

Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

NOVEMBER, 1942

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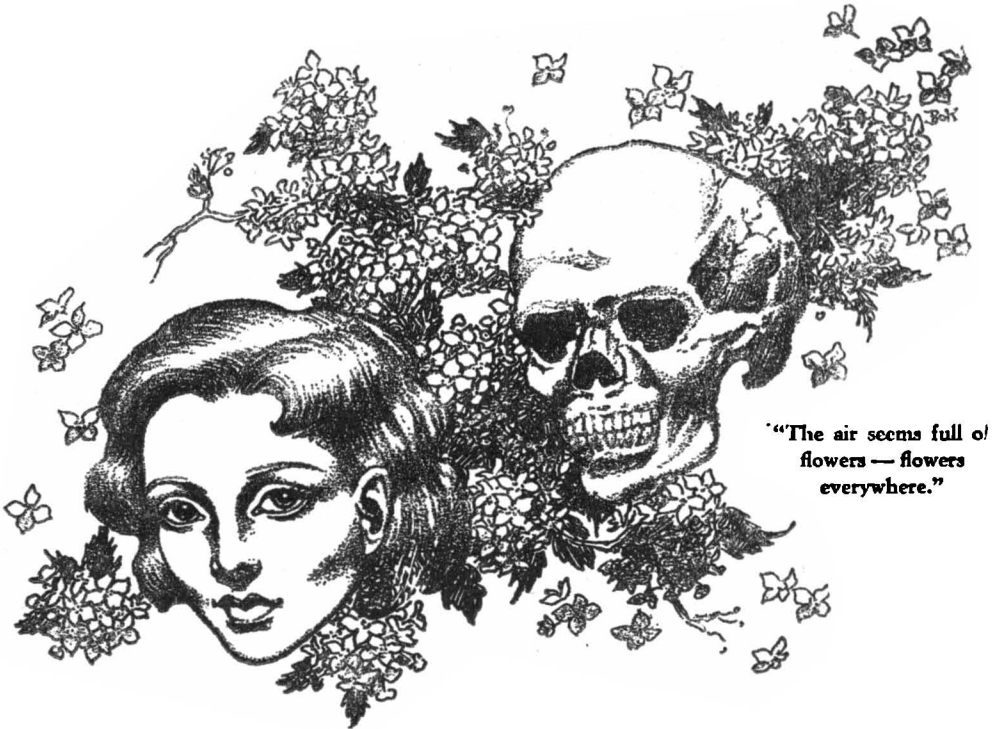
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D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

LAMONT BUCHANAN, Associate Editor.

*The victim of some horrible form of witchcraft can fight back . . .
but only with more witchcraft.*



"The air seems full of
flowers — flowers
everywhere."

The Evil Doll

By *HANNES BOK*

THE artist laid aside his palette and tossed down his brush. He ran slender fingers nervously through his thick black hair. "It's no use," he said. "I can't go on. I feel another attack coming on already." He looked for sympathy across the untidy floor of his studio to the girl on the model stand. "If only you could help me a little more, Eileen—if only you had some faith in me."

"Can I drop the pose?" The girl was pretty in her inexpensive clothes. The artist nodded, and she relaxed.

The artist turned, and waved his hand at the walls, crammed with darkly painted canvases. He was tall and very thin; his shabby suit draped from his shoulders in mournful folds. His gaunt face was dark and bitter. "If only you had more faith in these, Eileen—faith, too, in me—" He sighed, and pulled up a battered kitchen chair whose legs were wired into place.

The girl was not much stirred by his bleakness. "I can't help how I feel about you any longer, Maksim. I've done everything I can to help you. I'd lend you more

money, but I haven't enough to take care of myself as it is. Surely there's something you can do—"

He snorted a bitter laugh. "Do? I've tried everything. I know that my work is good. These art dealers—bourgeois pigs!—how can they understand what I am trying to express? They look at my work—pictures that I have slaved over, sweat blood in the making—and they say, 'Yes, it is good, but will the public understand it?'" His voice squeaked in mimicry. "The public! How can it understand what it has never been given the chance to understand?"

Eileen arose and stepped off the model stand. "But surely, Maksim, you could go out and get a job for yourself. Then you could save money until you had enough to live on for a while—"

He looked up at her, laughing darkly. "I do not know why I talk to you like this. I go out and get work! First of all, I am an artist. My life is painting. Without painting, I should die. Then there is this heart of mine. Oh yes—I admit that it sounds like an excuse. But that is not true. My heart"—he touched it dramatically—"it is very bad. Yes. I should be dead now, dead and in my grave. But I live on as best I can, because life to me is very sweet as long as I am strong enough to hold a brush. The doctors have told me not even to paint, that the excitement is too great. But I must. It is my blood. I care for nothing else." His eyes were regarding his dim canvases as though they were golden treasures.

Eileen took her coat from the back of a chair and slipped it on. "I used to believe you once, Maksim, when I thought that I was in love with you. You were so charming! But now I'm not so sure. I don't believe that you really have heart attacks. And whether you do or not, I can't continue to give you money that I need for myself."

He arose, smiling forlornly. "You are selfish!"

She shook her head. "Not selfish, Maksim. I just can't get along on the little that I earn. Rent's high, and food's expensive, and I need decent clothes around the office. Surely you can understand that."

He shrugged. "You sound so—final. It's in my mind that you are leaving, never to come back. That you are sick of me and my weaknesses." He waved a hand hopelessly. "And so our little friendship is ended. Too bad." The girl did not reply, but put on her hat and slid her fingers into her gloves. She tucked her purse under an arm, and the artist's eyes clung greedily to it. "But first, dear Eileen, before you go—let me have a little souvenir."

She discerned where his eyes were fixed. "More money, I suppose."

"Oh, no. Not money. No, I should like to make a little doll like you—something to put away for the present and to take out in the years to come when I remember you."

She laid down her purse. "Will it take long?"

"Oh, no! Merely a few minutes. Please."

"Well, then," she said, removing her gloves and hat.

MAKSIM BOGROW stumbled about the dark little room in a hurry. He brought out a battered cigar box from a lop-sided cupboard, and a candle. "Will you light this for me? Thank you!" He seated himself before the candle's glow and opened the cigar box, taking out a lump of dull white substance. Eileen pulled up a chair and sat down.

"What's that?"

"Wax," he said, holding the lump beside the candle's flame and revolving it steadily as though barbecuing it. As it

softened he kneaded it with his fingers. "See, we push into it here, and roll it out—so . . . And now we pull here, and roll some more—and what do we have? A body. Your body."

"It doesn't look like me," Eileen said. "Should I pose on the stand?"

HE SHOOK his head. His smouldering eyes had become unpleasant. "It is not required. But wait—if you were to give me a little lock of your hair to put on my little doll's head—" He unhooked a pair of scissors from a nail on the wall and held them out suggestively.

Eileen shook her head disparagingly as she found a wisp of hair which would not be missed. The scissors snapped. "Here you are—but I haven't the faintest idea of what you think you're doing."

"You'll see soon enough," he promised. He held up the little wax figure. "Kiss this."

Her eyes widened. "Kiss it? Why?"

"Because to me it will ever after seem that you have left in this wax a little of your personality—something of yourself."

She kissed the wax. "Sentimental idiot!" He thanked her gravely.

"And now—if only there were a bit of your finger nail—"

"Oh, Maksim, this is silly!" She did not accept the scissors.

"You think so? You laugh at me because I am sentimental to you, no? But you will see." He thrust the scissors out again. She hesitated, then sighed and humored him by trimming one of her nails. "There," she sighed. "I hope you won't want anything else—my teeth, for instance."

"Oh, no," he said blandly. "This is quite enough." He warmed the little puppet's head at the flame, then pressed the hair into place. With a fine brush, he touched his palette, then sketched eyes

and a mouth on the doll. "There, you see it? A little Eileen."

She studied the tiny figure. "You know, it does resemble me—the lines are like mine—"

"It is you, my dear. Or almost—one little thing, and the charm is complete. It must be baptized in your name."

She was amused. "You sound almost as if you were a witch."

"Oh, I am a witch," he said jokingly. "What else is a sick man like me to do when there is no money coming to him except what he can borrow?" But his eyes were narrowed. Eileen's lips tightened and she stirred uneasily.

"Witchcraft—that's all superstition!" she said.

"Yes, isn't it? I have not made you fear me?" There was a knock on the door, and his face darkened. "Excuse me."

Eileen arose. "I must be going."

"A moment longer, I beseech you." He waved her down and stalked over to the door. When he opened it, he went rigid with surprise, as though confronted by a ghastly apparition. He went out into the hall, closing the door. Eileen curiously examined the little wax figure. At first she heard only a blurred mumbling from the hall; then the voices grew louder, Maksim Bogrow's with anger, and the words were distinct. "What do you mean by coming here at this time, when I told you that I would have a visitor?"

A woman's voice countered shrilly. "I don't care! You can't treat me like this, Maksim. I'm not your slave; I love you! Either give me back the money I've loaned you, or marry me as you promised." Eileen's lips twisted in disgust: she shook her head.

Maksim Bogrow's voice was threateningly gruff. "Leta—I have the little doll which I made of you. It has been carefully stored away—oh, so very carefully. Do you wish it that I take this little doll

out of its wrappings and—" Eileen scanned the little figure which was herself, and pondered.

"Oh, Maksim, no! But take pity on me, Maksim. I love you—I can't help loving you even though I know you're no good. It's all your fault. I didn't want you and you kept making me come to you—and now I'm no longer able to control myself—"

"You'll get out of here and never come back, my sweet little Leta—or you will wish that you had. Yes—when you feel the pains again—"

Eileen frowned at the closed door. What did he mean? She arose and paced to and fro.

The woman was weeping. "Oh, no, Maksim—please! That girl in there—I saw her go in; I was waiting—do you really love her? Or are you going to do to her what you've done to me?"

Maksim muttered an answer, but Eileen could not understand it. The woman cried sullenly, "Oh, all right, I'll go. I hate you—I hate you even though I love you!"

There was a sound of feet descending the stair, and the artist entered, shutting the door. "My landlady was here, asking for the rent," he said. "You see how in need of money I am?" He was nervous, and his face was darkly flushed.

"Was that really your landlady?" she asked coldly.

He stared indignantly. "You think I lie!" He brushed a hand petulantly over his hair. "You will not lend me money? Well, no matter. I have this doll." He took it from the table.

She reached for it, and he jerked his hand away. "Maksim, I feel uncomfortable, leaving this doll with you. I heard what that woman said out there, and there's no need for you to have this doll to add to your trophies."

He stepped back. Her hand was still

out, waiting. "Or perhaps you're superstitious?" he asked.

She tossed her head. "I? Keep your doll then—and I hope it makes you very happy. I'm leaving now, Maksim. I am angry with you, and I don't think I'll ever come back—"

He smiled unpleasantly. "Oh, you will—of that I'm certain."

She laughed. "You're so sure about it, aren't you? I don't see how I was ever fool enough to have believed in you." She snatched up her hat, gloves and purse, hurried to the door, opened it, and looked over her shoulder. "Good-by, Maksim—and I mean good-by."

HE WAS still smiling. He bent over the candle and blew out its flame. The girl shrugged irritably and stepped out. As she hurried down the dim stair, there was a slight movement in the shadows below, and a woman climbed into sight. She was haggardly pretty in a florid, big-boned way, and her clothes were expensive remnants, long out of style. Eileen stopped.

The woman smiled wryly. "So you're the one!" she sneered, her eyes inventorying the girl. "You think you're in love with him, don't you—the same as I did!" The blackening had run from her eyelashes as though she had been crying.

"No," Eileen said. "I don't love him."

The woman stood aside. "Oh, go down," she said in discouragement. "There's no use in talking to you. I wouldn't have listened if anyone had tried to tell me what he was like. That's what you're like when you're in love." Eileen started down past her, then stopped irresolutely. The woman asked. "Tell me—did he make a little image of you yet?" Eileen nodded.

The woman seemed to turn pale. "Then you'd better go right back up to him, and get it from him. Destroy it—do you

understand? As long as he has it you'll never be free of him. He's a witch—do you hear me, a witch!" Her voice lifted shrilly. "He used a doll to make me do whatever he asked—I had to give him all my money, lie for him, steal for him! I love him—I don't care. But you—" She pointed vehemently. "Go back to him and get that doll. It's for your own good!"

"You mean—backmail?" Eileen asked.

"No, witchcraft. That man's a witch."

"But that's preposterous. There's no such thing as witchcraft, really. It's just superstition."

The woman smiled bitterly. "You think so? Hasn't it ever occurred to you that there must be some truth in a belief which has persisted since history began? People don't hand down knowledge that's of no value. The gods and goddesses of the past centuries are forgotten, because there was no truth in them—but witchcraft persists—haven't you ever wondered why?"

She poked a finger of derision at her clothes. "If only I had believed in time, I'd not be wearing these. You go back to him and get that doll!" Eileen shook her head in helpless defiance and again started down the steps, but the woman clutched her arm. "You fool, can't you see that I want to save you? It doesn't matter about me—I love the man—I don't want him to have any power over you!"

Eileen stared at her; the woman was sincere. She pondered a moment, then reluctantly turned and proceeded toward Maksim Bogrow's studio. The woman followed a few steps, then huddled against the wall, staring upward after Eileen in dread. Eileen rapped softly on Bogrow's door.

"Who is it?" he shouted peevishly. "I'm busy. Go away!"

"Maksim, it's I—Eileen. Let me in!"

"Get away from that door!"

"Maksim, let me in!"

"Get away from that door, you little—" He employed an unpleasant name, and Eileen's jaw dropped in dismay. "Get away, or you'll be sorry!" Eileen rapped again. "All right, damn you—you're asking for it!" Eileen stepped back, expecting the door to shoot open and Bogrow to rush out in fury, but instead she heard the tramping of his feet and then the running of water. She heard him mumbling, "In the name of all that's holy—" She pressed her ear to the door. "—I baptize you *Eileen Williams!*"

Then suddenly a sharp pain wrenched through her head, and involuntarily she screamed, clapping her hands to her eyes. Through a tumult of anguish she heard Bogrow's laughter, raucous in its triumph. Then the pain faded away. Weak with relief, she sagged with exhaustion against the door.

"Eileen! You still there?" Bogrow asked. "That's a sample of what you'll get every time you displease me. Pleasant, wasn't it? Now go home. Go home—and next time you feel the pain, you'll know it's a summons from me, and then you'd better come—but quick!"

Eileen turned drooping from the door. The haggard woman was still on the steps. "Too late," she said. "I warned you, but it was too late." Her face was as white as though she too had suffered the pain. "I know how it was—that's what he did to me."

"Are you coming down?" Eileen asked wanly, starting downstairs.

"Me? No, I'll stay. I want to see him again. I'll try to get your doll if he'll let me in." Almost to herself she murmured, "He's so cruel—and I love him so. Don't you worry—if he'll let me in, I'll get that doll!"

They gazed at each other for a moment, and then Eileen went deliberately down the stairs.

Nothing happened for two weeks. At

work Eileen was nervous, her head jerking up from her work at the entry of every person into her department. One of the counter girls noticed it. "Eileen, what's the matter with you? You act like a scared rabbit!"

"Nothing. I just thought maybe it was someone I know."

"How's your boy friend—the one who dated you up here that time?"

"Him? I haven't seen him now for over a week."

The counter girl smiled wisely. "I know what's the matter with you—you're in love, and he's ditched you. I told you he was poison! I could tell it in every inch of him!"

THEN one night Eileen was waked by the dreadful pain. It jabbed her, departed, then returned, stabbed, and went. She sat bolt upright in bed, whipping her hands to her temples. The throbbing pain diminished and vanished. She left the bed unsteadily and went to the bathroom medicine chest for an aspirin. She returned to her bed and lay down. She was almost asleep when the pain returned, and suddenly realization dawned. She clutched her breast. "It's Maksim, calling me! Oh, God! He is a witch!"

She left the bed again and began to dress, then stopped. "No, I won't go," she said, as though someone were there to comfort her. "I'll die of it first—I won't go."

She turned on a light and sat down, picked up a magazine and tried to read it, but she was too nervous. For an hour the pain returned, and this time it did not diminish. She rocked back and forth in torment, perspiring with agony, a little moan slipping through her gritted teeth. Then she jumped up. "*I'll have to go to him!*" She tore her coat out of a closet, did not bother to get a hat, and hurried out, not pausing to lock the door. She

could hardly see, and while waiting for the elevator she leaned against the wall as though her legs were melting. The elevator was delayed, and suddenly she raced down the steps and outside.

The pain did not stop. At last she was at Bogrow's studio, beating on the door.

He was in his dressing gown. He towered over her, his face slashed with a cold smile. "So you recognized my summons, and came. Well, my little dear, come in. I've been waiting for you."

She could only stand looking at him, her eyes glazed with agony. He smiled in satisfaction, then said, "Ah, but of course. The little image!" He went into the studio, took the doll from the table and carefully pulled a long pin from its head. The pain swept out of Eileen. Gasping, she lurched into the studio and dropped down on a chair. Bogrow held up the doll.

"You see? Your little counterpart."

Strength was returning to her. "Maksim, you're a devil!"

"Oh, yes, a devil," he said sardonically. "You were so much my friend—so kind to me once, and now I've become a devil!" She arose and started toward him. "No, keep away—or I might replace this pin."

"What do you want from me?"

"What do I want from you! Why, money, of course. Money so that I can go on creating these dreams of mine." His voice was reverent as he scanned his paintings.

"I haven't much in my purse, but you can have whatever's in it." She lifted her purse, and he advanced to take it. "So what that woman said—the one I met on the stair—is true!"

"Woman? Oh, yes." He smiled disdainfully. "Poor thing that she was—have you heard what became of her?" He rifled the purse and dropped it on her lap, then offered a newspaper from the table. "This headline—you see it? Probably you do not recognize the photograph. It must

have been taken years ago. 'Woman Dies in Plunge.' He read a few lines, his eyes flicking from the print to the girl's face. "Mrs. Leta Roberts, 31, estranged wife of Herbert A. Roberts, plunged to her death shortly after midnight from her tenth floor room in the Alvin Hotel, 357 West Twelfth Street. While entertaining a friend, she complained of severe pains—"

"It doesn't seem possible," Eileen said dully.

"No, it doesn't," he agreed heartily. "That is why the police do not bother me. The poor woman—she tried to steal your image from me under the pretense of making love. Unfortunately, she was of no further use to me, and I happened to have in reserve a little doll which I had made of her some time previously. She was in my way. So, rather than allow her to make further trouble, I disposed of her." He tapped the paper significantly. "Really, Eileen, this isn't very much money. I can't get along on this. You'll have to find me some more."

"But I haven't any money saved, and I won't get paid until Thursday!"

"Well, we'll wait until Thursday—and I'll give you a few little reminders once in a while, just in case you forget."

"You mean—?"

"Oh, I regret to say it, but—yes, I'll put pins in your doll every now and then to let you know that I'm thinking of you."

"You—you devil!"

He stiffened austerely. "That's enough abuse. You can go now. I'll expect you on Thursday."

Suddenly she raced past him, her hand out to catch the doll, but he was too quick for her. He slapped her face brutally. "None of that! I said you could go. Now go—or—" He picked a pin out of his lapel.

Vanquished, she turned and went out. As he had promised, she was plagued by the pains. And on Thursday, when she

went to him, he had requested all her pay.

"But I need something for myself!" she cried.

He handed her a five-dollar bill. "If you need more, you'll have to borrow from some one," he told her.

SHE visited a doctor, who diagnosed her pains as nerves, and gave her a mild sedative. Every two weeks she was forced to turn over most of her salary to Bogrow. His tortures had transformed her into a wraith who was startled by every sound, every quick motion. At last she could bear it no longer. She bought a gun in a pawn shop. "Going to shoot your husband?" the shop keeper asked facetiously.

She tried to laugh. "No, but it's an idea. I thought, with this war scare—you know."

He nodded. "You'll feel safer with a gun in the house. Yeah, I know." He handed her a slip of paper and a pen. "You'll have to sign here, lady, we got to keep a record of purchases."

Her hand trembled as she wrote her name. "Okay," the shop keeper took the pen and paper. She slipped the revolver into her purse.

Bogrow was not in his studio. She crouched in the shadows beyond his door and waited, shaking. At last she heard him coming up the steps. Her legs shook so that she had to sit down on the floor. She took the gun from her bag and held it ready, but it wobbled in her tremulous hands.

Bogrow whistled a happy tune as he climbed the steps. Then he was in sight. She aimed the gun, her mouth twitching, but she could not fire. "No," she said wryly. "I can't shoot."

She had whispered the words, but Bogrow had heard her. He rushed to her, seized her hands and dragged her to her feet. "A gun! You were going to shoot me!" He jerked her hands and the re-

volver clattered over the stairway's railing, thudding down the steps.

"I wanted to," she said, choking. "But I couldn't."

His face was hard as a statue's. Then he relaxed. He contrived a little laugh. "No, of course you couldn't. You're too gentle a girl. Well, go on now, get out of here. I'll push a few pins into your image just to show you that you musn't think of things like this."

Her eyes were wide with horror. "Oh, no, Maksim, please."

"Oh, yes, Eileen. You must be taught your lesson. Go on now." He pushed her toward the stair. She stood looking at him in dumb appeal, and he turned, unlocked his door and stalked in.

Dreading the advent of the pains, she stumbled down the steps. Her foot struck the gun, and she bent down, retrieved it, unconsciously put it back into her purse. There were no pains. "Oh, why doesn't he do it and get it over with?" she wailed.

The streets were dark. It was late, and there was little traffic. Ahead was a bridge, and she started across it, halting to look down at the black water. She was not aware that a man was approaching. Still there was no pain. She looked down at her wrist watch. It was nearly midnight. The pains usually came then. Well, they would come no longer! She opened her purse, reluctantly drew out the revolver and eyed it with a shudder. Then she lifted it slowly to point at her temple. Her finger found the trigger . . .

The sound of hurried feet startled her, and she half turned to see who was coming. A strong hand jerked the gun away, and an arm wrapped around her, preventing her from running. "No, you don't!" a man's voice muttered urgently. "Here, ter go of that gun!" He wrenched it from her hand. As she opened her mouth to scream, he clapped a hard palm over it. "Don't yell—I'm not going to hurt you."

She relaxed slightly, and his grip slackened. "All right," he said reassuringly. "I'll let you go now, if you won't do anything foolish."

She leaned back against the railing of the bridge, her hands pressed to her face. The man patted her arm sympathetically. "Things get difficult at times," he said gently. "I know."

When she had stopped trembling, she looked up at him. "Thank you. I suppose I was foolish. But there didn't seem to be anything else to do." He was not much taller than she, but there was strength in his stockiness. His shoulders were broad. It was too dim to see his face, but she sensed that it was kindly.

THE gun was in his hand; he looked at it, clucked his tongue, and tossed it over the railing down into the river. There was a faint distant splash. "Now tell me what it was about," the man said. "Maybe I can help you."

"I must go home," she said. "It may start at any time—the pain."

"The pain?" His voice was anxious. "You'd better let me go along with you to be sure that you're all right. I'm perfectly harmless—you needn't be afraid of me. I'm just a lonely bookworm, nothing more."

His apparent strength accentuated her weakness. She began to sob. "Here," the man said gently, "that won't do." He whipped a handkerchief out of a breast pocket and dabbed it on her eyes. Like a child, she permitted the gesture.

"Thank you," she said. "I can get ome by myself. You've been very helpful."

"Not yet. I'm going with you. We'll take a taxi if we can find one. While we're looking for one, you can tell me your troubles. I'm a good listener. I suppose it's the usual thing—you came to the Big City to go on the stage—" She

shook her head dejectedly. "By the way, my name's Dave Walsh. And you?"

"I'm—Eileen Williams. No, I wasn't trying to get on the stage. I have a job in a record store. You won't believe me when I tell you that I wanted to die because of—witchcraft—"

"Witchcraft?" He stopped stock still.

"Yes. You won't believe me. But I'd like to tell you. I'd like to tell somebody. I feel so helpless and alone—and any moment the pain will start, and I think I'll go mad—"

"The pain?" He was silent, taut with concern. "Here, we'll get a taxi first, and then you tell me."

IN THE taxi, she told her story. He listened patiently, not interrupting. "I've read about that sort of thing, but I never believed it. I can't say that I believe it now—the witchcraft part. I think the man's been hypnotizing you into thinking he's got some kind of power over you. I'd like to pay him a visit. I'd soon find out."

"If you tried to take the doll, he'd harm it in some way—and hurt me!"

He considered. "Yes, I suppose so. Granting that the witchcraft slant is possible. I don't suppose that I ought to take the chance." He frowned. "But I've got to do something!"

"Please don't go to him—I'm afraid he'll hurt me through the doll."

"But if I don't—he can go on hurting people for the rest of his life!" Suddenly he brightened. "Look—have you any wax in your apartment?" Her wagging head said no. "Well, we'll have to get some. There ought to be an all-night drug store open—we can get beeswax there."

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going to make a little wax image of you and put your hair in it—every thing your artist did. Then we'll see if it's really witchcraft or not if I touch it

with a pin. If it is, I know how to act. If it isn't, I'll go to see your artist and beat him to a hash."

She was very pretty, despite her paleness, as she eyed him. "Are you sure you know what to do?"

"Sure I'm sure. You'll see. Come on, now—we'll have to find a drug store." He leaned forward. "Cabbie—!"

They rode the elevator up to her apartment, the package of wax bulging from Dave Walsh's pocket. As they stepped inside and Eileen snapped on a light, she whipped her hands up to her face and huddled down, moaning. Dave reached down to her and assisted her to her feet. "Here, what's the matter?"

Her teeth were clamped tightly; through them she muttered. "It's come—the pain!"

He led her to the nearest chair and pressed her gently down to it. He crouched at her side, his forehead wrinkling. After a long moment she dropped her hands. "It's over. If only it doesn't come back! He plays with me—I don't know what to expect—sometimes I go nearly mad waiting for the next torture to begin—!"

"You feel all right?"

"A little weak, but all right otherwise."

"Where's the kitchen?" She led the way. "Put on the gas," Dave said, "while I unwrap this wax." She obeyed. "Now get a scissors and cut off a bit of your hair and a piece of finger nail—and here, you'd better kiss the wax. We'll do everything just as he did it."

She watched curiously while he twisted off a bit of warm wax and moulded it. "You bought far too much wax," she said.

"Maybe. Run me some water from the tap, please." While she was at the sink he palmed the hair and finger nail, slipping them into his pocket. The doll was ready. He baptized it in her name. "Now watch!" He jabbed the doll with the scissors. She screamed and clapped a

palm to her forehead. "Now don't tell me that you really felt anything!"

She was uncertain. "I don't know—I thought I did."

"But you really didn't. I know, because the charm wasn't complete." As she stared wonderingly, he dipped into his pocket and brought out the hair and finger nail. "You see? I didn't even put your hair and the nail into the wax."

She looked. "Then I only imagined the pain!"

"Sure," he said cheerfully. "It's all a state of mind. The witch doctors in Africa do it by showing their prospective victim the doll. He's scared silly by what they intend to do and imagines pain that doesn't exist—he scares himself to death. All witchcraft works that way."

"Then you don't believe that any of my personality went into the doll that Maksim made? I didn't then—I was too smug—but now I'm not quite sure. They say that each person has a vibration, and that the vibration lingers in the person's clothing, in the rooms he frequents—"

"Nonsense," he said. "I'll show you."

He pressed the hair and nail into the doll, and baptized it again. "Now it's the same as your artist's doll, isn't it? All right." He jabbed the scissors into it.

Was it her imagination—or really witchcraft? She screamed insanely, raised both her hands as though to stop him, and fell fainting. He dropped the little wax figure and lifted her from the floor, carried her to the sofa by the front door. She was still breathing, but she looked dead. He stood over her, shaking his head incredulously.

"But it can't be true—it can't be!" He was silent. He clenched his hands. "But if it is—!" He went out to the kitchen and studied the little doll.

When Eileen recovered consciousness, Dave was standing over her. "How do you feel?"

She stirred, then sat up briskly. "Wonderful! I can't remember ever feeling better. It seems as though all the flowers in the world are blooming around me—I can even smell them." She looked around, sniffing the air. "I can't see any flowers, but can't you smell them!"

"No. But I'm glad you're better. Come, now. I want you to take me to where this Maksim lives. We'll go in a taxi."

She winced. "Oh, no, not to Maksim's!"

"He can't hurt you any longer. Trust me. You won't have to see him. You can wait in the street while I talk to him." His earnest eyes convinced her.

"Well, all right. But it's terribly late."

"Two A. M. But it's not too late. The sooner we see him, the better. Come, get into your coat."

THEIR taxi stopped. "You're sure this is the place?" he asked.

"Of course," she said. She peered out and upward fearfully. "His light's on."

"Oh, Dave—don't go up. Please don't. I feel that something terrible is going to happen!"

"Nothing's going to hurt you—I promise it." He opened the door. "Wait in here. I'll be down soon."

She leaned back on the padded seat, but she did not relax. He stepped out, slammed the car door, and entered the old building. The steps were very dark. At last he reached the studio and rapped on the door. A voice called, "Who is it?" He did not reply. After a moment, there was a sound of approaching feet; the door opened. Maksim Brogrow looked out, silhouetted against the light in his room, a gaunt scarecrow. "You? And you are who?"

"I'd like to have a little talk with you—about some wax dolls," Dave said.

Bogrow's outline tensed. He was like a tall marionette whose strings had been

suddenly jerked. "I don't know you. You cannot come in." He started to close the door, but Dave lunged forward, pushed forcefully past the artist and entered. "I said, you cannot come in!" Bogrow's voice flitted to a nervous squeak. "Get out! Get out!"

Dave's eyes swept the dirty little room. "I've come to get the doll you made of Miss Eileen Williams," he said.

Threat melted away from Bogrow like a coating of wax. He crouched, apparently submissive, but his eyes were guileful. "I'll get it for you." He shuffled forward.

"And no funny business—or I'll knock your head off!" Dave warned. Bogrow did not reply: he opened the door of a grimy cupboard and reached in for something. He whirled, the doll in his hand.

"Keep away!" he cried shrilly. "I have the doll—yes! But you come a step nearer and I'll break it. If you want the doll, you must know what that means. She dies!"

Dave regarded him passionlessly. "Go ahead. Break it. But she won't die. Your little trick, whatever it is, won't work."

The artist laughed scornfully, shaking back the hair from his forehead. "You think not? Then you don't know the power that lies in this little image." He held it high. "You probably think of this as—only superstition. But I tell you that it is more! I have proved it! The soul resides in the body—yes? You must admit that. Parts of Eileen Williams' body are in this doll, giving it a soul—her soul. It is not for nothing that the Moslems believe it impossible to enter their heaven unless their bodies are whole. Why? Because without whole bodies, they cannot own complete souls. That is why they wear beards, do not cut their hair—they *know!* And I know!"

He lowered the doll, smiling slyly. "I have proved it! I have made many of

these little effigies—and they gave me power. And now I say to you—go! I will not give up this doll." He waved toward the door. "Go! And never return!"

Dave hesitated, then started toward him with slow, deliberate steps. Bogrow backed away, clutching the doll. "I warn you—come a step nearer, and I break the doll!"

"Break it!" Dave said. "That won't stop me. You think you'll kill her. Well, the part of her you'll kill is the part of her that submitted to you, and that's better off dead. But it won't keep me from laying my hands on you!"

He advanced to within arm's length—his hands shot out. Perhaps it was intentional, or perhaps the artist's nervous fingers closed unthinkingly over the little figure. It snapped in his grasp, and he looked down at the hand in horror. It fell lax; the bits of wax scattered to the floor. That did not stop Dave. He gripped the man by the shoulders and dragged him across the room. The artist tried to shout for help, but his voice choked in his throat. Suddenly he sagged; Dave dropped him, and he lay grasping on the floor, his face waxenly white. He put a hand to his breast. "My heart—my hear—"

Dave stood over him as he lay, his face contorted in anguish. Then his breathing became normal; he lifted his head. "You dare not strike me. I am a sick man. I might die."

Dave bent and pulled the man on his feet. "No, I don't need to strike you. First I want you to see that your magic's harmless. Eileen is not dead. She's down in a car, waiting for me. Come to the window. I'll call her. You'll see."

Bogrow hung on to him as they went to the window. Dave drew up the sash and peered down. "Eileen!" he called, his voice echoing through the silent streets. He waited, but there was no reply.

"Eileen!" The taxi was small below, like a shiny insect.

A rear door opened; Eileen peered out. "Dave! Did you call?" Bogrow started at the sound of her voice: he leaned over the window ledge, goggling.

"It's all right. I just wanted to say I'll be down in a minute," Dave called. Eileen drew her head back into the taxi. Dave straightened. "You see?" he asked, jubilantly. "I spoiled your charm. And now—" He grasped the artist's arm.

Bogrow cringed. "What are you going to do with me? Don't strike me! My heart—"

Dave laughed contemptuously. "No, I won't hit you. I'm going to do something that you'll think is far worse. This!" His hand darted to Bogrow's head and plucked a hair from it. He hurried over to the remains of Eileen's doll, picked up a fragment. He returned to Bogrow and pushed the wax against the artist's mouth. "There. Now I have material for making a doll of you—if I should decide it's necessary." He pulled down the window. Bogrow drooped, his eyes staring dazedly. "In a way, I'm sorry for you. Circumstances forced you into this. But you had no right to meddle with people's lives by force." He pocketed the wax and the hair. "Bogrow, I am going to make a doll of you—perhaps. When your heart hurts—you'll never be sure that it's really your heart. It may be a pin in a little wax doll." He started for the door. "Good night, and good-by."

"Wait! Please!" The artist staggered after him. "Do not make the doll! I must live! I have so much important work to do." He gestured wildly at his canvases. "I am a genius—I must give my work to the world!"

"I'm not saying," Dave said, at the door. "Good night." He went out, closing the door quietly. Bogrow stared after him.

Then, intense pain twisting his face, he clutched his heart—

ON THE stair, Dave smiled ruefully and tossed away the bit of wax and the hair. He went down to Eileen. She put out anxious hands to him. "It's all right? Once, while you were up there—just before you called down to me—I had the strangest sensation—as though part of me had died! But it was a part of me that I wanted to die—a smug and unforeseeing Eileen."

"You feel no pain?"

"Oh, no. I still feel happy and healthy. I can still smell the flowers. What did you do?"

He gave her address to the driver. As the car started away, he said, "I'll show you when you're home again. Eileen, we've known each other only for a night, but it seems like years. May I see you again—and possibly again after that?"

She laid her hands gratefully on his. "Yes, Dave."

"You think I've done something for you—but you'll be doing something for me. You can't know how lonely I've been. All I've had was my books, and once in a while, a stray dog to care for. If I hadn't seen you tonight—" He gestured futilely. "I might have gone on being lonely forever."

In her apartment, he ushered her to the linen closet and opened the door. "Here's how I neutralized Bogrow's spell. I figured that if one tortured doll could cause you pain, another lying peacefully would cut the pain in half. While you were unconscious, I took more of your hair and mixed it in the extra wax. See?" He put out a peremptory hand.

Eileen peeped into the closet. On a neat stack of scented linens lay six little waxen dolls.

From Artist into Author

MOST readers of WEIRD TALES know Hannes Bok's illustrations; they have commented on them for some time—generally

enthusiastically. So you can imagine our feelings the day Hannes came into the office and announced that he was through with ART; he was going to be a writer—or a section hand—or something like that. We remonstrated; we said he was much more useful to us as an illustrator; we said we liked his pictures, how did we know we'd like his stories?

Well, the answer to that is that we have used two of them—the second one being *The Evil Doll* in this issue. Of course, Hannes so far broke down as to draw the head for it, but the story, after all, is the thing. We thought that Bok ought to tell the readers of WT of his metamorphosis from artist to author, so we asked him to. What did we get? The following letter, so we think you'll have to draw your own conclusions:

My mother claims that the first thing I did after being born was to eat. (A slur at my appetite.) Second, she says I picked up a pencil and began to draw—but I think that's a *little* far-fetched. My earliest memories are of writing. At the age of nine I wrote action stuff of the type that I liked to read, but didn't seem available in print. I remember one episode: my hero, Don Denver, was riding a motorcycle in pursuit of bandits. They crashed through a "detour" sign and drove safely over a bridge. Not so our hero. He chased 'em on over the bridge, and right when he was in the middle—boom! A road gang (oblivious to the traffic) blew the bridge up. Was our hero killed? Not at all. He landed on a freight train's box car and when the train reached a crossing (where the bandit auto was delayed) he jumped off the train and beat up the villains. Nice? I wish I knew what the rest of the story was.

I don't like drawing much except for the making of fantastic pictures. I enjoy making huge landscapes of scenes on Mars and the moon. Have two 3 by 4 foot panels just begging to be painted upon, but at present I'm interested in a story.

Had an idea for doing a fantasy entirely in pictures. A magazine considered it, then decided that it would be too expensive. But I'd still like to do it. (Hint.) It'd be about thirty-four full-page pictures and thirty-eight half-page ones, without captions, which wouldn't be necessary.

Thanks again for letting me do an *Eyrie*

letter; am waiting eagerly for appearance of the story in print. Then I'll run around showing it to everybody, my chest expanding till—like the frogma in the Aesop fable—I'm ready to bust!

