

WINTER

# MARVEL MYTHS

of Science and Fantasy

15c

## The Titan

by P. Schuyler Miller

## The Golden Bough

by David H. Keller, M.D.

# MARVEL TALES

## Science and Fantasy

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# THE GOLDEN BOUGH

by David H. Keller, M. D.

“**L**AST night,” she said, “I had a dream. In that dream I saw a house in a dark forest, and now that we are married I want to travel till we find that house, and there I want to live.”

Paul Holland smiled as he looked at his bride of a few hours. This was her first request, and long before their marriage he had promised her that the first request would be granted, no matter what it was. This idea of hunting for a dream house seemed a rather peculiar one, but he decided that he could easily humor her in it.

Holland was of royal blood, but it was an age when royalty was no longer fashionable; so, he contented himself with the other things he had inherited from his ancestors and forgot about the title. He had left to him pride, a high head, courage and a kindly manner. He had married Constance LeMoine, knowing little and caring less about her family. All he knew was the simple fact that he loved her.

So, Holland and his bride started eastward through Europe, apparently careless of their destination, simply sliding over the hills and down through the valleys in search of their dream house. For Constance had often said to her husband:

"I shall have no trouble in knowing the house when I see it, and when we find it, we shall rest there a long time till the remainder of my dream comes true. It is a house in a dark forest and it is as real as the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow. I know that you are laughing at me, but this is not a wild goose chase. We are hunting for an actuality."

As they slowly drove through the country or sat over their meals at the little taverns or looked at the sunsets at the close of the day, they talked about this dream house and Holland asked a thousand questions. Was it a house or a castle? How large was it? Was it inhabitable or just a mass of ruins? Were they to live there? Were there a library and fire places? Thus, after long conversations, they agreed on the most important details of their search.

Holland did not care, so long as he was able to keep on living twenty-fours a day with Constance; he did not care if the journey never ended, if only she remained contented and happy. On and on, day after day, they went and finally came to a dark forest. There the giant pine rose, a hundred feet upward, before branching. There was a hush in the air and a peculiar absence of little living things, which made all still and quiet. The ground was covered with a heavy carpet of pine needles. In some of places thick moss carpeted the little open spaces; circles of bare ground were wound about by toadstools which glowed waxy-white in the dim uncertain light; on bare shelves of rock fool's gold glittered in the occasional sunbeam.

From the lofty branches pine cones had fallen on the road; these crackled under the rubber tires, but this and the noise of the automobile were the only sounds that broke the deathly stillness. The road passed over roads,

yet, here and there bunches of wild grass grew in the wagon ruts, showing how old the road was and yet how seldom used. Holland throttled the engine down till it made only a few miles an hour; they drifted rather than rolled, seeming to sail into a dreamland of ethereal beauty. At times, in front of them an unexpected beam of sunshine illumined a part of the forest with colors, like light breaking through the rose windows of a Gothic cathedral, so lovely that for a moment the heart paused in its beating.

They came to a fork in the road. The main road went on down into the valley, but the other climbed, in tortuous curves, up the mountain. When the woman saw that road disappear upward through the pines she whispered, as though anxious that no one, save her husband, should hear her:

"Let us go that way. What a road! How shall we find our way and what shall we find at the end of it!"

"I know," replied her husband, as he turned off the main road. "We will go up and on, and on and up, and at the end we shall come to the home of a wood cutter, or a charcoal burner, and, after much trouble, we will turn around and come down again."

"Let's do that very thing!" she urged enthusiastically, and, as usual, her request was granted. Holland, however, was not correct in his prophecy, for at the end of the road was neither hut nor peasant burning charcoal. Rather, there was a house in the dark woods. Constance LeMoine Hubelaire looked at it once and looked at it twice; then she covered her face with her hands and started to cry. Her husband, who, by now, was accustomed to her moods, just placed his arm around her and let her cry. At last she emerged, smiling.

"How stupid! But it was joy, Paul, that made me

cry and nothing else. Now we have come to the final ending of our search, for this is the house of my dreams—and in it I want to live a long time, till I learn what life is and the real definition of love.”

Holland looked at her rather sadly.

“I did not know that your plan included the idea of living here. I am sure that it would be a nice place to stay if we were near anywhere and had servants and company and all the little parts of life that make existence comfortable and pleasant, but I am afraid that none of these things will be found here. Yet, if it is your desire, we will stay here in some way for a few days, and, perhaps, after a day and night of it, you will be glad to go on with me to Paris or Berlin or somewhere like that.”

Constance jumped out of the car.

“We can at least see what it is! I called it a house, but it is really some kind of old castle. I am sure that it must be very old. Do you know anything about castles, Paul? Could you look at this place and tell how old it is?”

He looked at the walled building, the weather beaten parapets, and then he shook his head.

“How can I tell? But there is part of your answer. See that tree? The one growing near the wall? That was not there when the castle was built. It would have afforded too easy an access to the building. No doubt, the place was built and then all the trees within a hundred yards were cut down so the enemy attacking the castle would have no shelter. This one tree, and perhaps all the others, must have grown since that time, perhaps after the place was abandoned. Some of them are five feet in diameter. This road must have been built by Romans. Perhaps part of this castle was built by them. Shall we go in? No one lives here save bats and toads, yet, we can look around and then go to the next town.”

But again he was in error, for, circling the wall, they came to an old woman, seated on a three-legged stool, herding a few goats and some geese. Holland spoke to her in French and German, but she only smiled toothlessly at him. Then Constance tried Italian, and at once started a conversation that glittered in explicatives as a summer storm with forked lightning. At the end of ten minutes the bride turned to the puzzled man.

"You did not know that I could do that?" she asked. "I was raised in a convent in Rome. This old dame says that she is the caretaker of the Castle. Years ago the owner went to war and simply told her to look after the place, and, if anyone came who wanted to live here, to rent it for a certain sum in gold. She says that there is everything in the house for our comfort and she will wait on us. Her people live in the valley and will bring us food. She prefers to live here with her pets and her memories."

The old woman took the bride's hand and whispered. Tears came to Constance's eyes as she translated the words in a whisper.

"She says that the man who went to war years ago was her lover. They were happy here for a day and a week and since then she has stayed here, with memories for her companion.

The old dame took them through the castle, and they were surprised to find how comfortable it was in its homely simplicity. Throughout there were the signs of age, but all had been well and lovingly cared for. There was a slight chill over all, but it was not a dampness; the walls were dry. The old woman asked if she should have fires built. Constance looked appealingly at Paul, at which he handed the woman five gold coins, the price of a month's service. So, they came to live in the

house of dreams, now materialized as a castle in the Dark Forest.

There were many rooms in the castle that the lovers thrilled over, but two especially delighted them, each in a different way. One was a library, with solid walls and a long slit of a window, through which the sun came from morning to night, and time could be told from the position of the beam of light. The first streaming light of the morning fell on an Eve in pink marble, conscious of the knowledge gained by the Fall in the Garden. Just before night came the last light fell on a bronze man, tortured by the thought that he had to die before he knew what greater age might have taught him. Between the marble Eve and the bronze man were books of every size, cover and age. Paul Holland knew that he could be happy in such a room.

The other room was a bedroom. The floor was of wide, oaken boards, covered here and there with bear skins. A bridal chest was the only furniture save the bed. This, a large four poster, stood central in the room, and was, according to the old guide, the best bed in the castle. Her eyes glistened as she looked at it—glistened through tears. Narrow windows completely filled one side of the room; casement windows, that could be opened, giving complete entrance to the night. Decorations there were none, no pictures and no draperies; simply the chest and the bed.

Constance saw the room and shivered with delight.

"This will be our room," she exclaimed, and at once requested the old woman to air the bed and make it fresh with clean sheeting. Thus, one was happy because of the library and the other because of a bedroom and both were pleased with the happiness of the other. For a week they did nothing but explore the castle and the dark woods



around it, and during that week the automobile stood where they had left it.

The road ran past the castle and on through the wood to a sudden ending at the edge of the mountain. They saw there a sharp precipice; a mile below a little mountain stream made a streak of silver through the green of the valley. The two lovers, standing at the end of the road one day, felt that there was truly the end of a long trail. Constance turned to her husband,

"Will you do me one more favor?" she asked in a whisper

"I will if it will make you happy," he replied with a kiss.

She looked anxiously at him, twisting in indecision,

"I am happy here. All my life I have wanted to be happy in this way. I do not understand my emotions, but I do know that I am happy and I am afraid that something will happen to spoil it all. I want to stay here. At night I awake, crying, and I know that the tears come because I think that I shall have to leave here. Ever since I dreamed of this place I have wanted it, and in it I have found, not quiet peace, but a tumultuous happiness. I do not know what this feeling means or what causes it, but I do know that if I have to leave here, I shall die of longing to return. I dread the thought of going. I hate to look at the automobile; it is a symbol of roving; it means that some day you will ask me to sit on the seat by your side and ride on to the cities you delight in. When I see it standing there a dark despair fills my heart."

"Suppose I take it down to the village and store it there?"

"No! Because then you can go down and claim it again. I want—Oh! I know that it is silly, but I

want—I must have you do it! Start it and let it go down over the side here. When I know that it is down there, crushed and broken, a mile below us, I shall sleep in peace, and the dreams of the great cities will no longer torture me with the the menace of their ever increasing nearness.”

Holland drew a deep breath. “ ‘Tis a good car,” he said simply.

For answer she merely clung to him, shaking in the intensity of her despairing desire. And, because he loved her, he asked her to wait there for him, and he went and drove the car till it shivered, fifty feet from the edge, and then, stepping out, he threw on the gas and let it bound to its doom. Up it plunged into the air and down it fell, like a fallen star, striking below so far that no noise came up to tell them of its debacle. The man looked at the woman, and on his face was a twisted smile, but the woman, with eyes shut, breathed in perfect peace, nor did she move from her seeming sleep for a long time, and then only to kiss him passionately on the mouth and dream again. Thus it was dark before they came back to the castle. The old lady was anxious about them, for, seeing that the automobile was gone, she thought that they had gone in it to further adventurings and the finding of new life in the great cities, where her lover had gone whistling in the days before the war.

Thus the springtime came and went and summer brooded over the Dark Forest in all its sweet majestic glory. Time passed happily but slowly through long idling months. More and more time Holland spent in the library, while Constance in a long, happy daze spent hours on the bed, dreaming of the future and of dreams come true. The dame had shown her dresses of ladies

long dead, and more and more the bride wore these gay things of past ages, and more and more she wore her hair braided down her back in two long ropes, reaching to her knees, and more she passed the minutes looking out of the windows into the forest. One day she noticed that the room was but twenty feet above the ground and that the ivory formed a perfect ladder for adventurous feet. That night she could not sleep. The old woman in her walled off bed slept, dreaming of her long dead lover, and of the beautiful wild thing in the forest that had come to her through him. Holland, tired from a day of study, slept. Under the flag stone in the kitchen the cricket slept, but Constance LeMoine Holland, wide eyed and pulsing hearted, lay with her face in the moonbeams and sleep she could not. In the forest there was neither song of bird, hoot of moon owl nor howl of far-a-way wolf. All slept.

Then came the near music of a pipe, the thin thrilling, few-noted music of a pipe, and Constance, without knowing that she knew it, realized that the tune was the oldest in the world, contained in one octave, but comprising every fear and happiness known to mankind throughout the ages. Even in the bed her fair body swayed from side to side as she lay there listening to the music of the pipe. Not being able to bide it longer, she ran to the casement. There she saw the man making the music, and around him, in silent circles, were the geese and the goats. The man sat on the rock and made mad music in the moonlight.

The woman put on a pair of slippers and a black silk kimona, and going to the window, she climbed down the ivy. She came to the ground at last, walked over to the rock, broke through the circle of goats and geese and came near to the man who was making the olden music.

He came to the end of his song, and the music died in murmuring notes, mixed with mellow moonbeams. He looked at her with a glad smile:

“You like my music?”

“It’s wonderful. Who are you and where did you learn to play?”

“I live around here. I have always lived around here. This is my home. I never learned to play. I always knew how. Only one piece, but it can be played in an infinity of ways. Would you like to hear some more? Sit here by me while I play.”

Then he played it in a livelier manner, and the goats and geese danced in gay measure to the music. Round and round the rock they went till at last Constance joined them. Between a goat and a goose she danced till there came an ending to the music. Then she came back to the rock, flushed and breathless, but happier than she had been in all her life.

“I am so happy!” she whispered.

He laughed, throwing his head back, and revealing all his white teeth in the moonlight. He threw his arms upward. In one hand was the pipe that he had played on, but in the other there was nothing, and that hand he used to clutch at the threads of moonbeams. Again he laughed as he said:

“’Tis wonderful to be happy. Men and women used to be happy. I seem to remember when this place was filled of a night with men and women in love, and sometimes the men piped for the women to dance, and sometimes the men loved for the entrancing of their women, and, which pleased the women the more, the music or the loving, how can I, being a man, tell? Those days are gone save in my memory, and I am not sure that that serves me honestly. At least, I now have no audience save such as you see.”

Suddenly she turned to him and asked,  
"Who are you?"

"What does that matter, as long as my music makes you happy?"

"It does make me happy. Weeks ago I dreamed of this place, and asked my man to find it for me. He did. I asked him to destroy the car so we would not be able to leave it too soon, and he did. I want a son—a happy son—who will be able to clutch at the moonbeams and play the pipes. Can he give me that son?"

"Perhaps, but what odds? If you want a son, I will tell you how. Have you seen that pool of dark water over on the other side of the castle? No doubt the old lady told you not to drink there—that it was poison. Near the water is a giant oak. Now you must do thus and so."

So, slowly, for an hour he held her hand and told her just how she should do and why and if she did this and the other as he directed, the desire of her heart would be granted. He promised that on every moonlit night he would come and sit on the rock and play the pipe for her happiness and, thus when her child was born it would be a child of happy joy and great beauty and a player of ancient tunes upon the pipe.

She went back to the castle and climbed the ivy. Putting off her shoes and her black silk kimona, she stole again to her husband's side, and he, never having wakened, snored peacefully, for that he had never knowing injured anyone. Constance, awake by his side, heard him snore and thought of the unearthly music of the stranger's pipe, and she could not help contrasting the two. She placed one ear against the pillow and the other she covered with a thick mass of hair and a pink palm. Thus she went to sleep, lulled by the memory of the moonlight

music ringing in her consciouness. The next morning she awoke and could not tell whether it had been a dream or a reality. Her husband was asleep, but she woke him with a torrent of kisses and then was unable to tell him of the night before or of her desires.

The same day the old dame left the castle and wandered through the forest till she met the man who had played the pipes. She kissed him tenderly and ran her fingers through his tight curled hair and over his pointed ears. At last she took courage and asked him to play no more at the castle till the woman and her man departed.

"You were asleep last night," he whispered in reply.

"Yes, but I saw the tracks around the rock and the woman's footprints, mingled with those of the animals and birds; so, leave her alone--for the sake of your mother."

For answer he simply laughed and ran away from her.

The old woman looked worried. She never had been able to tell whether she had created a simpleton or a God.

Constance began to prepare according to the directions of the man who had piped in the moonlight. There had to be a ladder and a sickle and a white sheet, and some of these things could only be obtained by the wiles of cunning womanhood. Finally all was ready. With beating heart she undressed and pretended to go to sleep by her husband, but, while sleep came swiftly to him, she remained wide eyed and anxious till she was sure of his slumber. She put on her leather sandals, and, tying the sickle up in the sheet and the bundle to her back, she went out the window to the ivy and down to where the ladder rested against the wall. She took this ladder on her shoulder and tiptoed westward from the castle to the place of the dark pool of water. It was moonlight, and the shadows and moonbeams made a curious fairy land of the dark forest. Though her heart was beating fast

fast there was a song on her lips, a very old song, such as could be sung within one octave or upon a very simple pipe. She came at last to the old oak tree that grew by the dark pool and drained its water.

Placing the ladder against its trunk, she looked upward. On the first branch, just a little above the ladder, grew a spray of mistletoe, its green leaves, white berries and gray stems all shimmering in the moonlight. She took the sheet and, opening it, spread it evenly over the ground under the parasitic plant. On the sheet she placed the sickle. Now she loosened the two long braids of hair and let those dark, wondrous tresses come in freedom, one in front and the other behind her body, which she freed from her silk kimona and white gown. Taking the sickle in her hand, she trembling, started up the ladder. Near the top she paused. The mistletoe was within her reach. She hesitated, and while she did so—was it the wind?—a long tress of her hair reached over and entwined around the gray branches of the parasite. The woman looked at the union of plant and hair, then slowly reached and freed her tresses. With her curved knife she started to cut the plant from the oak, being careful to take a large piece of the bark of the tree with the roots of the plant in it. With the last cut, the mistletoe fell earthward, but on the dark sheet which was as it should be, for all were in vain had it touched the earth. Then, this last of the Druid worshippers, came down the ladder slowly and placed wet moss over the cut bark on the sheet and tied it carefully in the white linen. She took the ladder and slid it into the dark pool and did up her hair and put on her clothes. Then, with joy in her heart, she went back to the castle. Somewhere in the dark forest the laughing man piped the old song, and she, hearing him, sang the song to his music.

Back in the bedroom she found it still moonlight. On the headpost on the side on which she slept, she fastened the back of the cut bark and placed the wet moss over and around it and wrapped it all with the white sheet which she had tied in hard knots. Thus, the mistletoe was grafted on the oak of the bed, just a foot above her pillow. She kissed the white fruit, and, loosing her hair, went to sleep. Thus Paul Holland found her in the morning. He found her slippers wet and her kimona stained with the night dew. On her face was a look of deep peace. He sighed. "She is a queer little wild thing, and so far I cannot tell what she is doing, but perhaps the old dame can help me."

The next time one of the girls from the village came up with fruit, Holland took her and the old woman into the kitchen and, by means of the girl's little knowledge of French, gave the old woman to understand what he wanted to know. Sighing, she bade the girl leave and then took Holland into the library where she found for him a very old book with pictures in it, and crossing herself, she left him. Holland started to study the book, even as many young men had studied it in centuries past.

The young bride awoke, saw the mistletoe, smiled, and went to sleep again. When she next awoke, she dressed and they had dinner. After that she spent long hours in her room, but every day she took a silver pitcher and in it carried water from the dark pool, keeping the moss moist so the grafted parasite would grow. It grew. Finally it spread all over the head of the bed, fastening here and there to the ancient oak, and seemingly sapping the life out of it.

At last Paul Holland solved the secret of the book and the conduct of his wife. Now, while in the library, he slept instead of read, so, when night came, he was



able to stay awake. The full of moon had passed. the dark of the moon had come and gone and now the crescent moon was growing larger as though thriving on her diet of stars.

The first night of the watch Constance slept as though drugged. So satisfied was her husband of her sound sleep, that he arose, lit a candle, and sat on the chest, watching her. It was dark in the room and he decided that when she stirred he would blow out the candle, even though by doing so he would be alone in the dark with the shadowless things. He looked at her face. The beauty of her girlhood was now ripening into the full bloom of womanhood. Her white face shone like a pearl amid the blackness of her loosened hair which covered the pillow. Above her shadowed the masses of gray mistletoe, green leaves and white berries. Even as he looked a branch came down, slowly, and rested on her breast. Then ringlets of hair seemed to crawl upward from the pillow to interlace caressingly with the green leaves. All her fair body was at last covered with black hair and green plant. She smiled as though dreaming pleasantly. Now and then her lips moved as if caressing a lover.

The next nights were the same. Then came a fuller moonlight, and the woman was restless. She tossed by her husband's side.

"I cannot sleep," she cried. "Life is too full. There is so much love and happiness in the world that why should a woman spend her life sleeping?" She flung herself passionately on her husband, smothering him with kisses and wrapping her hair about him, as she cried again.

"Life is too short!"

He tried to satisfy and calm her, but at last pretended to go to sleep. She lay quietly by him, but he knew

by her short, sharp breathing that she was wide awake and restless. Then, through the sweet air of the moonlit forest came the sound of music. Constance sat up in bed. She listened to her husband. Satisfied that he was sleeping, she ran to the window. There on the rock sat the laughing man, surrounded by the goats and geese, and the tune he played was a very old one, all within one octave. Drawing on her leather slippers, Constance climbed down the ivy.

Paul Holland stood in the shadow and watched her dance, all lovely in the moonlight, and the goats and geese danced sedately with her. After the dance she sat on the rock with the man. He asked:

“Is all well with you?”

“All is well. The plant is growing on the oak bed. Every night the spirit enters my body. I never knew before what real happiness was. The thought of your love and your music fills my every thought.”

“Life is naught without love,” replied the man, laughing, as he reached into the air to catch moonbeams. “Keep the plant well watered, my dear, and whenever you are not sure of yourself, follow me.”

Holland saw it all from the window. He thought of the book and the old pictures and knew that he had but little time to spare. Below, in the little room next to the kitchen, the old dame heard the music, crossed herself, kissed the cross that hung from her neck, prayed and remembered such nights in years gone by. She determined to ask the strangers to leave before it was too late.

The next day the young woman made her usual visit to the dark pool for her pitcher of water, but her husband went to the little village at the bottom of the valley for letters and food. There he talked to some of the young men, and they went far away with a mule team and in

week came back with a number of long pieces of iron pipe.

Finally there came a day when Constance went as usual to the dark pool, carrying her little silver pitcher. She found the pool a mud spot. There was nothing there save the slime of ages, and on the slime rested the ladder. Angry, she walked around the edges of the hole and at last found where the water had all drained out through long iron pipes. She looked up at the giant oak and found that all the mistletoe on it was turning golden, a sign of dryness, death and decay. Crying, she ran back to the castle with her empty pitcher. Up to her bedroom!

Her husband was there, arranging some of his clothing. For the time she ignored him, as she ran over to her side of the bed. There was no mistake. The love plant was indeed golden, on the bed as well as on the tree. It had to have water every day from the dark pool, and now it was dead from the lack of it. She touched it and the leaves dropped off. The dried berries rolled in a pitter-pattering to the floor. All the dark green had turned to a golden brown. She faced her husband.

"Why did you do it?"

"Do what?"

"Drain my pond?"

"I was afraid of malaria. It was the only place like it here on the mountain top and I did not want you to be sick."

"Fool! Fool!" she cried. "If you had only asked me. Now, all life is dead for me."

"I still live," he said kindly.

And at that she burst into tears and ran to him and caught him in her arms.

"I didn't mean it," she whispered. "I didn't mean it. I was just worried, because my plant died. I have

you but it may be that you die as the plant and the moon and the song of the laughing man. Everything dies, and perhaps your candle will go out in the dark some time. Take me away from here. I am afraid! I fear the dark, and the moon will soon wither."

He comforted her as best he could and told her they would leave in a few days, as soon as he could have another machine brought to him from Vienna. They spent that day as lovers, and at times Constance seemed to forget her fears in the love of the man and at other times she looked furtively into the dark forest.

They told the old dame that they were leaving. She simply sighed and said that she wished they had never come. None too happy, the bride and her husband returned to their bedroom and discussed their plans for their future.

"And I think," said Paul Holland suddenly, "that before we go we had better take down that dead mistletoe and clean the room. Suppose we do it now? I will borrow a shears from the old dame."

He came back with a long pair of shears, such sizers as the oldest Fate used to snip the thread of life. While she sat on the bridal chest and cried a little, he cut all the ropes and the rotten sheet, and threw the dead plant and the things with it out of the window. As he wiped off the oak bedpost he remarked,

"This wood is all dried and powdery. I believe I could break it in two with my hands. The mistletoe has taken much of the life out of it."

The woman remarked softly,

"And it has taken some life out of me."

"No. We are just beginning to live. There are many happy days yet."

Thus and so, he tried to comfort her. The work

done, he placed the shears on the bed, and coaxed her to come to supper. She said she was tired and asked that they go to bed early that evening.

Returning to the room after supper, she noticed the shears on the bed, exactly in the middle of the coverlet.

"How odd you are," she said to her husband. "You left those shears in the bed, exactly in the middle. If it stays there, it will be between us all night,"

"That would be a good idea," he answered kindly. "You are tired and this has been a hard day for you. Thus in olden times the knights did with their swords when they wished to assure their damsels of an undisturbed night. So, you stay on your side of the shears and I will stay on mine. Thus, we shall both awaken refreshed on the morrow."

Half an hour passed and she whispered,

"I am frightened, Paul. Is that thunder I hear? Hold my hand."

He did so and went to sleep.

Then came the full moon, and its beams lightened the room, and the woman heard the sound of the pipe in the dark forest. At once she knew that she must go out there and dance or die from desire. She started to sit up in bed and her hair held her. She started to pull the long braids and still it held. At last she took courage and slid her hand down the braid till she found it wrapped around the neck of the man who had held her hand. The hair, the long black, snake-like tresses were wrapped around his neck and were covering his face.

She screamed; for she knew that Paul Holland was dead, and she knew the manner of his death.

Yet the pipe called her to the dark forest.

She took the shears and cut her hair, close to her head. Strand by strand, she cut it till she was free, and

as the hair was loosened it clung closer to the man's face and throat as though not quite satisfied that the deed was done.

Constance took off her silken robe and spread it over the thing on the bed. Under the silk all was still, save for the final convulsive twisting of the ropes of hair, tightening uselessly around the throat of the dead. Then the woman ran to the window and climbed down the ivy and this time she did not wait to put on her slippers. Once she reached the ground, she ran for the rock. The laughing man was gone, the goats and the geese were gone, but through the wood road she heard the sound of music, a very old song, all within an octave, and she ran after that song, crying,

"Oh! Pan! Wait for me. Please wait for me so I can love you and be happy."

But the laughing man walked on. Constance could come no closer to him till at last she saw him standing on the edge of the cliff. There he stood, playing and waiting for her. She reached out to catch him and kiss him. Then, failing to touch the fantasy of his body, she plunged over the cliff, her white body curving like a falling star, till she silently joined the crushed automobile, finding peace at last.

The laughing man, lurking in the shadow, ran out into the moonlight and threw his open hands into the air as though to pluck the moonbeams with his questing fingers. Then he started to play on his pipe. From the dark woods the goats and the geese came and gathered silently around him, and the song he played was all in one octave and very old. He laughed,

"These mortals are never content. They always try to gather moonbeams and even I cannot do that."

