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CONTENTS FOR OCTOBER, 1937

Number 4

| | | |
|---|--------------------------|-----|
| Cover Design | M. Brundage | |
| <i>Illustrating a scene in "Tiger Cat"</i> | | |
| Tiger Cat | David H. Keller | 386 |
| <i>A story as fascinating as any of the horrors conceived in the tortured mind of Dante or of Poe</i> | | |
| Pledged to the Dead | Seabury Quinn | 397 |
| <i>A thrilling tale of a lover whose sweetheart had been in her grave more than a century</i> | | |
| Which Will Scarcely Be Understood | Robert E. Howard | 416 |
| <i>Versé</i> | | |
| The Shunned House | H. P. Lovecraft | 418 |
| <i>A posthumous story of a revolting horror in the cellar of an old house</i> | | |
| The Homicidal Diary | Earl Peirce, Jr. | 437 |
| <i>What strange compulsion drove this man to roam the streets and commit his ghastly crimes?</i> | | |
| The Long Arm | Franz Habl | 450 |
| <i>Insidiously crawling and groping, the long arm reached out on its errand of death</i> | | |
| The Lake of Life (part 2) | Edmond Hamilton | 459 |
| <i>A weird-scientific serial replete with thrills, adventure, mystery and romance</i> | | |
| The Golgotha Dancers | Manly Wade Wellman | 483 |
| <i>A curious and terrifying story about an artist who sold his soul to paint a living picture</i> | | |
| Here Lies | H. W. Guernsey | 489 |
| <i>An ironic tale about a practical communist who taught his friend when to take him seriously</i> | | |
| The Last of Mrs. DeBrugh | H. Sivia | 492 |
| <i>DeBrugh was dead, but he still regarded his promise as a sacred duty to be fulfilled</i> | | |
| To a Skull on My Bookshelf | Elizabeth Virgins Raplee | 495 |
| <i>Versé</i> | | |
| Weird Story Reprint: | | |
| The Purple Cincture | H. Thompson Rich | 496 |
| <i>A popular story from an early number of WEIRD TALES</i> | | |
| After Two Nights of the Ear-ache | Francis Hard | 502 |
| <i>Versé</i> | | |
| The Eyrie | | 503 |
| <i>A department in which the readers express their opinions</i> | | |

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH



"Then I heard him in the hallway and on the stairs."

The Homicidal Diary

By EARL PEIRCE, JR.

What strange compulsion drove an ordinarily gentle and cultured man, on one night of each week, to roam the city streets and commit a ghastly crime?

I AM writing this account of my friend Jason Carse in the interests of both justice and psychiatry, and perhaps of demonology as well. There is no greater proof of what I relate than the sequence of murders which so recently

shocked this city, the newspaper items regarding the crimes, and especially the official report of the alienists who examined Carse during his trial. I cannot expect to bring Doctor Carse back to life, for he was hanged until dead, but I do

hope that this paper will offer new illumination on cases of criminal decapitation.

Justice and psychiatry are closely related, but it is difficult to recognize the judicial importance of so *outré* a subject as demonology. Yet I emphatically assert that the case of Jason Carse is irrevocably concerned with evil and dark lore such as mankind has not known since the Holy Inquisition.

One is naturally prejudiced against Carse, for even I myself, his lifelong acquaintance, was struck with repugnance when I first realized the nature of his activities, but his death on the gallows should foreclose biased reflection and permit the student to regard his case in a purely empirical light. As I am the only man in complete possession of the facts, it behooves me to give this astounding information to the world.

Jason Carse was a brilliant and respected criminologist, and at the time of his arrest he was recognized as one of the greatest students of the modern world, a fact which has made his case one of unparalleled notoriety. I was his roommate during the several years we spent in law school, and, although he shot to the pinnacle of his branch of jurisprudence while I was left to more prosaic routine, we never lost the contact which has now become so valuable. Our correspondence was frequent and regular since we were graduated, and I can say with justifiable pride that Carse respected my friendship as much as that of any other acquaintance, if not more. It was this intimacy with his personal life which has enabled me, as friend and confidant, to witness the revolting atavism which resulted in such outrageous crimes.

I obtained my first hazy acquaintance with the crimes three months ago when I received Carse's letter from Vienna. He

had just discovered sensational evidence in a famous criminal case—one of recurrent human decapitation—and his consequent enthusiasm was so rabid that I was afraid the morbidity of such matters was beginning to pervert his senses. For several years I had become progressively aware of Carse's melancholic attitude, and I had often recommended that he take a vacation from criminal cases. His indefatigable enthusiasm for research was all against my advice, and he had gone relentlessly ahead to the tragic climax which my greatest fears could not have imagined. This letter from Vienna, so eager with indomitable *il faut travailler*, confirmed my suspicion that Carse had descended into the depressing rut of monomania.

When he returned to America shortly afterward I crossed the country to spend a few days with him, but he was so sickly and irritable that I could do nothing to cheer his spirits. He continually brooded over the case he had been investigating, and I should have known at that time there was a dangerous neurotic compulsion stirring in his subconscious mind.

Less than a week after my departure from the city the first of the horrific head-hunting crimes was committed and the actual drama got under way. I can recall reading the sensational accounts in the newspapers and my anxious fear that this fresh display of criminal perversion would excite Carse into a state nearing hysteria. I telegraphed him that same day, begging his refusal to bother with the case and requesting that he come to visit me. His reply was swift and brief; he had already commenced his investigations of the head-hunting crime and nothing on earth could deter him from his set course. Knowing him as I did, I could do nothing but hope that the Head-hunter would be swiftly captured and the case brought to a finish. It was an un-

pleasant shock, therefore, when I read—exactly one week later—that a second and identical crime had been committed.

EVEN in my own city, three thousand miles from the center of the crimes, there was wild confusion at the announcement of this second spectacular murder. The reader may recall the international effects of the infamous "Ripper" crimes which terrified London a few decades ago and he will understand how rapidly the Head-hunter's fame spread through crime-conscious America. Both murders were made particularly mysterious because of the disappearance of the victims' heads. I knew the damaging influence which these doings would produce upon Carse, for he had always been interested in decapitations, and his thesis at the University of Graz had been based upon the mad career of Emil Drukker, the Head-hunter of Cologne.

I wrote again to Carse and begged him to abandon his studies in these new murders, but, as before, his response was cold and discouraging. There was a wild and almost fanatical tone in his letter which was indicative of his obsessed mind, and an ugly premonition occurred to me that this would be the breaking-point of his career.

The third and fourth murders, so horribly identical with the first two, came about at weekly intervals, and the city was in the grip of strangling terror. There was no rime or reason for the crimes, and yet the diabolical precision of the murderer seemed to indicate he was a madman of uncanny intelligence. In all four cases his victims were vagabonds and people of the lowest order. In none of the murders had the victim been assaulted, but the head had disappeared, seemingly for ever. There was not a shred of evidence pointing to the solution, and, except that the police knew

him to be a homicidal maniac, there was not a single person in a city of several millions whom they could call the murderer. Far worse than the four murders committed was the belief that they would continue week after week to an indeterminate conclusion.

I left for the city by plane on the evening of the discovery of the fifth victim, and during the trans-country flight I read Carse's own statement in the *Metropolitan Gazette* citing the crime as an atavistic expression of animalism. The fact that two of the five victims had been men, according to Carse's theory, belied the popular suspicion that the criminal was a homicidal sadist. Carse expressed the belief that the murderer was in the grip of some inherent savagery, and that the ghastly murders would continue until he wore himself out by the sheer expenditure of energy.

I reached the city shortly after sundown, and at once I felt the awful tension which had settled upon everyone in it. Men and women moved furtively, airport officials and police examined every strange face with cold and scrutinizing suspicion, and even my taxi-driver, a small mousy man, kept his fear-laden dark eyes continually reverting to the mirror as he whirled me through the slight evening traffic. I was surprised, therefore, in view of this mutual distrust, to find that Jason Carse, a veteran criminalist, had discharged all of his servants and was living alone in his grim house behind a barricaded door.

The most unpleasant shock was the unaccountably cold manner in which Carse received my visit, and his positive annoyance that I had forced myself so unexpectedly upon him. He would not explain why he had discharged his servants, nor the secluded life he was now leading, but there was little difficulty in realizing the fatiguing effects which these recent

crimes had pronounced upon him. He was virtually a stranger as we met in the hallway and shook hands.

"I wish you'd go to a hotel," he said bluntly. "I don't want anyone here."

But I didn't go to a hotel. I told him flatly that there was no other course open to me but to stay and take care of him; for obviously he wasn't taking care of himself, and his dismissal of the household help had precipitated a needless burden on his already over-laden shoulders. He needed food, for he was thin to emaciation, and I made him dress at once and accompany me to a restaurant where I saw that he ate a decent meal. I then led him to the theater, a particularly lively musical comedy, and kept him in his seat until the curtain had fallen. But my efforts seemed of no avail, as he was continually depressed and absorbed in his own reflections. That night before retiring he came to my room and again asked me to leave.

"It's for your own good," he said with strange harshness. "For God's sake believe what I say!"

For the next several days I watched him sink lower and lower into dependency of so contagious a nature that I felt the insufferable pangs of it myself. He worked late at night on the murder cases, referring constantly to autopsy protocols and police memoranda, and more than once I saw him reading his Bible. On several occasions he visited the county morgue and examined the remains of the Head-hunter's victims, and following each such visit he lapsed into a state of mental and physical agitation that exhausted him within a few hours.

The nights were almost unbearable, and I would lie awake for hours listening to the mumbles and moans which came from his room, oftentimes distinguishing such words as "God forbid it! God forbid

it!" and frequently he would scream the word "Head-hunter." There was no doubt that Carse had delved too deeply into this case, and that hour by hour he was descending into the clutch of a dangerous neurosis.

During my stay with him I engaged several servants, but he discharged them, and I was unable to reconcile him to my point of view. His resentment of my visit became more acute as the days passed, and I was beginning to fear that he would forcibly eject me.

It was easy to explain this increased irritability, for I myself, as well as every soul in the city, was nervously awaiting the next prowling of the Head-hunter, and in it I recognized more fuel for the fire that was burning Carse's reason. He was waiting for the fatal Monday night as a man waits for his doom, and each hour found him closer to a mental attack. On Sunday afternoon I discovered him in my room packing my luggage.

"You must go now," he said. "I appreciate your interest in me, but now you must go—you must!"

The tremor of anxiety in his voice nearly convinced me that he was right, but doggedly I clung to my set purpose to save him in spite of himself. I could not leave him alone in face of the developments which would occur sometime between then and Tuesday morning, and I told him so.

"Fool!" he exploded; "I can do nothing with you. Stay if you wish—but it's on your own head!"

The irony of that final statement, whether intentional or not, is something I shall remember to my grave. I don't think that Carse meant it literally—*on my own head*—but I was unable to shake his words out of my ears, and throughout the night and the following day they hung about me like a dirge.

Carse did not sleep at all that Sunday

night, but paced up and down in his study while a fierce, alarming expression hardened on his features. Nor could I sleep, for his continued pacing tore my nerves to shreds, and I spent the night alternately in my own room and at the partly open doorway of the library, where I was able to watch him in secrecy. Several times I saw him bend over a small book and study it with the intent regard of a disciple, and each time that he referred to a certain page he pounded his fist on the desk and cried to himself: "God forbid! God forbid!"

I should have realized what he meant. I should have known and been prepared, but how blind my friendship made me to the horrific implication of those repeated words!

Monday came and went in a slow drizzle of rain which only added to the somber quiet of the city, and as the evening approached and wore on I felt myself caught in the irresistible tide of fearful anticipation which warned of the sixth appearance of the Head-hunter. The streets were deserted throughout the day, and with but few exceptions the only pedestrians were police officers, who now traveled in pairs or squads. The evening papers were brutally frank in predicting that before dawn a sixth headless corpse would be discovered, and this expectation was shared by all.

Carse was at home all day and refused to answer the telephone or to allow me to answer it for him. He ate sparingly, with his same preoccupation, and, contrary to my expectations, he appeared to have lapsed into a state akin to normality, like a man who contemplates a pre-ordained and inexorable occurrence.

At six o'clock he came to me, ghastly haggard and thin, and again asked me to leave his house, but I refused this zero-hour request. He shrugged and went back to his study. I watched him for a

while and saw that he was studying that queer little book which so deeply affected him, and I again heard him utter those despairing words: "God forbid! God forbid!"

I WENT to bed at a little after ten and tried to sleep, but the city-wide excitement seeped into my room and kept me tossing from the thrusts of nightmares. At midnight Carse came up and stopped just outside my door, obviously listening to determine whether I was asleep. The silence was uncanny for a moment; then I heard a sharp metallic clicking and he went on to his room. After he had closed his door, I swept my sheet aside and went to my own door. Carse had locked it from the outside!

I called to him for an explanation of this conduct, but he either didn't hear me or chose to ignore my requests, for the house remained grimly silent. Returning to bed, I managed somehow to doze off.

At two o'clock I was awakened by the sound of someone's walking in the hallway. I sat bolt-upright in bed and heard the unmistakable approach of footsteps coming down the corridor from Carse's bedroom. The tread was stealthy and determined, and as it drew closer to my room I was conscious of a cold mask of sweat clinging to my face, because the footsteps did not sound like those of Jason Carse!

The feeling hit me and hit me again until I was left stunned with the horror of it. It did not sound like Carse! But if it was not Carse, *who was it?*

I wanted to call out his name, yet I felt, with some indefinable sense, that the treader in the hall was unaware that I was in the house, and for that reason it could not have been Carse. I was afraid to make an outcry, and I sat stricken with dread as the footsteps went past my door descending the stairs. A moment later

there was a noise of cutlery being moved in the kitchen, and the front door opened and closed.

As it had come, that strange prescience vanished and I tried to reason out what I had heard. Of course the man was Carse; who could it have been save him, for were we not alone in the house? I sat for hours on the bed working up a determination to shake the truth out of him when he returned, but shortly after four o'clock my strength ran out of me and I shook with fear as I heard that awful ghost-like tread ascending the stairs. My heart beat wildly when the person reached my door and twisted the knob to enter.

One thought flashed through my head: Thank God the door was locked! The terrible feeling that it was not Carse came back upon me, and I sat motionless as I listened to the sounds from outside. For a moment there were no sounds from the intruder, but I did hear a faint tap-tap-tap like that of a liquid falling to the wooden floor. In a minute the knob was released and the footsteps continued down the hall to Carse's room.

Any attempt to explain my thoughts as I sat smoking throughout the night would only add to the confusion of these revelations. They were not sane and rational thoughts, but rather strange suggestions and premonitions. I thought myself to be in the presence of a tremendous evil. In the morning Carse was up early, and moved back and forth in the corridor with strange industry. He was crying, for his sobs came disturbingly to my ears, and once I heard him descend into the cellar and there was a faint digging sound as he performed some outlandish task. Then I heard him in the hallway and on the stairs. I heard the splashing of water and the sound of scrubbing.

I pounded on the door for him to let me out, but it was not until nearly noon

that he finished his chores and finally opened my door. He was stooped and fatigued, and without bothering to return my amenities, he turned away and went to his study.

I WENT into the hallway and noticed, as I had surmised, that the floor showed signs of recent and vigorous cleaning. I walked down to his room and looked in, not surprised to notice that here, too, was the unmistakable evidence of scrubbing. I knew there was only one more thing to do; I must go down to the cellar and unearth what he had buried there!

The horrible truth had been dawning upon me for hours, and when I came face to face with him in the kitchen at the head of the cellar stairs I looked squarely into his eyes with the full realization that Jason Carse was the Headhunter.

I was not frightened—not for my personal safety, at any rate—but a sensation of sickening horror went through me as I looked into his tired face and understood that at last he had fallen into the cesspool which had tormented him since early years. The words of the coroner came back into my ears: "He is a madman of uncanny intelligence," and I knew that he knew I recognized him for what he was.

The awful silence of our conflicting glances was unbroken for several seconds, and then words came uncontrollably from my mouth and I managed to snap that nerve-cracking tension.

"What's in the cellar?" I cried. "What have you buried there?"

"If anything happens to you," he returned, ignoring my questions, "I am not to be blamed. I warned you in time to get away from this house. What do you think is in the cellar?"

"I dare to suggest there are six small graves."

An ugly smirk went across his face and he cast a glance at the cellar door.

"You always were too smart for your own good," he said softly. "Knowledge can be dangerous."

"How did you think you could get away with it?" I screamed, only too well aware of his implication. "My God, Carse! Six human heads!"

His jaw hardened and he took a menacing step toward me. Then suddenly he stopped, a queer tragic expression coming over his face. He put his hand to his eyes as if to blot out some horrible memory.

"I know, I know!" he cried hysterically. "Six heads—six human heads! Do you think I planned six heads?"

A shudder went through him and he buried his face in both hands and sobbed like a child.

My personal fear gradually subsided as I watched this remorseful quiescence which had come upon him. I realized that he had passed the emotional climax of his crime, and that he was now suffering that terrible reaction which must haunt and terrify all criminals. I took this advantage to gain control of him, for there was no way of determining when his madness would flare again.

"There is only one course open for me," I told him soberly. "I must turn you over to the police. Things like this must be stopped."

He pulled his hands away from his face and stared at me, his eyes fired with dread. "No, no!" he screamed. "Don't give me away. Please, in the name of God, don't give me away! I am sick, I tell you! I am not responsible!"

A feeling of helpless pity went through me as he sank to his knees in hysterical imploration, but I steeled myself against him. The man was mad and dangerous.

He must be stamped out without mercy.

"There are asylums——" I began.

"You cannot!" he cried. "You know what they do in asylums. I know! Please help me. I am not responsible. It is the book—the book."

"What book?"

"Drukker—that diary! Can't you see what it has done to me? It's eaten into my brain until I am mad. It's driven me like a slave until I have no other bidding. It taught me how to do these things. It makes me do them."

I pulled him to his feet and shook him unmercifully. He was crying and retching, a pitiable and horrible sight to look upon.

"You are talking irrationally," I cried. "I am your friend and I want to help you, but my first duty is the public welfare. There are six human heads buried in your cellar. There must be no more."

"No more?" he laughed shrilly and threw up both his hands to indicate the count of ten. "No more, you say? There will be ten more before it stops. Ten more! That's what the book says!"

"You want ten?" I demanded incredulously, struck numb by his callousness. "You want ten more to add to those six? Carse, Carse! They are not cabbages you are counting; they are human heads. Do you think I am a fiend to let this continue? No; it must end—it must end on the gallows."

"He died on the gallows!"

"He? Whom are you talking about? Try to make sense, Carse. I am your friend; trust me."

"I am talking of Emil Drukker—the man who taught me how to do these things. He is responsible for them, not I. He is the one to hang for them. Dig him out of his grave and hang him again!"

I PUSHED him gently into a chair, for his collapse seemed imminent. Spittle was running from his mouth, and his retching continued in spasms that shook him to his teeth.

"I am your friend," I told him again. "I want to help you, but you must get control of yourself. Why do you say you are not responsible? What drove you to commit these crimes?"

He looked at me searchingly and his eyes cleared. He swallowed a mass of incoherent words in an effort to master himself; then his hand pressed over mine.

"You are right; I must get control of myself," he said. "I have done some horrible things which can never be forgiven, but I swear to you that I have not done them intentionally. And I am not mad as you think. I am in the power of that book. I am the puppet of a horror that has outlived all natural deaths."

A feeling of relief passed over me as I saw him settle into a state of rational observation. I hoped it would last, for not three yards away from him, lying on top of the kitchen table, was a seven-inch butcher knife. My only hope was to preserve his state by permitting him to tell his story, and in that way to persuade him to accept the inevitable consequences of his crimes. I drew up a chair beside his own, yet kept myself alert to ward off any lunge he might make for the knife.

"What is this horror which has mastered you?" I asked in an effort to gain his confidence. "And what is this book?"

"I told you about it in my letter from Vienna six weeks ago. I told you I had discovered a rare book—an awful and compelling book. It was the diary of Emil Drukker."

"Where did you get it?"

He cast a swift glance about the room, then suddenly his eyes fell upon the butcher knife. I saw him tense, saw his

lips twitch under the lash of a horrible temptation.

"Carse, tell me about it!" I yelled, to distract him. "Where did you get the book?"

He pulled his eyes away from the knife and let them burn into my face. For a moment, undecided, he was silent; then his brows straightened and he leaned forward in his chair.

"Do you remember my Graz thesis? It was based upon the life of Emil Drukker in an effort to explain what impulse drove him to cut off human heads. It was a good thesis, one of the best on the subject, and it brought a lot of response from criminologists all over the world. About six months after it was published I received a letter from a man who was once Emil Drukker's personal servant. He was living in Cologne right close to the old Drukker castle, and he wanted to see me. He told me that he knew the Drukker crimes from the first to the last—sixteen of them.

"So I went, of course, and met this man, who was small and old, with an obsession for Emil Drukker. He talked for a long time, and then he handed me the diary and said it explained more vividly than I could ever imagine the impulse which prompted Drukker's recurrent human decapitations. He told me that Drukker had written each entry while the memory of the crime was still fresh in his mind. It was a terrible book to read, he warned, and unless I had the intellectual strength of a mental Hercules I would never forgive myself for having opened it.

"Naturally I was too excited to heed his warning, and on that same night I took the book away with me. I promised to return it to him when I had finished, but he wouldn't accept this plan. Instead he said that he would come and get the book when I was through. It was a mysterious business and should have told me

to expect no good to come of it. I asked him how he would know when I had finished with the book, and I shall never forget that evil smile and disdainful shrug of his response.

"I shall know well enough when I read the newspapers," he told me. "This time it will be six or seven—in about four months from now."

"Do you understand what he meant by those words? He knew what would happen! And yet he let me carry that book away with me! In the name of God, what kind of a man is he?"

"Why didn't you destroy the book?" I demanded of him.

"I couldn't! It was too fascinating, too powerful to destroy. I read that book with the reverence of an ecclesiastic until I knew every word between the covers, and the whole ghastly parade of Drukker's sixteen murders passed before my eyes like figures on a stage. Ten weeks ago I began to have nightmares that reconstructed the crimes of Drukker, going chronologically from Number One to Number Sixteen, then beginning all over again.

"When I returned to America seven weeks ago I still had the book with me, and the contents were so deeply engraved on my brain that I could think of nothing else. Day and night I thought about it, until at length I found myself actually imagining how I would go about emulating his crimes. Then I began to get the horrible impulse to fondle a butcher knife—Drukker used a butcher knife, you know!—and more than once I was struck with the scarcely resistible urge to cut off someone's head. It didn't matter whose head—but just a head!"

"Easy, Carse!" I cried with a wary glance at the kitchen table. "Tell me the rest, but don't excite yourself. What happened then?"

HE SLID back in a sort of stupor, shook his head several times, then passed his hand across his eyes in a gesture of despair.

"You ought to know damned well what happened if you were listening at your door last night. Six weeks ago I went to bed and dreamed horribly. I had just finished reading the first confession in the diary—some strange impulse made me read *that* confession and no other—and in my sleep I saw a human head staring at me. It was a cruel, Teutonic head, and I knew that it was Emil Drukker's head hanging in a gallows rope. Then he smiled at me; a horrible, vivid, real smile, and the head vanished. From then on, for how long I cannot say, I sat as a spectator and watched the complete action of Drukker's Number One.

"I saw Drukker leave his house and walk down a dark street with no other illumination than a few scattered electric lights. I tried to imagine how they were electric lights, for they had only gas in his day, but nevertheless they were modern lights, and the street looked like the street in front of my own house. He walked about ten blocks; then he saw a woman standing on a street corner. There wasn't another soul in sight. He crept closer to her, then drew out his butcher knife and hid it in the folds of his coat—a coat which looked strangely like my own wind-breaker. He first tried to talk with the woman, but she was not interested; so he pulled out the knife and brought it sweeping down across her throat. The blood spurted like a fountain and overran Drukker's hand, but he only laughed and pushed the woman to the ground, then knelt over her and began a horrible sawing movement with his knife. When he had finished, he drew a towel from his pocket and wrapped the head tightly to prevent the blood from trailing him home. He came

back the same way and entered the house, and at the foot of the stairs he unwrapped the towel and held the thing only by its hair as he climbed the steps. The last thing I saw or heard was the blood dripping on each step as he ascended to the upper hall."

"My God!" I whispered in horror.

"But that's not the worst," Carse cried as he grabbed my arm. "When I awakened the next morning it was late and the shrieks of the newsboys stabbed into my ears. They were yelling about a cruel, brutal murder which had been committed sometime during the night. I swung my feet off the bed to arise, when my eyes fell upon the diary which rested on my night-table. It was open to the confession of Number One as if I had been reading it in my sleep. There was a strange and terrifying dread in my soul as my feet struck the floor. I felt something wet and sticky touch my toes; then I looked down. It was a woman's head staring up at me.

"The room was smeared with blood from one end to the other, and there was a gore-caked knife resting beside the head, and a crimson towel lay across my bedpost. But there wasn't a drop of blood on my hands!

"I couldn't even attempt to explain it. I only knew that a woman had been murdered and that her severed head was in my bedroom. I didn't know what to do. I couldn't force myself into the belief that I was the murderer, and I stood stunned with the weird horror of knowing that Emil Drukker's Number One had been re-enacted and that I had played his own role. Where could I turn? Whom could I ask for advice? If I was mad they would commit me to an asylum; if I was not mad they would hang me.

"I carried the head to the cellar and buried it; then I cleaned up the blood and burned the towel. In my wardrobe I

found a suit of clothes smeared with fresh blood. I found my shoes and hat splattered with it, and then I found my discarded gloves stained a violent crimson, with each finger stiffened as the blood had coagulated about it. No wonder there wasn't any blood on my hands!

"I went over the house from top to bottom and eradicated every stain that might be evidence against me; then I sat down with the diary in one hand and the morning newspaper in the other. I compared the two crimes. They were identical, even to the burying of the heads. Emil Drukker had done exactly the same as I had done: he carried the head in a towel, he left it in his room overnight, he buried it in his cellar, and he cleaned up the blood the following morning. But there was one ghastly difference: Emil Drukker had committed his crime with full purposeful foreknowledge, whereas I had committed my crime under hypnotic inducement!

"There is no other answer for what has happened in these last six weeks. I have racked my brain to find another solution, but there is none. I am being hypnotized by some unexplainable force, and once each week I come under the power of this evil which directs and commands my being. Last night I went to bed with the full knowledge of what would occur during the night. That is why I locked you in your room. This morning when I awakened I found the head exactly where the other five had lain; then I carried it to the basement and buried it. I cleaned up the blood and burned the towel.

"If you are numbed with horror, try to imagine how I feel about it. Six crimes in six weeks! And I can only thank merciful God that it will end with only one more. Perhaps it is ended now. That German servant who loaned me the diary said it would be only six or seven."

"Do you think the police will believe all of this?" I demanded. "What you have told me has no sane explanation. It—it's demonism!"

CARSE smiled pitifully. "There are more things in heaven and earth," he began; then he heaved his shoulders as if flinging off an attempt at levity. "The human mind is a strange organ, and no man can explain its mysteries. I have seen too much of stivism to ridicule any theories. There is nothing we can do but wait and hope that the German servant's prediction is true. Six or seven. *Six—or seven?*"

"Do you mean you expect me to grant you leniency?" I exclaimed. "Great heavens, Carse, there have been six horrible murders! Society demands a reckoning."

"I have stoned enough for ten times six!" he cried. "Have you no soul in you? The crimes will stop now. The German said they would, and everything else he predicted has come true. As my lifelong friend it is your duty to see me through."

"But those six——"

"No man can bring them back to life, but I am still a living man and you must save me. I shall divide my estate among the families of the six, and I swear to you that I shall never open a book on criminology again. You must do it—you must!"

"Do you honestly believe it is over?" I asked hoarsely.

"I do; with all my heart and soul, I do!"

"But you would say that anyway," I cried. "Suppose there is a Number Seven? The blood will be upon my hands as well as yours. It is an awful responsibility, Carse. There must be no more."

"There won't be. I swear there won't be!"

He threw himself at me in an hysteri-

cal outburst of emotion. He tried to smile through the tears in his eyes, but the sight was so awful that I turned my head.

"I am still unconvinced," I said grimly. "The possibility of Number Seven is too important to overlook. Let me see Drukker's diary."

"Why?" he backed away and stared at me. "Why do you want to read the diary?"

"I want to read account Number Seven."

Carse came forward again and grabbed my arm. He shook it. "What good will that do?" he asked anxiously, "if there are only six of them? Besides, it's not a book you ought to read."

"Give me the diary!" I demanded again.

He scowled at me for a moment; then, shrugging, he reached into his pocket and withdrew a small leather-bound book. It was well worn, as if by many thumbs, and in faded gold letters across the cover were the words: *Personal Diary of Emil Drukker, J. U. D.*

"Sit down," I commanded. "And try to keep your nerves together. I shall do everything I can for you."

He backed away and dropped into a chair, his eyes fastened upon me in a look of almost majestic joy. And yet there was an undertone in his expression which I could not define. There was defiance there—and fear. One of his hands rested on the near-by table, less than two feet from the hilt of the butcher knife, and the fingers of that hand twitched nervously.

WITH an odd sense of uneasiness I flicked open the first several pages of the book and skimmed through the contents. My German was poor, yet I was able to understand the significance of what Emil Drukker had written in his

large, scrawling hand. I read the first six accounts, then stared at Carse in amazement. His six crimes and Druker's first six were so identical they might have been conscious reproductions. In all cases the victims were the same sex, the same age, and were in the same general walk of life. I then turned to account Number Seven and after reading a few wretched lines I gasped with horror: *it was a seven-year-old girl!*

Carse was on his feet, his jaw grim and determined. He stared fiercely at me, waiting my response.

"Carse," I muttered dazedly, "it—it—"

"You can't back out," he cried as he stepped toward me. "There will be no seven, I tell you. It's ended on six. I swear it to you!"

"No," I said, "I cannot permit such a risk. Did you read account Number Seven? He not only cut off the head, but he dismembered—"

"You can't back out!" he screamed as he shook my arm. "You can't, you can't!"

"But Carse, this is a girl—a mere child. Don't you realize it would be unpardonable even for you? No, I can never take such a risk. I must turn you over to the police."

Carse slapped me viciously, then stumbled back against the table. His face was a mask of suffused blood, his eyes wild with desperation.

"Damn you!" he cried savagely. "You are no friend; you're a cheat, a betrayer!"

Suddenly his groping fingers touched the butcher knife and he drew himself taut. His fingers wound around the hilt like slowly moving worms. For a moment there was scarcely a breath between us; then he lifted his arm and brought the knife slowly out before him. I watched, horror-stricken, unable to lift my feet from the floor. A numbing

paralysis of fright seemed to come over me.

"Carse, Carse!" I muttered.

He didn't hear me; his body was tensed for the deadly spring that would bring him down upon my throat. I saw a ripple of galvanizing energy race through his hands; then I managed an outcry. At the same instant he was in the air.

THERE is no need for me to relate the events which followed; for the newspapers had assiduously described the capture and arrest of Carse, and his subsequent history, brief as it was, has become public property. To my dying day I shall carry the five-inch scar along my cheek where his knife descended upon me, and I can never cease to be thankful for that one outburst of absolute fear which tore from my lips and attracted a passing policeman; otherwise I might have been Number Seven in the grim line of epitaphs that marked the close of this fantastic case. Only by bludgeoning Carse with his stick could the officer overcome him, and it was necessary to keep him in a straitjacket until the hour of his execution.

It is a curious fact that the psychiatrists who examined Carse, several of them his former pupils, could not find him unbalanced enough to be irresponsible for his crimes. Those long and tiring vigils in the mental clinic will haunt me for life; there was no end to their searching and probing of his subconscious mind, no end to the tests and questions, the examinations and analyses which ended hopelessly against him. But even if they had found him insane, violently and homicidally insane, they would not have dared report such a finding to the court. Society demanded a death in return for a death, and Jason Carse was nailed to his coffin at the first moment of his arrest. Had he been spared the gallows by the

court, he would not have been spared the gallows by the mobs that milled about the detention prison; for continually throughout the trial was the grim reminder that society represented by mobs has not yet forgotten the use of lynch law.

Carse's death put a definite end to the head-hunting crimes in this city, and for the first time in over six weeks the metropolitan area has been able to breathe freely. I have lost a faithful and sincere friend; but I lost him, not on the gallows, but three months ago when he first discovered the diary of Emil Drukker.

It is the diary, not my mourning, which has prompted me to pen this account of my knowledge of the head-hunting crimes. During the trial, as you may remember, I sought to introduce the diary as major evidence in support of Carse's somnambulistic manias, but it was waived out of court with ridicule and contempt.

One must admit that Carse's story as he told it to me, and as I later reiterated it to the court, was fantastic and highly improbable. But there are certain irrefutable arguments in support of Carse's story which shed a terrible light, not alone upon the case, but on all criminal cases of similar nature. For one thing, a hypnotic examination by competent state alienists was completely unsuccessful in the attempt to bring forth his subconscious knowledge of any of the six murders. Secondly, Carse was unable, despite his most intense and willing efforts, to reconstruct even the smallest part of any one of the crimes. His only acquaintance with his own alleged activities was brought to him in *dreams*.

A further significant fact, which the court ignored as irrelevant, was the ghastly identity of Carse's supposed crimes and those confessed by Emil Drukker. It is impossible that this duality of murders could be brought about by mere coincidence, for the similarity of detail was car-

ried too far. This fact alone presupposes the statement that there was a horrible and unnatural bondage between Emil Drukker and Jason Carse—the bondage of the diary!

One night of each week for six weeks Jason Carse was compelled by some unknown power to dream about a murder confessed and described in Drukker's diary. On each of these nights, while Carse watched it in a dream, an identical murder was committed somewhere in the city and the man whom he recognized as the murderer was Emil Drukker. It was as if Carse's dreams, projected into reality by the sheer vividness of the diary, had resurrected Emil Drukker from his grave and set him free to re-enact his former crimes!

I am mad, you will say; but I speak of demonism and not law. How else can you explain the duality of these murders? How else can you explain Carse's ignorance of the crimes? How else can you explain those brutal dreams, the fruit of whose reality Carse found each morning on the floor beside his bed? Nor is it enough to stop alone with this question. How many men besides Jason Carse have spent sleepless nights over the diary of Emil Drukker?

The newspapers will answer that question each time they are opened; in Paris the police discover a headless body lying along the wharves, and the murderer is still unknown; in Berlin a college professor kills himself upon the discovery of a human head lying near his bed with his own hunting-knife stuck to the hilt into its brain; in Stockholm the police discover the bodies of two women lying in an empty house—their heads have not yet been found; and in Cleveland, one of our greatest cities, is reported the discovery of the tenth headless corpse in a series of murders that has gripped the city

in terror. What kind of person commits such crimes? And why do the missing heads turn up years later in the basement of a house owned by a mild-appearing and docile old man?

Jason Carse was not the first man to pay with his life for crimes such as these, nor is he the last. It is well to beware of sickish-smelling trunks that are left in

deserted houses, and I caution the reader against stepping on misshapen bundles of clothing which he may find half hidden in a clump of bushes.

For the diary of Emil Drukker is missing from the drawer where I left it, and I have been told that a strange, Germanic-looking man was seen prowling about the house just before its disappearance.
