

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME IV

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 325 N. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1913, at the post-office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$4.50 a year in the United States; \$5.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in our 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. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1924, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for December, 1924

Cover Design.....	Andrew Brosnatch	
Death-Waters.....	Frank Belknap Long, Jr.	9
<i>Snakes—and a Black Man in a Black Lake</i>		
The Earth Girl.....	Carroll K. Michener	16
<i>A Distant Planet—Destruction of a Civilization</i>		
With Weapons of Stone.....	C. M. Eddy, Jr.	28
<i>Cavemen—Primitive Love—the Saber-tooth Tiger</i>		
The Death Clinic.....	Otto E. A. Schmidt	34
<i>Weird Revenge of a Great Surgeon</i>		
Cave of Murdered Men.....	W. Benson Dooling	47
<i>A Fantasy</i>		
Kaivalya.....	Mrs. Edgar Saltus	49
<i>Fourth Dimension—Hypnotism—Crime</i>		

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

A Tryst With Death	Edgar White	58
<i>A Rendezvous at the Tomb</i>		
The Valley of Teeheemen (Part One)	Arthur Thatcher	61
<i>Two-part Novel—Airplane Falls Into Strange Valley</i>		
Black Temple Band	Elwin J. Owens	87
<i>Six Black-robed Men—and a Weird Cave</i>		
His Family	C. Franklin Miller	93
<i>A Mad Colonel in the African Wilderness</i>		
A Hand From the Deep	Romeo Poole	98
<i>Strange Tale of Quack Surgery</i>		
After	Denis Francis Hannigan	106
<i>Beyond the Door of Death</i>		
Creeping Mist	Thomas B. Sherman	108
<i>Crime of a Man Who Was Already Dead</i>		
The Silent Five	Anthony D. Keogh	116
<i>A Haunted House and a Secret Society</i>		
The Case of the Russian Stevedore	Henry W. Whitehill	123
<i>Facts in the Strange Death of Dr. Dinwoodie</i>		
Voodoo	Estil Critchie	128
<i>Haiti—Worship of the Green Serpent</i>		
The House of Dust (Conclusion)	L. A. Botah	132
<i>Two-part Mystery Serial</i>		
Youth	Howard R. Marsh	156
<i>Storiote of Shattered Hopes</i>		
Fairy Gossamer	Harry Harrison Kroll	159
<i>A Cave of Hungry Spiders</i>		
The Song Eternal	Galen C. Colin	163
<i>Through the Ages It Sang to Him—of Love</i>		
The Crimson Crucifix	H. Thompson Rich	170
<i>A Birthmark—an Innocent Kiss—and Disaster</i>		
The Eyrie		175
<i>A Chat With the Readers</i>		

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply to

W. B. ZIFF CO.

Transportation Building
Chicago

Architects Building
New York

Bryant Building
Kansas City

The CRIMSON CRUCIFIX



By H. THOMPSON RICH

IT WAS such a little thing, Père—*tel qu'une très petite chose*. Just a tiny birthmark on my breast.

True, it did have the look of a crucifix. But does Père find anything so remarkable in that? Why, I have seen on a girl of the village one in the form of Joan, our most blessed saint, all in full armor, mounted, holding aloft her sword. Right on her breast she wore it, too, as do I. They could point her out to you in the street of a morning. And yet none thinks her especially marked by the gentle Christ.

Yet when Father François, the priest, beheld in baptizing me what had been my lot at birth, did he not forthwith pronounce me *consacrée*? Ah, Père, yes, though had he stopped there, it had mattered little. But no, he must offer a blessing. So, dipping his fingers in the holy water, he touched me on the breast, above the mark, and said (I can hear him yet):

“Child of the Cross, I ordain thee to purity. Until the day thou art wed shalt thou know naught of the love of man that is of the body, neither his arms nor his lips nor anything that is his. This do, and the crucifix upon thy breast shall remain, as today, of brownish hue. But fail, and it shall at once turn crimson—and thou shalt know thyself no longer pure.”

Little heed I then took of his words, Père. I was but young, and the thoughts of man were remote. So I

laughed and played and forgot Father François' words.

Forgot them for a time, yet they had been burned too deep for erasing, and as I grew older they began to come back to me and I thought often of their meaning. Puzzled, to *maman* I went one day and she told me—many things. But even yet I was perplexed and (I must confess it, Père) I but half believed. Nevertheless, I kept apart, and the young folks of the village found me different and shy.

Then came Raoul, and with him—love. Yet not the love of which I had been warned. His was a different love, somehow, tender and fine, and I feared not at all.

He was of the city, and came to our little town to till his father's farm. Yet he was not of the type I had been taught to know and avoid. His eyes were gentle and his voice was soft, and I knew he meant no harm.

Indeed he seemed not to think of me at all except as in a dream, and I found myself marveling. For hours he would sit beside me, looking up into my face as though in worship—and I found my heart stir.

Was that love, Père?

Ah, well, at any rate it was beautiful—oh, so beautiful!

One day I was moved to tell him of the crucifix and, quite unashamed, I bared my breast that he might see. And as he beheld it, his eyes glistened

and they seemed to take on a wistful, lovely look.

After that he was twice gentle, and oh, tenderness made his eyes like stars. Often he would take my hands in his and sometimes he would stroke my hair and whisper the dearest words.

Once he touched my face, so lightly, so softly, and his lips trembled. My heart grew faint with wonder, and I leaned toward him, overwhelmed.

His hands shook and his breath came fast. He moved as though to take me in his arms. Another moment and he would have held me fast and kissed me—when suddenly he gave a little sob and held himself back.

"Ah, no, *ma chérie*," he cried. "You are too sweet, too pure. The crucifix—we will guard it well, beloved. First you shall be my wife. Then shall your lips be mine."

"Thou knowest best, Raoul," I whispered. "I am thine in any way thou seest fit."

Then he took both my hands in his and poured out words, oh, so wonderful, Père. And I sat there thrilled as I had never thought to be.

That night he went to my father and our troth was plighted. We were to wed in the fall.

Then (ah, all the world knows!)—then came the war. . . .

And he went away, Père, went away and left me, with a heart too full for tears.

Ah, how proud he looked in his uniform of heaven-blue! On the day for marching he came to me, and we had a last hour together, the most wonderful hour of all. Again he took my hands in his. Again he stroked my hair and whispered those dear words. Again he touched my face, so lightly, so gently.

All heaven sang in my ears. And how my heart beat! Ah, Père, love such as that was too rare, too beautiful for me, a poor peasant.

The time came for parting, and he lifted me tenderly to my feet and stood there gazing into my eyes so deep and long that I felt my soul reach out to him.

Then, of a sudden, he bent and actually kissed me, pressed his lips to mine—and was gone.

"Good-bye!" he waved as he walked off down the road to the *maison de ville*, where the troops were forming—"Good-bye!" and again, "Good-bye!"

"Good-bye!" I echoed, and, sobbing, I turned away.

But though he had gone, the memory of that first and farewell kiss was with me yet, nor would it ever leave me. It was like a great red rose, and oh, so fragrant and so sweet!

Later, from the roadside, I watched them march away, line after line of blue, like a great strip of the sky. And catching his eyes, I waved at him and he waved back. . . .

Then he had disappeared.

I waited till they all were out of sight. Then I ran to the meadow and flung myself down and wept. From being so full, my heart seemed now quite empty. How I longed to hear once more his dear soft words and feel his gentle hands upon my hair!

But he was gone—gone.

Memories remained, however, and now they surged over me in a flood. I lay there dreaming, in the warm August sunlight.

Ah, Père, such memories! All the beautiful hours came back and bloomed about me, until I was in a garden such as only the wondrous fairies must know. And in the midst of all those exquisite flowers bloomed a great red rose—his kiss.

WHEN I returned home I was happy, and I knew that I had found the magic wherewith to face the long days until he should return.

And he would return! Oh, I was sure of it!

All the rest of the day I laughed and sang, and when I went upstairs that night it was with a gay heart. It was for France that Raoul had gone to fight—for France, and for me.

I sighed and turned to disrobe—when suddenly, chancing to look into the little mirror over my dresser, I gave a cry and went suddenly faint. *The little brown crucifix on my breast had turned to crimson.*

Oh, Père, then how vainly did I beat upon my breast, then how bitterly did I weep. But to no avail. Crimson it was, and crimson it remained, though I prayed piteously to the Virgin Mary and to all the saints. Nevermore would I be as before.

And all for a little kiss! Surely, Père, there could have been no harm in that. Would you have said there could be harm?

I knew not what to do. In my heart I longed to go to Father François and confess, yet I dared not, fearful lest he would judge me bad. So, too, I feared to tell *maman* and papa of it.

Then I kept it to myself, and grew morose and sad. Only to Raoul would I dare tell it. He would remember, and understand, and yet—what if he should not believe?

How the months passed I do not know, but somehow they dragged by, with the help of his letters.

Oh, his letters! But for them, I think my heart should have broken. They were so wonderful. All my flowers and sunlight were in them, all my hopes and dreams. And yet, there was that in them, too, which made me sad—for often he would repeat the words. "Guard well the crucifix, *ma chérie*."

How then was I ever to tell him? I grew hopeless. I despaired. And yet surely he would know—he would believe.

Oddly fearful, however, I remained silent. And I hid my secret well. High at the throat I wore my frocks and always when I undressed I was

careful none should see. More and more I kept to myself, fearful lest by some accident I might be betrayed.

But my very secrecy awoke suspicion. Soon it began to be rumored about the village (for everyone had known for years of my curious birthmark, and of the blessing Père François had given me at my baptism) that I had had an affair with one of the boys from the city.

"Is it so?" asked chic little Marie one morning, as I passed her on the road.

Marie had had several affairs and seemed quite proud of them.

"No," I stammered, blushing until my cheeks were fiery, and would have turned away.

"Prove it, then! The crucifix—is it still brown?"

I stood there silent, tears in my eyes, unable to say one word.

Two more girls joined Marie, and they asked me in unison for proof.

"Come," they said. "It is no shame, one way or the other. A little affair—pouf! If so, what then? If not, but show us that the crucifix is brown, and we will believe."

With them it was next to nothing, but with me—everything. Oh, Père, my heart was broken. I knew not what to do. I turned away. Could I have done otherwise?

So they guessed—and before night-fall the town was astir.

"The *consacrée* has fallen," people said; "the child of the Cross. Oh, la, such is the power of priests!"

My father heard.

"Is it so, *ma fille*?" he demanded angrily.

I hung my head.

"It was only a kiss, papa," I whispered, "only a little kiss."

"Bah!" he exclaimed, and I saw the blood rush into his face. "The crucifix would not turn crimson for a kiss. Who is it? Quick!"

"It is Raoul, father," I replied. "But it was no more than a kiss."

"Tell me no lies," he cried. "A thousand times he must have kissed you, else he would not have come to me for your hand. But this is no matter of a kiss. Are you sure it was Raoul?"

"There was none other."

"Very well. Then I shall send for him. He shall come here and marry you. I will have no shame upon my door."

I beseeched him not to tell Raoul.

"It was nothing but a kiss, father, only a little kiss, like a rose. Do not summon him. When his furlough comes he will return and he will understand."

"Rose! He shall get his furlough at once, and come. I will have none of his fooling. To the prefect I go. A letter shall be dispatched this night. Meanwhile go to the priest—and confess!"

He turned and stamped out of the room.

WHEN he had gone I flung myself upon my bed and wept as I had never wept before in all my life, for, Père, then my heart was indeed truly broken.

But presently I got up and went to Father François and told him all.

"Ah, daughter," he sighed, "thou art indeed *consacrée* no longer. But do not take it too ill. Thou art still innocent, and I will go to thy father and swear to thy chastity before him."

"It was only a little kiss. Father—just one little kiss."

"Indeed, yes. I believe it was no worse. Come, we will go to thy father."

So I went out with him, and hope returned to me. Presently everything would be all right. Papa would understand, and Raoul, and all the townspeople. Raoul would return from the war and marry me, and we would be happy.

But when we reached my father's house we saw it was too late. He had gone to the prefect, and they had written Raoul a letter, which had been immediately dispatched. Even now it was on its way.

And oh, Père, such a letter! There was no kindness in it. It was so harsh, so brutal! And there was no mention that it had been but a kissing, only that the crucifix was now crimson, and that, having brought me to shame, he should come at once and marry me—or it would be the worse for him.

As he told us what he had said, I trembled, and though Father François laid his hand upon my head in pity, I was not consoled—for Raoul would never understand such a letter. In the first place, his proud spirit would rebel at receiving so stern a summons from a peasant, for my father was nothing more, while he was the son of a wealthy landlord. And in the second place, not knowing he had ever harmed me, and with no mention made of the kiss at all, he could not but be sure it was someone else.

So I flung myself down and wept once more, while Father François talked to my father. What passed between them I know not, for I now cared little what befell, since fate had thus conspired to turn Raoul forever from me.

Yet the words of the blessed priest must have convinced my father, for presently he came to me and, laying his rough hand as gently as he could upon my forehead, he raised my eyes to his.

"Daughter," he said, "forgive me. I am more sorry than I know. But all shall be well. Come, sit you down and write Raoul, and I will add a line or so. When he shall receive it, he shall come to you gladly."

So I wrote, pouring out at last my secret. And as he had promised, my father added a few short words of softness. Even the good Father Fran-

gois made a note at the bottom of the page.

Then we took it to the prefect, and he promised to send it by special post.

"But will not the other reach him first?" I faltered.

"Yes," he admitted, "but only by a little. Hardly will he have had time to read the first letter when the second shall be in his hands. An hour or so—no more."

We thanked him and turned away. But I was ill at ease. For what might he not think and do in the hour or so between the letters?

Oh, and what he thought! What he did! Père, I wish to live no longer. My heart is quite, entirely broken, and my hands—they are so cold.

THE rest is strange, even in the telling. I know not of such things. And yet, I could swear that on the third night after the letters had been dispatched, as I lay sleeping, Raoul came to me.

I do not know how he entered the room. No door opened, and no window moved. But he came, nevertheless, Père, and I waked up and beheld him standing there, looking at me with the saddest expression that I had ever seen.

"Is it true, then?" he asked in a low, strained voice, and his eyes had a lonely, far-off look.

I would have answered him, when suddenly those piercing eyes fell upon

my breast, upon which fell also the faint light of the burning candle at my bedside—and, my night garment having fallen slightly apart at the throat, he beheld all at once the crimson crucifix.

"Oh, wretched God, it is true!"

With a cry he turned and vanished.

"Raoul! Raoul!" I called. "It was only your kiss—only your first little kiss!"

But my voice echoed strangely in the empty room. He was gone.

Next morning a telegram came from the front. He had died in a raid for which he had volunteered. They cited him for extreme bravery.

And a few days later our second letter returned, unopened. He had never received it.

Then came a letter from a friend.

"He had received bad news that afternoon," it read; "news that seemed completely to break him up. In fact, after reading it he seemed no longer to wish to live. So that when our lieutenant came around looking for volunteers to go out and bag an outpost of the boche, he would not be restrained from going.

"When the second letter came, just a little later, we made every effort to reach him. But he had already gone. And he never returned.

"There will be a cross for him, of course."

Yes, Père, the *Croix de Guerre*. See, I have pinned it on my breast—over the crucifix so red, so crimson.

