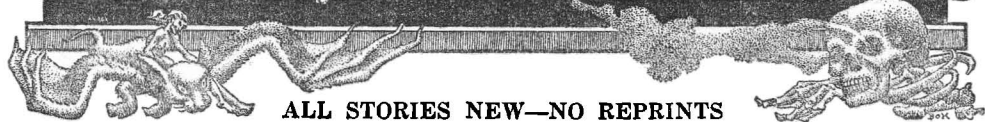


Weird Tales



MAY, 1942

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NOVELETTE

- STONEMAN'S MEMORIAL Seabury Quinn 4
*Cold and Hard as Death Itself Was the Bullet-Proof Doom That Hunted Down
 Sin in Modern-Day New York! A Tale of Jules de Grandin . . .*

SHORT STORIES

- THE ENCHANTED RIVER Dorothy Quick 24
*The Wheel of Life Turns—Turns Endlessly; And
 Sometimes the Cycle Is Lived Again.*
- GHOST FOR A NIGHT Robert Arthur 33
*The Gay and Ghostly Little Tale Which He Had Planned Takes a
 Turn Which the Author Finds Highly Distasteful!*
- MASQUERADE Henry Kuttner 43
*No Reason Why a Vampire Shouldn't Change with the Times.
 No Reason at All . . .*
- THE DEADLY THEORY Greye La Spina 54
*A Sorcerer, a Lover, a Murderess—These Three Had Formed
 An Unholy Alliance to Rob Death!*
- BLACK BARGAIN Robert Bloch 66
*Are Black Books Still Read? Might Not a Missing Alley Cat
 Mean a Chosen Sacrifice?*
- THE GIANT IN A TEST TUBE George Armin Shaftel 77
*There Are Serums to Melt Away the Decay of Old Age—
 To Give Everlasting Youth . . .*
- THE CONCRETE PHANTOM Weston Parry 85
*Often Might Be Heard the Sound of Muffled Riveting—
 Between Midnight and Dawn . . .*
- CRYSTAL VISION Alice-Mary Schnirring 93
Everyone of a Certain Type Has What Might Be Called a Third Eye . . .
- THE GIPSY'S HAND Alonzo Deen Cole 102
It Was Against All the Laws of Nature. But It Happened!
- VENGEANCE IN HER BONES Malcolm Jameson 112
*She was a Vicious Rogue. But She Could Smell Submarines.
 And She Could Hate 'Em, Too!*

VERSE

- THE DREAMER IN THE DESERT Francis Flagg 52
- SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS Irwin J. Weill 64
- THE EYRIE AND WEIRD TALES CLUB 122

*Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use
 of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.*

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173
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D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

HENRY AVELINE PERKINS, Associate Editor.

He swore that she would be as warmly pulsing with life as before —that he would bring her back from the world of the dead by a strange process of Phoenix-like re-birth!

The Deadly

“PALINGENESIS?” said the man standing next to me at the bar, as he turned to face me. “What do you think *you* know about it? Scientists say it’s a mythical theory based on that legendary tale of a rose reduced to ashes and then restored magically to living loveliness by some olden Mage for a queen of Sweden.”

I thought to myself that scientists had other theories but that after all nothing in the cosmos is ever lost; things merely change their unessential qualities and become other things. At any rate, it wasn’t palingenesis I wanted to discuss; what I wanted was to draw out that man until he forgot his lofty reserve. I wanted to make sure—well—

“You’ll have to pardon me,” said I aloud, “but you have such a striking resemblance to my old friend, the artist Julian Crosse who enlisted in the French Foreign Legion about 1914 and was later reported dead, that I was attempting to account for it by palingenesis. Jestingly, of course. I was his agent,” I explained.

“Oh?” said the man and ordered another gin-and-tonic.

He sipped his drink with obvious appreciation.

I kept watching, careful not to let him see how amazed I was at what appeared to me not a resemblance but Julian redivivus, only it couldn’t be, for Julian would have known and greeted me. This man had done neither; he had indifferently suffered my presence and my attempts at conversa-

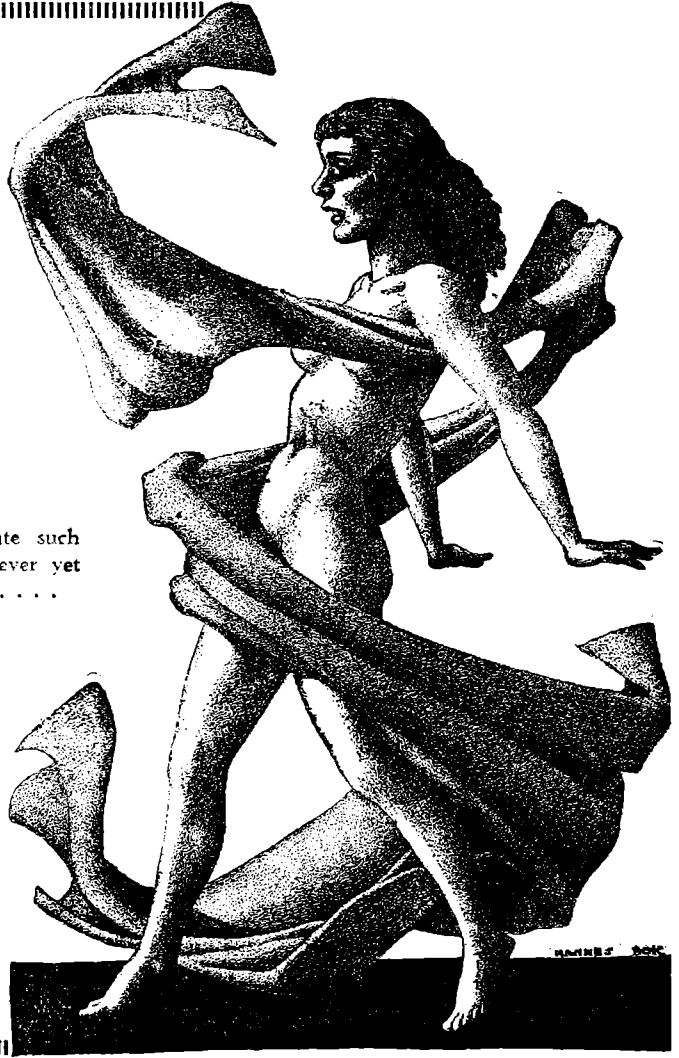
tion until I had jestingly uttered that open-sesame word, palingenesis. Then he abruptly turned to me with that scornful query as to what *I* knew about palingenesis.

I finished my Scotch-and-soda; beckoned the bartender to bring me another drink and a fresh pack of cigarettes. I had a feeling that my vis-a-vis was about to spill something interesting, so I lighted a cigarette and waited with outward patience that belied my inward state, for the likeness to Julian Crosse was rather more than I had observed at first glance. It is true that this man had an unruly shock of hair even if it was iron-gray while Julian’s had been warm brown. The man had no last joint on the fourth finger of his left hand; Julian had once caught and mashed that joint and it had been amputated. This man’s skin was an even pallor while Julian’s face had always glowed with the warm tan of the outdoor man. Yet there was, in the very manner the chap spoke, something that brought Julian vividly to mind; I mean, his assumption of esoteric knowledge that Julian always pretended but did not possess as far as my experience with him had brought out. No matter what branch of occultism we discussed, he had always touched upon it as the mystery of today and the scientific fact of tomorrow. So I waited, sure that I would shortly be given a dissertation upon palingenesis, the phoenix-like rebirth from its ashes of what had once been a living entity. That was how sure I was that the stranger was Julian and that the discussion, whether as

Theory

BY GREYE LA SPINA

She had learned to create such delights as no man had ever yet been permitted to enjoy. . . .



a workable theory or as a survival of superstition, would be couched in such magical phrases that no one could listen without being caught in the trailing fringes of enthusiasm.

"I had an experience with palingenesis," said the man, holding up his glass and twirling it so that the clear contents purred against the edges. "It might interest you, if you are open-minded."

He hesitated and then said slowly, his piercing blue eyes full on mine, transfixing me much as the Ancient Mariner transfixed the Wedding Guest: "My profession

took me to Maine. I was doing a lot of painting those days."

A strong conviction grew within me but the potency of that gaze restrained my mind from forming a conclusion and my tongue from uttering my thoughts. I rubbed out my half-smoked cigarette and nervously lighted another.

"Yes?" said I non-committally.

An expression that I interpreted as satisfaction flickered over the man's face. He took another sip of gin-and-tonic and mercifully lowered his hypnotic eyes from my face.

I wanted to clap him on the back and shout, "You weren't killed. You are Julian Crosse." But I was morally certain that he would have replied with chilling gravity that Julian Crosse was dead. So I confined myself to observing his every movement while I thought of many things, all closely connected with my old friend.

THE art world knows his work well. The character of his brilliant canvases, drenched with golden sunshine in the portrayal of which no other contemporary artist could equal or surpass him, told its own story of the young man's joyous attitude toward life. Up to 1912 he had painted nothing but trees; individual trees, groups of trees, vistas of forest glades in their virgin loveliness, pierced by those miraculous shafts of amber light which he knew how to paint with such sumptuous technique. The work he produced in the early part of the following year was of such entirely different character that I found it difficult to accept as his, for in spite of its undoubted qualities his gifted brush had made an entirely new departure.

As soon as collectors discovered that in these new pictures Julian had intensified the qualities that had made his wild, sun-drenched woods so distinctive and different, they began to buy up the new paintings at a rate which kept me frantically begging for canvases, more canvases, and yet more canvases. These new pictures featured a single model, a charming young girl; slender, supple, dark hair and eyes. Julian painted her in innumerable poses that built up a fairly representative picture of her life. The interpretation of that series formed the continuous life of a simple country girl whose existence was bounded by the narrow horizon of humble duties. Julian injected an enchantment, a charm, into those homely tasks that threw a glamorous haze about the girl so that the loveliness of her utter simplicity, the quiet

acceptance of her apparently uneventful life, became things of spiritual beauty almost too great for words. Julian's "Girl Peeling Potatoes," for instance (now one of the valued modern acquisitions of the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art), is something more than its name signifies; it is a vision of innate beauty underlying the humblest duties that are accepted with spiritual insight as symbols of higher things.

Throughout 1912, then, Julian painted his Maine model assiduously. But there were two distinct periods in that year. It was not until the second period canvases had been on sale for some time that one art critic discovered that in these later canvases the girl's face was never depicted, that her hidden hands were idle, her figure always drooping, half concealed in voluminous draperies. This fact met with a certain amount of speculative interpretation. These last pictures did not sell as did the earlier ones; they possessed a peculiar morbidness to the point of blocking an assault on the public imagination that might have inspired the passion of ownership. Despite my protests, Julian continued to ship me those sodden canvases unanimated by the spiritual qualities that had made the earlier portraits so noble. People would look at them, shudder, walk away with corrugated brows and narrowed eyes. They could not help feeling, as I felt, a strange quality emanating from them; a powerful, undeniable impression of something unhealthy, morbid, far from sane.

Then some newspaper fellow got it into his head to ferret out the artist. He made a big feature article for his Sunday paper out of what he thought he'd dug up. He said Julian had fallen in love with one of two sisters, of whom the younger died and the one he loved had gone completely out of her mind and run away. Julian and the girl's guardian had found her in Bangor, dying of consumption, and had brought

her body home. The reporter had it that Julian had painted the first portraits when the girl was herself and the others after she'd begun to fail mentally. This account satisfied the public's curiosity more or less and Julian told me he didn't care enough about what was being said to affirm or deny the story; he said there were things in life of such vast inner import that their outward and often misleading manifestations mean nothing to the human being who experiences them.

Julian's last paintings were a drug on the market and all at once he must have stopped his work entirely for I got no more from him. He came to see me in New York and when I remonstrated, he replied that he was sailing for France and intended to join the Foreign Legion. He told me that the woman he loved had died horribly and he himself could only wish for death now. I have to say that he went to his death as a bridegroom to his wedding morning, welcoming it as a door that would open a wider, happier existence. I add this last because some fool reporter had the impudence or temerity to suggest that Julian must have been a drug victim to have put into his work the weird and bizarre qualities such as emanated from it during his last painting period.

At this point in my reminiscences, the stranger (or was he?) confronting me at the bar broke in upon my rambling thoughts and began to talk in a low, intense but unhurried voice, every intonation of which strengthened that incredible conviction which grew and grew within me as I listened.

"I met a girl up in the Maine woods," said he. "Her name was Marzha. She lived with her younger sister Idell in a log shack, put up in the wilderness by her uncle Elisha Moffatt so that he might study without human interruptions the occult subjects to which he had devoted himself. Her father, a sea-captain, had gone down

with his ship and her mother, a passionately loving Persian woman, had not long survived him. Elisha had taken his orphaned nieces into his home and they had been brought up in his own fashion, which meant that he had taught them a smattering of mathematics and their ABCs and had then let them seek their own education from the books in his library, mostly comprised of occult volumes.

"I felt that in Marzha I had met everything man could desire in woman, so accompanied her to the log cabin to meet her uncle. Elisha was a remarkable man. Black smocked, heavy black hair in wavy masses; shaggy black brows over deep-set black eyes, rich black beard parted in the middle like old pictures of Moses, he impressed me as a being whom it would be a privilege to know better, especially as I soon learned from sixteen-year-old Idell that he was always carrying on some obscure occult experiment in his completely equipped laboratory. To my astonishment, Elisha welcomed me into the family circle as a guest, with a disregard of conventions that made me like him the more. As our acquaintance ripened into warm intimacy, I realized that he had hoped for just what happened, the growing attachment between Marzha and myself.

"THERE was, however, what at first seemed to me a silly situation to deal with; Idell imagined herself in love with me. She had inherited a tempestuous temperament and at sixteen was more highly sexed than Marzha at nineteen. She entertained a raging jealousy of her sister that tore at her soul. My devotion to my betrothed, my depiction of her in my canvases, brought the wild girl's passion to such a point that she determined to usurp her sister's place at any cost. Her simpler arts of feminine seduction degenerated into sheer, open, abject pleading for a love she ardently desired with every fiber

of her wild being. She found me deaf, dumb and blind to anything but Marzha.

"Early one morning I went with Elisha to Bangor; he needed certain herbs that were not procurable in his woods and I wanted several tubes of color. We returned in the late afternoon. Marzha did not come to meet us, although I kept my eyes on the open doorway hungrily from the moment the log-house came in sight. It was Idell who burst out and ran toward us. Her appearance was alarming. Her hair tumbled in wild confusion about her shoulders; her face was a pallid white; her eyes were wide and staring. She screamed at us over and over as she half ran, half stumbled, toward us.

"Marzha is dead! Marzha is dead!

"Elisha groaned in stupefied incredulity and I knew then what I had suspected—that Marzha was his best loved niece.

"Our flying feet carried us into the log-house but we were too late. Marzha's head rested on her outstretched arms on the table; her flesh was cold and stiff. Already her body showed the dreadful signs of reaction from the poisoned mushrooms that Idell declared her sister had inadvertently included in those prepared for lunch. I held to my almost stilled heart the distorted, terrible, discoloring face of my dear dead, trying to hide its horror in my bosom.

"Idell cried out to her uncle that he knew well her own aversion to fungi. Elisha replied, with a slow restrained speech more terrible than any emotional outpouring, that Marzha must have been strangely bespelled to have picked a poisonous genus after her long years of familiarity with the innocuous fungi. From this veiled innuendo Idell did not defend herself but she withdrew from the log-house as if she could not meet our eyes.

"Palingenesis, you said, didn't you? Well, palingenesis is what Elisha Moffatt said to me. I was to help him; he had

spent much study on it; it could be done; I need not mourn. We need only build a funeral pyre and cremate Marzha's body, preserving the ashes.

"The idea of cremation met my approval. I could not bear to put her body in the earth while the hateful poison still tore at her so relentlessly. At the same time I feared lest Elisha's mind had become unhinged by the disaster. I told him that I intended to scatter the purified ashes upon the running water of the clear brook that murmured near the log-house. At this he protested hysterically, declaring that I would be a madman to block his plan. Have her back, he said, he would. He *knew* how the process worked and believed he could bring Marzha back, warmly pulsing with life.

"I told him defiantly that he was certainly mad and that I would not have her ashes desecrated by his unholy experiments. He swore to me in turn by the Ark of the Covenant that held the seven mysteries of creation that he would not permit my stupidity to stand in his way. When I in turn swore to keep Marzha from him, he laughed.

"He bade me note how easily he could wrest her body from me, and lifted his arm until I felt so numbed from head to foot with my impotent struggle against an unseen but potent power he wielded so easily that I was obliged, against my will, to bow reluctantly to his wishes.

"I told myself that fire purified that which it consumed and was it not better than the worm? I tried to believe that the pure element of flame would clarify the poison's dire work, returning Marzha to my arms alive and lovely as Elisha declared."

The bartender paused significantly before the narrator and me, his eyes bent upon our drained glasses.

"Will you accept a drink?" I asked my vis-a-vis.

"Gin-and- tonic," replied he indifferently.

"Give me another Scotch-and-soda," I ordered.

For a few moments the man and I sipped our drinks and puffed at our cigarettes. He had accepted a cigarette from me, rolling it slightly between his fingers as Julian had used to do, so that it got so soft it only lasted for a few puffs. I was full of impatience and kept wondering when the moment would arrive to clap the man on the shoulder and cry joyfully that he was Julian Crosse and I'd known it all along. After three or four puffs he rubbed out the cigarette and took up the burden of his discourse.

"We made up a pile of wood," went on the man, "and reverently laid on that rude pyre the stiffened, hideous travesty of what had been a gracious living creature. About this pyre Elisha paced with priestly solemnity, chanting strange words in an unknown tongue. As his signal I lighted the pyre with a torch he had hastily prepared. The red flames leaped avidly until naught was left but a pile of powdery gray ash. This Elisha carefully gathered to the finest particle, putting it into a great urn against the time of the experiment, for the performance of which his consuming anxiety betrayed itself in almost feverish word and gesture. He had also, he explained, to make certain alterations in the incantations because of extraneous matter from the pyre itself.

"MEANTIME Idell fumed and fretted but kept well away from her uncle's accusing eyes, for she had reason to believe in his more than ordinary powers. Me, also, she left alone.

"The morning after the episode of the funeral pyre, Elisha told me that I must let him have a small quantity of blood from my median vein. It was an ingredient in what he called the elixir *Primum Ens San-*

guinis. He put this blood into a bottle, adding by twice its weight a certain alcahest of which fortunately he had just sufficient. He sealed the bottle and arranged for it to be maintained at blood warmth in the laboratory for fourteen days.

"If you chance, my friend," said the man (I almost spoke out my secret thoughts when he called me that) as he sipped his drink, "to have curiosity as to the nature of the alcahest, you will find it in any accredited magical book by Paracelsus, Eliphus Levi, Trithemius, even Agrippa. Suffice it that after fourteen days Elisha filtered the flashing, ruby-clear liquid that had risen to the top of the bottle. The elixir was carefully decanted into a chemically clean container and put to one side where it would be safe until needed.

"I insisted upon being present at the ceremony, which meant Idell's presence, as this particular rite depended upon a unity or a triad. Idell was admitted between the outer and inner circles her uncle had traced upon the laboratory floor, and was bidden to feed the lamps that at stated distances sent up clouds of pungent, perfumed smoke. The great urn stood in the center of the inner circle, where Elisha and I were also, surrounded by that ring of oil lamps that sent up clouds of choking smoke from their tiny wicks. My skin stung into gooseflesh with vaguely intangible intuitions of something portentous, amazing, hovering at the exact point of revelation. So we stood, the uncle, the lover, and the slayer of the dead girl, in unholy combination to rob Death.

"With my own eyes," said the man (and bent them upon me until responsive gooseflesh pricked upon the surface of my body while I listened in a kind of trance to the eerie tale), "I *saw* that palingenesis. My ears tingled with the strange combinations of syllables Elisha chanted. At last the lid of the urn stirred slowly as if pushed upward by some as yet unharnessed but po-

tent power. I cannot express in words the terror that struck me at that sluggish movement as of something horrible beyond words, for beneath that cover I knew there was nothing but gray ash, the final chemical resolution into nothingness of a human body. Yet the cover did move, despite my bristling hair and goosefleshed skin. It moved—it tilted upward—fell back as if that which impelled it were not yet strong enough to concentrate upon pushing it aside.

"Then from that urn where reposed the ashes of the dead there puffed an occasional darkish mist. Horror tore at me and I could hardly control the agonized retching that began to shake my body.

"Again that Something lifted the lid of the urn. Elisha cried his charms the louder, chanting a barbaric strain the words of which throbbed within my brain as if even they, each individual word, was possessed of strange occult significance and living power.

"Did you ever stop to consider," the man digressed thoughtfully, "the amazing magical powers that lie within two or three tiny words, rightly used?"

He did not pause for my comment but continued.

"I watched the urn. Finally the lid was pushed perceptibly to one side. It trembled there upon the edge of the urn. I gazed with a fixed stare for I could see nothing below it but empty air hazy with clouds of pungent smoke. All at once the cover flew off and crashed upon the floor, shattering into a thousand fragments as if the power that lifted and flung it were almost too tremendous yet to control or direct itself.

"The voice of the adept became a shouting triumph even if an undertow of something tremulous within his being betrayed to me a human shrinking at this fearful thing he was doing. I realized too late that something obscene and unholy

was taking place. When my staring eyes could no longer doubt that they were in reality seeing the actual recall into life of what had become an appalling horror, I sickened so that I could no longer look upon it. Retching, I turned my back upon what I could not bring myself to credit although my eyes had told me it was only too true.

"From that urn where had reposed the sacred ashes of the dead there arose a tenuous vapor that slowly and undeniably was taking a woman's shape. It was darkly purple, horribly suggestive of the grave and decay. As I had looked, this slowly materializing Thing drifted downward from the open top of the great urn and came to a rest upon the floor beside me. The glassy, unseeing eyes had no intelligence in them, yet were they in horrid manner the eyes of Marzha. The awful purple face, the writhing features that shaped more and more into familiar, beloved semblance, yet so loathly were in their suggestions of rotten decomposition that I went down upon the floor at that horrid phantom's feet, unconscious.

"**P**ALINGENESIS! The Thing Elisha Moffatt had resurrected from Marzha's ashes was her body *as it had gone from life*, disfigured by purple and black discolorations due to the poison's rapid action; ghastly, too, because of the unwholesome, suggestive puffiness of gas-inflated flesh that had decomposed so rapidly. This Thing neither ate, drank, spoke nor breathed, as far as we could perceive. It walked among the haunted three in that log-house, affecting each in different fashion by its loathly presence.

"Idell frankly feared the Thing's clumsy approach and would fling herself abjectly upon me, begging for protection. To Elisha it represented at once his occult triumph and the sad evidence that a little knowledge is a dangerous thing; yet his

horror was transcended by his scientific enthusiasm at his experiment's success. If he had a regret, it was that he had not foreseen that he could not raise up a body to the beauty it had possessed before Death had defaced it so horribly. It was I who suffered most poignantly. The resurrected Thing was obviously soulless and this seemed the ultimate desecration. I could hardly bear to look upon it, so unutterably repulsive and loathsome did I feel it to be. I begged Elisha to reverse, if he could, the spell that bound the Thing to earth, that it might crumble into ashes and those ashes be given decent interment. At first he would not acquiesce for the evidence of his ghastly success was as yet too precious for what he bitterly termed my mania of wanton destruction. So I began secretly to plot for its removal. I remembered that when It had first appeared from the urn the adept had sprayed it with a dilution of that ruby elixir he had distilled from the alcahest and my blood. I noted later that three drops of the elixir in distilled water were given daily to the ghastly Thing that not only offended the eye with its appalling appearance of death and decay but only too well attacked the sense of smell so that at its approach nausea would invariably seize upon me.

"Each day Elisha took the elixir from the safe in order to feed and spray the Thing. I saw that the ruby liquid was diminishing in quantity day by day and asked him what he planned to do when it was gone. Make more, he had replied. I told him I would refuse to give my blood and that Idell certainly would not be complaisant about hers. This must have filled him with despair since it seemed the adept could not use his own life fluid. The liquid grew less. Then Idell took a hand. She said that as she saw it, the Thing had not been sprayed sufficiently and that if her uncle were to be more generous the following day, the Thing might in turn

throw off its horrid mantle of decay and become Marzha in all her beauty. For this I thanked her, as Elisha agreed to think over the situation from my standpoint if this further experiment did not succeed.

"Despite the dwindling supply of the elixir, Elisha was more generous with the spray the following morning and his attempt was, in a strange way, successful. The lips of the Thing opened; the puffed eyelids lifted a crack to show the gleam of intelligence. No words came from the Thing but the dry, blackened lips mouthed inaudibly. The Thing sank supinely upon the floor as if exhausted by that small effort, and Elisha sprayed it again, while I begged that he let it droll away into nothingness. He pushed me aside and shouted with triumph as the Thing began to revive slowly. It raised to a sitting posture. It began to alter subtly, the frightful evidence of decomposition fading and the skin glowing with new life. The dark eyes opened under normal lids. What had been a loathsome Thing became Marzha, beautiful as before. Elisha, in wild excitement, sprayed the reviving body recklessly with the *Primum Ens*. Pulsing blood reddened pale cheeks; puffy paws became white, delicate hands.

"While Elisha started for his desk to consult a notable tome on palingenesis, I received in my welcoming arms the miraculously revived beauty and life that was Marzha; sweet and wholesome to the touch, fragrant with fair health, incredibly thrilling as her mouth fixed upon mine in a long, hungry kiss. At just that moment Elisha checked his rush, standing as if frozen. He called me to throw her from my arms and look upon something lying behind the table at his feet.

"Marzha's arms clung, her voice caressed with passionate words of love, so fiery with ardor that I could hardly credit her lips with having uttered them. Prescience of unutterable calamity over-

whelmed me as I tore myself from her embrace and followed Elisha, to stand staring like a lack-wit at that which lay behind the table."

"Make it a Scotch-and-soda for me," said I to the approaching bartender. "On second thought, better make it a double one. I need it."

"Another gin-and-tonic," said the narrator impatiently. He fixed me again with that hypnotic gaze which I did not heed, for I could not have left him with the tale still untold and the hoped-for disclosure still a secret.

"The revenant pursued me," said the man, after the bartender had set our drinks on the counter and lingered a moment to wipe up the rings left by our last drinks. "She called me her life, her love. She begged me not to look upon what her uncle wished me to see. She promised that if I would only love her she would be a thousand women for me and could grant untold gratifications if she chose.

"SHE was too late to deceive me. On the floor behind the table lay the still warm body of Idell, an ironical smile of evil triumph on her lips. Beside her on the floor a labeled bottle told the story.

"I could not understand until Elisha cried in fury that she had done it purposely that her soul might inhabit and renovate Marzha's body. To me this was the supreme, unpardonable desecration. The dead body of my sweet love was obviously animated now by the passionate fire and wicked intelligence of the tempestuous Idell, who again approached me with the sinuous litheness of an enamoured tigress. I hesitated, for the woman approaching me was to all appearances the woman I had loved and lost; I wondered if perhaps this were not some further spell of Elisha's.

"Then the woman cried out, 'Oh, my beloved, can you deny our love? Look, could any other woman be as desirable as

I?' and she tore from her gleaming white body the homespun garment and smiled with such allure that Elisha must have trembled for me. She said, as she neared me, that she had learned to create such delights as no man had ever yet been permitted to enjoy. . . .

"As she approached, I withdrew, for never could I have believed that this tempestuous, abandoned creature was the finely reserved woman I had worshiped. I bade her let me alone, saying harshly that I did not care to traffic with Marzha's murderer.

"Idell must have read in my voice the doom of all she had dared for; she turned upon me in fury and despair. From her delicate lips—the lips that had been Marzha's—words poured telling the hideous story of a perverted passion, a hatred too deep not to have seized upon the opportunity to rid herself of an envied rival.

"In the midst of this tirade I realized what the withdrawal of the *Primum Ens Sanguinis* might mean to this unwelcome revenant.

"I snatched up the bottle, lifted it high in the air, then crashed it purposefully to the floor where it burst into fragments that flicked the ruby drops of sparkling life-essence seeping into the cracks, every drop lost forever.

"Elisha shouted a protest that changed to a moan of resignation. Idell sank upon the floor and, face in hands, wept with tumultuous sobs that shook Marzha's body.

"That was the beginning of the end. Fearful were the days that came and went. Elisha and I were determined that the going, whatever it might be, should be in our presence for we feared lest Idell might have learned somewhat that would enable her to maintain Marzha's body and transport it from our sphere of influence; to what evil she might, by her knowledge and wicked will, have devoted it we dared not

think. With the passing of each day the body that had been Marzha's became more attenuated, more subtle in essence. At moments Idell would throw herself at my feet and beg me to give my blood again to Elisha for the prolongation of her life. Although it was agony to see Marzha's body perishing before my eyes, I braced myself to watch her die.

"A day came when the misty body subsided like a thin layer of gray ash upon the floor.

"As it sank, I heard—or thought I heard—a thin, threadlike sigh in my ears. I breathed a prayer; not for Marzha who did not need it but for the unhappy Idell, and may God pardon me if I did wrong. Upon the surface of the brook's running waters I scattered the gray dust that it might be too widely separated ever again to be subject to palingenesis."

The narrator stopped abruptly and addressed himself to his half-empty tumbler of gin-and-tonic. His obvious attitude was that he had gone to considerable trouble to clarify palingenesis to me, even to the point of furnishing an example of its work-out in everyday life.

I waited in trepidation to hear what I hoped for but the man said no more; he sipped his drink in silence.

"You painted both the girls, didn't you?" I ventured finally.

"Yes," he said, and sipped again.

"Marzha first and Idell in Marzha's body afterward?"

"Yes," he said.

"Then you are Julian Crosse," said I and would have clapped him on the shoulder but that he incomprehensibly removed himself by rising and starting to leave the bar.

"Julian Crosse died in 1915," he said. "Also, it isn't expedient for the dead to return," he threw back over his shoulder.

"Dead men don't drink gin-and-tonic," I muttered.

He was still looking at me and he smiled. "No?" he said.

The swinging-door flapped and a man in perhaps his early seventies came into the bar. "Oh, here you are," he said. He was a remarkable man with shaggy white hair, shaggy white eyebrows, shaggy white beard divided in the middle like the pictures of Moses. "You forgot your drops," he said, and gave the other man a small bottle that sparkled redly.

"I suppose I ought to thank you," returned my man resignedly.

He turned a sadly whimsical smile upon me as he opened the outside door.

"How some human beings cling to the evidence of their past successes," he said, and went out, followed by the ancient.

I said to the bartender, "Put the bottle of Scotch on the counter. I think I want to get drunk."

