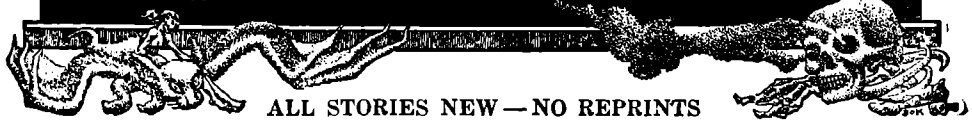


Weird Tales



JULY, 1946

Cover by Matt Fox

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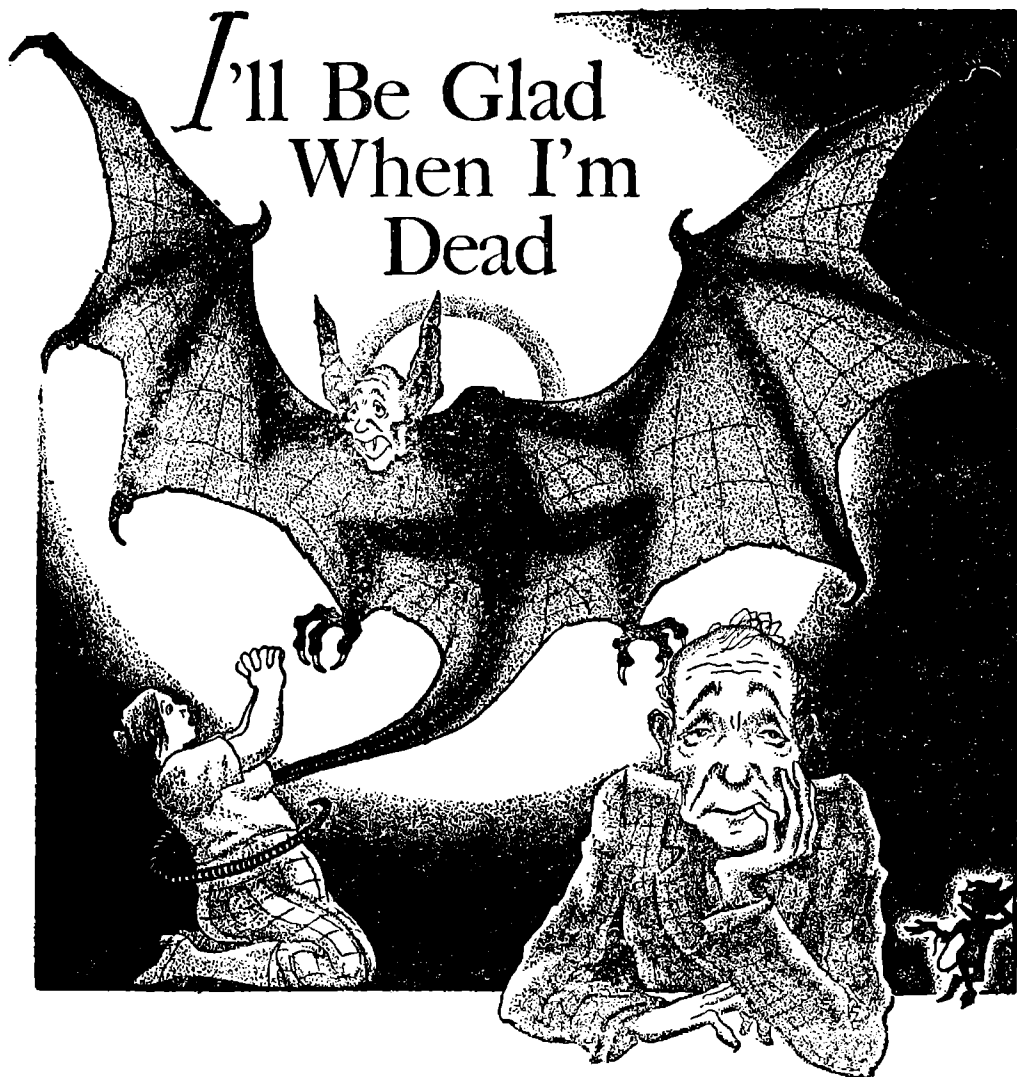
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I'll Be Glad When I'm Dead



BY CHARLES KING

“GET UP, you lazy bun!” Julius didn't need an alarm clock.

“Get your skinny feet out've that bed before I clout that bald skull of yours!”

He had a wife.

“You wanna be late to work?” Then, as usual, she answered herself: “Sure!”

There's prob'ly nothin' better you'd like than to take the roof offa my head and the food outa my mouth.”

Julius agreed. But, being a hundred and seventeen pounds against his wife's one hundred and ninety, he kept his generous assent a deep secret.

“Get up!”

The little runt was going to revenge himself upon a world loaded with oversized enemies

Heading by BORIS DOLGOV

Squirming unhappily out of bed. Julius perched on the edge a moment. Gradually, his small, vaguely colored eyes focussed downward. No getting away from it, he brooded unhappily, his feet were skinny.

Slewing sideways, his eyes took in the bony arms that poked out of his undershirt. Though, at certain times, he fondly imagined that he was starting to put on some weight, this was an off day. He saw himself for exactly what he was . . . a skinny little runt.

And he hated it.

And he hated *them*.

Them? They were the well padded people who unconcernedly waddled through life.

They were the ones whose several chins quivered as they laughed.

They were the ones whose plump bellies shook as they walked.

They were the ones who flaunted their flesh proudly . . . the flesh which Julius didn't possess.

So he hated.

"A WRIGHT, awright, slow poke. I don't wanna stay over the sink all day. Feed your face and scam."

"Yes, m'dear," mumbled Julius as he hastily swallowed a scratchy piece of burnt toast. Then, squashing his hat atop his head, he fled to the outside world.

Nobody gave the forlorn, shabby little man a second glance as he mooched down the street. They would have done much more than that, however, if they could have read his morbid thoughts. For Julius was engrossed in his favorite occupation: reducing all fleshy hulks to dried up, wizened specimens such as himself. His methods were quite grisly.

He was three minutes late for work that morning. His boss—a two hundred pounder, of course—didn't let Julius forget it all day. The daily kicking around, which he had grown to accept as a part of his miserable job, was, this day, excruciatingly enhanced by the blobby behemoth who paid his salary. By the day's end Julius was almost witless with helpless rage. As he slammed from the office into the street he hardly knew where he was heading.

What made it that much worse was that

his bony hands were completely tied. There was nothing he could do—absolutely nothing. If he spoke up to his Boss that bulbous bully would flatten him on the spot with painful promptness . . . and then fire him. And his wife. Oh, his ever loving wife. When she got her beefy paws on him that would be the end. He'd be a dead pigeon, for certain.

Now, there is a definite group of men who revert to childlike actions when they are under severe strain of temper. Some of them wave their arms wildly as they rant and bellow; others, frenetic with fury, clench their fists and hop up and down in paroxysms of vocally silenced rage.

Julius belonged to both groups . . . and to neither. Internally he churned with a violence that was unbelievable in its sheer fury; externally he presented the front of a pallid, little character with curiously strained features.

But there is always a breaking point—and today was it. He was going to revenge himself upon a world loaded with fat enemies. He entered a small stationery store, made a quick, unobtrusive purchase, and then darted around the corner to where there was an empty lot. Then he took the machinery for his vengeance out of his pocket.

A box of chalk.

Then, squatting on his heels, he drew, upon a slab of concrete walk, the two symbols designating both sexes of the lumpish, corpulent people that he envied and loathed . . . his Wife and his Boss. They represented, to him, all *the others*.

If he had been a good artist—if he had been *any* sort of an artist—it wouldn't have happened. The egregious part of it was that he couldn't draw at all. What he fondly hoped was the faces of his enemy symbols were merely childish distortions.

Angles and curves overlapped without any harmonic lines or perspective, presenting a veritable distortion of ungoverned traceries. Still, nothing would have happened if he hadn't completed his job so thoroughly.

UNDERNEATH what would have been unrecognizable to any one but himself, he scrawled every nasty obscenity he

could pluck from the stilled vocabulary of years. From the chalk in his hand rolled all the pent-up viciousness that had been contained so long; viciousness which had grown by feeding and festering upon itself.

The completion of his destiny was simplicity itself. He lit a cigarette and tossed the flaming match into the center of his drawn and written depravities.

"Well?"

Shocked surprise rode across Julius' face as he spun around. Where *had* that squeaking voice come from?

"Damn it, I haven't got all day! Well?"

He looked around again. Nothing there. Sweat coursed freely down his face. Had he become subject to squeaking hallucinations? He looked down. *He looked down.* There it was . . . in his vest pocket.

"Well?" queried the single-eyed crimson little horror poking its head out of his pocket. "D'you think I have all day? Ask me what you want—and hurry up!"

Somehow Julius found what was left of his voice: "Who . . . what . . . are you?"

"Oh, oh," moaned the red mite, "did I get called away from a bit of the most gratifying torturing it has been my lot to administer in centuries . . . called away just to answer the stupid questions of a moron human?"

"B-but . . . b-but . . ."

"Stop repeating yourself. Don't you realize that the precise curves and angles of the figures you drew—coupled with the obscenities and the burning match—called me up to you?"

"Then—"

"Of course! Your combined acts geared together to form a spell. You're entitled to one wish, stupid, and I wish you'd get the lead out of your baggy pants."

Slowly . . . torturously . . . the enormity of what had happened enveloped the bulging-eyed Julius. His voice came in whistling gasps: "You . . . you are . . ."

"*A Demon.* And now will you *please* hurry."

WHIRLING worlds, with Julius as their core, came to a sudden, jarring, rending stop. The still, small voice of caution forced itself through his accustomed cloak of timorousness. "But I always thought . . .

read . . . that demons were large—with horns and forked tails—and . . ."

"Shut *up*, you misbegotten human," squalled the raging horror. "Did you ever *see* a demon?"

"I only meant . . ."

"Quiet, damn your human soul! You used a vest pocket size spell and got a vest pocket sized demon. Anything wrong with that?"

"No . . . *wait!* Did you say I get a wish? *Any* wish?"

The other shuddered. "Questions, questions. I'll go mad. Yes, dope, you get any wish. Only hurry—I've got *work* to do."

Julius seemed to gain sudden height. "All right, I've got a wish."

"Yes?"

"*I want to be a vampire!*"

"Mm-mm. Interesting. If you'll pardon my demonic curiosity, I'd appreciate knowing just why."

For perhaps the first time in his life Julius spoke surely. The words came steadily: "All my life I've hated fat people. They pick on me—remind me of what I am—"

"You are a rather sad specimen," observed the other.

"I want to get back at them . . . cut them down to my size. . . ."

The other nodded. "I quite see your point. By returning as a vampire and sucking their blood you'll cut their weight down."

"Exactly," Julius agreed happily.

"Of course, though, you will have to die first. Only way it can be done, you know."

"But—but—you'll definitely bring me back?"

"As a vampire? Oh yes. The spell guarantees you one wish . . . and you'll get it."

"Then," smiled Julius, "I'll be glad when I'm dead."

"Wait, human, are you sure?"

"You—you're not backing out on me, are you?"

"Dope! Certainly not! It's just that . . . well . . . in all my centuries I've never seen such a miserable specimen as yourself. What I'm trying to say, human, is that I'm *sorry* for you."

Julius' voice rose shrilly: "You're tricking me . . . trying to cheat me. . . ."

"No, human, it's merely the first authenticated case of a demon trying to help anybody."

"Lies—broken promise—" the skinny man's voice died away to a despairing gurgle.

"Very well, then, and stop that lousy snivelling. Only don't forget that I warned you. I'm a vest pocket size demon, and my spells . . ."

Julius broke in eagerly, as if afraid the other would change its mind. "Let's go to my house and get it over with."

Muttering something about "Vest pocket size and spells having to balance," the demon grumpily subsided.

Julius lay down, in his house, but asked one last question before he died.

"Don't worry," spat the demon in answer, "you'll come back and drink blood . . . damned, dopey, human fool!"

THE awakening was sudden. Julius knew he was alive. Things were slightly blurred . . . there seemed a limitless expanse of space about him . . . but he was

alive. And he was *flying*. Good old demon. He'd more than kept his promise. This was great.

Flying . . . *look!* An enormous blob of flesh beneath him. What a lovely beginning. What a wonderful subject to practice upon. Careful now . . . land softly. Ah. His first victim was a veritable giant, extending away in amazing manner. But no time to puzzle over that now. *Drink.*

Funny . . . very funny. Not the taste of the blood. No, that was good. But he had found out something. Vampires do *not* sink needle-sharp teeth into their victims' necks. All wrong. False. What they do is insert an incredibly sharp nose and . . .

Look. Run!

Grotesquely shaped like a mammoth starfish, a fleshy appendage was swinging down with horrifying speed. Run . . . fly . . . *splat!*

Punctuating the night with her steady snoring, Julius' wife turned over, her hand dropping off the side of the bed.

And, on the floor, a mashed mosquito quivered once . . . twice . . . and lay still.

