

# Tales of MAGIC

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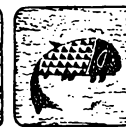
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# & MYSTERY

and the Supernatural Explorations into  
Famous Conjurers Throughout the World  
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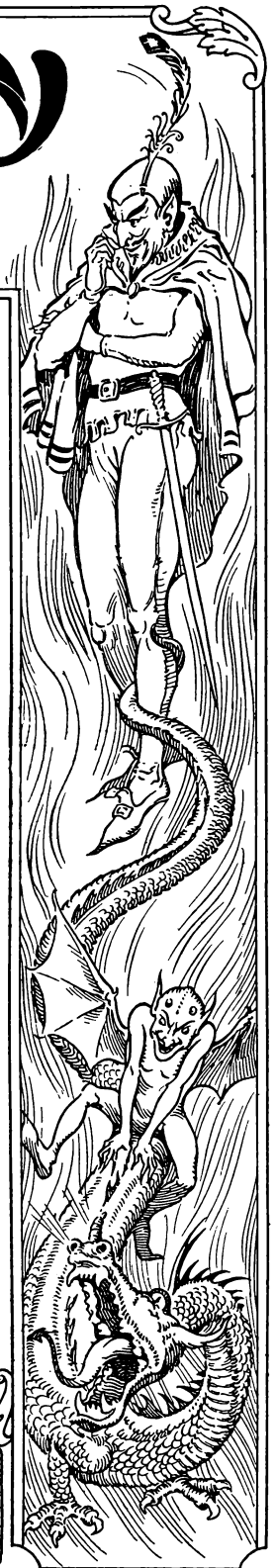
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A department which regularly each month will explain the presentation and secret of a number of good tricks.

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Her cry will ring in my ears forever. The fright of a child at some monstrosity, the fear of a woman who knows not what she fears . . .

# The Devil's Darling

The Fantastic Tale of a Man Possessed of a Devil  
who Directs Him to Dark Deeds of Horror and  
Ultimately Compels a Fearful Penance

*By* ERIC JULES

**D**ELLART was a third year medical student and if a bad man can love, he loved his work. The minor operations he had been allowed to perform revealed such accuracy and delicacy of touch that the professors prophesied fame for him in the department of surgery. For some reason, which I do not understand, he was very anxious to perform an amputation of the leg above the knee and this, of course, he was not permitted to do. The limb which had excited his professional interest was that of a patient in the hospital, and Dellart saw it cut off. I happened to meet him going home afterward, and his face grew savage as he described the operation, and mentioned his desire. "But a sound limb would do as well," he said when he had finished.

The following evening he rushed into the room where he, Brown and I held our revels. He was in his most cheerful humor. I never saw him more happy nor full of deviltry. He was always a handsome fellow, but this night he was superb. Though the room was full of men drinking and playing cards, I saw no one but him, nothing but his strong, lithe figure, his supple hands, his magnificent head and beautiful dark eyes that glowed and shone more brilliantly the more reckless he grew. I had a curious sense of losing my identity in his and after an hour had passed, I began to imagine that every time I lifted my glass to my lips it was Dellart's wish, not mine.

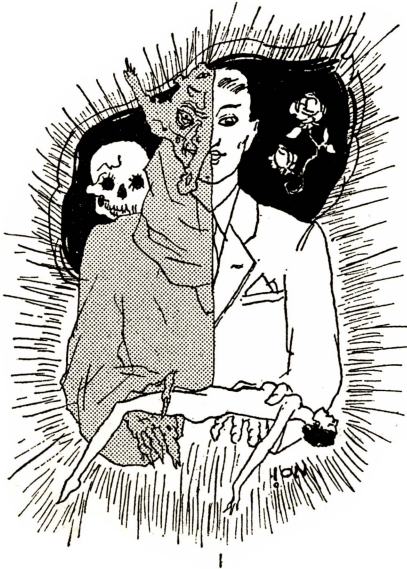
"David was a man after God's own heart," I heard him say, "and I'm a man after the Devil's own heart—a sort of 'Devil's Darling.'"

The rest laughed boisterously; they spoke the name in drunken repetition until into my clouded brain came the thought that Dellart was, in some special sense, a child of the Devil. It increased, if possible, the power he exerted over me. And when, at last, I found myself outside, he was still my evil star, drawing me after him along the streets.

When I became fully conscious (though I shall always think I had left my stumbling body somewhere behind me), we had gone into a house and mounted to an apartment on the third floor. The room we entered was outfitted with table, instruments and all the appliances of surgery. Dellart glanced about as if to make sure that nothing was wanting and then stepped quietly into the adjoining room. I followed, for I was still under that strange influence the "Devil's Darling" had acquired over me.

This was evidently a lady's room for by an open fire sat a girl of not more

than seventeen; a girl with marvellous blue eyes—deep blue, with alluring lights in them. Her features were lovely, the more so because of their innocent, unsullied, even child-like aspect. Dellart cast himself on the rug at her feet and lay looking at her, his eyes glowing. And she looked down at him, overflowing, I could see, with love and admiration for her handsome lover. To her he was neither the Devil nor the “Devil’s Darling.” If I had been a creature born of Dellart’s imagination, she could not have been more unconscious of my presence.



The thought came into my clouded brain that Dellart was, in some special sense, a child of the devil

Presently the man began talking in his low, magnetic voice, telling her of his work at college and of what the professors had said to encourage him, but not a word, I noticed, of Brown or I, his boon companions. At last, he put up a caressing hand and brushed her hair further back upon her forehead. “Do you really love me, Marion?” he asked gently.

“Better than life, Philip.”

“And do you believe that I love you—that nothing save love for you could make me trouble or hurt you?”

“Yes,” she replied simply and I could see her heart palpitate painfully with fear of what he would say next. I looked eagerly into her face, but if *she* saw either love or pity there, *I* saw nothing but strong purpose and a

determination to bend her to his will.

He put his hand on her knee and carefully examined the muscles up to the hip with a physician’s gentle touch. She had on only a loose robe and she quivered perceptibly, but whether from fear or modesty I could not tell.

“What is it?” she whispered. “I am quite well.”

He buried his face in his hands and remained in this position for a minute, while those beseeching blue eyes sought to read the meaning of his act.

“I am quite well, Philip,” she repeated.

Then he roused himself and looked up at her with that gaze which none of us could resist. “There is a disease, my dear, which comes so subtly that in its early stages none but a watchful physician even guesses its existence. How did your mother die?” he concluded, abruptly.

The girl’s heart throbbed in her throat so that I could count the beats. She made no answer except to keep her pleading eyes on his face.

“She faded away, dearest,” he went on, “with no especial pain and with no disease that her old doctor could put a name to. She was gone before anyone realized she was seriously ill. If he had known what the profession is beginning to learn now, she might have been saved.”

The girl’s voice was scarcely a whisper. “What is it, Philip? What do you want me to do?”

He held both the quivering hands a moment before answering. "To let the limb go, darling, and save the rest of the precious body."

Her cry will ring in my ears forever. The fright of a child at some monstrosity, the fear of a woman who knows not what she fears, all the terror of a human being on the verge of some dreadful, unknown future, was in that cry. But Dellart's face never softened. He held out his arms after a moment, and she crept into them. He kept her close and caressed and soothed her and told her how he loved her and how, if she would be brave, it would soon be over and the maimed body would be dearer to him than the beautiful whole one had ever been. When she was quiet, he said: "I have put off telling you too long, Marion. Every moment is valuable now."

At this she began to talk to him, still like a child, coaxing, bribing him with soft kisses, begging him to say it was not so and that she needed no operation. And if he had not indeed been an offspring of the Devil, he must have yielded! But he did not yield, and after a while his magnetism had its effect and she consented to do whatever he thought best.

"But you must do it yourself, Philip," she whispered. "I will not have anyone else. You will not mind, will you, dear, when I'd so much rather?"

Mind! May God never forgive him!

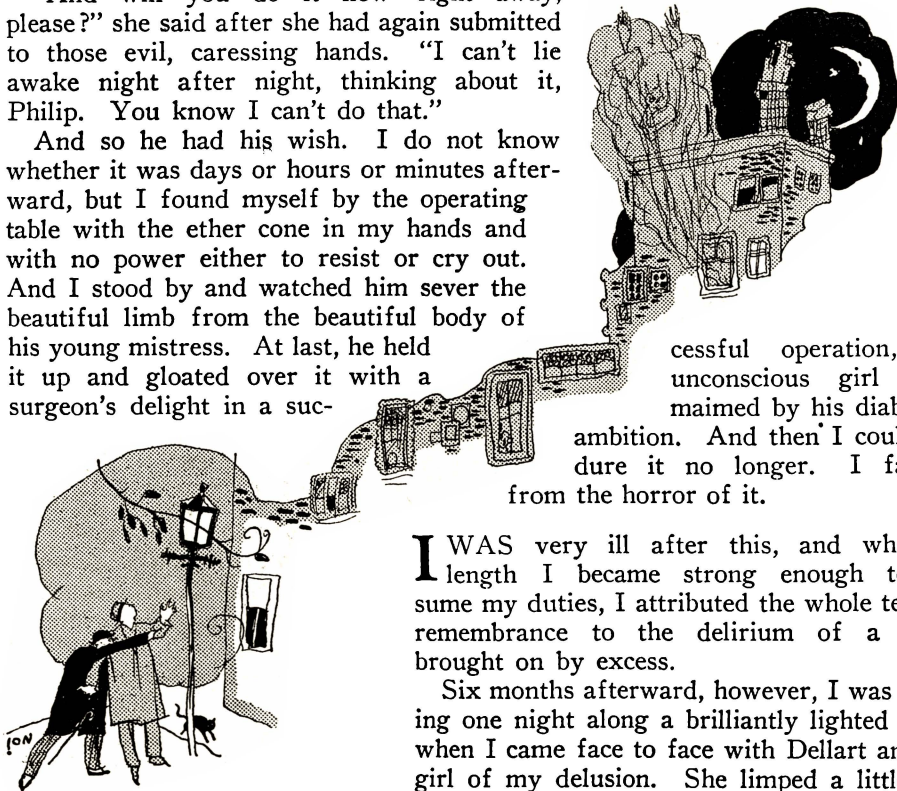
"And will you do it now—right away, please?" she said after she had again submitted to those evil, caressing hands. "I can't lie awake night after night, thinking about it, Philip. You know I can't do that."

And so he had his wish. I do not know whether it was days or hours or minutes afterward, but I found myself by the operating table with the ether cone in my hands and with no power either to resist or cry out. And I stood by and watched him sever the beautiful limb from the beautiful body of his young mistress. At last, he held it up and gloated over it with a surgeon's delight in a suc-

cessful operation, the unconscious girl lying maimed by his diabolical ambition. And then I could endure it no longer. I fainted from the horror of it.

**I** WAS very ill after this, and when at length I became strong enough to resume my duties, I attributed the whole terrible remembrance to the delirium of a fever brought on by excess.

Six months afterward, however, I was walking one night along a brilliantly lighted street when I came face to face with Dellart and the girl of my delusion. She limped a little and when a big, clumsy fellow trod heavily on her foot, seemed surprised at his anxious apology.



When I came to myself I was in the street staring up at the windows. . . .

The flesh crept on my bones as I realized that the foot, at least, was artificial.

I tore about the streets like a madman. I could not doubt that it was the same girl, though the child-look had completely left her. Nature is not lavish with such faces as that. I felt that unless I had something to drink, I should go mad. I plunged into a saloon and ordered whiskey. I was about to toss it off when I looked up and saw Dellart drinking too. "To my fame as a surgeon," he said, smiling at me. Our glasses clinked and I stood there and drank to his fame and my own damnation. We went out arm-in-arm; I could no more have resisted him than I could the effect of a powerful drug. Again there seemed to be nothing in the world but his personality and mine, and the awful horror toward which he was dragging me. Dellart broke the silence. "You saw my little friend," he said lightly. "A pretty creature, isn't she? Do you know, I believe she has no more idea that she is committing what the world calls a crime by living with me, than she has that I'm not an angel in the form of a man. I wonder how long Purity, itself, can stay pure and hold communion with——" he stopped and laughed softly.

"The Devil!" I muttered. He laughed again and finished quite naturally, "with the Devil!"

When we reached the apartment, Marion was preparing supper with all the dainty appliances of a woman who does such things from choice and not from necessity. I shuddered again as I saw the slight, graceful limp and then I slipped into that horrible room and waited. As I expected, they soon followed. I believe Marion thought he intended dressing the old wound in some way and that he gave her ether to save her pain, for she showed no reluctance whatever. She even laughed a little as he placed her on the table and tried, poor child, to make him think her cheerful.

"Good-bye for a few minutes, my skillful surgeon," she said and then, once more, I put the ether cone to her face and she drifted into unconsciousness. I cannot dwell on this. I sob like a child now when I think of it. But I stood by and helped him cut off one of her sound white arms!

We had hard work bringing her to, but finally she opened her eyes and looked Dellart full in the face. Whether she recognized him or understood what he had done to her, I do not know, but she gave one great cry which I can hear now above all the din of the city, "Oh, God, God, dear God!" and was quiet. Dellart looked up and said carelessly, "A very successful operation, but the patient died. She should have invoked her Divinity sooner." There was not a sign of pity or remorse on his diabolically handsome face.

I took the girl in my arms and snatching up some of the gauze which lay about, wound it about her, covering her from the pollution of his gaze and mine.

As I turned, the room became black as pitch. I stood quite still, trembling in every limb. Then Dellart began cursing, his voice unnatural with terror, and I realized that he was struggling with Something. I could feel Its presence all about me, unreal and awful. All my senses suddenly became merged in one great organ of hearing, and hearing was agony in the supernatural darkness. Every little while Dellart would knock something over, and then he would curse again and call to me to come and help him. But the silence of the unknown being which made no answer to his imprecations was most terrible of all. At last, I heard Dellart cry: "No! For Christ's sake, no!" . . .

In the better parts of every city there are houses concerning which the re-

spectable neighbors feel vague misgivings, though they can allege nothing against the inmates. When I came to myself, I was in the street staring up at the windows of one of these houses. It was daylight and Brown and another fellow had me by the shoulders, shaking me, laughing, and asking "what the Devil" I was staring at.

"I think I've had the D. T.'s and seen him," I said faintly, at which they laughed again. But the laughter froze on their lips. A scream came from above and the voice was Dellart's.

"Dellart!" I gasped. "Dellart is there!" and dashed into the house and up to the operating room. Startled faces peered at me from along the hall but only Brown ventured to follow. On the operating table lay Dellart, his right leg amputated above the knee, his right arm cut clean from the shoulder; and on the floor were the severed limbs, where they had been flung by the operator. The man's eyes were starting from his head, his maimed stumps twisted by more than mortal agony.

On the couch where I had placed her lay Marion's body, mutilated but beautiful, like the "Winged Victory." . . .