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Weird Tales

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THE HOLLOW MOON

lunar vampire—strange icebergs in the Pacific

By **EVERIL WORRELL**

WASHINGTON NOCTURNE

ghost tale of the Unknown Soldier

By **SEABURY QUINN**

ALMURIC

strange adventures on another world

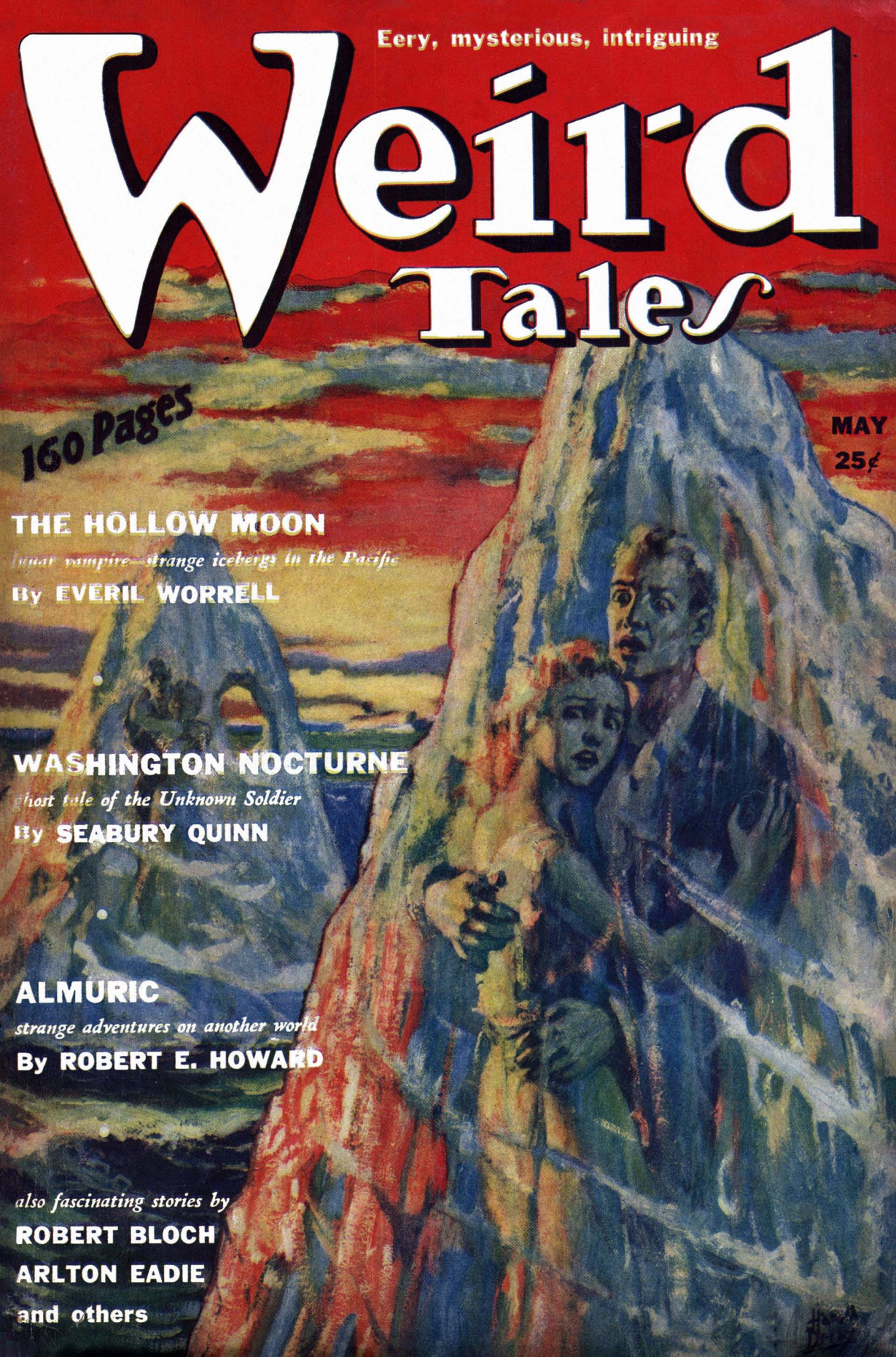
By **ROBERT E. HOWARD**

also fascinating stories by

ROBERT BLOCH

ARLTON EADIE

and others



A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"He dipped the flashlight so that it illumined Valerie's white face and upturned throat."

The Hollow Moon

By EVERIL WORRELL

*A fascinatingly different story about the weird adventure that befell
a party of Americans shipwrecked in the South Seas—
the strangest of all vampire tales*

SOON it will be the end. I believe it might be possible to survive longer here than any of us will in fact live. There is the old question of the will to live: We are a miserable sextette of castaways, and each of us has his (or her) own reason to wish for death. Aside from the fact that this half-life, or life-in-death,

in which we count the hours and days and wearily and constantly expect extinction, prompts one toward suicide—and toward murder.

Gibbs' yacht struck on a submerged pinnacle of the rock on which we are slowly dying, at about midnight two weeks ago last night. This chronicle will probably

never be seen by anyone, after the last of us has gone. I have here, however, a bottle which formerly contained gin; and it corks stoutly. I will do the usual honors; keep our record as long as I can, put it into the gin bottle, cork it, and throw it into the Pacific Ocean. Perhaps sometime . . .

The yacht reposes on the floor of the Pacific, and got there not long after she struck, but we took a few things off. Gibbs is responsible for the gin bottle—and for several other bottles of various brands. What we saved of food is gone, and we are living on dew and limpets.

We even have water. I salvaged a couple of large pieces of canvas, and in these we nightly collect dew. I have read of this expedient, and it is amazing how much is really available—enough to make up the loss by broiling endured during the days, I think. I say this guardedly and after much thought. We are dying, and in part dying of thirst; but if our thirst for water alone were killing us, we would be by this time far worse off than we are. We are dying of rebellion against the constant longing for more water; the constant fear of a night when no dew will gather in sufficient quantities—but our tongues do not swell and protrude.

And then, there are in each of us those individual seeds of destruction of which I spoke in the beginning.

We are gaunt, enfeebled living skeletons. We are worse off in physical condition than Terence McSwiney of Ireland and Mahatma Gandhi of India after longer periods of total food and water starvation. But we are devoted to no cause, and our weakness does not grow progressively worse; if our sufferings were as serious as they are intense, as I said, we would be past writing—past quarreling. . . .

We all hate each other.

Gibbs drinks. . . . Lisa, his beautiful wife, who reminds me of Poe's exquisitely lovely Ligeia, she who could not be

conquered by death, more or less keeps him company. Ah, but the thing they did yesterday was horrible, considering they really love each other. And yet—sometimes they seem to hate each other too. Yet without each other, life would be for each of them the desert in which no rose blooms. Put all that together, and you have tragedy.

So yesterday, at high noon here on our desert rock island, they went off together to a little cavern we have found on the north side of the rock, low down toward the water. They took a bottle of wine with them; they said they wanted to drink a toast to the voyage that ended on a rock, and to each other.

I went after them, a little later. I thought they had acted strangely when they went away together. I thought, What if they have gone off together to commit double suicide? But it was not that.

THEY were in the little cavern. They lay unconscious there, lit by dancing rays of cold light reflected from the moving waters.

I looked around a little, and saw a white powder scattered on the rock floor of the cavern. I tasted it—bitter. Chloral hydrate, I thought. I remembered Gibbs showing me some after we got our things together on the rock. The wine bottle was barely touched. Lisa's mouth showed an encrustation of white—chloral hydrate. Her wrist was cut, and blood was oozing. I heard about that later, but the bleeding didn't amount to much; to so little, and the action of her heart was so faint, at first I thought she was dead.

I went to work. Not nice work. I carry a ball of twine around with me, and I caught limpets by diving, and hurried back and tied the string to a limpet, and stroked and forced the limpet down Lisa's throat, and after a little pulled the string.

She had some automatic reflexes left, and the chloral was swimming in consid-

erable wine after all, so a good bit of it came up. Then I did the same by Gibbs. I walked them around a bit then, first one and then the other. After a while, both of them came to. I sank down just where I was and lay still for so long I thought maybe it would be for ever; but after another while, the three of us helped each other back to what I may call camp. We told our story, too, just as I am writing it down. Gibbs and Lisa supplied what I didn't know about.

It was not a suicide pact. They had had an unusually bitter quarrel—and had each felt that nothing but murder would make them feel better. We are all so overwrought, here, and they the worst of us. Gibbs then had cut Lisa's wrist, because he wanted to hurt her more. But he went to sleep himself about the time he started, and had only scratched the surface.

They are doing very nicely today.

And I—to think I have saved them—for God knows what fate! At best, another death. Perhaps it was well done. I, Michael Sydney, scientific explorer, delver into hidden secrets and hidden places—I am up against ultimate values which are beyond my judging.

I want, for some reason, to find Valerie Dorn, whom I cannot see from where I am sitting.

I dislike Valerie. I should like to know why I dislike her so much. We are highly antagonistic, and I should like to analyze that. . . .

But—another writing will do for that. I want to know where she is, to talk to her. I want, I suppose, before both of us are gone for ever from this earth, to *change* her. I don't know why it should matter, but it does. There is something about Valerie Dorn that I want to break and shatter—as Gibbs wanted to cut Lisa's wrist before he died. But I dislike Valerie, and everything about her, and the thing between us is a purely mental thing.

Valerie!

I meant to call her, not to write her name. The sun is near the horizon, and the swift red and black of the tropic sunset-fading-into-night is upon us. Before the lurid darkness descends, I want her with the others—safe and where I can see her.

*Record of the Hours Between Sunset
and Midnight*

IN PERUSING diaries of the desperate class I have always thought it the height of idiocy to read the calendar headings: "August—, 1940."

For us, for the present, Time is dead. As a matter of fact, I know it is still August. It must be—but that other August in which we sailed the south seas and expected our voyage to follow a certain set and expected course is millennia ago. Einstein's space-time curve has thrown us off. Of course I mean this figuratively; we have had such dizzying events in the last hours that all of us have strange feelings—a sort of mental wandering that had heretofore spared us, has dizzied our minds.

But I want to make this a straight narration.

Last evening, then, as the hour of sunset swooped down out of the sky, I went in search of Valerie. I found her soon enough, seated in a lonely place she frequents behind a sort of pinnacle of rock, where she has what privacy the rock affords.

Valerie is needlessly conceited. I, for instance, have done what few could dream of; Valerie has never done anything noteworthy that I know of. She is unusual, and her thoughts are unusual; but neither she nor her thoughts are worth much. That is why I do not like her.

I invaded her sacred privacy.

"Come back to the others. The rock gets lonely—desolately lonely, when the daylight fades," I told her.

She turned her strange eyes upon me.

Those eyes are wide and darkly shadowed, but I doubt if they have any authentic color of their own. They must reflect things — lights and colors around her, moods and thoughts of her own. I can swear at times that they are a light gray that is almost colorless; again that they are black; and sometimes they hold an undefined depth of color. Also, she is ageless. At times she is fifteen, or even younger; sometimes any age—old, too experienced—not, however, ever tired. Something behind those eyes is always burning, shining—I hate women who think too much. If we were back in the world of men and women and I met her everywhere, I should make it a point never to see her when I could help it. She is an utterly antipathetic type; interesting, but repellent.

"When you and the others are out of sight, this rock is as good as any other place," she said. "I don't have to watch you meeting death halfway, eating it, drinking it, thinking it. I can be normal, if I don't see any of you. Death is only a change in life, anyway. When I am dead, as you would say, I will be alive as Kerry has been for six years. And tonight I intend to break your arbitrary ruling, your Majesty. I am not rejoining the others. I am sleeping here—alone."

I left her, hating her a little more than usual. Kerry was her husband. He had died six years ago, and he is far more of a personality to Valerie than any of us. Yes, to Valerie, death resembles a rather handsome dark man in a gray business suit—Kerry Dorn had walked across the street on his way to work in New York. He had not absent-mindedly strolled in front of a truck, but he had leaped there to push a child out of the way, and of course that made him a hero. But it hardly made him a living hero after six years. But to Valerie, it did.

I left her—with Kerry, after telling her that she is a thanatophile; in love with

death. Where Kerry Dorn is, he is not worrying about her any more.

And I went back to the others, who had drawn close together with the falling of darkness. For now it was dark—very dark. We talked a little.

"After all, I remember pretty tough camping trips——"

To think we attempted a little cheer—that night! Last night. The night of ultimate horror.

THE others slept, one by one. I must have dozed, for I thought we were all still together, except for Valerie, when I heard her scream.

It was late, and a slightly gibbous moon hung, lop-sided and swollen-looking, low in the sky. The top of the rock was bleak and bare and visible, all but the part hidden by Valerie's sheltering column of rock. To that I raced, forgetting weakness and the pounding of my heart. And around on the other side of that rock column, I saw again the surface of the rock—bleak and bare—with no one visible upon it.

I listened, but heard no sound. There were only two possibilities — she had plunged into the glassy, moonlit waters, screaming as she leaped or fell; or she was in the only really concealed place on the whole rock—the cavern where a few hours ago horror had lurked, because our two lovers had attempted double murder there.

I scrambled and stumbled down to it again, and it was as though the horror reached out for me, met me, drew me by the hand. The mouth of the cave was lit by a truly ghastly, quivering reflected light, for it was on the moonward side of the little island. The back of the cave was in darkness. Darkness and silence. And yet, something was there—something living or something dead. Again, horror and tragedy.

I—I, Michael Sydney—was afraid, partly for myself, partly for Valerie. Back

in that dismal darkness she was, perhaps—and perhaps not alone. I do not know what form my thoughts were taking. I hesitated to go back there; I was feeling my weakness again, and—not for myself alone—I dreaded the blow in the dark that might mean my sudden finish. Yet forward I must go, and into the unseen and unguessable.

Then the surprising thing happened. A light flashed on, back there in the darkness. Before I saw his face my fancy conjured up Gibbs' image; for of us all he alone had saved a flashlight. And it was Gibbs, and Valerie lay apparently senseless at his feet.

He spoke quickly, after the long wait while he must have been looking out of the darkness at me, as I stood there limned against the moonlit water.

"Don't get this wrong, Sydney!" he said. "I've done what I could for her, see? And it was necessary to cut a little. A snake—she came here to sleep alone, I think, and the snake bit her right in the throat. I cut out a little with my penknife, and sucked the wound. I've done what I could, but the throat looks a bit lurid."

He dipped the flashlight, so that its brightest circle of light illumined Valerie's white face and upturned throat.

Yes, it looked lurid, to use his word. Blood was trickling from a swollen wound. She looked like—what? God, the old vampire tales!

Then Gibbs doubled over so that his own face entered the paler circle of light around the central brilliant aura. And he—he looked like Dracula.

I walked over and picked Valerie up in my arms. I had to carry her away from this place at once—at once.

I said only one thing.

"A snake?"

Gibbs was in darkness again, but I could almost see and feel the look on his face, the slow flush that went with it.

"Queer, on a bare rock in the mid-Pacific. I saw it, though; it made for the water. A sea snake—*sea serpent*, Sydney. You see?"

He was insane and a liar, and I was about to tell him so. But just then he screamed, and swung the flashlight in a wild gesture that seemed to signal me to turn around—and I turned. God! The memory of that moment would live a hundred years, if my life lasted that long.

A snake, after all. As big and thick as a man, limned against the moonlit water beyond the mouth of the cavern behind me, crawling up the sheer side of the rock, and over the ledge that was the mouth of the cavern. As big and thick as a man. . . .

I FELT a scream strangle in my own throat, and then I got hold of myself. For my eyes were playing me tricks, and now I saw that what I had thought was some impossible kind of face in the snake's head, was a face, all right, only it was in the head of a man. Yes, a man was climbing up out of the sea and into our cavern, and I couldn't see how he made it, especially as a sort of cape seemed hanging from his shoulders, which, being wet and slinkily clinging, had given him the serpentine effect.

Then—was he shipwrecked as we were? He must be, and so would be of no help to us, since no man having a boat that would stay afloat would come near a barren rock, let alone swim to it and climb over it.

Gibbs screamed again. I suppose he was, as often, on the border of D.T. anyway, and if he had seen this man and frightened him away by screaming at him before, and if he had really taken him to be a sea serpent, he probably thought now that he saw fangs and heard hisses.

"Shut up, Gibbs," I said crossly. "You're crazy drunk, and I don't know what you've done to Valerie, but after what you did to Lisa today it isn't going to be

good for you if her condition is serious. This is a man and not a snake, and he must have come off of another wrecked boat, even though there has been no storm. He can help us carry Valerie, since he's strong enough to wriggle up the face of a cliff. Pull yourself together while I talk to him. He must speak English, French, Spanish, German, Russian, or some other——"

The next moment I almost went down on my knees thanking God, although the new arrival was definitely of the sneering and supercilious order.

"I see you speak practically every language," he said, too suavely. "Don't spend time naming any more of them. I speak all of them myself, but since you and your friend speak English usually, let us stick to that. I have a boat—not wrecked—I was moved to investigate this rock, which seemed, as you might put it, 'not quite right.'

"My yacht will take care of all of you nicely, just as soon as you can board her——"

I hated him, from the start. But Gibbs was crazy and Valerie perhaps dying, and all of us expecting no future but slow death; so one can easily imagine how glad I was. I'm a man of the world, hardened, stoical, sophisticated; I could die, I wouldn't beg for life, I could take it as it came. . . .

We were saved! We were saved!

I could have kissed his feet, whether I hated him or not. I could have run around in circles, laughing and crying.

I went over and touched Gibbs' arm, and he was shaking and shivering with a nervous fit, and that helped me to cover up my own emotion.

"Get hold of yourself, man!" I said to brace him. "Valerie will get over what you did to her, I hope. We need you to help with her, and to tell the others, and—Gibbs, we'll sleep on board a ship!"

But did I say it was a night of horror? We told the others, yes.

Lisa and Jones, who had been cook on Gibbs' yacht, were hysterical with joy.

But it was too late for Galen, who had been mechanic on the yacht.

We almost fell over him, on the other side of the rock, in Valerie's hide-away—a place where Galen had never bothered to go. He lay in the moonlight with his face turned up and his throat stretched, and so much blood had run out of him that he had a shriveled look. And at that there were only blood-smears—not really much blood. That must have been because of the hunger and thirst. His throat was like Valerie's, but so very much worse, as though with Galen someone had had plenty of time . . .

I looked at Gibbs with more distaste than I have ever looked at any man. And then—in his eyes I read a blank amazement that had the look of utter, if drunken, innocence. Well, a drunk may commit murder and know nothing of it—even two or three murders sometimes. Yet—Gibbs looked a bit like a little boy accused of breaking a window he hasn't been near. Well, it would all have to be thrashed out later. We had to get on the yacht, and take care of Valerie. Tomorrow I will go on with this.

Tomorrow?

BY MY watch, which, being waterproof, has never stopped, it *is* tomorrow. By optical evidence, it still is night. Either the watch is bewitched, or these waters through which we sail, and the sky over us as well—or all of us.

Valerie lives. She is weak, but improving. We all had a ghastly kind of meal on board the strange yacht, which should have been breakfast by my watch. The food consisted of one dish, of which our host alone partook with much gusto. I don't care for meat at breakfast, and while

I sometimes like high seasoning, I didn't like this. But I suppose my state of mind affected my appetite.

A special sort of wine was served Valerie, which seemed to do her good. She had almost to be carried to the table, and seemed half fainting when she got there; but after having some of that wine she rallied tremendously.

At our table were Gibbs and Lisa, Valerie and myself, and our host and captain, who calls himself Le Noir. The name suits him only too well; in fact he resembles the Black One of legend, or in other words the Devil himself. He is swarthy, and his heavy brows meet in a V. His skull is long and narrow, and I don't like his looks. Valerie (sweet girl!) has already managed to tell me that I dislike him because I am afraid he knows more than I do. I told her truthfully that I am sure he does, and that I imagine some of his knowledge to be of a kind no decent man would want. Yet perhaps that was rather a foolish remark. I know nothing against Le Noir. He saved us, I suppose; that is, he took us off the rock.

But I wish I knew where he is taking us. He has made no promise as to port; we asked him if he was bound for any port in North or South America; we would have gone down on our knees in gratitude had he mentioned San Francisco. Instead, he said he was on a longish trip which was off the steamer routes.

Except for the fact that water is churning under our keel, I could imagine our course lay off the earth altogether. That sounds like an insane statement, but let me set down the facts. *They* are insane—the facts. Or say, indeed, that the very skies above us and waters beneath are all crazy and impossible.

But the facts:

It is by my watch nine o'clock of an August morning. And I haven't skipped

twelve hours or anything like that. Gibbs was awake while I took a short nap, and he assures me that it was a short one—of perhaps two hours' duration only. Well! . . .

Later

WELL, to bring this up to the present moment again: Let me try to describe the indescribable.

I walk to the nearest port, which is heavily glassed. (There are no decks on this little ship; we walked into it as into a submarine; once in we are in, and sealed away, it seems, from both outer air and freedom.)

I look out—up, down; a little forward, and a little back toward our wake. And what I see is not so very strange; just natural enough, yet *unnatural* enough, to make me doubt my sanity. I know in the first place that it ought to be—by this time—nearly ten in the morning; but above I see stars, and in the water that streams darkly and vaguely back I see stars once more. That in itself is not as I have ever seen it; as a ship rushes through ocean water, throwing it aside in ripples and furrows in even the calmest sea, it is impossible to see *reflections of stars*; yet they are there beneath us, nor are these reflections as broken as you would suppose. They are dim and faint, and the water seems to flow over them—indeed, it is as though those reflections were other stars which shone upward from beneath the water over which we travel.

The stars above us, on the contrary, are large and clear and burning beyond anything I should have thought possible even in the tropics. They quiver and sparkle a little—a very little indeed; otherwise every star would have the appearance of a planet, so large and near they are. The nebulae are so brilliantly clear that to follow their convolutions gives me a feeling of dizzy sickness, as though I were too

vividly imagining those unplumbable depths of the abyss; in fact, I dare not look out of the port-hole long at a time, either downward or upward, because of the sickness that overwhelms me; it is all a part of the strangeness of the aspect of what should be a well-accustomed scene at sea; granting that I must be wrong in the first place about it being ten o'clock in the morning; granting that I must have lost a period of time. . . .

There it is! I am losing my grip on myself entirely. I did not sleep. It *is* morning. No, that way madness lies. One cannot look at the night sky, the night sea, and repeat that it is morning. Well, let that pass.

I tear my dizzy eyes away from the awful beauty outside the port. That sky, in the starless tunnels between the nebulae—the awful, unparalleled blackness of it! The waters beneath our keel, those waters in which faint star-images shine impossibly upward: those misty, milkily violet waters that seem to hold an unknown phosphorescence—that resemble drifting vapor quite as much as water. . . .

He is approaching, with Valerie. My God! I thought her face was white when we carried her on board this ship. Now it is whiter still, and in her eyes—those indescribable eyes of no color and many colors—there is some sure and dreadful knowledge. She sways as she walks, and his arm goes around her, and I start forward.

But the dizzy sickness I have been fighting overcomes me. The floor of the cabin swings upward, and for a little everything. . . .

Was black. I see that I have carried the present tense a bit too far, in rendering legible the lines immediately before this. I fainted for a brief time, and then I was unable to write for a little. But I have found it possible to hold a pen again. *He* says the attacks of utter prostration will be

intermittent, and each recovery more complete in the case of those of us who survive, and less complete in the case of those who will die.

Let me write as fast as possible while I can. It seems to me that all of us will die. Our sufferings in the last half-hour have been too intense. . . .

We are sailing—not the seas, but the skies! I have done with conjectures. I am recording things as they happen. This deadly sickness which overcomes us is space-sickness—the name *Le Noir* gives it. It is the result of shifting from one gravity zone to another. This shift is, I suppose, in the nature of a fairly smooth gradient—although there may be variants beyond my calculation. We are leaving earth and approaching the moon; of course there are small comets, groupings of dark matter, too, everywhere in space, and these set up minor shifts of magnetic attraction.

I think much of the wave-like procession of our attacks of nausea and utter prostration is due, however, to the efforts of our systems at adaptation. On board ship, you know, if one is seasick one can withstand it for a while; one is submerged in misery, and emerges—simply turns his head and is abjectly ill again.

All of us have read fanciful accounts of space-travel. Everything in the ship floats at a certain point; the nose of the ship directs itself forward toward the goal, but at a given place in the journey, up becomes down, and the drag of gravity which has had to be overcome, changes to an accelerating force.

It is all true, so far as it goes. But no writer of things imagined has ever even touched on the deadly shifting of the organs within the body, the very blood within the veins. The bottom of the spaceship is the bottom of the world, so far as you are concerned; yes, but there is that gradual—and sometimes *lurching*—sense of shifting, which is real; the reaction to

everything out here where the drag of earth and moon are approaching equilibrium, and accordingly neither one a governing force. . . .

Out of five passengers, Le Noir has predicted that one or two of us will die. He has made captures such as this before. The mystery of the *Mary S.*, the schooner whose crew disappeared with dinner cooking on the galley, is not a mystery to him. He has hinted at a fate which makes me pray, almost, for death for all of us.

But the suffering. I am going under once more. My nose bleeds, my stomach and heart are bursting; pressure is kept constant in the ship, but the pull from outside of things that are bigger than this little world of ours, things that shift and hurtle by unseen in the dark, too small to be seen as shooting stars from earth, and too lightless, but large enough to tear us in pieces like bullets which need not enter the body to do their deadly work—spears of gravity-pull that invade us and are gone. . . .

I can write no more. Perhaps never another line. . . .

THANK God, whatever happens, we are definitely within the governance of the moon's gravitational field now, and able to think and reason, even if all we can do is to face things bravely.

Le Noir states coolly things I, having heard much, have heard of: but things few people have heard stated or formulated—things about our solar system, so pleasantly and safely lifeless in space around our teeming earth. Le Noir makes it seem to me very silly that the real minds of Earth unite in believing our planet likely to be the only one inhabited in the universe; not that I ever thought that a very sensible idea, if only because of averages. What has happened once, is likely, in the course of a million million million million chances, to happen more than once; and

since more than those millions of stars inhabit space, and among them are certainly at least some planets—and we know nothing about these stars, or planets, or the ability of life to adapt itself—well, it does seem quite possible that somewhere besides on Earth, something, *or some things*, live.

Some things live on the moon, according to Le Noir. He himself lives there, when business does not take him to Earth—or to Saturn, home of disintegrating souls. But the moon is our present concern. I perhaps am loath to write of the moon—after listening to Le Noir.

The Things which inhabit the moon do not live *on* it, says Le Noir. Not, at least, to any great extent. His kingdom is not on the moon. Astronomers are not right in saying nothing ever moves *on the light or dark faces* of the moon; but they approach the truth more nearly in saying *that*, than when they put it that the moon is uninhabited.

There is a ghastly kingdom inside of the moon!

You (who read, or *never* read) have read vampire stories? Then you have heard mild stories meant for children. Vampires, you know, inhabit dark places; the dirt in which they are buried; they live by the blood of the living; they walk abroad only in the night.

But on Earth, there is always their enemy, the Sun. Men dwell *on* the Earth, and Earth's heavy atmosphere diffuses the sun's rays even into the deepest shadows on the sunward side. But even on the hemisphere of the moon's surface lit glaringly by the sun, there are *utterly black* shadows: inky crater-shadows into whose black depths no heavy air conveys the diffused sun-rays which are death to vampires; and you see that, day or night, there is no place on or in the moon where vampires may not find easy refuge. Now—consider those unlit caverns within the

moon—its hollow center, with fissures extending to the surface; and you have something only too much like that Hell our scientists "know" is impossible—because they have found, in all the universe, no place where they think it can be!

They haven't thought much about the moon in this connection. Le Noir says there are many Hells, as we might describe them. Many Hells—perhaps then, even a few Heavens? It seems our scientists haven't gotten so far with their definite knowledge—but of course I never thought they had. It is so childish, their little fabric of what can and what cannot be; so pitifully childish, when you think how near the earth is to the moon; not very far from Saturn, even; and nothing but cold emptiness between Earth and other places that are worse.

Le Noir hints at these horrors till I think he hopes we may go insane. Jones is dead, died of the space-sickness. Lisa's bleeding wrist wounded by Gibbs, who loves her, was the thing that brought Le Noir's attention to us, that invited him among us; and Galen's death on the rock—Le Noir did that, before he began on Valerie, and then came Gibbs. That horrible first breakfast on his ship—there was blood in that which made us easier victims of his intended doom for us; for he wants to break our wills, to bring us willingly into his moon caverns of Hell. For our blood and our souls, Le Noir had hovered near—and I think *over*—the rock that was a hell on Earth, waiting the darker horrors of crime—murder, madness, cannibalism—to prepare the way for him to reach our very souls. . . .

LISA interrupted me here. She has read what I have written on the ship. She says she likes Le Noir; that he has been telling tales for fools, and that we are in good hands.

"Space-travel — you lunatic!" she said

gayly. "Seasickness—and gullibility. You can see the water under the ship, upside out the port——"

"You can see a sort of liquid air which has clung to our ship as she tore out through Earth's atmosphere, which grew heavy and visible in the cold of outer space. Le Noir says that a slight seepage of warmth from out the ship has kept it liquid, or it would be ice. And through it—through that 'water' beneath our keel, if we have a keel—you can see the fixed stars of outer space. Over the ship the air is thin, like a thin veil of vapor—see how the stars burn up there through that little film of air? The bottom of the ship swings toward wherever gravity is pulling us, or downward—whether down for the moment means the earth we left, the moon we approach, or some small lump of matter wandering through space; and so the heaviest and most liquid air swings down too—beneath us; giving the illusion of water—of strange water, through which we see empty space and stars. You see, Lisa?"

"Anyone on Earth would know that you're crazy, Michael," she said. "You take Le Noir seriously, don't you? I *like* him. When we get to Frisco, I'll have you taken to a hospital—you need rest——"

A gong sounds through the ship, which seems to rock in space with the sonorous vibration. I have been writing only a little after each incident, each discovery. Now I feel that I will have to put these notes by; I shall fold them compactly and place them in my vest pocket. Fortunately my handwriting is very small. . . .

The End of the Journal

AT LE NOIR'S summons we all went forward into that part of his spaceship which he has heretofore excluded us from. The whole curved, streamlined front of the vessel is made of heavy glass—and we are able to see ahead of us.

God! The awful glory of the sight!

We were fast approaching the moon, on its bright side. The curved, luminous shield stretched out until it filled the sky from horizon to horizon. What had been only a few moments before a fantastically near, tremendous heavenly orb, was become a landscape; but a landscape such as was never seen on Earth.

Brilliance beyond all power of description—the practically airless, arid desert reflecting the bright fury of the sun's rays clear as they traversed the empty ether. And yet, shadows — shadows huge and monstrous, knife-keen and gobliness—shadows of those awful mountains of the moon, those dizzy declivities and craters fit for man's nightmares, but not his mortal seeing! This, then, is why I have headed this last short bit of my hopeless journal *The End*. This, and what comes after.

With unexpected ease, Le Noir's space-ship slowed and drifted like a cloud. Lower she swung; and settled, easily as a falling feather, into the mouth of one of the black craters — and so on down — down. . . .

I thought we were going direct to that awful moon-center of which Le Noir had spoken. But for some reason, he delays bringing us to what I think of now as the ultimate Hell. This is because he wants to break us utterly, to weaken us all with suspense; and there are probably factors involved of which I cannot even dream. One thing I know: Valerie resists him with a strength which neither he nor any of her companions had expected. Each look that has passed between them in this last hour has been like the crossing of swords.

Well, as I said, Le Noir delayed our ultimate descent. The space-ship came to rest on a ledge only a little way below the surface of the moon. And he has left us, and gone on down the crater, which leads, he said, into the very center of the moon.

He opened the hatch of the ship, and

heavy, damp, but quite breathable air poured in. What keeps it here inside the moon, since none to speak of is on the moon's surface? I asked him that, as he prepared to leave the ship. His answer was like the blow which I half expected to accompany it:

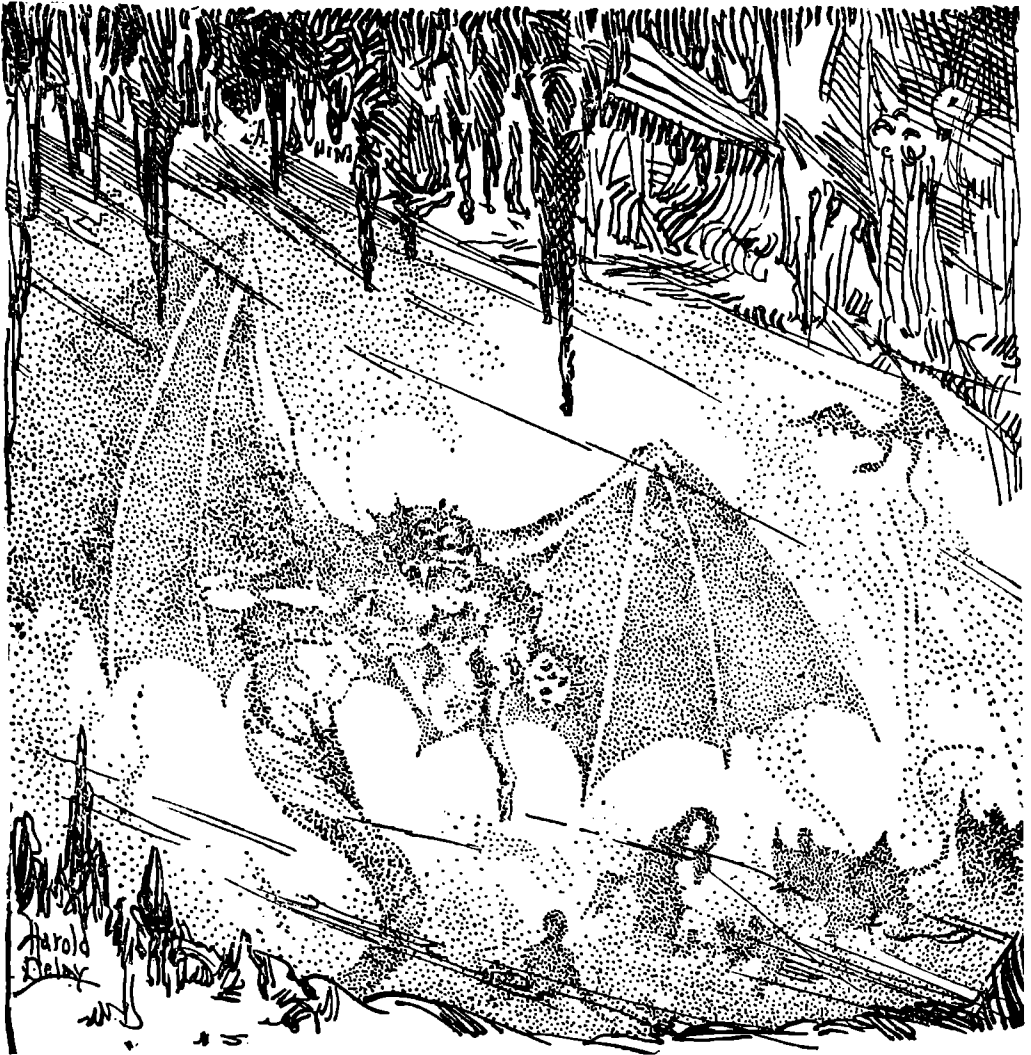
"Gravity, fool! The moon is hollow, I have told you. Having far greater viscosity than the atmosphere of Earth, toward the center the air is very dense—you will all suffer new pangs in descending. Be ready to accompany me when I come back. If you seek to escape—the way back to the surface is clear; but there is no air up there. Of course there is suicide, but it is not supposed to have God's blessing even on more blessed planets. While there is life—hope on! Hope, all of you, for the unspeakable joys of dwelling with ghouls and vampires——"

He laughed. I have never heard such laughter. On Earth it would be insane; but it fits this place well enough.

He went a little further down, and passed into a side tunnel; and as he went from sight, I swear that the serpentine look returned to him which he had when I first saw him, and then the shadows of wings extended from his cloak; so that he was both serpent and winged thing with the wings of a bat. I should call him Satan himself; but he has said that there are many hells in space—so perhaps there are many devils.

None of us will ever see any other place than this; *but I pray to God that there may be in the universe as well, places that are bright and lovely, and as blest as this place is accursed!*

THIS is the end of the journal, I know; but not the end it seemed to be. Here in this ghoulish horror we have found—not hope, but courage; not escape, but in the very face of death, a glimpse of Paradise.



"We looked with unspeakable horror on what must have been a part of Le Noir's hell."

Valerie, whom I have tried to hate— Valerie, who has lived in the past for the sake of a vanished love—came to me with a strange light upon her face.

"Is this your true self, Michael?" she asked, and there was something like awe in her voice. "I have never imagined anything finer or braver; you spoke out loud; you said you prayed that there might be in the universe places lovely and bright, which we would never see.

"Your prayer seemed to put a new heart in me; at the worst, last moment, there

must be something better than despair. Suicide, Le Noir spoke of: the death that is accursed—but what if we die fighting, trying to escape? Even if there is not one chance in a million, that is not suicide. Michael! I have told you, and you have laughed at me, that I can hear Kerry—especially in times of crisis. He is dead, you always say and sneer; but I hear him—not his voice, exactly; his thought. Just now it was courage which I drew from you, that cleared my mind so that I felt his presence.



"I have been hearing—really hearing with my auditory sense, I mean—a strange, rushing noise. Haven't you? We have been miserable, preoccupied. But it is clear—a sound like the rushing of water or a great wind. I want to follow the sound, to find out what it is; if only because Le Noir spoke of no such thing—and so it can't be of great interest to him. Besides, in the noise there is a sound like music: sublime—deep-toned, like an organ note—a chord on a mighty organ.

"Possibly, even, he did not want us to know what it is, or to notice it. But when my mind cleared just now, I felt that a

beginning to whatever resistance we can make, or effort to hide—*something* there must be which we can attempt. I must follow that sound, find what it leads to. Will you come, Lisa and Gibby? You will, won't you? Anything is better than to wait for Le Noir's return. And *you*—Michael, *you* will go with me?"

Yes, I would go with her, although Lisa and Gibbs were far too broken, too uncertain. They were both hopeless and resigned. Maybe Le Noir was not so hideously bad—were ghouls and vampires and Hell within the white moon possible? Yet—was it possible to have come where we

had come—away from Earth to her bleak satellite? There was nothing to do, then; wait—and see how bad things were. . . .

So I went with Valerie, who cried over Gibbs and Lisa—not over *us*. We were seeking a Grail—escape there is none—so call it that! We dare to seek escape where there is none, a victory that cannot be.

THE crater's sides were steep and almost dark; there was a dim phosphorescence, however; and we found that the sides of the crater were honeycombed with tunnels like the one Le Noir had disappeared in. We did not follow him, but followed the sound Valerie had spoken of; and it was indeed like the rushing of water or a mighty wind than any I had ever heard. . . .

The rocky structure of the moon is different from that of Earth; composed, as we know, of the same elements, they are somehow differently textured, for there is a *transparence* about the moon; incredible as it seems, at one place in the tunnel where the ceiling must have been very thin (I had felt that we were ascending) I saw dimly but clearly the glowing orb of the sun, and even tinier glittering points of light that were the far stars.

And there was a place where the rock floor beneath our feet was thin, too; and we looked with unspeakable horror into what must have been a part of Le Noir's Hell.

Imagine murderers, degenerates, such dregs of humanity as we call "human fiends"—imagine them hurtling on their downward path of disintegration until they are in truth inhuman—until nature conforms their bodies to their black minds, and sneering features and monstrous deformities portray the spirits that inform them!

Imagine the cast-off species of the long, winding trail of evolution—monsters in the animal kingdom dating back to the age

of the behemoths, back to the reptilian forms of old Earth, back farther to jelly-like amorphous monstrosities unnamed and undreamed of—imagine these freaks, too horrid to survive on Earth, having established themselves within our near neighbor the moon—and bred and changed strangely there, crossing themselves with the cast-off spawn of humanity that inhabits here with them—a world of men and monsters and demons mixed together—having one thing in common: a constant reiteration of the serpent and bat types; however grotesquely altered—always that.

Limned against a dim phosphorescence from below, through the dark clear glass-like ledge beneath our feet we looked down upon this, and shuddered and clung together; nearly fainting—I as well as Valerie—when a huge winged reptile that was yet man and monster both, swooped upward toward us in wild gyrations, bearing gripped in its slavering jaws a dangling corpse—and one we recognized, newly borne (unknown to us) to this place by Le Noir—Galen, brought here from the rock where last we saw his mutilated body—Galen making a feast for the winged dark thing that tittered. Even the sound came to our ears, echoing in the silence.

It was Valerie who partly recovered first, and drew me on. The rushing sound came to us, close ahead in the darkness. Down a second tunnel we darted; and felt a current of air drawing us on—growing into a wind; into a steady, strong gale. . . .

I said that this was the end of the journal. Now, at last, it is. The very end.

We are going on with the rushing wind. We are going to hurl ourselves into the crater-shaft ahead, up which (we can see and we believe understand) it roars.

The crater shaft ahead is visible to us now, in wonder and horror visible. Its sides are smooth as glass, and as reflectant. They are so worn by the upward rush of air, which at this point escapes under pres-

sure from within the planet, out—*out into space itself*. They are iridescent, shimmering, mother-of-pearl—no, they are like the shifting glimmer that inhabits the moonstone. They seem to reflect the changes in the shifting of sound in the mighty diapason of the organ-chord of the air rushing up the crater shaft from the very center of the moon.

We have spoken together, clinging to each other here just where the onward sweep of air might still be resisted. From the terrific force of that upward current we believe it rushes out into space with sufficient velocity to bear our bodies (it may be and we pray) beyond the reach of the moon's gravity-pull. To wander out on the airless surface of the moon — that was merely suicide, and hardly worth while. Le Noir himself suggested it; I think he would have captured us and dragged us back; perhaps not even dead — perhaps there is, after all, enough air out there to sustain existence for a little while. In any case he would have brought us back—our bodies, if we died there. And there would be the fate of Galen, whose corpse we saw in the horrible jaws of the tittering monster. . . .

No. This way, ahead, lies hope—hope of a death that is clean. We have prayed that our surmise may be right. We hope only for this — escape, clasped in each other's arms, into the utterly lifeless void between the planets—there to be for ever unknown, unguessed, undreamed of—frozen meteors that were a man and woman, locked together. . . .

I am about to wrap the twine which I still carry, and which is very strong, about us, hoping that it will help us cling together as the mighty current sweeps us into space. We want to stay together, as we are going.

Valerie suggests that I fling my finely written and now completed manuscript ahead of us, corked in the flat gin bottle

which I have all this time carried, with the ball of twine. No reason; only to watch its going, as a little preliminary before we ourselves go.

The ball of twine! Last time I used it, it was to save Lisa's life, by tying it to a limpet and forcing the limpet down her throat, after she had swallowed poison; I pulled the twine and saved her life—and now she is back there in the space-ship, as she preferred—she and Gibby half believing in *Le Noir* because it is the easiest thing to do. . . .

Like Valerie, I am sorrier for them than for us. I think we have found a clean death—and there have been other lovers commemorated in the sky as constellations. We will not be exactly that—and no one will know of our fate—but it is not an ignoble one.

And so I will proceed to seal this within the bottle, and hurl it into the outward-bound cyclone—and locked in each other's arms, we will walk forward until it takes us. . . .

Editorial Comment: by Editor of "The Investigator"

SPECULATION will be rife concerning the foregoing document. Michael Sydney's is too prominent a name to be discredited in the world of letters, whatever be the material appended to it. Yet the foregoing is of a nature utterly unparalleled, even in the world of imaginative fiction, to which many will wish to consign this against the author's express denial that it is anything but the truth—Sydney's graphic account of the deadly space-sickness from gravity shifting; his description of a world within a hollow moon; his account of an upward geyser of air escaping into space with such force that human bodies are borne by it beyond the reach of the moon's gravity attraction—and, to link Sydney's foregoing story

with the sequel as told to the press by many and diverse reporters, into the field of Earth's magnetic attraction.

To take up the only phase of the affair on which Sydney makes no comment, since he himself has learned of it only through the accounts of others:

On the night of August 30th, three urgent communications were received by groups of spiritualists holding meetings at the three largest Pacific Coast ports of the United States: Seattle, San Francisco, and Los Angeles. These communications were beyond all precedent, according to those attending these widely separated seances, urgent and clear. They purported to be given by one who called himself Kerry Dorn; they gave a specific latitude and longitude in the South Pacific Ocean, and urged that rescue parties be sent there with all haste for the rescue of Mrs. Valerie Dorn, the widow of Kerry Dorn; Michael Sydney, explorer; and possibly Arthur K. and Lisa Gibbs.

So unusual and insistent were the communications, given in one case by rappings, in another by trance mediumship and in a third by what was claimed to be a partially materialized control speaking for Kerry Dorn from the "other world," that long-distance telephone calls were exchanged between the three spiritualistic societies. Before morning these were supplemented by hasty investigations which established the truth as to identity of the relationship between Valerie and Kerry Dorn, and also the protracted absence of such a party as was described on the sailing-yacht of Arthur K. Gibbs, owner.

The Coast Guard was appealed to, and declined to take action. However, one of the members of the group in Seattle was very wealthy, and a partner in a shipping concern, and before noon the next day managed to have a fast steam yacht dispatched to the latitude and longitude given in the three diversely received messages.

The result of this expedition has been widely read and lightly credited. This is because we simply do not believe things we are not prepared to believe. Even I, John Graham, editor of *The Investigator*, offer no personal opinion.

But the evidence of all on board the rescue ship is as follows:

On arriving at the given latitude and longitude, at a point in the South Pacific, all on board were amazed to see two small icebergs floating in the warm waters of the sea, not far from each other. On investigation it was found that within each iceberg, frozen in the center, were a couple—a man and woman, clinging to each other, and having on their faces expressions of utter terror.

The ice was gently and carefully chipped and melted by artificial heat, supplementing the action of the sun and warm Pacific water, which had already acted upon it, of course. The man and woman encased in each iceberg were carefully removed to the deck of the *Northbound*, and watched with the closest anxiety. After a little, life returned to the apparently inanimate corpses. All four were perfectly rational, and exhibited in the beginning a delirious joy at finding themselves on the yacht *Northbound*, and immediately afterward an intense desire to relate the events detailed in Sydney's manuscript—in every point of which the four agree. The identity of the four was of course easily established.

This practically completes the case, except for one very interesting detail. While melting away the ice encasing Sydney and Valerie Dorn, the flat gin bottle containing the manuscript, just as he had thrown it before him into the geyser of air, was taken out; hence the foregoing is not furnished by Michael Sydney from memory, but is verbatim his diary as recorded from time to time during the "moon journey," the shipwreck, and the sojourn on the moon and flight from Le Noir's space-ship.

I HAVE discussed the theoretical and scientific features of the whole thing with Sydney, over a dinner for two that lasted until the dawn.

The air which bore them up the moon crater and far into outer space solidified around them, liquefying and freezing with terrific rapidity in the absolute cold into which they entered. The bodies of all four were frozen, of course, and preserved alive in the frozen condition in the same manner in which, experimentally, dogs have been frozen and later thawed and revived in the laboratory. The gin bottle was frozen into the large berg containing Sydney and Valerie Dorn, because its small volume offered so little surface to the uprushing air that it moved upward slowly, and was overtaken by the bodies of the man and woman who shortly afterward hurled themselves, clasped in each other's embrace, into the uprushing air-geyser.

The friendship between the four who were rescued in the South Pacific is of a nature which might in itself testify to shared experiences of unparalleled beauty and terror, horror and victory over almost certain destruction. Valerie Dorn and Michael Sydney repeatedly expressed their delight that Gibbs and his wife had followed them, during the voyage back to Seattle on the *Northbound*.

It is hard not to digress into the personal and human side of a story, an experience, so breath-taking. But to return again to the scientific features, or theories, of Sydney's manuscript and account—

The encasing shroud of frozen air was large enough to protect the bodies of the four men and women in a state of suspended animation, through the encounter with the Earth's atmosphere and the plunge deep into the waters of the ocean, through which the "bergs" rose again upward to float on the surface of the water until the advent of the *Northbound*.

In space-travel fiction, anything plung-

ing with meteor-speed into the earth's atmosphere flames and burns to an ash, unless it be a space-ship of resistant metal; we have here, however, the unprecedented hard coldness of space-frozen air. We have likewise, in defense of Sydney's explanation of events otherwise utterly inexplicable, the oft-reiterated accounts in the late Charles Fort's writings of "apports from the sky"—small animals, often of the lower orders such as periwinkles, snakes and toads—each being encased in a sheath of ice. Here, then, is a definite check of a highly evidential nature. But it is, I predict, one which will not interest scientists.

The hollow moon! The ancient, brittle satellite, drying and cracking, leaving great internal fissures and then a hollow center into which gravity draws down as by a great sucking process the atmosphere which encircled it as it first was torn from Earth. What could be more reasonable? In its very reasonableness I find another check. But I offer no opinion. *The Investigator* publishes authenticated accounts of unusual happenings, and quotes the reasonable explanations offered in their substantiation. Beyond that, it does not go.

Before this issue of *The Investigator* goes to press, the newspapers will have announced the marriage of Michael Sydney and Valerie Dorn.

Open Letter to Readers of "The Investigator"

To you, the readers, I have been permitted by my friend Mr. Graham, editor of *The Investigator*, to write these few words directly:

The Investigator is the journal of the open-minded, and Mr. Graham's editorial comments are fair in the extreme. However, I feel that the facts in the above truthfully recorded document demand something more.

These few words are in the nature of an

appeal, of an attempt to awaken Earth from her dream of security, an entreaty to arrive at some real knowledge of the moon.

Only after understanding and knowledge can come even the remotest policy of a planned defense—and defense against such terrible neighbors we must have.

There is much which I had no time to write in my journal; much that haunts my memory waking and sleeping. There is the remembered vision of the brilliantly glaring orb hanging in the sky before our approaching space-ship—of things noted swiftly and in terror, that live again more clearly in the memory.

The vampire-demons, the monster-ghouls who inhabit the moon—our near neighbor in the heavens!—have, I think, given a ghastly life-in-death to the satellite herself, as maggots creeping in the bare skull of a corpse vivify it. The face of the "man in the moon"—ah, when it hung before us it grinned like the face of a skull; and toward an orifice lined with tooth-like crags did the space-ship sink and into it enter, as into a ghastly maw.

The mighty gust of air that swept us out of a connected crater was like the exhalation of a giant's breath, incalculably prolonged; may there be in turn a long inhalation, when air diffused through nearby space is drawn in again through dreadful crater-nostrils?

Those dread forms of nightmare life—Le Noir and his kingdom of monsters—what do they resemble so much as nightmare forms materialized? They inhabit the hollow center of the skull in its vampire death-in-life; the skull that is the moon. Only in the realm of metaphysics might one even conjecture the nature of the relationship between moon and moon-monsters.

This is the wildest conjecture only; I have come to feel that our dead satellite is in itself a wicked, menacing thing. Have we not always felt it? Do not astronomers regard our moon with unease, and point out that some day she will perhaps fall toward the earth, to our destruction? Do not poets paint word pictures attributing malign influences to the orb of night, even while they recognize the sentimental potency of her white light? There was the moon of Oscar Wilde's *Salome*, that moon that rode the sky in quest of dead things. . . .

My space is limited. I feel that never again will I or mine be in extreme peril from Le Noir and those who inhabit the moon; though as to that, only God knows. But I cry out to the world to waken from the dream of false security, into which *they* strike at times — and may strike more widely and terribly.

At least, let us be on guard!

MICHAEL SYDNEY.