

Weird Tales

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Contents for November, 1925

- Cover Design ----- Andrew Brosnatch
- The Stolen Body ----- H. G. Wells 581
Evil Entity Seizes a Man's Body and Tries to Destroy It
- The Return of the Undead ----- Arthur Leeds 589
A Hospital Vampire—Morphine—and a Ward Full of Children
- Lukundoo ----- Edward Lucas White 599
Every Tale of African Pigmies That Whistled and Jabbered
- Vale of the Corbies ----- Arthur J. Burks 607
The Beating of Unseen Wings Filled the Valley of Ravens
- Midnight Realism ----- William Sanford 612
At Midnight the Phantom Stepped Down and Stabbed Itself

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- The Acid in the Laboratory**-----**Gordon Philip England** 615
Heartless and Cruel Was the Physician, but He Knew How to Suffer
- Candle-Light** -----**Louise Garwood** 621
She Returned From the Grave, but He Would Not Receive Her
- The Man-Trap** -----**Hamilton Craigie** 625
A Monstrous Plant Makes Its Kill
- The Seventh Devil** -----**F. Douglas McHenry** 630
Scientist Puts Human Brains Into the Skull of a Gorilla
- The Ghostly Lovers** -----**William James Price** 636
Verse
- Under the Hau Tree**-----**Katherine Yates** 637
Death Could Not Keep Them From Their Honeymoon
- The Headless Spokesman**-----**Irvin Mattick** 643
Short and Terrible Tale of Murder
- The Waning of a World (Part One)**-----**W. Elwyn Backus** 647
Four-part Serial of a Voyage to Mars
- The Gargoyle (Conclusion)**-----**Greya La Spina** 677
Serial Novel of Devil Worship
- Weird Story Reprint**
No. 5. The Young King -----**Oscar Wilde** 690
Three Marvelous Dreams Did the Boy King Dream
- The Fiend of the Seine**-----**Dick Heine** 697
Horror-tale of Paris
- Whispers of Heavenly Death**-----**Walt Whitman** 699
Verse Reprint
- The Eyrie** ----- 700
A Chat With the Readers
- The Conqueror Worm**-----**Edgar Allan Poe** 704
Verse Reprint

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WEIRD TALES

408 Holliday Building

Indianapolis, Ind.

We have received a story called *Pity Me!* from one of our younger readers, a story that is altogether so delightful and interesting that we feel we must let you see it. The young lady who wrote it has not yet attained the literary polish and maturity of style that come only after years of writing, but she has imagination and enthusiasm, and achieves a gruesome effect that reminds us of the old English ballad of *The Gay Lady Who Went to Church*, with its doleful lines:

“On looking up, on looking down,
She saw a dead man on the ground;
And from his nose unto his chin,
The worms crawled out, the worms crawled in.”

The authoress is young—very young;—but we give her story here in its entirety.

PITY ME!

By Bertha Russell (age 15)

How I loved to handle corpses, cold, stiff, bodies! That was why I had been an undertaker. Came the day though that resulted in my loathing and hating them. The reason for this, let me, a wretched, broken-down, white-haired old man explain to you, reader.

It was a cold, wet, dripping, clouded day when the body which was to make me what I am today arrived to be embalmed. The body was of a dark, beautiful, Spanish woman of wealthy people. I learned that she had died but three hours ago from some ailment or other. The boss, who was the head undertaker of the place, ordered me to embalm the body and to be ready inside of an hour. I nodded my head happily, for was I not going to handle a cold corpse?

Having secured the necessary tools and articles, I entered the gray, musty, tomblike, embalming room. It was a narrow room with large man-size shelves running on each side. At the end was a slight enlargement of space which made accommodating room for a long, narrow, black table. This section was lit more brighter. On the table a body covered entirely by a sheet was lying as stiff as a stick. I knew this to be *my* corpse.

With one sweep of my hand I snatched the sheet off with delightful eagerness. A sort of dismayed sound escaped my lips as I viewed the body of the woman. Ah, she was too lovely, too divine-looking for me to caress and pet. No, no, I would not let my passion work on her, no.

So, having prepared my thin, silver knife, I began to cut the artery that was customary to being severed in embalming. I know that I hadn't reached the artery as yet, (I don't know why for it was usually done in one minute) when my eyes were strangely attracted to the lips. Surely my eyes must be deceiving me, for did they not begin to twitch from one side to the other as if they had tasted bitter salt? The eyelids began to flicker; then the hands began stiffly to open and shut, open and shut. My knife clattered to the floor; still I stood there, powerless to run. The features began to twitch also, as if in some agonizing pain. To my horrified eyes, the eyelids flickered once more and then opened as quick as a bolt of lightning. Those haunting dark brown eyes just stared at me with a look that I don't want never, never, to see. "You—what—have—you—done!" the tortured living thing shrieked in a high pitch tone of voice between gasps while rising, with still those glassy eyes fixed on me.

I know I screamed, I know I yelled, I know that I fell with something fleshy hurling itself upon me. I knew no more.

The boss privately afterward told me while convalescing from a nervous break-down, six months afterwards to be exact, that when they heard my terrific fear-laden screams they had rushed in to find me on the damp floor with the dead body of the Spanish woman lying across me. Awful—awful!

He good-naturedly refused to believe me when I told him the entire frightful story, saying it was my nerves & strenuous work and to please forget it. But how can I forget it when he himself remarked that he finished cutting the artery?

Pity me, reader, pity me!