

Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

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D. MCGILWRAITH, Editor.

LAMONT BUCHANAN, Associate Editor.

Mayaya's

Little Green Men

By
HAROLD LAWLOR



Heading
by
**LEE
BROWN-
COYE**

I HAVE it here in the lower right-hand drawer of my desk, in a pint Mason jar full of alcohol. A gruesome souvenir, some might say, but I look upon it as a talisman. And—who knows?—some day I may go to Trinidad. . . .

Mayaya came unexpectedly, and just in the nick of time. For Peggy had been doing the cooking and cleaning, inefficiently enough, this long week past, and she was on the verge of hysteria that morning.

A rambling, reconverted farmhouse,

twenty miles from town, is all very well and beautiful—in the decorators' magazines. But we'd had hell's own time of it trying to keep servants—three batches of them in less than two months. They couldn't stand the isolation, the lack of amusements.

So there were just the three of us now in a house with twelve rooms, two studios, and four baths; my wife Peggy, our three-year-old son Scooter, and myself. The servant-less week had left Peggy a wraith—a somewhat peevish wraith.

"No, no, no!" she said to Scooter, as

-It's here—see—in this pint Mason jar; look but don't open!

we were at breakfast that morning in the kitchen. "The oatmeal goes *in* your face, darling, not on it."

Peggy's voice was on the thin edge, and I should have known better. I should have kept my mouth shut. But I said, "You've really exceeded yourself this morning, baby. The coffee is even lousier than yesterday's."

Peggy glared at me, speechless. Then her face broke up, and she laid her head in her arms on the table, and bawled. "If you can do any better," she cried incoherently, "go right ahead! I'm fed up! I'm nearly crazy! Max phoning me this morning that if I don't get the illustrations done for the Nellis book I'll never get another job out of them, so help him. And I'm three weeks behind now. And the bathrooms to be cleaned! And who *wanted* to live in the country, anyway? *You* did!"

"Sh, sh, sh!" For some time I'd been trying to stem the tide. "There, baby, calm down, for the love of Mike. We'll get somebody yet. And, anyway, I'll help—"

"A fat lot of help you are," Peggy sniffed. "You and your darned old soap operas."

"Yes, and where would we be if I didn't get an installment out every day, I'd like to know! You like to eat, don't you?"

"You can't *talk* to me like that!" Peggy cried.

"Oh, can't I?" We stood there glaring at each other, shaping up to a nice battle.

Scooter then added his bit to the general confusion by crying, "Whee!" and shoving his dish of oatmeal onto the linoleum.

"Oh, my God!" Peggy wailed at this last straw. "And I spent all day yesterday scrubbing that blasted—"

Obviously we were badly in need of help. Then the knock came on the kitchen door.

Peggy was in no condition to answer it, with her face all tear-streaked. I banded her my handkerchief sulkily. "Here, wipe your face. I don't know which is the bigger baby, you or Scooter. I'll go."

"Oh, shut up," Peggy said mildly.

So I opened the door, and Mayaya was there, smiling.

"GOOD day," she said softly. "I understand you are in need of domestic help?"

I couldn't help but stare. She was a very superior-looking colored girl. At least I thought she was colored, though she was no darker than well-creamed coffee. And rather beautiful, with unrouged skin; wine-red lips, and dark lustrous eyes. She was an undeniable figure of chic in her plain black coat and hat, and looked totally unlike any household help I'd ever seen before.

Peggy recovered first. "For heaven's sake, Jay, ask her in. You might even roll out the red carpet."

Our visitor laughed huskily, with a sound like muted chimes. "I'm Mayaya," she introduced herself.

"If you can make coffee, you're hired," I said.

Peggy glared at me for this. "And we'll get other servants to help you, just as soon as possible," she enticed.

The girl was already taking off her coat and hat, to our relief. She shooed us gently out of the kitchen, and in less than a half-hour called us to the breakfast room. The china, silver, glassware, were shining—which they certainly hadn't been under Peggy's inexpert ministrations. Scooter was already seated and—miracle!—his face was even clean for a change.

"Pinch me," Peggy whispered. "I don't believe a word of this."

Neither did I. But the coffee was marvelous. I smacked my lips.

"The bacon, the eggs, the muffins!" Peggy was almost delirious. "We've found ourselves a pearl!"

"What'd she say her name was, again?" I asked.

"Sounded like she said 'Me-yah-yah' to me."

"Never heard of a name like that."

"Listen," Peggy said intensely. "If she can go on like this, I don't care if she calls herself Ming Toy Fatima O'Rourke!"

Neither did I. We beamed at each other. Peace was restored. All was right with the world.

We thought.

There was just one small thing troubling me slightly. When Mayaya came in with more muffins—neat, clean, a candy pink *tignon* wrapped around her head—I asked her, "How did you know we were in need of domestic help?"

And that was when she said the strange thing.

She laughed throatily, "Oh, the little green men told me."

The little green men!

Well, we didn't think it so strange at the time. I thought it was just a phrase, a gag, one of those things you say. There was no impudence behind it, and as we were too glad to have her, we weren't really very curious to learn just how she'd known of our desperate need for a servant. So we dismissed the little green men from our minds.

For a while.

MAYAYA promised to keep a watchful eye on Scooter, so Peggy went off to her studio, and I went off to mine, and soon lost myself in the fictional woes of Ma Costello and her brood. (Universal Network. 10:45 a.m. It'll tear your heart out.) It was wonderful to be able to work again—without stopping to blow Scooter's nose, or having to call up the laundry to bawl them out for ripping my shirts.

At noon I'd got Ma nicely embroiled with a loan shark, and her youngest son threatened with the reformatory (though innocent as an unborn babe), and her oldest daughter's lovable daughter stricken with acute appendicitis, when there was an interruption.

Peggy knocked on my door, and when I opened it she said solemnly, "Spooks!"

"Spooks?"

"M-h'm. Come and look."

She led me to the living room, and then stood there eyeing me expectantly. Clearly she expected me to be bowled over. But I couldn't see anything at first.

I blinked, and said, "So what?"

"Well, *look*, dummy! It's clean. And so are the other eleven rooms. And the four baths! Look at the gloss on that piano! Look at the windows, the blinds, the draperies. Spotless!"

I said, "You mean Mayaya did all this? In four hours? Alone?"

"And looked after Scooter besides!"

"It's impossible, I said flatly, knowing Scooter.

"It certainly is, Peggy agreed. "What did I tell you? Spooks!"

It made us just curious enough to ring for Mayaya. When the girl came in—neat, unobtrusive—Peggy cleared her throat. "Mayaya, the house looks beautiful. You couldn't have done this all alone?"

"Oh, no, Mrs. Chase."

Peggy and I looked bewildered. "Well, then, *who*—?"

Mayaya said, "The little green men. They helped me."

I started to laugh. I couldn't help it. After a minute, Peggy began to laugh, too, joined in. The three of us stood there laughing like fools. And what we were laughing at, I don't know. Nothing made any sense.

When Mayaya excused herself, and went back to the kitchen, I said to Peggy, "Our pearl is a jewel of the first water, honey, but she's nuts."

"She must be. Jay, do you suppose it's safe to leave Scooter with her? I know she adores him already, but—"

"Well, she doesn't seem to be violent. And, anyway, maybe we're wronging her. Maybe there really *are* some little green men."

"Jay, darling! Don't be a blithering, driveling idiot!"

But, nevertheless, Peggy looked thoughtful. And so did I.

Definitely, the little green men were beginning to intrigue us.

BUT something happened that evening that wasn't funny. At least, we didn't think so. We saw it with our own eyes, and I don't mind telling you I could feel every hair on my scalp itching to stand erect as I watched. Not that it was such a macabre incident. It was just—impossible. Yet it happened.

Peggy, in chartreuse slacks, was sprawled on the floor in front of the fireplace reading a magazine. Scooter was upstairs in bed. Mayaya was in the kitchen washing the dinner dishes. And I was at the piano, picking out with one finger the *Meditation* from Massenet's *Thais*, which Peggy always claims gives her the colly-wobbles, whatever they are.

She said now, "Jay."

"Um?" I said, absorbed. The artist. I hit A instead of B flat, and winced myself.

"I'm not likely to fall asleep while you're

striking all those sour notes," Peggy said tartly, "but it really is stuffy in here. Open a window, will you, there's a lamb?"

"Can't."

"I know they're stuck, ever since the painters finished. But try again, Jay, please."

"Am I Tarzan, the ape? I like to broke my back last night trying to get 'em open, and—"

I broke off, struck by something in Peggy's expression. She was staring over my shoulder, her mouth open, her eyes wide. I turned to see what she was looking at.

The window behind me was sliding open of itself, easily, silently.

There was absolutely no one near it.

I tell you, it gave me the damnedest sensation in the small of my back: Like tiny mice scurrying up my spine.

Halfway up, the window stopped rising. The draperies swayed faintly in the breeze. And I turned at last to look at Peggy, my jaw ajar, like her own.

We stared at each other, speechless. Peggy was the first to regain her voice. She usually is.

She said, "Jay, wasn't that the strangest thing?"

It was the well-known rhetorical question. I didn't bother to answer. Instead I got up and went over to the window. And I'm ashamed to say I was almost afraid to touch it. But at last I put my hands on the sash and tried to shove it down.

I couldn't force it down any more than I could open it the night before. It was stuck fast in its frame, and it stayed stuck, though I shoved and heaved till I was red in the face, using all my strength, and I'm no lightweight.

I gave up at last, and I tell you I backed away from the window, never taking my eyes off it. Weakly I sat down on the piano bench. Peggy came over and huddled on it beside me. I put my arm around her, and we sat there gaping at the window as if we were hypnotized:

"Of course, there's one explanation—" I said at last, half in jest.

Peggy nodded, but she wasn't laughing. "The little green men," she whispered.

Well, this couldn't go on forever. On a sudden decision, I rang for Mayaya. She came in presently and stood before us re-

spectfully, her head swathed in a poison-green *ignon*—a strangely exotic figure there in our living room. She looked at us inquiringly.

I swallowed. "Mâyaya, I've been unable to open these windows since the painters finished a week ago. Yet tonight, when Mrs. Chase expressed a wish to have one of them open—one of them opened of itself."

If I had hoped to disconcert her, or expected expressions of disbelief or ignorance of the whole thing, I was disappointed.

Mayaya smiled faintly. It was as if she were secretly enchanted, and a little proud. "It might have been the little green men," she said. "They heard—and helped."

"But Mâyaya!" I protested. "This is insane! Who—or what—are the little green men?"

"I do not know, Mr. Chase. When I left Trinidad to come to the States, *Maman* said they must accompany me."

"But we can't see them!" Peggy broke in.

"Oh, no, Mrs. Chase," Mayaya agreed. "Myself; I have never seen them either. I just know—they are there."

She beamed at us as if everything were reasonably explained. Eliciting information from Mâyaya, we found, was like pushing one of those roly-poly toys children play with. You push it down, and think you have it down, and it bounces right back again, leaving you with a horrible feeling of frustration.

I tried again. "But Mâyaya, we can't have the house cluttered up with invisible men!" I sounded like a fool, and I knew it, which didn't add to my peace of mind. "It's—it's eerie."

"But they have offered you no harm, Mr. Chase!" Mayaya protested. Her lovely eyes filled mistily. "Of course, if you want me to leave—"

Well, we didn't want her to leave. And in all fairness I have to admit we had no reason to think that Mâyaya was laughing up her sleeve at us. It was obvious that she sincerely believed in the little green men.

So Peggy and I both protested we didn't want her to go. And that was the way the interview ended. Mâyaya stayed.

And we were stuck with the little green men.

Peggy said, half-hysterically, "So help me, from now on I'll be afraid to take a shower!"

SCOOTER was next to be touched with the idiocy.

A scream from Peggy next morning brought me to my feet with a jerk. Life in the country, where we'd hoped to find peace, was rapidly becoming a nightmare. Leaving Mā Costello in the middle of a garrulous, valiant speech, her head bloody but still unbowed as it were, I raced for the stairs.

"Jay Chase, will you look at this child? What in the world—!"

Our nearest neighbor, Myles Slavitt, was standing in the hall, and in his arms was Scooter, dripping wet. Now that the initial sensation was over, Scooter seemed a little bored with it all.

"I faw inna fiss-pool," he announced matter-of-factly, albeit with a slightly apprehensive eye on me.

We had no time to question him in the ensuing confusion, while we got him upstairs, and dried him, and called the doctor. When the doctor came, he said there was still a little water in Scooter's lungs, but not much.

"Someone did a little excellent life-saving work, here," the doctor observed, "and got the rest of the water out promptly."

Naturally we thought it had been Slavitt. And though Peggy and I had never liked the man—he was too oleaginous, his manner too ingratiating—still we felt we owed him a debt of gratitude.

The doctor finally left, after putting Scooter to bed.

"And stay there, see?" I said at the door. "I hear you out of that bed inside of an hour, I'll come up and annihilate you."

Scooter smiled at me seraphically. And fell asleep. It had been just another incident in his crowded days.

Slavitt was still waiting downstairs.

Well, Scooter, as it transpired, hadn't fallen into a fishpool. He'd fallen into Myles Slavitt's swimming pool, near the diving board, where the water is twelve feet deep. And thereby hung a tale, according to Slavitt.

He seemed deeply puzzled by it all. "I didn't see him fall in. I was shaving in the upstairs bathroom, and I just happened to

look out the window and see the little fella come up for what must have been the second or third time. Now I'm a heavy man, as you can see, and the pool is a long roundabout way from the house. There was no one else in sight. I thought the little fella was a goner, sure. It must have been all of ten minutes before I reached the pool, though I ran as fast as I could."

Peggy shivered, and moved closer to me.

"Well, sir," Slavitt said, bewildered; "When I got there, the kid was sitting on the edge of the pool, dripping wet and coughing a little, but otherwise okay. Now the water is low, and it's a good two-foot reach to grab the edge of the pool from inside. There's an overhang and it's quite a little job for a full-grown man to drag himself up. And the ladder out of the pool is way off at the shallow end. Besides, the kid couldn't swim, could he?"

"No," I said. I was feeling kind of peculiar, and doing a little puzzled thinking myself.

Slavitt nodded his head. "Then how did the little fella get out?" he asked triumphantly.

I shook my head slightly at Peggy, who looked as if she were about to speak. I thought I knew what she was going to say, and there was no use letting Slavitt think we were out of our minds.

"Somebody must have pulled him out." I ventured.

"That's just it!" Slavitt said. "There wasn't anybody around at all. Nobody's going to save a kid that size from drowning, and then just walk off and leave him, are they? It don't make sense."

"Well, who pumped the water out of his lungs? You?"

"No. He was all right when I got there, I tell you. Yet somebody must have done it. Who?"

There wasn't any answer. At least, no answer either Peggy or I cared to make to Slavitt.

Well, there was nothing to do but wait for our neighbor to leave, and Scooter to awaken from his nap so that we could question him. In the meantime, we were grateful to Slavitt, so Peggy rang for drinks.

It's strange to remember now that Slavitt's kindly errand of mercy was really

the starting point for the tragedy that was to follow.

Mayaya came in with the tray of drinks, neat and trim in her mulberry uniform. She looked the ideal maid, except for the turban of bon-bon yellow in which her head was wrapped.

I didn't like the look that came into Slavitt's face when he saw her, nor the way his eyes followed her as she moved about. I sensed that Mayaya was aware of his gaze, too, and resented it. Peggy was at the far end of the long living room, pouring salted nuts into a silver compote, and after a hasty glance in her direction, Slavitt nodded at Mayaya and said to me:

"Likely looking gal. Colored?"

I said, "Yes," shortly.

Slavitt chuckled, and said too loud, "Dark meat's sweetest, eh?" with a nudge and a leer at me.

It was hard to remember the man was a guest in the house. Peggy heard, and looked up, frowning. Mayaya shot him a venomous glance. I ached to poke him in the nose, but contented myself with changing the subject abruptly.

Myles Slavitt had a thick hide, but even he realized he'd spoken out of turn, and he flushed a little. It was an ugly little scene that left us all feeling acutely uncomfortable. Nevertheless the unpleasant glow remained in Slavitt's eyes whenever they rested on Mayaya as she passed through the hall.

I don't like to remember that I was the one who first spoke of the town meeting to be held the following night. For I can't help feeling that in doing so I played right into Slavitt's hand.

God knows why I urged Slavitt to attend. I must have been talking hastily, thoughtlessly, in my attempt to fill the awkward silence that had settled upon us after the man's earlier unpleasant remarks. I wished heartily that the fool would leave.

"My wife and I always go," I said, speaking of the town meeting. "Nothing very important ever comes up, but now that we own property here, we feel it's our duty."

Myles admitted he'd never before gone to any of the meetings, but he more or less promised to put in an appearance the following night.

Peggy and I didn't protest when he finally

made a move to leave. I went with him to the hall, and Mayaya was there, holding the door open for him, which was unfortunate.

Apparently our stupid neighbor was a man who never learned.

He laid a too-familiar hand on Mayaya's arm, and said, "Those were fine drinks, girl."

Mayaya didn't cower. She bore herself with dignity. But she couldn't resist a glance of appeal at me.

Well, he'd been nice about Scooter, but there are limits to gratitude. I removed Myles' hand from her arm, ungently, and all but shoved him through the door. I'd had enough of him. He blustered a little on the doorstep, but when I stepped through the door, his voice trailed off, and he slunk away.

"Ugh!" Peggy said from the living room archway. "That goon!"

"Let's forget him," I said. "I'm sorry, Mayaya."

"It's quite all right, Mr. Chase, I understand," she said quietly. "Thank you."

"By the way," I said, "I wish you'd keep a closer watch on Scooter. You know what happened when he wandered away this morning."

"But he didn't wander away, Mr. Chase." Mayaya protested softly. "I knew he was gone. And I knew the little green men would watch over him. And, you see, they did."

My head was beginning to spin. And I knew Peggy's was, too, judging from the expression on her face.

SCOOTER was awake when we went up to the nursery, and fidgety to get out of bed. He seemed none the worse for his experience, and was a little restive under our questions.

Yes, he remembered going across the lawn to Slavitt's. Well, no, he didn't think he'd been so *very* naughty, 'zackly. Mayaya had told him he might leave her side. The little green men, she'd said, would watch over him.

Peggy and I exchanged glances over Scooter's head.

And there'd been a leaf floating on the surface of the pool, like a little boat. And, in reaching for it, he'd fallen in. And

water got all up his nose. And it hadn't been very nice, according to Scooter. He couldn't breathe. And he couldn't see. And finally everything went black, like at night-time.

"I was afraid—just a little bit," he assured us solemnly.

Peggy hugged him. "Of course you were, darling. But now, try to remember—real hard. This is the important part. How did you get *out* of the pool?"

Scooter pushed out his lower lip, and squinted his eyes. He was thinking. He opened his eyes. "The little green men pulled me out!" he announced at last.

"But, darling, are you sure? Did you see them? Actually?"

Well. He was *pretty* sure he'd seen them. But he wasn't *very* sure. And could he get up now please?

It was hopeless. After all, he was only *three*. It was impossible to tell what he'd actually seen, and what his imagination was prompting him to believe he'd seen, fired as it had been by Mayaya's remarks.

Later, Peggy and I had a private confab behind the closed door of our room.

"I guess there's nothing else for it," I said. "We'll have to let her go before we all wind up batty."

"But Jay, dear, she's so wonderful in every other way."

I raised an eyebrow. "She—or the little green men?"

"Jay! You don't really believe in them, and you know it."

"Do you?"

"Certainly not!" Peggy was indignant. But after a minute, she added thoughtfully, "Still, you have to admit—"

"Oh, for God's sake!" I shouted irritably. "You see? She has us all headed for the nut factory."

"Well, let's wait till the end of the week, at least. I'll have the Nellis illustrations done by then, if I hurry, and—well."

So we left it at that. And there's no use now blaming ourselves for not having fired Mayaya immediately.

WE HAD dismissed Myles Slavitt so completely from our minds that we didn't even notice he wasn't at the town meeting next night.

There was the usual argument about whether or not a traffic signal was needed at First and Main. And Jed Stout was warned sternly again he'd better fix that there hole in the sidewalk in front of his store afore somebody broke their neck—at which Jed looked blank. (He was becoming adept at looking blank by this time.)

Peggy and I left at eleven, a little smug with the sense of a duty conscientiously performed, and highly amused all the way home at Jed Stout's callous unconcern for the necks of his fellow-townsmen. I remember we made an hilarious bet as to whether or not Jed would relent at the next meeting.

Unfortunately, our gaiety wasn't to last.

We'd no sooner turned off the highway onto our private lane, and the house loomed up distantly before us, than we knew something was radically wrong. Every light in the place was out. Even if Mayaya had retired early, she had instructions to leave the hall light burning. And it wasn't like her to be forgetful.

Peggy grew alarmed at once.

"Jay, hurry!" She sat on the edge of the seat. "I have a feeling—"

I was uncomfortable myself. I stepped on it, and we covered the last mile of private lane in nothing flat. Gravel spit under the tires as we jerked to a stop. We could hear Scooter sobbing softly to himself in the hall, even before we could get the door open. I was all thumbs, and the damned key wouldn't go into the lock, and it didn't help any to have Peggy needling me with, "Oh, hurry *up!*" accompanied by nervous prods in the back.

The door opened at last, and we practically fell over ourselves getting into the hall. I snapped the light on, and Scooter rushed into Peggy's arms, howling.

"Oh, my darling! What's the matter?" Peggy cried.

God, the hall was a sight! There were streaks of blood all over the white marble-ized linoleum, the mahogany chairs were overturned, and the Chippendale mirror had been knocked from the wall and lay in fragments.

But Scooter was all right, though terrified.

While Peggy tried to quiet him, I went into the darkened living room, and tripped over something on the floor just beyond the

arch. I fumbled for the ceiling light switch, found it. And then I was calling sharply to Peggy, "You stay out there in the hall."

I paid no attention to her startled questions.

Mayaya was lying on the floor before me, face down. I turned her over gently, though there was no real need of gentleness, for she was dead. Apparently she'd been choked to death. There wasn't a scratch on her.

Then why all the blood in the hall?

I was mystified.

I switched off the light again, and went to the phone in the hall, to call Doc and the police. When I'd got the two numbers at last, I spoke as quickly and briefly as possible.

Peggy overheard. "You mean—she's been murdered?"

"She certainly didn't strangle herself."

Scoter was still sobbing a little, and babbling of a "great, big man."

"But Jay, who—?"

I WAS beginning to think I knew. But Peggy was white and shivering, so I kept my mouth shut about my suspicions. I said instead, "You go upstairs, Peg. I'm going to follow these bloodstains. They seem to lead outside."

"I won't stay in this house with a corpse!" Peggy announced flatly. "I coming with you."

I couldn't argue her out of it. And, anyway, she was probably safer near me. Still holding Scoter, she followed me to the car where I got a flashlight.

There were stains all over the doorstep, and the gravel driveway was streaked with them, leading to the left toward Slavitt's place.

Peggy gripped my arm. "Jay! Slavitt! Of course!"

I nodded grimly. I wanted to get my hands on Slavitt before the police came. He'd be too safe with the police.

We started off toward the Slavitt estate, following the bloodstains, but I

wasn't quite prepared for what I found.

For I found Slavitt all right. The flash lighted up something just over his lot line. I turned it quickly aside, and said to Peggy, "Stay back here. I'm only going a few steps farther on. Don't let Scoter see, and don't look yourself."

I'd had just a glimpse in the momentary glare of the flash, but it had been enough. When I was sure she wouldn't follow, I went ahead gingerly.

He was lying there, face down, and his clothing had been shredded from his body. I needed only one sickened closer glance at the raw, red bleeding mass of pulp to know that he was forever beyond help—or further punishment. God, what a way to die! He'd been literally skinned alive by what must have been hundreds of tiny knives wielded by who knows whose hands?

The hands of the little green men?

Yes. They'd been too late to save Mayaya, but they'd revenged themselves horribly upon Slavitt. I'm positive. For, you see, there was something else.

Peggy took one glance at my face when I reached her side again, and mercifully asked no questions. It wasn't until we were back at the house, waiting for the police, that she noticed how tightly Scoter's hands were clenched.

"Jay, Scoter seems to have something in his hand."

He was still hysterical, poor kid. We had to pry his hand open, for he kept it clenched convulsively. But we took at last from his small moist palm, the tiny lifeless figure of a little green man.

"I found him on the floor," Scoter sobbed. "The big man hurted him, and I picked him up—"

I have it here in the lower right hand drawer of my desk in a pint Mason jar full of alcohol. A gruesome souvenir, some might say, but I look upon it as a talisman. And—who knows?—some day I may go to Trinidad. . . .

