

# THE GUILTY MAN

## *A Study in Tragedy*

By MARION CARRERE

**A**PPPEARANCES, as has often been said, are misleading. Many a girl in a fur coat, gold-buckled shoes and an expensive marcel snips ribbon behind a counter; that inoffensive-looking cloud over there may darken and spit forth lightning; your sweet-faced wife may be plotting to deceive you; parsons go wrong.

Jeffrey Saubes, sitting with outward placidity on a box before his barn door with a keen-bladed, horn-handled knife in his hand slowly whittling as though his sole aim in life was to model a yacht in perfect miniature, was, in reality, thinking how smoothly that same knife would carve into the heart of his enemy, Philip Loeber.

His hate was a black hate, compounded of jealousy, envy, a sense of inferiority, and fear. It had begun twelve years ago when, the two men owning adjoining farms and having been good friends until then, Philip Loeber commenced to climb and Jeffrey Saubes to go down. Jeffrey drank, but that was his own affair; lots of men took a glass now and then, and made money just the same. But he was driven to borrow money from the more prosperous Philip, not once, but again and again, and he grew to hate the man who had befriended him.

Then Martha Hansen came along with her yellow hair and her fresh cheeks and her soft laughing eyes to settle with her uncle on the old Leatherby place. The uncle had fallen from his threshing machine the following year and was killed. There had been a quiet, slow but determined battle for her hand between the two men. Loeber had won.

Although Martha was dead now, and Jeffrey could see the daisies waving in the spring on her grave in the orchard corner over there on his neighbor's land, he had neither forgiven nor forgotten. This was count two.

Also Loeber had given him advice about his habits—advice which Jeffrey, growing more and more aloof and bitter-hearted and weasel-faced and grim for the smoldering hate in his heart, considered had been offered with a superior air. Count three.

And Loeber had sworn yesterday to have Saubes arrested for stealing a dozen of his fine White Leghorns. It was the fear that followed this threat that had started the whittler's brain on its evil scheming. He would kill him; and he wondered why he had not thought of it before. It would be easy.

Since his wife's death Philip Loeber had lived alone, with only a man-servant who slept, as Jeffrey knew, in a room over the carriage-house a few hundred yards from the back door. When the two farmers had been friends Saubes had often spent the evening talking and smoking with his neighbor. That was before he had become full of hate and had taken to drink. He knew where his enemy slept and that there was only a very simple lock on the outside door downstairs. His knife would get through that easily.

The hired man, a young, melancholy, but on the whole good-natured Dane, would be in his loft by eight o'clock, or nine at the latest. Loeber would be sitting by the fire or preparing for bed, dropping his big boots on the floor and yawning widely after the hard day in the fields.

The man with the knife would come up behind, speak so that the other would turn—it was part of his design that his enemy should see the hand that struck him down—and the knife would be in his heart before he could cry out. . . .

The man in the sun, whittling at the miniature ship, smiled grimly, and with one powerful vicious plunge of the sharp blade cut his work in two like a piece of cheese and flung it aside. His thinking was done.

**I**T was a propitiously dark night, black as Jeffrey Saubes' soul and as full of turmoil. A night full of the oak's and oak's of wind-tortured trees that bent curiously down to see the man who was going to kill his friend.

It was March, and the water in the creek that ran between the two farms was high and noisy, rushing through the darkness as if anxious to be away from the menacing meadows of the little wood and the big dark man who crossed heavily over the uncertain bridge. Some

new-born lambs cried pitifully from the sheepfold and a coyote howled in answer. A streak of moon peered out fearfully and disappeared.

Approaching his victim's house, he looked up and saw that the farm-hand was moving about in his room. Undressing perhaps, already, although it was not yet nine. No, he was moving swiftly back and forth, stooping to lift something, passing the window almost at a run. Suddenly, as though he felt the scrutiny of the man outside, he snatched at the blind and the window was dark.

Whatever he was doing, he was up there and out of the way. Thought Jeffrey Saubes: My work is here; it will soon be over, and I shall be home with my tracks well covered before anything is discovered. I shall be rid of the fool in a little while. How simple a thing murder is, after all!

He meditated, as he crept toward the door he had planned to enter, that suspicion would certainly never fasten on him. He had carried his enmity in his heart like a secret disease and had confided in nobody. The crime would, no doubt, be laid to the robbers and drifters who infested the highway into town. He had no fear that he would be caught, only that he might find his enemy alert and waiting and that the deed might be defeated.

There was a light in the kitchen, as he could see through a slit in the door. Try as he might, it was a very difficult thing to raise the lock with his knife without making a sound, but after a full fifteen minutes he accomplished it. He opened the door, pushing it in softly and cautiously, inch by inch. A creak. He sprang inside.

In the kitchen a lamp was burning, but as far as he could see no one was there. In the bed-room, perhaps. He strode across the bare floor, looking with quick motions of his head to left and right like a jungle beast who expects death to leap from every shadow. Not a sound in the house. And then he saw the body of Philip Loeber, whom he had come to kill, already dead with a knife-jab in his thick red neck and his inert legs sprawling grotesquely.

HE noticed that the room was in confusion. A chair was overturned; the cloth was dragged partly from the table and lay along the floor among a litter of broken china; a blakened log lay on the hearth-rug as if it had been seized for a weapon. He stood gaping like an idiot with the knife in his hand and his eyes riveted to the spectacle of his enemy slain. The work he had come to do was done. He could not move.

Even when he heard a heavy step approaching he could only stand helpless on the spot. Albert, the hired man, tall and blond almost to whiteness, with a smooth, boyish face and the wide-open, brilliantly-blue eyes of a child, came into the room, carrying an old straw suitcase in one hand and his cap in the other. He started on seeing a visitor, and if his face had not been already as white as paper he would have paled.

"Mr. Saubes—for God's sake—Mr. Saubes—" He looked with a shuddering glance at the body of his employer that lay between them.

Saubes put his knife away and said deliberately, "Do you know who killed him?"

The man stammered, "But what are you doing here, Mr. Saubes?"

A hard look came over the face of the would-be murderer, but he did not answer. He seemed hunting for words. Suddenly the Dane shut his square jaw with a snap and bright red color flowed into his face. The arteries in his neck stood out, and he pointed a finger that shook with emotion at the other man.

"You—you were his enemy! He told me! You did it. I saw the knife you put away."

"I did not do it," said Jeffrey Saubes quietly.

Albert dropped his suitcase and in the flash of a half-second had an ugly looking revolver leveled at the other man.

"You sit down in that chair. I'm going to telephone for the sheriff. Wait—get that rope from the nail."

Saubes took a quick look at the ominous black mouth of the weapon and pulled down the rope sullenly. In a few minutes he was bound tightly to the chair and was sitting alone with the dead man while he listened to the farm-hand's thick voice speaking into the telephone. He let his head fall to his breast, for suddenly all the energy that had

driven him here subsided and left him weary and only desiring rest—sleep.

The Dane came back, striding thunderously in his big boots and sat down opposite his prisoner. For a long time they were silent, the one with his glance on the floor at his feet, sunk in an apparent apathy, and the other with his face averted from the huddle that had been his master. And then slowly, hesitatingly, his big blond head turned and he looked, but with aversion, at the dead man. As he did so, Jeffrey Saubes raised his eyes.

"I thought so, Albert," he threw out with a laugh. "You killed him."

"What? You think that I—Mr. Saubes—"

"You killed him," repeated Saubes. "I am only curious to know why. Do you mind telling me?"

"You think I—"

"I know it. Don't lie, boy. When you came in you didn't even go near the body, and you have hardly looked at it since. That's one reason. An innocent man would have gone over to see if he were really dead. You were the color of chalk when you came in and before you saw him. Also, I see by your face that I am right. Untie me."

For answer the younger man put his head down on his hands and burst into loud sobbing, and when he raised it again his face was wild and tear-streaked and his big strong frame shook. He was as a child who fears nothing so much as his own sin.

"I did it," he flung out, speaking quickly, "I did it; but I swear by my dear old mother in the fatherland, by my little sister, I didn't mean to. No, I didn't mean to kill him. I—I ain't the kind of fellow can kill anybody, Mr. Saubes."

He got to his feet and stood there wringing his hands.

"It was because of my little sister, Elsa, who works as maid in town. I sent for her from home last year. Seventeen, she is, and pretty—" He shuddered and looked fearfully toward the man he had killed. "He—began paying her attention, and when I asked him what he intended to do he laughed. He just laughed at me."

"And you killed him!"

"We fought, like two men. I called him a name and he struck me and we

fought. He was a big man. Stronger than me. He took a knife from the table—it was fixed for supper—and he ran at me. It was me—or him."

Again Jeffrey Saubes laughed. Always his laughter had a sinister, dark note in it. He said lightly, or with an assumption of lightness:

"You'll have a hard time making the police believe your story."

"I know it. I was going to run away. But now I got to hang for that, Mr. Saubes, and little Elsa—my mother—" He sat down heavily again with his face hidden in his hands. "Me—" he muttered, "never—never could I hurt a fly—like a girl I am—"

He got up suddenly and came over to untie the ropes, but Saubes stopped him with a sharp word of command.

"Leave them alone. When they come keep your mouth shut. I'm the murderer—not you."

The Dane's eyes opened wide. "You—" he began.

"I came here tonight to kill him. I hated him for years, envied and despised him. I came with my knife in my hand through the neck of woods over the bridge and opened the door with the blade. I planned the whole thing. But for you, my hands would be red now. You killed him in an honest fight over a woman's honor; I wished to put him out of the way because he was richer, more lucky with the women. He lorded it over me. I came to kill him."

"Can I let you hang, Mr. Saubes, for what I did?"

"You'll have to, boy, because I left a note home in case anything happened to me. About my property and that. I'll tell them to get it. I'll swear I came to kill him. In my heart, I had committed the crime a dozen times over. The law would say you were the guilty man, but which one of us is a murderer, you or I?"

Voices and stamping and hurried feet outside, and three burly men came in, grim-faced and hard-eyed and determined. They gave quick, comprehending glances about the room. Advanced to the man in the chair and unbound him.

He stood silently while they put the cold iron circlets around his wrists. He even smiled when the Dane seized his manacled hands and pressed them in a frantic, sobbing goodby.



## Table of Contents

The contents of *Weird Tales* is fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers. All communications should be addressed to the publishers main office at 834 North Clark St., Chicago, Ill. Subscription, \$3.00 a year in the United States; \$3.50 in Canada. Single copies, 25c.

PLANET PARADISE .....	DICK PRESLEY TOOKER	3
THE TAP .....	ARTHUR EDWARDS CHAPMAN	14
THE THING THAT SHOULD NOT BE.....	BURTON PETER THOM	17
THE GUILTY MAN.....	MARION CARRERE	21
THE TRANSPARENT GHOST .....	ISA-BELLE MANZER	23
COILS OF DARKNESS.....	SYBLA RAMUS	32
CARVED IN THE FLESH.....	TOM RAWSON HILBOURN	32
THE HALL BEDROOM.....	W. ELWYN RACKUS	35
THE DOOR OF DOOM .....	MART SHARON	41
THE ABYSSAL HORROR .....	B. WALLIS	42
THE HOUND .....	H. P. LOVECRAFT	54
DRACONDA .....	JOHN MARTIN LEAHY	52
THE GHOST OF SILENT SMITH.....	C. FRANKLIN MILLER	54
DOCTOR DEBRUCE .....	EARL LEASTON BELL	71
THE HATER .....	E. W. WILSON	71
WEIRD CRIMES .....	SEABURY QUINN	74
THE KYRIE .....	THE EDITOR	79
THE KILLER .....	HAROLD WARD	81

For Advertising Rates in DETECTIVE TALES apply to YOUNG & WARD, Advertising Managers, 168 North Michigan Blvd., Chicago, Ill.