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CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1938

Number 5

- Cover Design M. Brundage
Illustrating a scene in "Goetterdaemmerung"
- Tam o' Shanter Virgil Finlay 513
Pictorial interpretation of a poem by Robert Burns
- Thunder in the Dawn Henry Kuttner 515
A story to stir the pulse—a tale of warlocks and wizards and valiant men of might in the far-off olden time
- Pigeons from Hell Robert E. Howard 534
A posthumous novelette of frightful death and three women whose bodies hung in a dreadful room of horror
- Goetterdaemmerung Seabury Quinn 554
There was a stunning impact as the car crashed, then a strange awakening—but what was the inscription on the tombstone in that ancient graveyard?
- Where Once Poe Walked H. P. Lovecraft 578
An acrostic poem
- The Secret of the Vault J. Wesley Rosenquest 579
What dread mystery lurked in the charnel chamber beneath the house, and what impious rites of life and death were performed there?
- The Isle of the Sleeper Edmond Hamilton 588
If we are but images in the dreams of some supernal being who slumbers, what will happen when the Sleeper awakes?
- Dreadful Sleep (end) Jack Williamson 598
A romantic and tragic novel about the fearsome beings that lay in slumber under the antarctic ice, and the tragic doom that their awakening brought to the earth
- Weird Story Reprint:
- Medusa Royal W. Jimerson 624
A creepy story about the strangely alive hair of a beautiful American girl
- The Eyrie 632
The readers of WEIRD TALES express their opinions

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The Isle of the Sleeper

By EDMOND HAMILTON

If we are but images in the dreams of some supernal being who slumbers, what will happen when the Sleeper awakes?—A strange and fantastic story

GARRISON lay face down on the life-raft and felt the sun slowly cooking his brain. After four days, his only sensations were of heat and thirst; he was too dizzily sick to feel hunger any more. The little raft rose and sank on the long, lazy Pacific swells, and each time it fell, the blue water gently smacked his face.

He knew dimly that he would not last much longer. It was only a matter of hours now until he would give way and gulp up the blue water that slapped so invitingly at his face, and then he would die rather horribly. Of course a sane man wouldn't drink sea-water, but then a man who has been floating in mid-Pacific four days without food or drink is not quite sane.

He thought bitterly again that the others were the lucky ones, those who had

gone to swift death when the explosion sank the *Mary D.* Those others of the crew, all of them, were at peace now, gently drifting and bumping down in the cool shadowed ooze of the bottom. It was only he, jumping instinctively from the freighter deck as the explosion ripped it, who had been unfortunate enough to live.

Garrison began thinking of water again. He knew that was only hastening the end, but he couldn't keep his weakened mind from doing it. Greedy visions floated through his brain, of silver brooks running over brown stones, of bubbling springs and placid rivers and blue lakes. He saw crystal tumblers of ice-water, beaded with frost. He sobbed, his face crushed against the hot, salt-crusting canvas.

Hours had become eternities for him.



"Three of the beast-men had left him and seized the girl."

He did not realize the sun had gone down, until the furnace-blast scorching him eased a little. Then he raised his head, opened bleared, red-rimmed eyes. It was night, and the raft drifted on dark, lulling waters, the sky a jungle thick with stars. Garrison let his face fall again.

How many eternities later was it that a new, startlingly unfamiliar sound impinged on his dimmed consciousness? A dull rasping and grinding, close to his ears. It began and ceased in roughly regular rhythm. Rasp, rasp—then silence. And then the rasp, rasp. . . .

The unfamiliarity of the sound roused

in his deadened brain a vague desire to investigate. He raised himself, as slowly and stiffly as a corpse coming alive, upon his elbows. He stared numbly. Two feet in front of his face was solid land.

The life-raft had drifted onto the sandy beach of a dark island, and lay now with one end grinding and rasping into the sand. There was no other sound but the sucking of the surf. The wheeling companies of stars looked solemnly down. The island stretched in front of Garrison, a dark, unguessable mass.

"It's land," he heard a dry voice croak.

Then Garrison realized that the voice

was his own. He was conscious that somehow he had staggered to his feet.

"Land," his salt-crusted lips whispered again.

Garrison stepped off the raft, and went to his knees on the sand. He hitched himself up by a miracle of drunken effort, and unsteadily he started forward in a blind, directionless run.

He ran in a clumsy, stooping posture, head sagging, thin hands hanging nervelessly. His dazed eyes could make out nothing in the darkness. He was like a blinded, maddened animal, moving by instinct rather than intelligence.

He slipped in loose sand, and tripped over rocks, but went reeling on. Then he tripped again and fell. And this time he did not get up. His tired body relaxed gratefully, luxuriously. His mind darkened, slipped into a shadowy dusk. He was aware only of the holy, dusky calm taking possession of his mind. This, then, was death? He slipped into darkness with the sigh of a tired child.

But later, Garrison awoke. That was a strange thing, he thought as consciousness first revived, to awake from death. But he knew suddenly that he was not dead. For fierce thirst still burned his throat, and how can a dead man feel thirst? He wrenched open his gummed, swollen eyelids—to the dazzling splash of bright sunshine.

BY CONVULSIVE effort, he got to a sitting position. Then with numbed, wild gaze he stared about him. His mind was too dazed to appreciate the full impact of the surprize, and he felt only a vague wonder at what he saw.

Around him rose a thick forest of unearthly beauty. Huge, black-trunked trees towered high above him, shutting out the sky with great masses of silvery foliage. Their interlacing branches were twined with dark, arboring vines. And on the

vines grew enormous, orchid-like blooms, wonderful, tender-hued flowers that cascaded in spilled beauty toward the green turf.

Brilliant macaws and parrots flashed screeching through the flowers, and liquid notes of bird-song tinkled sweetly. In the long, hushed silences, a soft wind wandered whispering through the trees, laden with strange, spicy scents and haunting undertones of exquisite perfume.

Garrison stared dazedly. Then through the trees he saw a shining thread of water, a tiny, fern-fringed brook singing through the woods. The crazed longing of four days burst into raging life within him. He ran weakly forward, with an inarticulate cry. A minute later he was lying flat, crushing the ferns, his face buried in the cool crystal stream.

It took all his will to force himself to stop drinking. He was trembling when he raised his head from the water, and his parched mouth and withered tongue seemed slowly expanding. Tears twitched his eyelids.

"I'm saved," he sobbed hoarsely. "Saved!"

Garrison forced himself to get up and stumble away from the stream. He felt even yet no hunger, but he knew that he needed food.

Close by he found it, a tall tree heavy with round red fruit. The fruit looked and tasted like an apple but had a hard, stone-like core. When he had eaten some of it, he felt a little stronger. And he saw now that he was in no danger of starving, for there were many trees with fruit.

Also, there was plenty of life evident in this hushed, faery forest. Brown hares bolted through the ferns, and flying squirrels shot in dizzy arcs from branch to branch, and monkeys chattered in the distance.

"Lucky, to stumble on this island," he mumbled. "Most islands in this part of the Pacific are just bare rock. Probably isn't very big—and doesn't look inhabited at all."

He started in an unsteady tramp toward the distant boom of the surf. He was astounded, as he went, by the variety of life he glimpsed. Two spotted leopards, bounding up a distant tree. Grunting wild pigs rooting in thickets. He heard a hyena somewhere near him, barking in the brush. Deer in large number, swift and beautiful. It seemed incredible to find such life on a small Pacific island.

Then he emerged from the thick woods onto a narrow, sandy beach. The white blob of the life-raft lay on the sand where the tide had left it. Sweeping his gaze along the shore, Garrison saw that the island was five miles long, and two across. It was all blanketed by the thick forest, a green isle sleeping on the vast bosom of the sea. There were no signs whatever that humans had ever been here.

Garrison started trudging along the shore, for it was easier going on the beach than in the forest. He had gone less than a half-mile when out of the woods beside him suddenly stepped the girl. She appeared so startlingly that he stood frozen, staring at her.

"Lord above!" he exclaimed. "Where did *you* come from?"

She smiled. "My name is Myrrha," she said.

She was a white girl—he saw that first. Then his stunned brain perceived that this girl was young and lovely. He doubted if she was more than seventeen. Her dress was queer—a scanty tunic of soft white cloth, belted with a jeweled girdle. Her ivory shoulders were left bare by it, and its skirt stopped short of her rounded knees.

Her eyes were steady on his face. They were soft, wistfully tender black eyes, in which doubt mixed with glad eagerness. Her red-ripe lips were parted a little in excitement. Black silky hair was combed back in a soft mass from her broad, low brow.

"Myrrha?" Garrison repeated dazedly.

"From in the forest, I saw you here," she said, with a quick gesture of slim fingers. Excitement was eager in her eyes as she added, "I was so glad that at last there is somebody else."

"You mean that you and I are the only people on the island?" Garrison cried. "That you've been here alone?"

Myrrha nodded. "Yes, except for the Sleeper, of course."

"The Sleeper?" Garrison could not comprehend her. He cried, "How long have you been on the island?"

"Ever since I can remember, of course," she said, looking at him wonderingly.

"But how did you get here?" he exclaimed.

"I don't understand you," Myrrha said perplexedly. "I have been here from the first. I am part of the dream, the same as you and everything else here."

"Part of the dream?" Garrison echoed. "What in the world do you mean by that?"

MYRRHA'S puzzlement increased. She looked at him with astonished wonder in her clear eyes.

"You mean, you don't understand it?" she asked. "Why, that is strange—I understood it all from the first. Though I don't know just *how* I did——"

"Will you quit talking riddles and explain?" Garrison demanded. Then he saw the hurt in her child-like eyes and awkwardly tempered his speech. "I'm sorry. I'm just excited, impatient. What

did you mean by saying you were part of the dream?"

Her answer stunned him.

"Everything here is just a dream," Myrrha said, with the eager quickness of a child trying to explain something. "This island is really just barren rock, and the forest and animals and you and I are only a dream. They all seem real to us, of course, since we too are part of the dream."

"Why—you're crazy!" Garrison exploded. "This forest—the animals—you—a dream? And I, too?"

"Of course," Myrrha said earnestly. "You are part of the dream, the same as I am."

Garrison repressed a strong desire to swear. Then he felt pity for the girl. She believed what she was saying, he saw. She must, he thought, have grown up here alone, and somehow evolved this wild theory.

"Whose dream is it we're part of, Myrrha?" he asked, humoring her. "Who dreamt us?"

"The Sleeper, of course," she said instantly.

Garrison felt a strong desire to laugh. This was, surely, the most insane adventure he had ever had.

"And who is the Sleeper?" he asked.

Myrrha's soft face sobered with a touch of awe. "He is just—the Sleeper. He lies in the depths of the forest, sleeping, never waking. And whatever he dreams has reality on this island. The Sleeper dreamed the forests and brooks you see around you. He dreamed the animals, and the birds. He dreamed *me*—and I was suddenly here. Since I have been here, he has dreamed many other animals, but no other people until you. I am glad he dreamed you. I was lonely!"

And Myrrha's dark eyes broke into a dancing smile of pleasure. Her soft, bare

arm hooked through Garrison's with confident affection.

"So the Sleeper dreamed me, did he?" Garrison said amusedly. "I'd like to see this Sleeper."

The awe came back on Myrrha's face and she answered slowly.

"I can take you to see him. But you must promise not to go near him."

And quite simply, she started to lead the way off the beach into the woods, following an invisible trail of her own that led deviously toward the center of the forested island.

Parrots and monkeys scolded them as they trod the green turf between aisles of giant, flower-decked trees. The soft wind swept them with spicy, perfumed breath. In the air hummed a myriad of gorgeous insects.

Myrrha was like a gay little wood-nymph at his side, laughing up at the scolding birds, plucking a great blue bloom from a vine to thrust in her black hair, dancing along on little bare white feet. But once she held Garrison suddenly back, and he saw the dangerously beautiful shape of a leopard fade into the foliage ahead.

"I could wish that the Sleeper hadn't dreamed *them*," Garrison said dryly.

"Those are only his bad dreams," Myrrha said earnestly. "He has dreamed many beautiful things here, but sometimes he dreams too of evil things."

"Logical enough," Garrison laughed. "How did you figure all that out?"

Myrrha smiled back as she shook her head. "I don't know. It was in my mind, somehow, when the Sleeper dreamed me."

They had threaded through more than a mile of the faery forest, and now entered a long glade of tall, tremendous trees, a natural cathedral of green gloom and hushed silence. Myrrha pressed

against Garrison a little timidly as they went on.

"We are near the Sleeper," she whispered. "Make no loud sound. All life on the island fears to go near him, and even I—I am afraid."

CURIOSITY stirred in Garrison as they went forward. Then as they stopped in a moment, sharp wonder replaced it.

They stood at the edge of a perfectly circular clear space in the hushed green glade. Grass covered it like an emerald carpet. Out there in the center of the circle, in the sunlight there was inset in the grass a low, square dais of dazzling crystal.

On the crystal dais stood a low copper couch, with strangely carved sides. And on the couch, wrapped in a robe of golden cloth ornamented with black figures, lay the motionless figure of a man.

He lay quite unmoving, upon his side, one bare arm flung across his down-turned head. As Garrison went closer, Myrrha fearfully trying to keep him back, he saw that the man's hair was dark, his skin white. Nothing else could be seen, shrouded as he was in the golden robe.

"The Sleeper," whispered Myrrha. She had halted him with plucking fingers, a dozen feet from the crystal dais. Her dark eyes were wide with awe as she stared at the recumbent figure.

"Good Lord, this must be a corpse laid here for burial by some unknown race, long ago!" Garrison exclaimed. "But how it has been preserved perfectly for so long, lying here in the open——"

"No, he is not dead, only sleeping," murmured Myrrha. "Speak not so loudly, lest you awaken him."

"I'm going to examine that body," Garrison muttered with intense interest, starting forward.

W. T.—6

But Myrrha held him, clinging frantically, her face chalk-white with terror.

"No, you must not! If you awaken the Sleeper, his dream will end—we and everything else he has dreamed into being on the island will perish!"

"Nonsense," he said, but she held to him.

"Remember, you promised you would not go near him!" There was frantic horror and heartbreak in her voice.

Garrison softened at sight of the girl's terrified emotion.

"All right," he told her. "I'll let him alone."

Myrrha drew him fearfully back out of the sunlit clearing into the glade. She led hastily back the way they had come, looking apprehensively behind her.

"Had you awakened him, you would have destroyed us all," she told him, a catch in her voice. "That is why all the animals, even, do not go near the Sleeper—somehow they sense that."

Garrison felt he understood all this. There must once have been a civilized race on this unknown island, one that had embalmed the dead man so perfectly that he had lain indefinitely on his copper couch, unchanged. The animals, fearing the dead, would avoid him.

And it was natural that Myrrha, growing up alone on the island, would think the corpse a sleeper and evolve her weird belief that everything on the island was the Sleeper's dream. For Garrison had no doubt now that Myrrha was a castaway like himself, grown up here from childhood.

She was happy now with child-like relief as they left the glade of the Sleeper behind them.

"I take you now to my home, Garrison," she said, trying to repeat his name as he had told it to her.

Garrison looked back thoughtfully and said, "I'd like to have a closer look at that body sometime."

Instantly the panic flashed back on Myrrha's face. She clung to him, desperate entreaty in her eyes.

"Gair'son, you must never touch the Sleeper! It is as I said—if he ever awakes, we who are only his dream will meet our end. Promise me you'll never touch him!"

He could feel her heart hammer with terror. "All right, Myrrha," he said soothingly. "I promise not to touch him."

THEY came soon to Myrrha's home. It was on a wooded slope at the north end of the island, amid great trees. A foaming little stream rushed down there, and right beside it snuggled a dainty bower of twisted green withes, thatched with velvety moss.

Myrrha showed him how she had made a door of boughs that could be closed at night against the animals. And she showed him fruit and nuts she had collected for food, and the soft couch she had made of fragrant ferns.

"It will not be lonely now, with you here, Gair'son," she said fondly.

"But I can't live in this too," he objected.

"Why not?" Myrrha asked, clear eyes puzzled. "It is big enough for both of us."

Garrison tried awkwardly to explain.

Her eyes filled with tears and her soft mouth quivered. "You do not like me, Gair'son."

Hastily, he tried to soothe her. And as he held her, he was suddenly conscious of the appeal of her soft beauty, of her rounded ivory body and graceful limbs that the scanty tunic scarcely concealed, of the pure forehead and wide, hurt dark eyes beneath her silky black hair.

"Myrrha," he muttered.

And somehow then he was holding her tighter, fragrant red lips against his own hungry ones, silkiest of perfumed black hair against his hand. "Myrrha—Myrrha——"

So began Garrison's life with Myrrha on the island. It was a fantastic life, and yet it was more real to him in the next few days than all his past life in the busy, bustling world.

It was Myrrha who made it so warmly real for him. It seemed to him that he had never known what love was until he met this girl, so child-like in her utter simplicity of mind, so wonderfully womanly in her soft loveliness and devotion to him.

He wondered much how Myrrha had come to the island, how she had survived and grown here. And she was able to tell him but little. Her notions of time were vague. She had been on the island just as now, she said, ever since the Sleeper dreamed her.

And when Myrrha talked so earnestly of the Sleeper, Garrison would smile and draw her fondly closer. He made no more attempts to disillusion her of her belief, for he saw that nothing could shake her queer faith. But Garrison wondered much about that lifeless form on the copper couch.

ON THE third morning, Garrison and Myrrha went down the wooded slope from the bower—and stopped in surprize. A small lake had appeared at the foot of the hill—a blue, shining little lake that had not been there the night before.

Myrrha clapped her hands in glee. "Gair'son, look! The Sleeper has dreamed a lake!"

"You think the Sleeper dreamed this lake, too?" Garrison said, though he was himself surprized.

"Of course," she said confidently.

He laughed. "Something happened to dam up that little stream during the night—that's what did it."

"It is not so," Myrrha asserted. "It was the Sleeper's dream."

"We are such stuff as dreams are made on," quoted Garrison, smiling. "No matter how it came here, it looks like a good place to swim. Come on!"

But in the next few days, there were things that Garrison found harder to explain than the lake.

There were the elephants, for instance. Garrison saw them one afternoon, two huge, humped gray shapes pushing ponderously through the distant forest. He stood rooted in amazement.

"Why didn't you tell me there were elephants on the island?" Garrison exclaimed to the girl.

Myrrha shook her head. "There never were any until now, Gair'son. The Sleeper must have just dreamed them."

"Rubbish," he said impatiently. "They've been here—you just didn't happen to see them before."

Yet he had inward doubts. He and Myrrha had been over all the island in the last few days, and had seen no elephants or tracks of any. Yet the great beasts were here now, beyond doubt.

It was the same with the giant, three-foot blue butterflies he saw the next day, and the seals that appeared in the lake a day later. They had not been there before—they were there now. And Myrrha said quite simply the Sleeper had dreamed them too.

"Sleeper, my eye!" Garrison said impatiently. He told her, "I'm going and look at that body again."

"You will not go too near the Sleeper—will not touch him?" Myrrha pleaded anxiously. "Remember, you promised me——"

"I'll keep my promise," he reassured her.

"I will go with you," Myrrha declared.

"Don't quite trust me, eh?" he smiled.

"It is not that, Gair'son," she said earnestly. "But we have been so happy—I fear lest something you do might awake the Sleeper, and bring an end to us and everything else here."

This time his arm was about her waist as they went through the forest, and into that hushed and solemn glade of green gloom where no life seemed ever to venture. And he could feel her heart pounding as they came to that silent, circular space of sunlight.

In its center still dazzled the crystal dais, and upon it still stood the copper couch on which rested the body of the Sleeper. He lay as before, wrapped in the shrouding golden robe, one arm across his down-turned head.

"A miracle of preservation, that body," Garrison muttered, staring. "Archeologists would go crazy to examine——"

He stopped, for Myrrha had shuddered wildly beside him. The girl gasped, "Look—the Sleeper stirs, and sighs!"

For a moment, Garrison almost thought he *did* see a faint movement of the body under the golden shroud, almost thought he heard a low, singing groan. Then he dismissed the fantastic idea.

"It was just the wind sighing, and stirring the robe, Myrrha," he said. But her face was aghast with fear.

"Gair'son, let us leave here, quickly! The Sleeper is having bad dreams—and that means evil on the island!"

As she led him frantically back through the glade, the girl was quivering with terror.

"I am afraid, Gair'son! The Sleeper groaned and that means his dream was evil."

He held her trembling softness close to him. "Don't be afraid, Myrrha."

But that night, fear came to Garrison himself, for there came—the beast-men. He awoke in the little bower, Myrrha still sleeping in his arms, and heard strange, heavy foot-steps outside, snuffling grunts, a clumsy clawing at the door.

Then the rude door was torn open, and against the starlit sky he saw the dark silhouettes of the creatures outside. Hunched, huge, hairy shapes of men nearer the animal than the human, with bowed, gorilla-like limbs and bestial snouted faces out of which green eyes blazed through the darkness at the frozen Garrison.

"The things of evil that the Sleeper dreamed!" screamed Myrrha, awakening at that moment.

THE bestial figures started to enter, unloosing a babel of chattering and grunting as they heard the girl's voice. Their hairy hands reached in the dark—and then Garrison broke from the trance that had held him, and went mad with terror and loathing.

He smashed wild blows against the hairy bodies, yelling his horror. The creatures recoiled out of the dark hut, running swiftly back on hunched legs into the trees.

"Myrrha, we've got to get out of here before they come back!" Garrison cried unsteadily. "Come on!"

He was half carrying her as he plunged out of the bower, and ran into the dark forest. In a moment they heard the raging, chattering uproar of the beast-men, tearing the bower apart.

Garrison's horror-clouded mind recovered itself only minutes later. His frantic flight had brought Myrrha and him into a dark thicket of tall bushes.

"Gair'son, *they* are what the Sleeper dreamed today as we watched!" cried Myrrha, shuddering wildly. "I knew his dreams were evil."

"Listen!" Garrison suddenly exclaimed. And they both heard an angry, chattering uproar drawing closer in the forest.

"God, they're trailing us!" cried Garrison, aghast. "They want—they want *you*, Myrrha."

He wrenched a great branch from a tree, and with the rude club in his hand, stumbled blindly on through the woods with Myrrha. And after them, veering to follow them, came the pursuit.

Hour after hour they dodged and fled through the nighted forest, and always the chattering, unclean horde pursued. The paling dawn found them at the southern end of the island, Myrrha exhausted and clinging pitifully to him.

"We can't run from them for ever," Garrison said hoarsely. "Sooner or later, they'll catch up to us."

Then sudden hope lit his haggard face. "Maybe they wouldn't follow us to that clearing where the Sleeper lies! None of the animals on the island ever go there."

"No, let us not go there!" Myrrha cried.

But he overrode her protests, stumbled desperately with her through the woods to the hushed, solemn glade that lay silent as ever in the rising sun.

He carried the fainting girl to within a dozen feet of the crystal dais. On his couch, the Sleeper's dark, down-turned head was still immobile under his up-flung arm and golden robe.

"I am afraid," Myrrha whispered, looking fearfully at the motionless form.

"We're safe here, I think," Garrison panted. "They won't follow——"

"*Gair'son!*"

Out of the glade into the clearing had burst the unclean, hairy horde—the beast-men!

Myrrha's scream catapulted Garrison fiercely forward to meet them, to hold them from her. His heavy club swung in

raging blows that crushed the skulls of two of the creatures like eggshells.

But the others came at him, with shrill yells of animal rage, bestial, snouted faces slavering their rage, reaching for him with incredibly powerful hands. He slammed the club wildly against their faces, crushing bone and muscle. Then Myrrha screamed again.

Garrison turned for a split second, and cried out hoarsely. Three of the beast-men had left the attack on him, had circled past him and had seized the girl. Ivory body struggling in the grip of hairy arms—Garrison's blood froze at the sight. And before he could turn back, hands gripped him, too.

"Myrrha!" he cried madly, struggling to smash aside his own attackers, to reach her side.

He glimpsed her white face, her horror-dilated eyes. He heard her frantic cry.

"Gair'son—wake the Sleeper! It's better for us all, for everything here to perish, than for us to die like this——"

He couldn't reach her. The clawing, hairy hands held him back, would have him down in a moment.

"Wake the Sleeper, Gair'son! End everything——"

The beast-men had him to his knees, by now. His red-lit, tortured soul knew that there was no hope of saving Myrrha, no hope except the wild one that her cry had voiced. If he woke the Sleeper—if that did end Myrrha, everything—better for her to end that way.

Garrison made a last effort against the clutching, tearing claws. He swung his club wildly around his head, and threw it straight at the motionless form on the copper couch. He saw the club strike the Sleeper's bare shoulder, saw blood flow from the bruising wound. And then he

glimpsed the Sleeper stirring wildly, starting up to a sitting position. . . .

A sudden mistiness came over everything. The trees, the grass, the dais and couch, Myrrha's white body and the hairy beast-men—all seemed suddenly fading, vanishing. And Garrison was aware that his own body, too, was vanishing, fading.

Through dimming sight, as his own body disappeared, he saw the Sleeper sitting up, opening his eyes. And in the final moment before his body vanished, before everything vanished, Garrison saw and recognized the Sleeper's face.

It was his own face! He, Garrison, was vanishing like everything else—but the Sleeper was Garrison, too, and the Sleeper had awakened.

With that incredible realization, his consciousness whirled into darkness. And then instantly he was conscious again. And he found himself sitting stiffly and alone in the sunlight, Myrrha and the beast-men and all else gone. He, the Sleeper, had awakened.

Wildly, Garrison stared. He had been lying on bare rock, and around him stretched a lifeless, barren island of rock without one spot of life, one speck of green. And Garrison sobbed aloud as he realized.

He, who had stumbled ashore and fallen into exhausted slumber here, had been the Sleeper. And his dream had created the forest and animals and Myrrha, and had even created a dream-Garrison like himself who had lived and loved in this domain of dream. And when he had awakened, the dream had failed and vanished.

Something made him turn his sagging head to the sea. The black speck of a ship was out there, heading for the island. . . .

THE captain of the tanker felt sympathetic toward this castaway he had rescued, and who lay now in the berth of his lamplit cabin. He felt glad that his search for survivors of the *Mary D.*, that he had begun on receiving the doomed freighter's interrupted distress call, had saved at least this one man. But the gray-haired seaman's kindly face was troubled, now, and he spoke reluctantly.

"I don't doubt you had a wild dream of some kind," he said. "Lying delirious on that rocky island—who wouldn't?"

"It wasn't just a delirious dream—this dream was a *reality!*" Garrison cried. "Those things I dreamed, the forest and beasts and the girl and the other me—they all had real existence, somehow, as long as I lay dreaming them."

"Oh, come now," the captain told him. "You're too intelligent to believe that."

"I do believe it, though," Garrison said. And his eyes glimmered with tears. "I believe that I met the only girl I'll ever love in a dream that was real and solid while it lasted.

"How was the dream made real? I don't know—I don't know. Maybe some queer force impregnating that island, attuned to the mental force of the subconscious mind. Whatever caused it, I know that it all *was* real. I know—by this."

And he rolled up his sleeve, baring his shoulder. There was a fresh, angry wound on it.

"That is the wound the other Garrison, the dream Garrison, made in the Sleeper's shoulder when he threw the club. I didn't have that wound when I fell asleep on the island. I had it when I awoke."