

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 33

CONTENTS FOR MARCH, 1939

Number 3

Cover Design	Virgil Finlay	
<i>Illustrating "The Swine of Ææa"</i>		
The Metal Chamber	Duane W. Rimel	7
<i>A curious tale about a scientist who contacted another planet telepathically</i>		
The Swine of Ææa	Clifford Ball	13
<i>A bizarre and fantastic sea-tale about an island not charted on any map</i>		
The House Where Time Stood Still	Seabury Quinn	39
<i>A tale of Jules de Grandin, and a brilliant scientist touched with madness</i>		
The Return of Hastur	August W. Derleth	66
<i>An eldritch story of the incredible horror that terrified a quiet countryside</i>		
Fearful Rock (Part 2)	Manly Wade Wellman	85
<i>An eerie novel of the American Civil War, and dark powers</i>		
Desert Dawn	Robert E. Howard	100
<i>Versé</i>		
"Satan, Yawning on His Brazen Seat"	Virgil Finlay	101
<i>Pictorial interpretation of a passage from George Sterling's "A Wine of Wizardry"</i>		
Comrades of Time	Edmond Hamilton	102
<i>A thrill-tale of the far future, and the aged Wise One who craved death</i>		
Introduction to a Stranger	David Wright O'Brien	124
<i>Versé</i>		
The Quest of Iranon	H. P. Lovecraft	125
<i>A fascinatingly beautiful early story by a late master of weird fiction</i>		
The Stratosphere Menace	Ralph Milne Farley	130
<i>A brief science-story of a terrible doom that menaced mankind</i>		
Smoke Fantasy	Thomas R. Jordan	137
<i>What was that grisly creature seen in the swirling cigarette smoke?</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Devils of Po Sung	Bassett Morgan	139
<i>An Amazing story of brain surgery</i>		
The Eyrie		154
<i>A department in which the readers express their opinions</i>		

Published monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Entered as second class matter September 24, 1938, at the post office at New York, N. Y. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English Office: Charles Lovell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

Copyright 1939, by Weird Tales
 COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN.

 172

WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

"The long claw-like hands
reached for his throat."



S moke Fantasy

By THOMAS R. JORDAN

What was that grisly creature seen in the swirls of smoke from Sanderson's cigarette?

THE hour hand was close on to one o'clock, and Sanderson was still working on his latest story. His reading-lamp was the only light burning in the lonely house, and shadows clustered in the corners of the library waiting for their chance to be rulers of the night.

Something had happened to Sanderson's power of imagination. In the past, it had never been difficult to describe his characters, regardless of their position in the plot. He now found himself unable to describe the man who was to be the central figure of his tale; a man of cruel and wanton deeds, black of soul and hard of heart, a man of unnatural and sadistic desires, capable of a multitude of evils. But the appearance and build of this man still eluded

him, and his features seemed only a blur in the mind's eye of the writer.

It might be because he had written so many stories of a similar nature that his mind was unable to produce an original description and he found himself facing a blank wall. Always his stories had been grotesque and weird, woven around men and women possessing strange and terrible qualities.

Sanderson was confronted with a frenzied thought. Perhaps he had lost the knack of twisting words and phrases so that the reader would get a clear picture of the characters described. If such a thing had happened he would have to find some way to help him restore that faculty.

He paced to the window and looked out into the night, watching the rain

patter gently on the ground outside, seeking for an inspiration. The darkness yielded nothing and only seemed to mock him as he strained for a suitable picture of the man he was trying to visualize.

The smoke from his cigarette on the ash-tray drifted idly into a corner and formed into a billowy cloud. As he stared at it he suddenly thought that here was a way to reach his goal. If he could imagine that his character was sitting there, hidden by the smoke, perhaps he could materialize a picture of him from the mist, as one imagines visions and palaces in the clouds on a windy day.

Sanderson seated himself in his chair and peered into the blue billows. A ragged wisp of smoke jutting out from the thick mist could be his hair, unkempt and tangled, like that of a madman. One section was dividing from the rest in a long angular streamer to the right, forming an imaginary arm, and he could almost make out two indistinct legs at the foot, with another arm making itself manifest on the other side.

But his attempts at conjuring a face and body from the vapors were difficult. In vain he concentrated on the upper portion of the fog in an attempt to create in his imagination the lines and expressions of a countenance. Suddenly, success began to reward his efforts.

He could barely discern a pair of eyes, wild and inflamed, staring from the mist, while whirls of smoke eddied around them, wider and wider, until a long evil nose was revealed.

The face was beginning to disclose itself more clearly when he became aware that the body had taken a definite form, long and lean with a sinuous strength to it that reminded Sanderson of a great

cat. It sat in the chair in a tensed forward position as if ready to spring. One long arm hung at his side while the other gripped the back of the chair for support.

Sanderson's delighted gaze returned to the face. Clear and evil it now stood out, the mouth vicious and hard, leering at him with diabolical cunning, while sharp deep lines ran up from the corners of its mouth. Similar lines creased the uncouth forehead into a permanent scowl and the bulging eyes still stared crazily.

The vision was perfect, and the writer closed his eyes for a moment, phrasing sentences of description and feeling a surge of confidence flow through him. His character was perfect in every detail and now he could go ahead on his story with a new confidence in his powers of imagination.

He opened his eyes to find that the vision had not left. It sat there in the corner, clearer than ever, and it seemed to him that the mouth was working in a grimace of hate. A wave of fear swept through Sanderson and he wondered if his mind had deserted him. The figure was now rising, eddies of smoke still clinging to it, and an evil vitality made itself manifest to the writer, for it was now striding toward him with quick, cat-like movements.

It had all happened so quickly that Sanderson was unable to get out of his chair before the thing was on him. The long claw-like hands reached for his throat and the air was instantly cut off. He made a frantic, futile struggle to loosen that relentless grasp, and all the time those mad eyes stared mercilessly into his own.

The last thing that Sanderson sensed before pain-pierced blackness enveloped him was the faint odor of his cigarette, still burning in the ash-tray.