

JUNE 25c



Weird Tales



THE HORROR IN THE STUDIO

... a gripping story
of the film industry

By DOROTHY QUICK

WHAT WEIRD TERROR LURKS BEHIND
THE SCENES IN HOLLYWOOD?

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL



Weird Tales

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

The Horror in the Studio

By DOROTHY QUICK

*A dramatic weird story of Hollywood and a
soul-blasting horror*

I WAS in Hollywood two days before I got in touch with Bryant Holden. For weeks I had been trying to decide whether I should let him know that I had been engaged by Super Films to design costumes for their new feature, *The Devil's Gifts*, in which he was to be starred.

I did not quite know what to do. I didn't want to presume on a boy and girl romance that he had obviously forgotten. I was especially sensitive on the subject because I had *not* forgotten.

Eventually I wrote a note:

Dear Bryant,

Since we last met, I've become a designer, and the Super Films have engaged me to do unusual costumes for your new picture. It will be fun to see you again.

LOIS.

(Now known as Dale Arden.)

I put down my address and sent the note off by the maid. If anyone had told me that very soon I would be plunged into a maelstrom of the weird and unnatural by that simple gesture, I would have scoffed in disbelief. It is indeed a mercy that the future is veiled for us.

About an hour after I had sent my letter, Bryant swept into the room like a tornado, and before I could get my breath I was in his arms. After one brief kiss, I pulled away. Heavenly as it was, I had to remember that for almost three years he hadn't deigned to know I existed.

"The old adage didn't work in our case," I laughed uncertainly, because I was so near to tears. "Absence didn't make the heart grow fonder."

Bryant looked like a small boy deprived of his toys.

"I'll be honest with you," he answered. "They put it in my contract that I couldn't marry for five years. I didn't have the nerve to write you that, and I wasn't strong enough to miss the chance for fame and fortune. I kept thinking I'd get back home to explain——"

He was so obviously distressed that I intervened. "I understand, Bryant. It's all right with me. We were friends before we were sweethearts. Let's go back to that."

Bryant took my hands in his. "I want you to know that I haven't stopped caring—that there's no one else."

I felt that we were getting too serious. To break the tension I said, "I want to hear all about the new picture."

We sat down on the couch, and Bryant's arm slid around my shoulder. Three years of misery vanished—life stretched ahead like a shining pathway.

But it was at that moment that the terrible thing that was coming reared its head.

"I DON'T like it," Bryant said, and I was astonished by his vehemence. "I've done everything I could to get out of it, but I've had no luck. If I break my contract there's a tremendous fine which I couldn't meet, to say nothing of all the lawsuits that would follow."

"What's the matter with the picture?" I asked, still smiling—God pity me!

"I hate it! It's horrible! Ugh! One



"The moment came for Giulio to strike the death blow."

of the scenario writers unearthed an old manuscript with a plot that out-horrored the horrors! I read it once and I still dream about it. When they told me I was to play it I flatly refused. I said it would ruin my future as a leading man. They flung John Barrymore and Fredric March in my face as having survived *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* with added popularity."

"Surely nothing could be worse than that!"

Bryant's face clouded. "I hate talking about it, even, but that's silly, when I've got to play it." He shrugged slightly.

"The manuscript was the diary of a Florentine named Giulio, written centuries ago—just a few odd pages tucked in the back of an ancient vellum book. He was one of the favorites of Lorenzo de' Medici, and he sold his soul to the devil for wealth, youth and all the fleshpots of life. Then, as the years went by, he became frightened of his bargain and bought his soul back from the devil. The price he paid was that he must give the devil five souls for his—so that he could retain all the devil's gifts.

"*The Devil's Gifts!* That was the name of the picture. A grand title, I thought.

"Giulio begins by corrupting the mind of his mistress until her soul is lost. Then he takes a lovely girl, betrays her and leads her so far down the way of debauchery and sin that her soul is the second. Next is a young boy whose entire life he undermines to pay his debt. So it goes, until he has brought five people to the devil's level, and all the while he becomes more and more loathsome himself—not in looks, for he never ages, but he is evil personified—his machinations, his lies, his evil nature take shape within him and he becomes a mass of crawling sin. He gets his soul back from the devil but he is so evil that there is no place for him. God will not receive him and the devil has relinquished all rights to his soul. He can not die and he can not live. He becomes a monster, tortured by his past deeds, yet ever doing more in the hope that the devil will relent and let him come to him.

"Finally he meets a girl whose goodness is stronger than his vileness. She loves him, not knowing the evil creature that he is, and though he tries to seduce her, her love and purity save her from his wiles. He repents and turns his thoughts away from evil, and the devil's gifts lose their power. He becomes an old, old man, unspeakably senile, and dies at her feet.

"There is a suggestion of his redemption at the very end. It's a terrible picture—a terrible man. The ending is of course a studio one—the manuscript stops where he is an outcast from heaven and hell and, tortured by his life, is going mad. I suppose it's foolish, but I feel that something awful will happen. The manuscript alone has such a force of evil that it seems to squirm in your hands.

"It all sounds pretty grim, I must admit, but I can see the studio's point—after all, he's a sort of Don Juan.

"He tortures women. Gilles de Retz

and the Marquis de Sade were infants compared to him. Oh, well"—Bryant shrugged—"what must be—must. See that you design me gorgeous costumes, and just having you there will help keep me sane."

I thanked him prettily for the compliment and had no idea at the time how prophetic his words actually were.

WHEN I read the script I understood better how he felt. There was a compelling power of evil emanating from the typewritten pages. If I could feel it so strongly in the script the studio had made, what must the actual manuscript have been! Bryant had told the story sketchily. He had left out the culminating horrors of the delivering of the five souls to the devil. Giulio was far worse than Bryant had painted him—a creature so depraved, so sunk in the morass of sin that one hated him long before the first episode was finished.

It was a magnificent part. It was also an extremely difficult one, for beyond the chiseled profile and the flashing smile of the always handsome young man, there must inevitably be the suggestion of evil. I thought how far Bryant had grown away from the boy I had known, to be able to portray it, and I wondered if he would put it over.

The days slipped away quickly, and I had never been happier. Bryant was devoted to me. We went to openings and had our pictures taken together, we lunched at the Brown Derby, we dined at the Coconut Grove, and went swimming on Malibu beach. I was swept into the glittering world of stardom and I loved every minute of it. Between times, lovely rich materials were assembled for me, and I created what the studio called "masterpieces."

I was afraid once my sketches were O.K.ed, my job would be over, but great-

ly to my relief I was told I must be on the set every day in case there might be changes or readjustments of the costumes.

The first day I went, it would have been hard to tell who was the more nervous, Bryant or I. I made my advent timidly, for I wasn't quite sure what my status would be, but Bryant came forward and ushered me to a chair marked with my name. It gave me such a sense of importance that for a minute I did not quite take in Bryant's magnificence. Then I exclaimed.

"Bryant, you're wonderful! You're not Bryant Holden at all. You're one of the Medici court come back."

Even under his make-up he paled. "Don't say that. It's spooky enough the way I feel in these things without your noticing it."

I looked at him. If an old portrait could have stepped down from its frame, its ancient figure could not have been more perfect than Bryant. His hair, which had been allowed to grow long for the part, waved back from his face, and fell gracefully. The long-sleeved surcoat shaped its red velvet lines to his figure and the mink fur outlined the classic contour of his neck. The pale rose silken tights clung to his straight legs, until he had all the chiseled grace of a statue. The costume was a credit to me, but the way Bryant wore it was magnificently his own.

Just then the director signaled and the glass doors which enclosed the set were shut. Bryant pressed my hand and walked over to the stage.

From a far corner came a lovely slender figure, the Fiammetta of the picture. Though I happened to know that Glade Sylvan, who was playing the part, possessed quite the worst reputation in Hollywood, I was struck by the sweetness of her face. In spite of her many lovers, she had a startled look of perpetual innocence that was truly amazing. The

long, flowing gown of blue made her look absurdly young, and the golden curls escaping from the heavy mesh that bound her forehead only added to the youthful effect—Giulio's first victim!

They were not beginning with the opening scene of the picture, because Glade Sylvan had an important part waiting for her in another production, and so the sequences that she was appearing in were to be shot first so that she could be loaned out.

"W E'LL just run through the lines first with business. Do it your own way," the director, Carl Van Wagen, said.

It was the scene in which Giulio seduces Fiammetta. He has gained admittance to her father's house disguised as a music teacher. Glade was so innocent and sweet and Bryant so fascinating and boyish that it seemed a charming summer idyl.

But when Fiammetta, after agreeing to a midnight rendezvous, made a sweeping curtsy to Giulio and left the tapestry-hung hall, an evil expression stole over Bryant's face. So evil was it, that, sitting in my chair, I shuddered.

They went through the scene three times before the director said they were ready to "shoot".

There were several minor changes and bits of action interpolated. Each time he did it, the expression of evil on Bryant's face deepened and each time the director said "Great work!" to him.

Finally they took the scene. It went off perfectly. At the end of it, they took a close-up of Bryant watching Fiammetta leave.

It was still early, so the director gave Glade twenty minutes to change her dress, while the rest of us moved over to the other set, Fiammetta's bedroom.

Bryant was very quiet. He stood a

little to one side, with a strained expression on his face. I went over to him and told him how marvelous I thought his acting had been. His reply was abstracted, unenthusiastic.

Before I had a chance to say anything else, Glade Sylvan appeared. She wore a long, white robe, which, despite the yards and yards of material that had gone into it, managed to cling to every line of her perfect figure, revealing each lush, rounded curve. Her golden curls were unbound now, and she looked younger and more innocent than ever.

They went through the lines. It was a beautifully written scene—the Marguerite idyl. It ended with Glade closely clasped in Bryant's arms, his lips on hers, while from behind the hangings of the bed leered the devil's face triumphant.

After they had gone through the scene once, I heard Glade say to Bryant, "It isn't necessary to put quite so much passion into a rehearsal."

A leer passed over Bryant's face, unlike any expression of his I had ever seen. He made no reply. At the time I wondered—but the moment passed.

The scene finally taken, time off for lunch was announced. As Glade and Bryant passed me on their way off the set, I heard her say, "And I thought you were such a nice boy."

He put his arm around her and I couldn't help seeing that his fingers touched the curve of her breast. "You won't quite know how 'nice' I am until——" His voice died down as he whispered in her ear.

She looked up at him, and I could see the sudden awakening of interest in her eyes. I remembered the lovers she had been credited with and I was afraid. A pang shot through me that I had to admit was jealousy—raised to the nth degree.

They left the set together, and later I

saw them at a tiny table in the lunch-room.

That afternoon they did the part where Fiammetta, frantic over her lost innocence, desperate with the knowledge of her unborn child, pleads with Giulio to right the wrong he has done her by making her his wife; and when he refuses, kills herself while he watches, laughing.

It was a great scene. Both Glade and Bryant excelled themselves. When it was over, the director called out to Bryant, "If you keep up this tempo, this picture's going to be a classic. It's almost as though you were Giulio—you're so good."

Almost as though he were Giulio!

I remembered Bryant's feeling when he read the manuscript. I remembered the way he wore the unaccustomed clothes, the leer on his face, the passion Glade Sylvan had objected to at first and been intrigued by afterward. I remembered all these things, and in spite of the warmth of the studio I shivered as I felt icy fingers clutching at my heart.

"It's almost as though you were Giulio."

I was suddenly afraid.

MY FEARS were justified. Bryant plunged into a mad affair with Glade Sylvan, which promptly became the talk of Hollywood. Always before, Glade had been the dominating factor in her affairs, the one sought. But now her infatuation for Bryant had altered all precedent, and after a little, she was the one who pursued. She hung on his every word, sheer passion for him was written on every move she made. At first Bryant responded; then as her ardor deepened, his lessened, until his indifference became as much cause for gossip as the scandal had made in the beginning.

During all this time I saw very little of Bryant, and when I did, he was strangely unlike himself. Our dinners and

drives suddenly ceased. For very pride, I couldn't force myself upon him. In the studio he was always in costume and seemed more and more like the character he was portraying.

Rumor reached me that he and Glade wore their costumes away from the studio. "My Florentine lover" was reputed to be her name for him. I was miserably unhappy because the man I loved had drifted from me a second time.

Finally the day came when the last sequence in which Glade appeared was to be taken—her last in reality, her first in the picture; the ballroom scene in which Giulio for the first time sees Fiammetta.

The ballroom was perfectly reproduced from the one in the Strozzi palace. Filled with gay, laughing people in the Florentine costumes I had designed, it was stupendous. Bryant looked like a Greek god. He was so magnificent in his white silks and satin edged with sable, that my heart cried out to him.

He passed near me. I conquered my pride. After all, it was better to seem casual. "Hello, Bryant," I called.

He wheeled and a puzzled look came into his eyes. "Bryant—she called me Bryant—not Giulio."

I knew what he meant. The director, the actors, everyone in the studio had been calling him Giulio! Fear swept over me, fear of some unknown terrible evil.

"Bryant," I said again, and put my hand on his arm, "Bryant, why don't you come to see me any more?" My fear for him had conquered the pride that had possessed me. I made up my mind I would fight Glade for the man I loved, and save him somehow from the evil that menaced him.

A subtle change came over him. He shook himself very much as a dog coming out of water might do.

"Lois, dear little Lois," he breathed; then the old boyish grin gleamed out

from his face. "How about a ride to-night—out in the moonlight, just you and me?"

"O.K." I grinned back, deciding swiftly that sitting back waiting for men is all a mistake.

"I'll come for you at eight," he said, just as the director called, "Places".

I shall never forget the scene. The music, the stately old dances, Lorenzo de' Medici honoring his subjects by sharing their pleasures and through it all Bryant's white satin moving, a constant focus for my eyes.

I was not the only one watching him. Glade Sylvan was intent upon him, too, and a deep furrow appeared between her eyes, for Bryant was obviously making love to a lovely red-haired girl—one of the extras. . . .

Finally Glade could stand it no longer. She made her way back of the dancers who were going through the ballet, and finding Bryant, linked her arm in his. As chance would have it, she drew him behind a pillar, near enough to where I sat for me to hear what they said.

"Giulio, my Florentine lover, I can't stand you looking at that girl like that. Can't you see you torture me every time you touch her?" There was real agony in Glade's voice.

I could see Bryant's face. It was evil, as evil as it had been in the close-up that first day.

"You little fool," he sneered, "can't you see when a man's tired of you? You might as well know we're through."

"No—no—you can't mean it." Glade was pleading.

"I do." Bryant pushed her clinging hands away, brutally thrust her from him against the pillar and walked rapidly in the direction of the red-haired girl.

Now I could see Glade Sylvan's face. She dared not weep for fear of disturbing her make-up. The trouper instinct of

not spoiling the picture was strong, but she was suffering silently in a way that I hope never to have to see again. Glade Sylvan, the desired of all men, had been discarded. She had recognized as well as I the finality in Bryant's voice.

She caught my eye and moved toward me. "I took him from you," she said slowly, almost as though she spoke without volition. "That is, I thought I did. I know better now. I never had him. There's something about him——" A swift shudder swept over her, she put her hand on mine. "He's not human—even when I've been in his arms I've known it. I've been afraid. But no matter what he was, I loved him; no matter what he asked for, I gave."

"Hush!" I tried to stop her. I knew she'd hate herself afterward for telling me these things.

"It did no good. He's worse than the man in the picture, he's an inhuman monster that——" She paused, then whispered, "For God's sake don't fall into his spell."

For one instant, her horror-stricken eyes looked into mine; then before I could speak the angry words that trembled on my lips, she was gone.

Afterward I was glad that they had never been said, for less than an hour later, I was standing beside Glade Sylvan's lifeless body.

THE director, suddenly needing an extra, asked me if I would like to be in the picture. Of course I jumped at the chance. So I, too, wore a costume, which the mirror had told me was not unbecoming.

The director had assigned me to a place very near Bryant and Glade. The last "take" was a close-up of Giulio bowing low over Fiammetta's hand. The rest of the scene had already been shot. The

extras were left in for background, so I stood directly behind Glade.

"Farewell, my lord," Glade's mellow voice spoke Fiammetta's lines.

"Good night, but not farewell. We meet again." Bryant's tones were honey-sweet.

A man came forward to hold a card with the number of the scene on it, before the camera. "I love you," Glade whispered to Bryant so low that I could only just hear.

"Fool!" Bryant sneered.

"It's all over?"

"Must I tell you again?" This time Bryant's voice was louder, and the girl next me caught his words. I felt her lean forward.

The whole studio heard the rest. Glade cried in a high-pitched, hysterical voice, "Then I don't want to live!" She snatched the dagger from Bryant's belt and stabbed it into her heart.

Everyone watched Glade fall, but I looked at Bryant, and saw an expression of evil gloating on his features. Only for a second. It was as though an evil mask were being held over his face; then, as a woman screamed, it died away, the color drained from his cheeks and he staggered uncertainly.

Eventually I got him away from the set, into his dressing-room and the hands of his man. By the time he had been gotten into his ordinary clothes, I too had changed, and together we walked to his car. Bryant seemed in a daze.

I brought him back to my bungalow, made him lie down on the sofa while I got supper. He fell into a deep sleep almost immediately.

I LEFT him alone, and it was long past ten o'clock when he finally stirred. Before he had a chance to talk, I gave him coffee and sandwiches. Then as I saw that the color had come back into

his face and he looked more like the old Bryant, I stopped the chatter I had been flinging into the conversation.

"Tell me what happened," he said.

"Don't you remember?"

"I remember Glade Sylvan killed herself. But why?"

I gasped. "Do you mean to tell me you don't know?"

Bryant shook his head. His eyes were puzzled.

"You don't remember what she said to you on the set? What you said to her?" I persisted.

"Good heaven, Lois, why would I lie to you? I don't remember much of anything that's gone on since the day we started the picture. I remember my part, of course, but other than that I don't seem to recall what I've done in between. Haven't we been together?"

His expression was strained as though he was trying hard to bring back the week that had passed. My nerves snapped.

"You've been Glade Sylvan's lover and she killed herself because you told her you were through."

"My God!" cried Bryant. He took my hands in his and held them over his heart. "I swear by all I hold holy that I love you and that to my knowledge I've never been untrue to you." His eyes, clear and honest, looked into mine.

"I believe you——" I whispered because emotion was choking my throat. "I believe you, even though I heard you tell Glade you were finished."

"That wasn't I. Don't you see, Lois?—that was Giulio!"

I caught my breath as the magnitude of what he was saying penetrated my consciousness. Unhesitatingly I knew it was true, even before he went on explaining.

"I told you when I first read that manuscript that something strange happened to me. I believe it was Giulio—come back

to do more work for his master, and he's doing it through me—taking my body for his own."

I knew now why I had been afraid, why Bryant hadn't noticed me. Giulio would naturally keep Bryant away from me, for I alone, apparently, had the power to drive Giulio out and bring Bryant back. I had done it for a minute this afternoon, I was doing it for a longer time now, and I would go on doing it.

"You can save me, Lois." Bryant put my thoughts into words. "He won't get back if you are with me; otherwise I'm afraid he'll push me so far out that I'll never be myself again. Promise you won't let that happen—that you'll stay with me." He clung to me; there was fear in his voice.

I gathered him into my arms and pressed his head against my breast. "I'll never leave you."

I could feel him trembling as I held him. I soothed him gently as a mother might have done a little boy afraid of the dark. Suddenly he cried, "Glade—I'm responsible for her death!" He began to sob.

"Hush, my darling, hush. You're not responsible for anything—that was Giulio."

As I said the name, the strangest feeling took possession of me. I had the impression that something evil was trying to beat down the barrier of my will. I felt that I was a shield before him, like a window some obscene and terrible thing was trying to come through.

The next morning Bryant and I went to the highest official of the company. But it was no use. They absolutely refused to release Bryant from his contract or the part. They did, however, grant a holiday for Glade Sylvan's funeral, so we had three days in which to forget.

They were glorious. We went to Malibu and lay in the sunshine. I thought it

strange that Bryant made no attempt to kiss me. He would sit hours with my hand in his or resting his head upon my lap. Once when I started to kiss him, he drew back.

"Not yet. Giulio likes that sort of thing too much. I'm afraid he'll get back." His eyes were deep-shadowed.

"Out here in the sunshine it all seems fantastic," I exclaimed.

"I always feel that he's waiting for a moment when the bars are let down, that he may slip in. When the picture is over, and all that Florentine atmosphere which puts me in a receptive mood is gone, then we'll go away and I'll feel safe. But now I'm afraid." Bryant's face was grave.

I remembered the feeling that I had had, of a nameless obscenity trying to get at him through me, and was silent.

When they recommenced work on the picture, I was more frightened than ever for Bryant. To be sure, I was near him, calling him by his right name, having already seen that the studio followed my example; but even with all this, I could see that Bryant was feeling the strain. There were moments when I could catch a glint of Giulio in his eyes.

They were doing a banquet scene where Giulio begins the conquest of another girl, Ginevra. It was laid in one end of the large hall, near the spot where Glade Sylvan had killed herself. The long, narrow table looked like a scene from *The Jest*, on a larger scale.

In the midst of the people taking their places, I was called to adjust Ginevra's costume, the lines of which did not quite suit her. It meant a little draping; so we had to go to her dressing-room, and it was fully twenty minutes before I got back to the set.

When I returned I was horrified to see Bryant bending ardently over the red-haired girl. One glance and I knew what had happened.

Giulio was in control. He had overcome Bryant's will during the little time I had been gone.

I started toward him to try and bring back the spirit of the man I loved, but just then the director called "Lights—places," and I knew it was hopeless. I saw Bryant whisper something in the red-haired girl's ear before he left her.

THERE was nothing to do but wait. The scene went on. Giulio wove his net about Ginevra and at the same time picked a quarrel with the noble who, in the story, was her betrothed. The action called for a duel with daggers between the two, and when the scene was being taken and Bryant was advancing toward the man, dagger upraised, the lust to kill was shining from his eyes. I was afraid.

The noble "Howard Parker" sensed something strange, too, and when the moment came for Giulio to strike the death blow, which of course for the picture would be faked and was not supposed to be carried out beyond the first downward thrust, Howard was lying on the floor. As the dagger started downward, he rolled quickly to one side. There was a low gasp as the steel blade was driven into the wooden floor by the force of Bryant's arm. If Howard Parker had not moved, Bryant would have been a murderer!

Bryant recovered himself quickly. "I lost my balance. Thank God you moved, old chap!"

There was nothing for Howard to do but accept the explanation with as good grace as possible, but I knew from his expression that he did not believe it.

When work was over for the day Bryant disappeared before I could get to him. The red-haired girl was not to be seen, either.

I waited until the confusion of the final details of the scene was settled, then

went to the director. "It's vitally necessary that I talk to you alone at once," I told him.

He was a kindly man, and he must have seen the terror in my eyes, for he swept aside everyone and everything and led me to the deserted set of Fiammetta's bedroom.

"Now, my dear, what can I do for you?" he began.

I launched into the story. I kept nothing back, not even my school-girl romance.

Surprise, incredulity and astonishment struggled for possession of his rugged features. "You believe that this Giulio meant to kill Howard?"

"I do. Just as I believe he intends to seduce that red-haired extra girl."

"You think Bryant himself is innocent of all this? There have been people with dual personalities, you know, and Bryant may have a Mr. Hyde in his own nature."

"It couldn't be that. There was no sign of anything of the sort until this picture started. Bryant himself knows nothing of what goes on when Giulio is in control. He feels him trying to gain possession, but once Giulio has been successful, everything as far as Bryant is concerned is a blank." I could see the director watching me narrowly. "Besides, I too have felt that evil force trying to reach Bryant through me."

"There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy," he quoted. "I have delved a bit into the occult. Perhaps I can help——"

"The picture must be stopped."

"I haven't authority for that. The company would laugh at all this, but I can arrange that you will be near him on the set as an extra in each scene." He paused suddenly. "We'd better get to Bryant. The more Giulio is in control the more

strength he will gather, and the harder it will be to drive him out."

WE STARTED to walk across the lot toward the row of dressing-rooms which were in actuality little houses set in a row, but each one separate in itself. Bryant's was at the end. As we neared it, we heard a scream. We started to run, but before we could reach the door, it was flung open and the red-haired girl came running out. She was dead-white and half hysterical.

The director caught her by the arm. "What has happened?"

We both saw that her neck was marked with great, red, ugly bruises, and that she was clutching her dress together over her shoulder where it had been torn.

"The man is a fiend!" she gasped. "He's not human! I got away in time, but——" She slumped into the director's outstretched arms.

He picked her up. "Go ahead." He indicated Bryant's room. "I'll take care of her—see that she doesn't talk——"

The door was open. I went in. Bryant was sitting with his back to me, facing a huge mirror, and the reflection that gazed back was a horrible, lustful thing.

"Bryant!" I called. "Bryant!"

The look of sheer desire died away. His face became as blank as though the evil that had been upon it had been wiped off with a sponge. In its stead was an utter blankness.

"Bryant, darling," I whispered, and held him close.

A tremor shook his body, then a series of convulsions. Finally he fell forward on the dressing-room table in a stupor.

"He did that before. He'll sleep now. When he wakes up he'll be Bryant again," I told the director, as he came in.

"Then we'll send his man to watch him. You can be called as soon as he wakes."

The director picked up the phone and said to send Bryant's valet over at once. When the man arrived, the director took me to his private office and made me sit down in a deep, cushioned leather chair. Then he opened a drawer and took out an ancient manuscript.

As he laid it on his desk, he said gently, "Here is the root of the trouble. I don't know a great deal about such things, but I have read a little on the subject. I feel sure that the spirit of Giulio is bound up with this, that this innocent-looking document opens the way for him to return to earth."

"As though it were a path from the unknown," I interjected.

"Precisely. Of course, with our reproduction of the past, we've made it easier for him to gain control of Bryant. If it hadn't been for Bryant's love for you, there is no doubt Giulio would have completely dominated Bryant by now, and we might never have been able to drive him out. As it is, I think if you could burn the manuscript at a time *when Bryant is himself*, you would send Giulio back to the infernal regions where he belongs."

"Mr. Van Wagen, you're wonderful. I'm sure you've hit it and we'll save Bryant." I felt new life flowing into me.

"I'm taking the responsibility of giving you this," he handed me the manuscript, "in spite of its value as an antique. But remember, you must only burn it when *you are sure Bryant is himself*. If Giulio were in possession, you would destroy Bryant for ever, I believe."

The enormity of what I was taking on my shoulders struck me fully. "You mean——" I gasped.

"Just what I say. It would mean the destruction of Giulio's spirit, and as he would be in command of Bryant's body, the body would die and Bryant's soul would wander homeless about the earth.

Be very sure it is Bryant himself, before you consign the manuscript to the flames."

"I will," I promised solemnly. "I can't thank you enough. There aren't words enough in the world."

"I may be wrong. It may not work, but I think and hope it will."

I put the manuscript in my handbag which, being one of those large, flat envelope purses, had room enough to hold it easily. I shook hands with the director. He touched my cheek gently and said, "Good luck, little Saint George!"

I left him as fully determined to slay the dragon as ever the saint he had likened me to could have been, when he rode forth with his gleaming sword.

BRYANT was very quiet when I sat by his side in the blue roadster. Apparently he remembered nothing of what had happened, and I did not try to enlighten him.

Once when we were waiting for a light, Bryant leaned toward me. "You're beautiful," he said.

"I'm glad you think so," I laughed as the car shot forward again.

"I wish I could tell you all my thoughts." There was a quality in his voice I had never heard before as he plunged into a dissertation on how lovely he thought me, and I enjoyed so much hearing him extol my charms that I never even noticed where we were going, until the car stopped in front of Bryant's house.

"I wanted to pick up something I'd forgotten before we go to dinner," he said matter-of-factly. "Won't you come in?"

Without giving me time to answer, he jumped out and held the car door open for me. I followed and watched him insert his key into the lock of the iron-grilled door.

"The servants have a night off," he explained.

We went in together.

"Wait for me here," he suggested, showing me into the living-room. "I won't be a second."

I went over to the fireplace. Although it was warm and summery outside, the fire was laid, ready for burning. "Atmosphere," I thought, and then was grateful, because here was just what I needed. I would burn the manuscript and be finished with the horror of the studio for ever.

I got some matches from a smoking-stand and started the fire. "I will wait until it is burning brightly," I thought, "before I throw in the manuscript. I must take no chances."

It was well I did so, for as I stood there opening my bag to have the manuscript ready, I heard a noise behind me and turned to see what it was. Bryant stood there—but I knew instantly it was not Bryant, for he wore Giulio's costume and it was Giulio's rapacious look that gleamed forth from his face.

I remembered the tales I had heard of Bryant and Glade dressing up for their love-making. I remembered the director's words about being sure it was not Giulio, when I burned the manuscript.

As he advanced toward me, I shut my bag and slipped it behind the cushion of a near-by chair. I was sure he was too intent on my face to even notice what my hands were doing.

"Bryant, Bryant darling," I called—I had brought him back that way before. Now my voice seemed to make no impression on him. He caught me in his arms and crushed his lips against mine.

It was the most terrible experience. I was being kissed by Bryant, but he was only the shell of the man I loved. His real self was—God alone knew where—

and it was Giulio, evil and obscene, whose kisses were being branded upon my soul.

I knew this, and yet despite my knowledge and my horror, it was arousing a response in me. I loved Bryant, I wanted to be his, but not this way, not as a plaything for Giulio. I must bring Bryant back, for his sake and my own.

"Bryant, Bryant—can't you see it's Lois, Lois who loves you?"

The thing that was within Bryant laughed and caught me up in his arms and carried me through the living-room to a room I had never seen before. It was hung with tapestries and in the center was a high-carved bed.

"Bryant," I pleaded frantically, for I knew that unless I could bring him back quickly, there would be no use. "Bryant, don't you remember Lois, how we used to walk home from school together, how you loved me? Don't you remember—we are going to be married?"

Giulio, with Bryant's mouth, laughed again, as he put me on my feet. "These ugly things, we must get rid of them," he cried and pulled off my hat and tossed it far into the corner of the room. He ran his fingers through my curls and then they traveled downward to the neck of my dress.

I remembered the red-haired girl's bruised neck and her torn dress. "Bryant," I screamed, "you wouldn't hurt Lois?"

For an instant his eyes changed. Hope surged within me, but it was only for an instant.

"You little fool," Bryant's voice, subtly tinged with all of Giulio's venom, snarled in my ear, "you are going to pay for all the trouble you have caused me; you were almost strong enough to drive me away—you kept me out three days, but in the end I fooled you. I pretended I had gone. But I didn't go and I won't go. You are my only danger. After tonight you will be so much mine that the

weak thing you call 'Bryant' will never come back and I—Giulio—shall for at least this body's term of years, have a home on earth."

Frantically I tried to get away from him. Overwhelming horror beat upon my brain. The awfulness of my situation was unthinkable. It was not only myself that was at stake, but Bryant's soul as well. Once this incarnate evil had made good his threats, I knew Bryant would be utterly lost.

Holding me firmly by the wrist with his left hand, he tore at my dress with his right.

Silently I began to pray, "Dear God, don't let it happen. Don't let this awful creature dominate me—"

"Our Father who art in heaven . . ."

I shut my eyes to avoid the terrible eyes that seemed to be gaining control of mine.

"Hallowed be Thy name . . ."

Surely his fingers were less firm, less steady? I went on praying:

"On earth as it is in heaven."

"What are you doing?" The snarling voice tried to pierce through my thoughts. "Stop fighting me!"

Hope was reborn. Prayer had power. Good could conquer evil. I kept my eyes shut and went on, only now I spoke the words instead of thinking them:

"Thy will be done on earth . . ."

The fingers traveled upward to my neck. "I will kill you!" the voice cried, and then I felt his lips pressed to mine, choking back the words.

My thoughts kept on with my prayers. Over and over I said the words in my mind. With obscene kisses on my mouth and unclean fingers pressing into my throat, I went on, until finally my lips were free and all the force was focused on my throat.

I was gasping now, scarcely able to breathe, and I could hardly keep my

thoughts concentrated, with evil throwing all its strength against me. But somehow I managed to keep on praying. Through a mist of blackness in which there were things too unspeakable to name, I forced the words through my tortured brain:

"Our—Father—who art . . ."

The pressure on my throat slackened.

"in — heaven — hallowed — be — Thy name . . ."

I could hardly feel the fingers, their touch was so light.

"Thy kingdom come—Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven—Give us this day . . ."

I heard a thud such as a heavy body falling to the floor might make.

I kept on repeating the words of the Lord's Prayer over and over, out loud as my gasping breath came back to me. After a while I ventured to open my eyes.

Bryant's body was lying on the floor; his breath came and went evenly. To all appearances he was asleep.

I was afraid of a trick, so I kept on praying. Faith had saved me; it would save Bryant, but I dared not let down its bars.

ALL night I stayed there in that tap-estry-hung room, in the shadow of the carved bed, stayed on the floor by Bryant's side repeating all the prayers I had ever known, reciting the creed and making the sign of the cross over Bryant again and again, on and on through the night. I dared not stop, although my voice became no more than a whisper and my throat was an aching fire.

The first rays of the early sun were in the sky when Bryant opened his eyes. The last words of prayer on my lips died away into a silent thanksgiving for the miracle that had been wrought, for it was Bryant whose eyes looked questioningly into mine.

"What's happened?" he asked, as he struggled to his feet. Then he saw my torn dress and took in the significance of my disheveled condition. "My God—what have I done?"

He pulled me up.

"If I've hurt you, Lois, I'll kill myself!" he said, and I knew without doubt it really was Bryant that spoke.

"Don't ask questions. Come," I whispered, unable to make my tired voice do more.

I led him into the living-room. The fire was out, of course, but the embers still glowed.

"Get some wood. Hurry, make a fire!" I told him.

He humored me, breaking a chair across his knees, although quite evidently he thought I was mad.

By the time I had got the manuscript out of the bag, there was a blaze on the hearth. Into it I threw the ancient pages. Holding Bryant's hand, I watched them catch fire. For a few minutes they burned, and it seemed to me that in the hiss of the flames I caught a human cry of agony.

When the last vestige of the manuscript had disappeared, I knew that I had reached the end of my rope.

"Bryant," I called uncertainly, and then fell in a heap at his feet.

AFTER that I was very ill. I was unconscious for days, and then there were long hours of delirium in which I lived over and over the horror of that awful night. Complete nervous exhaustion from overwork, the doctor called it, and only Bryant and Carl Van Wagen knew what the work had been. By the

time I had recovered, the picture was finished.

Bryant brought the news to me. His eyes were shining as he told me that the studio said he was a great as well as a popular actor. "They're so pleased with me," he went on gleefully, "that they're positively human."

I didn't take in the significance of his words. I was so glad the picture was over and Bryant would never have to wear those hateful Florentine clothes again. I said as much.

"My dearest," Bryant took me in his arms, "since you burned the manuscript, I haven't minded playing Giulio—because it has been acting a part, not living it. You saved me, Lois—what are you going to do with me?"

A sudden shyness swept over me. Dale Arden the self-assured young designer was gone. In her place was Lois, a simple girl in love.

"The studio has released me from the non-marrying clause in my contract, mostly thanks to Van Wagen's influence, and they're giving me three weeks' holiday before I return to do bigger and better things." Bryant's voice was overflowing with happiness, "They've got a new contract all drawn up for the next two years for an eminent designer. It's made out for 'Mrs. Bryant Holden'. Will you sign it, darling?"

Suddenly his voice was serious, his eyes looked deep into mine.

A joy such as I had never thought to know surged through every atom of my being. All my rosiest dreams were coming true.

"Will you?" he asked again.

For answer, I put my lips on his.

