

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



A MAGAZINE of the

BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

NUMBER 4

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 317 Baldwin Building, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the postoffice at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 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 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. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1925, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for April, 1925

| | | |
|--|-------------------------------|----|
| Cover Design..... | Andrew Brosnatch | |
| When the Green Star Waned..... | Nietzin Dyalhis | 3 |
| <i>Evil Beings From the Dark Side of the Moon Attack Aerth</i> | | |
| Bloody Moon..... | Harry Harrison Kroll | 13 |
| <i>A Thrilling Tale of the Kentucky Caves</i> | | |
| The Lure of Atlantis..... | Joel Martin Nichols, Jr. | 17 |
| <i>Beneath the Sargasso Sea, in the Grave of Missing Ships</i> | | |
| Deaf, Dumb and Blind..... | C. M. Eddy, Jr. | 25 |
| <i>A Grisly Story of the Obscene Legions of Evil</i> | | |
| The Soul-Catching Cord..... | J. W. Bennett and K. L. Soong | 31 |
| <i>A Chinese Occultist—and an Evil Apparition</i> | | |
| The Grim Passenger..... | Donald Edward Keyhoe | 37 |
| <i>Was the Steamship Titanic Destroyed by an Egyptian Curse?</i> | | |
| Little Island..... | H. Thompson Rich | 42 |
| <i>A Pacific Hurricane Hurlled It Into the Ocean One Night</i> | | |
| Servants of Satan..... | Seabury Quinn | 49 |
| No. 2. Giles and Martha Corey. | | |
| <i>True Tale of Salem Witchcraft</i> | | |

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

| | | |
|---|---------------------------------|------------|
| The Dark Interval | J. B. Powell | 55 |
| <i>His Spirit Was Tied to Earth Until He Made Amends</i> | | |
| Sleigh Bells | Hasan Vokine | 59 |
| <i>Snow-bound, Besieged by Wolves in a Russian Winter</i> | | |
| Invaders From the Dark (First Installment) | Greya La Spina | 61 |
| <i>A Novel of Werewolves and Occult Evil</i> | | |
| The Wind That Tramps the World | Frank Owen | 99 |
| <i>A Tale of Sweetness and Light and Exquisite Music</i> | | |
| Treasure | Alexander Snyder | 107 |
| <i>A Thug—a Physician—and a Mistake</i> | | |
| Back From Dust | Frank K. Shaw | 109 |
| <i>The Shadow of the Guillotine Hung Over an American Courtroom</i> | | |
| Strange Tales From Santo Domingo | Arthur J. Burks | 113 |
| No. 3. Daylight Shadows. <i>Desert Heat and Madness</i> | | |
| The Dark Pool | Francis Hard | 118 |
| <i>Verse</i> | | |
| The Haunting Eyes | Eudora Ramsay Richardson | 119 |
| <i>They Came Back From the Grave to Torture and Save Him</i> | | |
| The Headless Horror | Robert Eugene Ulmer | 127 |
| <i>A Tale of Thrills—and the Severed Head of a Murderer</i> | | |
| Through the Horn Gate | Walter G. Detrick | 131 |
| <i>McIvor Meets Peggy Odel in the Golden Horn</i> | | |
| The Electronic Plague | Edward Hades | 136 |
| <i>A Scientist's Mad Brain Looses a Radio Horror Upon the World</i> | | |
| The Last of the Teeheemen (Conclusion) | Arthur Thatcher | 141 |
| <i>Two-part Serial—Weird Adventures Among Dog-faced Savages</i> | | |
| The White Scar | Nellie Cravey Gillmore | 158 |
| <i>A Dream Showed Him His Wife's Murderer</i> | | |
| Grisley's Reception | William Sanford | 162 |
| <i>Fate Took a Hand in the Convict's Attempt to Escape</i> | | |
| The Eyrie | | 164 |
| <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

*A Radio Horror, Created by a Mad Brain,
Menaced the World With Destruction*

The Electronic Plague

By EDWARD HADES

THE Electronic Plague, that infernal and unparalleled blight which spread over the country on the evening of September 10, 1935, just after nightfall when everybody was tuning up the radio—casting street and house into utter darkness, stopping completely the machinery of civilization, and striking tens of thousands of persons unconscious, hundreds of them never to awake—the Electronic Plague has never been satisfactorily explained to the public. Few know the true story. Officials of the War Department have, locked securely away in their most secret vault, the device that caused the woful disaster, and with it a document, the confession of Dr. Alexander Gnash, its inventor, who himself died in the plague. His niece, Ruth Palmer, understands how it happened; and there is one other, Urban Woodward. Ruth and Urban are married and never mention the matter except at an intimate family gathering, when the family, only a year old, merely gurgles and does not comprehend.

It happened in the queerest way. Urban had been humming sweetly along at a modest twenty-five miles an hour, watching his speedometer in anticipation of the instant when it should register a total of 500 miles. He had promised the salesman to go those first 500 miles very slowly; but he had promised himself to cover the 501st mile at the maximum. Now the numbers were hovering at 499, about to change; his impatient foot was

yearning to push the accelerator into the floor. At the crucial moment his engine calmly died, for no reason at all that Urban was aware of.

With mock savageness he shook the steering wheel and glared at the futile, unmoving figures. Genuinely disappointed at the failure of his climax but still able to laugh, he exercised the starter—with no result. Not a sound came as he pressed and pressed and pressed again.

Then gradually his lights went out. Beyond question there was something wrong, and his disappointment changed to annoyance and alarm. He was already half an hour late for an engagement. Desperately he took out his flashlight, intending to investigate; his flashlight, too, went out immediately after he turned it on. Striking matches, he opened the hood—a mere formality, for he knew nothing about the motor. It looked just as usual to him.

Here was a pretty fix! He was still two miles away from Hawkspit, where lived his friend "Elaine the fair, Elaine the lovable."

He sat on the running board and considered ways and means. If another automobile would come along and render first aid—but nothing passed from either direction. Suddenly he remembered going by several stalled machines before he himself had stalled. There seemed to be an epidemic of engine trouble over here in Jersey.

Tracks for a trolley-car line ran along the road, but no car came, and he soon tired of waiting. With each minute he felt himself becoming more unpopular with Elaine. He began to walk, intending to stop at the first house to use the telephone.

The night was inky black except for occasional dim flashes of lightning, and as he walked even the lightning ceased to play. Coming to a clearing laid out into building lots, he looked over the Palisades and the river to the other side. The sky was deep blue-black instead of its customary reflected splendor. He rubbed his eyes and stared. The lights of New York had gone out!

Urban started fearfully. A peculiar terror seized him, an unnatural tremble stirred his limbs. It was rather enjoyable, almost voluptuous, and he tried to laugh it away. Something had happened to him; that was sure. Was it the end of the world? If it was that, would he be left alive and forgotten?

But just as he might, this feeling of being left alone in a changed world made him far from comfortable. The black air, heavy and lifeless, seemed unfit to breathe. He hurried on, exasperated at his lack of energy. At last a glimmer appeared by the roadside. A house loomed uncertainly, and his irritation vanished along with his vague imaginings. A house, a telephone, and soon he would be telling Elaine how afraid of the dark he had been, and next calling a garage to take care of his car. Then, with Elaine, let it be as dark as the pit: he would never object!

URBAN stumbled and groped across the lawn, up to a veranda, and knocked at the door. Minutes passed before it opened and a figure in white stood holding a candle and waiting in silence.

"I want to use the telephone; may I?" he asked politely. "My car has broken down."

No answer. The figure turned, with a backward glance that invited him in. He saw that it was a girl, tall, even taller than he, and young, with great eyes ashine in the flickering light. He put on a bold though respectful smile, and assumed an ease he did not possess as he followed her.

"Are your lights out of commission too?" he began, but she gave him no reply, only set the candle on a small table, indicated the telephone, and withdrew. Tactful she was, he thought, but mysterious, and greatly troubled.

With his imagination running free again, Urban searched his pockets for Elaine's number. He looked after the white-robed figure with more interest than he paid the letters and cards. She was at a window, bent over, chin resting on interlaced fingers. He believed he heard a sob. Pity flooded his soul.

He put the receiver to his ear and waited; but wait as he would, and play with the hook, and plead "hello", no response came from the operator. He sat a long time, forgetting Elaine and wondering about the girl at the window.

"Your phone's out of order," he said lamely.

"I know," she murmured.

He studied her words.

"May I stay with you—for a while?"

He was gentle but sure.

After long minutes, "You are welcome," she said.

He advanced toward her.

"Oh, do not leave me!" she burst out, almost begging. "Please don't go away! There's something terrible going on tonight, and I cannot be alone any longer. Aunt's asleep, and uncle—"

She broke off sobbing.

"That's all right," he comforted.

"It's just the lights, and they'll go on soon, and you'll feel better. Cheer

up! Why, all New York is dark! A storm must be coming, and it has interfered with the power."

He took her hand, and she gave it to him so trustingly, and met his eyes so helplessly, that the image of Elaine at the back of his mind was blotted out forever.

"Let us get acquainted," he proposed.

"Take me outside," she said breathlessly. "I'm stifling. There's something wrong in here. I almost think there is something wrong with the whole world tonight. I feel ready to lie down and die. It is not a pain, it is not unpleasant, but it is becoming worse and worse."

It was true. Urban felt his former weakness returning. Some subtle poison was enervating him, and he was tempted to close his eyes and surrender to delicious oblivion. Almost collapsing, he shook off his lassitude and helped the girl out to the veranda, where he placed her in a swinging chair. She was so stricken that he almost had to carry her.

"It is nothing," he assured her. "It will pass. I'll call you up tomorrow (I have your number), and we'll laugh to remember how nervous and foolish we have been. Do not give in. Listen to me. Though it is a stupid thing to say, I feel that I have known you long. And I don't even know your name, nor you mine."

He stopped talking, and fell beside her, stunned, gulping the air as if he were about to faint. He was suffering now, but fought for consciousness. He lighted a cigarette and tried to laugh, but failed altogether.

"I . . . I . . ." he heard her gasp.

"Shall I . . . get . . . a glass of water?" he asked, with effort.

He pulled himself to his feet, walked a step, fell back, and gave up.

"No good pretending," he said. "I'm not well myself."

He tried to be natural, to smile, but terror gnawed at his heart. Some insidious force seemed to be sapping his life away. He looked fixedly into her eyes, the blank unfocused eyes of one in a trance. He crept close to her, embraced her, and kissed her mouth. A long time they remained together thus. A faint, despairing cry came from within the house, but they were conscious only of one another.

"If we die," he declared hoarsely, "it will be a shame, for I love you, I know. Many times I have said this; but it is true this time. And this time there seems no use in saying it."

"Hush," she whispered, hardly audible. "I believe you."

"We must fight," he insisted. "We can never die, loving like this. We must hold fast to our love, and it will keep us alive for each other. Fight, my dear."

And as they clung and kissed she became less passive. Once she stroked his cheek.

"But I am so sleepy," she complained.

"Do not give in," he warned. "Fight, or it may be the end."

"I hardly care," came her weary reply.

IT BEGAN to lighten and thunder. One bolt struck directly overhead, fairly shook the house, seemed to pass right through them. Rain pattered on the roof and began to pour. Dreadful though the storm was, they welcomed it. It made the air alive again and charged with energy. Urban kissed the girl softly and found strength to stand and hold her upright. They staggered a little way into the reviving rain.

"I must see to my aunt," she said, and went into the house.

While he waited in the hall the lights winked and brightened, settling at last into steady illumination.

Urban expanded with relief. Things were taking on their normal aspect again.

The girl rejoined him, and announced, very calmly: "My aunt is dead."

"But," he objected, "not dead, surely!"

"My aunt is dead."

"Your uncle—you mentioned your uncle," he stammered.

"He is in the attic, at his radio," she said stonily.

He followed her glance toward a door, and started to open it.

"Don't," she commanded, holding his arm. "Don't go . . . He is a madman, or worse. I am afraid to go near him."

"He may need help," Urban persisted.

With his hand on the knob, he hesitated, sensing danger. All the evil and strange events of the night rose in his mind, connecting themselves with this uncle and his mysterious radio. It was in obedience to a duty not to be shirked that he opened the door. He flung it wide and stepped back.

A dim white light, a ghostly kind of mist, radiating all the colors of the spectrum, streaked over the stairs from above.

"What is it?" he asked in fearsome awe.

"I never saw this before. But it must be what affected us, what killed my aunt. Keep away from it. Oh, take me out of this terrible place!"

"Later; but first I shall have a look."

As he moved forward the old spell came over him again. But she was at his side, and, supporting each other, they faced the unknown power.

"Let us see what it is, this radio of your uncle's," he said with forced lightness.

Clinging together, they charged the stairs and surveyed the attic. It was unearthly in this odd white light.

Wires and tools were everywhere about, confusing and blocking their progress.

"In the corner, there!" the girl exclaimed.

At a table piled with battery-boxes and flashing lights, from which emanated the white glow, sat a motionless, gray old man.

"It has killed him, too," the girl said, unmoved.

The man's head, blackened hideously, rested on his shoulder, and his black gown was almost burned away.

"This is no radio, no ordinary radio," Urban exclaimed.

Swiftly he went to the table and overturned it. The instruments of death and destruction crackled, sputtered, and subsided; the unwholesome light disappeared with the wreckage.

"That hellish contraption will do no more harm, I guess. Shall we go down?"

"It has done its harm, I fear," the girl mourned. "Oh, how could he! He hated us, he hated the whole world, for no reason whatever! But he was not wicked. I have always thought him mad."

Urban stooped to pick up a paper, and led her below. Under a soothing lamp, while the girl wept without restraint, they read:

To whomever it may concern—and I dare say it concerns the whole world, for I believe the whole world goes honking and clanking past my house, disturbing the quiet of my thoughts, breaking in upon my musings. But not after tonight! This night I mean to let loose my power upon the air. The Hertzian waves, instead of bearing jazz bands and bedtime stories, shall broadcast the Gnash electronic force which shall stop this rush of automobiles, these garish lights—shall, in fact, stop this damnable age of machinery which I loathe! Tomorrow a new civilization shall begin, an age of peace and contemplation.

I know my invention will destroy automobiles. It will cripple power plants; it must paralyze everything that runs by electricity. And what else it will do I cannot say.

This theory that life itself is electricity makes me pause . . . What then? Shall I broadcast death? But I will go on. The Electronic Plague—on with the Electronic Plague!

ALEXANDER GNASH.

THEY talked, while a rose and gray dawn revealed the earth to them again. Urban went for his machine; it ran as if nothing had happened to it, and was now awaiting them by the roadside.

"Let us get started," he was saying.

"I should think you would despise me. . . ."

"On account of your uncle? But you had nothing to do with all that. I love you and you love me. Your uncle was a cruel and decadent man, but he is dead. It was a narrow escape, but we loved each other, and our love kept us alive. . . . I have been through fire and earthquake in my time, through flood and cyclone. I lived through the influenza epidemic, and now the Electronic Plague. Nothing can kill me."

"It is possible," she ventured, "that all the rest of mankind is dead."

"And only we two living? Hardly. You shall see."

At that moment a folded newspaper described an arc and dropped upon the porch, while the carrier continued on his way with a whistle.

"That fellow at least is a survivor. And the morning paper comes as usual, to tell us all about it. On Doomsday, I verily believe, the papers will be issued with full accounts of the event, and lists of the sheep and the goats."

He opened it eagerly, and they read of a mystified country, interrupted wheels, unconscious people, thousands stricken, hundreds estimated as dead, but many recovering, and affairs in general struggling back to proper functioning.

"This is stupendous," she grieved. "I feel as if I were in some way responsible."

"You shall never be connected with it," he said with conviction. "We are the only two who know, and we need never say a word, though I know a newspaper man who would be grateful for the tip."

"This will haunt me all my life. I must tell. I shall never be merry again as long as I live. Better if I had died too. . . ."

"From now on you shall be happy, for you are going to enjoy life, with me," he consoled her. "Why, many a time I have felt ready to lie down and die, and instead packed up and started for some other spot on the earth. Civil-engineering in Central America . . . with the marines in Haiti . . . teaching in the Philippines . . . back home to Illinois and the farm . . . off again to Texas oil fields . . . just as soon as existence staled and the joy of living evaporated, with me it has been away to pastures new seeking happiness."

"I shall never be happy," she insisted.

"You shall. Try it with me. Here, selling stock in New York, I have been successful and contented. Married to you, everything will be perfect. Why, dear, we love each other, and that settles it. Come. I shall marry you, in spite of your mood, no matter what you say."

And so it was. . . . Later in the day, having attended to their personal affairs, they found a moment to discuss what was to be done about the disaster. They deemed it best to report the matter to authorities at Washington. The War Department took control and ordered secrecy. That was all; except that certain knowing ones declare that the United States can now enforce peace among the nations, and that there will never be another war.