute of a sorceress.

Circe had that power.

But Lily Ross?

Here she was, laughing away, affectionate and alluring. And I was picturing her as an enchantress. Ridiculous.

Well, it was best forgot. I did forget as we entered the supper club. But when we sat down under the red drapes I saw her titian locks flame forth in evil glory, saw her tawny skin glow, saw the crimson depths of her eyes.

Red witch, now!

I had a drink. Several drinks. In between I blinked. She talked, but I hardly listened.

"Let's dance."

I held the red witch in my arms, held a living flame close. Held her closer than I had ever held her, and felt her respond. Her response was flame. Fire kindling, feeding.

That fire engulfed me. I was tired of thinking, tired of toying with the incredible. The wine helped, and her beauty was a greater intoxication. I went down into the warmth—the warmth of her glowing hair, the warmth of her eyes, the red glow of her mouth.

Why deny it? When she suggested her apartment I didn't hesitate. This wasn't the Lily Ross I knew, but the realization no longer bothered me.

She clung to me in the cab, on the stairs. "We've been working too hard, darling," she whispered, over and over again, as though it were a formula. Her words no longer mattered. I was consumed by the flame of her nearness. The red, swift flame, coursing through my blood and being.

She opened the door. I stepped in. We embraced in the darkness for a long moment.

Then, "I've waited for this," she mur-

mured. "You and I, together. We're going to do wonderful things, aren't we?"

"You mean down at Rocklynn?" I asked lazily.

"Oh—*that!*" she laughed. "Of course not, silly! That's child's play. Don't you think so? It has no real meaning at all."

"Well—"

"You and I were meant for greater destinies." Her voice, vibrant in velvet darkness, had a new quality of its own. A *dark* quality. Peculiarly, I wondered what she looked like here. What color was her hair? And those lips, that now burned mine?

Lips that burned away my questions and left only a desire.

"Greater destinies," she whispered. "You've the brains. I have the beauty."

"You know, I've never felt this way before. Today I saw the futility of it—cooped up in a stuffy little laboratory when we might be playing for bigger stakes."

Did you ever have a woman make love to you with lips and arms while she talked like a bank director? It's an unnerving experience.

"Yes, we'll go a long way together. Keith's out of it, of course. We have the power now. The power to learn. The power to command. With those spells and incantations there are no heights we cannot achieve.

"I could be a queen—"

Well, it was enough. Lips or no lips, I knew. The shudder that ran through me could not be repressed. The voice was Lily's but the thoughts were Keith's. Not Keith's—but Keith's when he was possessed of the Devil.

I knew what I held in my arms now. The girl that had worked alone in the black chamber, under the glowing eyes of the monster in the cage. The girl that changed in light and darkness. The girl who desired power, who lured like the priestess of a Mystery.

I knew, and as I shuddered, she knew. Her arms pressed closer, her body moulded to mine, her warmth sought to drown my dread, and I felt her mouth seek mine, seek mine with a promise of ecstasy.

I pushed her back. She sensed it, but suddenly embraced me. Again her mouth neared. I felt it graze my lips and then—Lily Ross bent in the darkness, and with the fury of a tigress, locked her teeth in my throat!

### 9. *Devil's Bargain*

AS THE tiny, pointed fangs met, I shook her free.

A feline growl rose in her throat. Her panting breath rasped as her hands raked my face.

"You fool!"

Again her mouth sought my neck. I lifted one arm and let go. I had to do it.

Just a short uppercut to the chin and she slumped to the floor. I stepped over, switched on the lights, and carried her limp body to the sofa.

She lay there, eyes closed, a golden witch under lamplight. From her bruised mouth ran a tiny crimson trickle.

The sleeping sorceress—

I got cold water, a towel, brandy. It took three minutes before her eyes fluttered open. By that time I'd been in her bedroom and found what I was seeking. So when her eyes did open, they focussed directly on the bronze crucifix held before them.

A look of pain seared her face. She writhed.

"No—take it away—please—"

I held her twisting body taut.

"Look!" I commanded.

"No—fool—let me go—I can't—"

The crucifix pressed closer. I placed the cool metal against her forehead.

She screamed.

I drew it off and stared at the livid welt



—the imprint of the cross burned into her white flesh.

Perspiration beaded my brow, but I didn't desist. I knew what had to be done. Exorcism. The casting out of demons.

First Keith, and now Lily. She had to be freed.

Her moanings ceased. I waved the crucifix before her and whispered.

"Lily, darling. Look at the cross. Look at it. I know it hurts, but you must look. You must. Just gaze from under your eyelids. I won't burn you with it. Just look. Look and sleep. Try to sleep, Lily. You're tired, so very tired. So tired. Sleep. And look at the cross. Sleep."

Science and witchcraft, eh? Well, let's see what a little modern hypnotism will do.

Psychic trauma or possession by a fiend, call it what you will. I waved the crucifix and commanded her to sleep. The light glittered on the weaving outline. Her eyes followed it, her ears heard my murmurs.

Lily slept.

**M**Y SHIRT was wet clear through. I was trembling. But she slept. And I kept whispering. "Lily, come back! Lily fight it. Come back. Lily, come back."

The tremors came then. Convulsions. I saw her writhe in agony and still I didn't stop. Didn't dare stop.

She moaned, and it wasn't her voice. Her hands darted like talons to her temples, as though to tear away the scar. Her face was the worst—changing from pallor to deep flush.

But my voice was winning. I felt that. Her whimpers grew weaker. She slept under the cross, accepted the vision.

The force within her waned, then blazed in a final access of fury. That's when my hand trembled so that I nearly dropped the crucifix. When her face began to look like *other* faces.

They bubbled up from beneath her flesh, those malignant expressions of hate and

rage. The expressions seen on the faces of the schizophrenic, the demented. The faces of madness—and what was madness in olden days but demoniac possession?

They came now, grinning their defiance. And the voice and the cross fought them, fought them down, fought them from her being.

At the end she slept, and I slumped beside her. The crucifix rested against her bare arm, but it no longer burned. I had won. She had won. I knew that Satan had returned to his body in the glass cage.

In the morning's awakening we made our decision. I told her what she didn't know—and she told me what I had guessed; about the "dizzy spells" she had experienced while working alone in the chamber.

"I'm going back there," I insisted. "You need rest. I'll carry on alone, and I'm forewarned as well as forearmed by what you and Keith have gone through. I won't succumb, I promise you—not until I've found a way to get rid of His Satanic Majesty once and for all."

"Be careful, darling—"

I smiled grimly. "You're telling me? But it has to be done. That menace must be removed, quickly. If you or Keith had been allowed to continue it might spread like a plague. There's no choice in the matter. Either we get rid of Satan or he gets rid of us. That's the bargain."

"You'll call me regularly?"

"Of course. And in a day or two both you and Keith can come down again to help. But now—I'm going back to hell."

Lily smiled. "May God be with you," she whispered.

### 10. Powers of Darkness

**T**HAT night we worked alone, the Devil and I.

The Devil and I, in that black tower. The red braziers burned as a beacon, but

the red glare from his eyes blazed a still stronger warning.

All alone in the dark room, behind locked doors. A crouching fiend in a cage. A crouching man at a table.

From time to time the ebon monstrosity reared ponderously to pad back and forth behind the barrier. From time to time I rose and paced the floor with equal restlessness.

Frequently a malignant scowl convulsed the black and bony face. Often, I too, scowled.

I turned the yellowed pages of a dozen bulky books. I scanned the notes written in Lily's precise handwriting. But learning the mantic arts is a grim business. No wonder wizards grew gray!

Here was White Magic—the nine steps in the evocation of angels. The command of the Seven Stewards of Heaven; Arathron, Bethor, Phaleg, Och, Hazith, Ophiel, and Phul. White Magic, and a jumble of theological arcanum which would be of no use here. Wrong lead.

Black Magic—ashes of hosts and dried toads—unguents of grease and blood of corpses heated over human bones—burning crucifixes—gibberish.

Red Magic? The highest esoteric art was never written or told. Nothing here.

Try divination.

I tried divination for hours. Long hours in the black room.

Long hours under hell-spawned eyes. Eyes that watched me as I studied. Eyes that seemed to pierce the glass cage, to peer over my shoulder as I read, peer and mock.

The file on divination was huge. Could I evoke an omen, a clue? Divination—

There was aeromancy, allectryomancy, aleuromancy, alphetomancy—but I had neither wind nor rooster, flour nor hard dough.

Amniomancy? Use the caul of a newborn child? No. And the horrid an-

thropomancy—prophecy by use of human entrails—no, again.

Arithomancy, Astragalomancy. Both mathematical tricks, long since discredited. Axinomancy and Belomancy were relics of the old "trial by ordeal" of Saxon days.

Capnomancy? Divination by smoke-wreaths from a drug-sprinkled fire? Hashish visions. A fake.

Cephalonomancy, Dactyliomancy, Gastromancy, Geomancy, Gyromancy. I had no donkey's head to sprinkle with live coals, no finger ring, no gift at ventriloquism, nor was I a sand-diviner. I might try Gyromancy as a last resort—walking in a circle until I grew dizzy and fell. The direction of the fall had significance.

Oh, sure. Sorcery is so fascinating, until you analyze it.

Hippomancy, the Celtic trick with white horses. Out.

Hydromancy, Ichthyomancy, Lampodomancy, Lithomancy, Margaritomancy, Myomancy, Onomancy, Onychomancy, Oomancy, Parthenomancy.

Fine stuff! All superstitious nonsense, though the last—divination by employing a virgin—might prove entertaining.

Well, Pyromancy, Rhabdomancy, Sciamancy.

Sciamancy. Evocation of the dead. Was there a proven formulae here in Lily's list? There wasn't. I was singularly grateful. To command the dead sorcerously—dangerous ground.

Spondonomancy, Sycomancy, Theomancy.

That was the end of divination.

And still Satan stared. I was becoming more and more conscious of that stare. Satan grinned. The grin burned through me. I'd find a way! I had to.

There was no sleep for me that day, and it was almost midnight when I blundered back into the notebooks and hit the section on *Elementals*.

Elementals. The primitive spirits.

The gnomes inherent in earth own the kingdom of the North, and they exert the melancholic influence over the temperament of man. Their sign is the Bull, and they are commanded by the Magic Sword. Their sovereign is Gob.

## NONSENSE!

The sylphs are of the air, their kingdom is the East, and their influence bilious. Under the sign of the Eagle, they are controlled by the holy pentacles, as is their sovereign, Paralda.

Well?

Salamanders are spirits of fire, and their kingdom lies South. Sanguine in their influence, under the sign of the Lion, and the command of the trident, their sovereign is Djinn—yes, the prototype of all *djinn*.

And the undines of the West, those who evoke the phlegmatic aspect of men, are governed under the sign of Aquarius, commanded by the cup of libations, and under the sovereignty of Necksa.

Gnomes, sylphs, salamanders, undines. Earth, air, fire and water. Astrology and oriental legend, and mysticism.

Except that—there were spells.

Spells for the evocation of elementals. Elementals, known to our theology as fiends. Fiends of the Pit.

Spells to command them, written in Lily Ross's handwriting. Taken from the tomes. Precise directions for mixing incense, and drawing figures, and reciting commands.

"There are nearly a hundred proven spells and incantations. Genuine." That's what Keith had said.

Genuine spells. Recipes to raise daemons. "A pinch of salt and a tablespoon-full of butter. Bake well under low flame."

Not exactly. These recipes might affect the stomach, but only with a nausea of dread. "A pinch of ground bone, and a cup of blood. Place under the fires of Hell."

I was light-headed. Light-headed enough to try.

After all, I had to experiment, didn't I? Find a way to evoke, familiarize myself with rituals? Why shouldn't I take this perfectly absurd routine about the gnomes, for instance, and see what happened?

Lily's marginal notes said, "Sword in cupboard, lower shelf. Important—use no other. Steel sword. Steel alone guards and commands gnomes."

I had the silly-looking old blade in my hand before I knew what I was doing. I had the blue chalk, too, as directed, and I was kneeling down facing North. The gnome kingdom.

Grimm's fairy tales? Why not find out?

Draw the mathematical design, as directed. Draw the sign of the bull—the peculiarly Egyptian sign, so indicative of ancient stylization. The bull of Apis, of astrology, of ancient days. A blue bull. Make it big. The gnome materializes on that sign and cannot leave it until you command. Draw it big and play safe.

Play safe? With this nonsense?

But there was a black bulk in a glass cage grinning out at me and this wasn't nonsense.

I waved the sword. I realized what a ridiculous figure I cut in that dark room, waving a "magic sword" before a lot of chalk drawings scribbled schoolboy-fashion on the floor. But there was nobody to watch me—except the glaring eyes of Satan in his prison.

Slowly I mumbled the incantation. Lily had accented it and phoneticized carefully: No mistakes. Now to recite it aloud. The sword pointed north—thus. My feet touched the tip of the outer blue circle. At the syllable breaks I must point the sword at the horns of the Bull. Synchronize. So.

"Oh Gob—" I began.

It sounded foolish. Self-conscious.

Grimm's fairy tales. But I persisted. It didn't take long, after all.

No. It didn't take long before I felt the cold wind strike my face. Felt the sword tingle in my hand as I pointed, felt an electric surge sweep up my arm. Heard the syllables blaze out, saw the flame of the braziers *bend* before the words.

And then, in the Sign of the Bull, the tiny, crouching figure. It coiled into shape, into substance. The little swarthy creature with the mouse-like face, the rodent body, and the beady, glittering eyes. Standing there, bowing. The gnome.

*Grim* fairy tales!

The gnome. The little man who *was* there. The little man that hid in the woods. The little dwarf man who tempted maidens in the forest. The little man who guarded the mines and the gold of earth, the little man who haunted the dark mountaintops of the north countries and dug the burrows beneath the hills.

One of the ancient Pictish, Celtic *little people*. The tiny race of troglydites that lived on earth before men came, retreated to the dark depths like the serpent. The figure known to all legends and all times. The dwarf. The troll. The kobold. The Brownie. The leprechaun.

"Master?"

Oh, that piping little voice! That shocking, detestable little voice, so hateful in its reality!

And it *was* real.

I dropped the sword.

Then I picked it up. This was the sword of command. Of command. The thought hit me then. I could—command.

**I** COULD command this creature out of myth, command it to do anything I desired. Anything. To—kill. To burrow under a building and send it toppling to ruins, as he and his fellows toiled like rats. The way they used to burrow under castles, in ancient legend. Like a warlock, I could

send it on errands of death. It was my servant, my familiar now. I could have it and its fellows. Yes, thousands of them. Merely by command. Command with the steel of the sword.

The thought burned. Burned like Satan's eyes. Burned like fire.

Fire.

The salamander!

I won't describe the next hour. The wave of elation that swept over me is too much a part of hysteria. I drew the Lion, kindled the flame, waved the trident. The yellow blaze revealed the lizard figure that grew out of flame, absorbed it. Fiend, imp, archetype of hell's legions, the salamander of evil. And the hissing inflection in the word, "Master?"

Here were spells that worked. Here were orisons and litanies that brought results. I couldn't send Satan back, but I could conjure up his hosts.

Conjure up his hosts! Why not? Imagine this tower room filled with waiting monstrosities from myth. Imagine *rooms* filled with them. A horde, a vast and limitless horde, all calling me—"Master!"

Master of demons. Master of evil. Lord of a power greater than any known.

For the first time I began to realize the feeling inherent in that word. Power. Power to rule. Power over wind and water and fire and air. Over earth. Power to rule earth.

Now I knew how Keith must have felt. He'd dreamed of something like this. Men laughed at evil, did they? All the better, they would not burn him at the stake for sorcery but permit him to evoke evil unmolested. He'd been a fool, Keith had. Trying to interest millionaires. Why did he need any allies? One man to rule them all, that was the way.

And Lily. Silly child! Personal vanity was her downfall. She wanted to be a Cleopatra, did she? Sheer melodrama. Juvenile. She might have been a queen—

greater than a Circe. Queen of evil. But I'd stopped that. Her mistake was to rely on me for help.

I wouldn't make that mistake. I'd rely on no one. I and I alone would evoke and rule. I had the power, didn't I? I had Satan in a cage. He was no longer Prince of Darkness. I could take his place.

The King is dead. Long live the King! Why not?

A week ago, if anyone had foretold my future I should have scoffed. Like everyone else, I suppose. But now it was real, I had this opportunity. The goal of witch and wizard through the ages. The powers of darkness mine to command. Why hesitate?

Why not evoke? Use the rituals, use all of them. Fill the room with a legion of nightmare shapes. *Revenants*. Ghouls and *efrits*. *Vrykolas*, *hippocampi*, *amphisbanae*, *striges*. An army, a black army. An army to conquer the world.

Keep them ringed in the magic figures, until the word of release was given. Keep them ringed, and then—

But what about Satan? What about the spell to send him back? Back to where—to hell? But we could have hell here on earth!

And why not?

An earth filled with man-made war and misery. An earth filled with grasping, cheating, lying, stealing, raping, murdering, crazy humans. Filled with pestilence, disease, idiocy. Let the Lord of Evil come into his own!

Sweep away humanity. Sweep away the earth. Black gifts the creatures might grant you for the power. Eternal life, eternal ecstasy. Lips might whisper secrets. Primal forces to invoke and control.

Why send Satan back at all?

I glanced at the listless black figure in the cage. Glanced and smiled. Smiled and laughed suddenly.

Was this—this thing—the fabled Lucifer? This mangy, decrepit, listless bag of bones with the sick eyes and whining sneer? Was this whimpering mongrel really the Arch-Enemy?

I felt stronger than he did. I *was* stronger than he. I had stripped him of his power and taken it for my own.

I was the Master of Satan!

Plans, plans, plans. Dreams swirling in the blackness. The salamander staring, the gnome crouching in the chalk-dust. Yes, and I, standing in darkness, chanting out invocations. Chanting for endless hours, gripped by an inner elation and compulsion.

The room, surging with power. Pulsing with vibrations. And filled with shapes.

Until I stood there, amidst a crowded maze of circles and designs, each filled with a figure. A bowing figure that croaked, "Master!"

I stood there and made a Hell on earth.

### 11. Hell on Earth

"SLOWLY now—it's a surprise."

I guided Lily and Keith toward the door marked *Private*. Keith leaned feebly on my arms, but he pressed forward eagerly.

"Surprise?" gurgled Lily. "You mean—you've sent him back?"

I smiled. "You'll see," I told her.

She and Keith gave me a long look. I didn't like it. They seemed too conspiratorial. Eying me. I'd open their eyes for them in a minute.

I pushed open the door. "Come into my parlor," I said.

Keith kept staring at me. So did Lily. "Ladies first," I said. Lily suddenly shrugged and stepped in. Keith followed her. I went in and shut the door. Locked it.

Then I faced them.

They faced the room.

They didn't say a word. They couldn't. It was too overpowering.

I'd taken the drapes off, swept the room clear of tables and cupboards. Needed more space. The place reeked with mingled incense odors, but even the braziers were gone to provide more floor area.

Floor area for *visitors*.

They stood there and gazed at Hell. My Hell. The Hell I had created by incantation, by invocation. Around the glass cage housing Satan the legions swarmed. One of each. A Noah's Ark, in a way, of horrors.

Hell's sample-display showroom. Take your pick. Plenty more where these came from.

The thoughts made me laugh. I did laugh, too. The noise grated against the silence, and there was a vast answering response. "Master!"

"What have you done?" Keith's eyes blazed anger.

"Merely played sorcerer's apprentice," I told him. "How do you like it?"

"These—monsters," Keith spluttered. "Do you realize what would happen if you lost control?"

"Certainly." I smiled.

"It's insane," he muttered.

"It's science," I answered. "Isn't this your dream come true? Your dream of proving the validity of sorcery?"

"It's a nightmare. I want no part of this. Send these creatures back—there's directions for that. Send them back at once."

"Change of heart, eh? Well, recognize another change at the same time. You're not giving me orders any more, Keith. I'm in charge here."

Keith paled. He faced me with an intent stare.

Lily stepped between us.

"You must send them back," she whispered. "You were going to get rid of Satan, remember?"

"What do you mean—remember? Do you think I'm a child? Of course I remember that foolishness. But it's no good. Think of the power I possess. Think of what we could do with these creatures."

"Creatures!" Lily quavered the word.

She stood like a golden goddess, surrounded by the bobbing, weaving, crouching shapes of darkness. The tiny men with the malignant faces, the snake-like figures that shimmered in air, the canine visages of ghouls, the monstrous bulk of squatting incubae, the leprous-white crawlers. An aquarium, a menagerie, a gallery of fiends. They filled the room, each in his tiny island of chalk. Behind was the cage with the figure of Satan slumped on the floor. Had he no interest in this gathering? Where was his burning desire to escape? No matter.

"Creatures," Lily quavered, and her glance rested on me in strange appeal. "Darling—for my sake—send them back. You're not well, you've overworked, you can't think what you're doing—"

"Enough." I stepped closer to her. "I'm not crazy, if that's what you mean. Three days in this room hasn't made a wreck out of me. I've learned more about the essence and nature of evil than you both know. And I'm going to use that knowledge and that power."

"The Devil is through, in other words," Keith commented, dryly. "You're taking over."

For a moment the bald statement seemed to paralyze me. As if through a fog I caught his meaning. Then I chuckled.

"That's just about the size of it. From now on, I'm in command. These creatures are my minions. At the signal they will be released."

I lowered my voice.

"I've got a plan. It's all thought out. I've done a lot of thinking here these past days. I know just what to do—how to use these things. Rule, I tell you! And

you two will share the power with me, if you like."

"Send them back," Lily begged. "You don't know what's happening to you."

"Happening to me? I'm waking up, that's all. I feel more alive at this moment than I ever have. I'm strong, and he's weak. I'm going to do what no man has ever dared. I'll open the gates! Lucifer will again rule earth. Why shouldn't he—I mean I—he—I—"

THEN I realized.

Realized what I was saying.

I thought, "Satan," and I said, "I."

I. Satan.

I looked at Keith and the girl. Their eyes were fixed in fascination on my face.

My face!

Lily's hand was holding something out.

A mirror.

I took it.

Took the silver glass and stared at my face in the mirror. Stared at the black, goatish countenance, at the growing beard on the chin, stared—transfixed—at the darkened temples from which *the two horns were beginning to protrude!*

What had happened to Keith and Lily had happened to me. Three days in a room with the black man, three days in a room while his will gnawed at my soul in darkness, burrowed in.

The change had taken place. *I was Satan!*

The mirror fell and shattered. I stood there, looking at the dark skin on the back of my hands. The dark skin on the back of my—claws.

Turning, turning; body and mind and soul. Cloud of darkness pouring out of the cage and into my brain.

I was Satan and I had evoked demons and I would rule earth.

Madness!

*But why not?*

Nobody was dashing holy water in *my*

face. Nobody was waving any crucifixes. Nobody was shooting any—

I saw it out of the corner of my eye. Keith's holster, with the two guns, lying on the little table near the door. Saw it as he saw it and made a dash. I got there first.

I pulled the guns out and pointed them very carefully. Keith stopped in his tracks.

"No you don't," I chuckled. "No one is shooting me, if you please. Lily—the door is locked. Very tightly." She'd made a dash, too. "We are all alone now. With our—servitors." I chuckled again. It was beginning to feel very pleasant.

"Stand still, both of you," I directed.

"Madman," Keith shouted. "Put down those revolvers!"

"Please—" Lily whispered.

I slipped one weapon into my pocket, held the other high in my right hand. My blackening right hand. I could *feel* it change. I *pulsed*. Every nerve tingling, as the change completed.

One claw held the revolver. The other rose.

"Now, you two. When I lower my left hand, our little playmates will be released. I don't need my right hand for anything but keeping you covered. So remember. Stand and watch."

"Satan!" Keith mumbled. "Satan incarnate!"

"Please, darling," Lily whispered. "Oh, please, darling—"

I laughed. The grinning throng waited behind me. Waited, and ravened. I could feel their pulsations mingling with my own. How they lusted to be free! To walk the earth once more; to walk and creep and crawl and lope and fly and—kill! They waited and they crouched for my command. My command would free them. From the black tower they'd swarm out over the world of night and the shriek of earth in torment would mock the walls of heaven.

The strength welling in me. . . .  
I lifted my left hand high. One gesture now—

Then Lily moved.

"Back or I'll shoot!" I screamed.

She came forward. Her eyes held no hate and no fear, only a pleading that burned and burned. I had to get rid of that burning. Kill her, kill her and release them. Free the hordes of Hell!

My left hand swooped. My right hand moved out. The hand of Satan. I flicked my wrist, pressed the trigger—and sent a bullet crashing into my brain.

### 12. *Fall of Lucifer*

"EASY," I said. "Easy."

"Must probe," grunted Keith. "Get it out. Silver bullet or no, there might be infection."

"Easy," I repeated. Then, "Are you sure it's gone?"

Lily smiled down at me.

"Of course, darling. They're all gone. And the cage is empty. The instant you fired the gun they disappeared. Not in a cloud of brimstone, either. They just—weren't there."

I smiled. It wasn't so hard, because Keith had the little silver pellet out.

"Lucky shot," he commented. "Just missed grazing the parietal lobe."

"I still can't understand it," I said. "Can't understand what made me shoot myself and why Satan disappeared."

"The oldest story in the world," answered Keith. "Virtue triumphant. It fought the evil in you and won, even though you weren't conscious of it. When Lily came toward you the battle was resolved. You and the Devil fought it out in your own soul, and you won."

"And that was the secret of getting rid of Satan. The human soul pitted itself naked against his will and denied him."

I shook my head as Keith continued.

"Evil preys on inner weakness. In my case, Satan focussed his forces on my dominant quality of ambition. That ambition, directed sanely, caused me to embark on scientific research. Perverted just a little, Satan made my ambition become a lust for power at any price.

"In Lily's possession, her natural feminine vanity was accentuated to the point where she desired utter adoration. Again the psychology of evil came into play. And when the Devil invaded you, he worked through your love of learning, turning your scholarly inclinations into the field of sorcery."

"It's hard to believe now," I said. "Maybe it was all a mass hallucination. Those old wife's tales—"

Keith chuckled.

"Perhaps what we saw and called Satan *wasn't* physically real. We each saw a different figure in the glass cage, and Consideine and Wintergreen might have had their own concepts. Even these creatures you materialized might be merely focal imaginative visions.

"But this I know. Whether we choose to personify it as Satan, or the Devil, or the Powers of Darkness—evil exists as a force in this world of ours. Describe it in terms of witchcraft or psychiatry as you will—evil is real."

Lily laid her head on my shoulder. "Let's forget it all now," she suggested.

"Suits me. Got any methods to suggest?"

"Well, if you're not too sick—"

"Too sick? I feel swell."

"Well, if you're not too sick, I suggest we celebrate."

"Fine idea," I responded.

"Sure," said Keith. "Let's go out and raise hell! Why—what's the matter?"

"Nothing at all," I replied; and promptly fainted.