

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 21

CONTENTS FOR JUNE, 1933

Number 6

- Cover Design ----- M. Brundage  
*Illustrating a scene in "Black Colossus"*
- Black Colossus ----- Robert E. Howard 675  
*A mighty story of a barbarian mercenary who saved a nation from shuddery evil*
- Golden Blood (part 3) ----- Jack Williamson 700  
*A powerful novel of weird adventures in the hidden golden land of Arabia*
- The Iron Man ----- Paul Ernst 719  
*A powerful weird-scientific story of a robot that ran amuck in the city streets*
- The Crawling Curse ----- Hugh B. Cave 733  
*A tale of the East Indies, and the ghastly retribution that drove a murderer to his doom*
- Genius Loci ----- Clark Ashton Smith 747  
*The story of a deathly horror that lurked in the scummy pool where old Chapman was found dead*
- The Dwellers in the House ----- Sophie Wenzel Ellis 759  
*A sensational tale of an evil Arab who changed bodies at will to perpetuate himself through the ages*
- A Sprig of Rosemary ----- H. Warner Munn 773  
*A tender story about a skinflint whose stony heart was softened after his death*
- The Last Drive ----- Carl Jacobi 778  
*A brief story of a grisly ride through a blizzard with a corpse*
- Nellie Foster ----- August W. Derleth 782  
*A ten-minute tale about a woman who would not stay quiet in her grave*
- The Eyrie ----- 786  
*A chat with the readers*
- Weird Story Reprint:  
The Floor Above ----- M. L. Humphreys 789  
*One of the most popular stories from WEIRD TALES of ten years ago*

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$3.00 a year in the United States, \$4.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright 1933, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN

# *The* Last Drive

By CARL JACOBI

*A short story of a grisly ride through a blizzard  
with a corpse*

**I**T WAS a cold wind that whipped across the hills that November evening. There was snow in the air, and Jeb Waters in the cab of his jolting van shivered and drew the collar of his sheepskin higher about the throat. All day endless masses of white cumulus cloud had raced across a cheerless sky. They were gray now, those clouds, leaden gray, and so low-hanging they seemed to

lie like a pall on the crest of each distant hillock. Off to the right, stern and majestic, like a great parade of H. G. Wells' Martian creatures, marched the towers of the Eastern States Power lines, the only evidence here of present-day civilization. A low humming whine rose from the taut wires now as the mounting wind twanged them in defiance.

Through the windshield Jeb Waters scanned the sky anxiously.

"It's going to be a cold trip back," he muttered to himself. "Looks mighty like a blizzard startin'."

He gave the engine a bit more gas and tightened his grasp on the wheel as a sharper curve loomed up suddenly before him. For a time he drove in silence, his mind fixed only on the barrenness of the hills on all sides. Marchester lay thirty miles ahead, thirty long, rolling miles. Littleton was just behind. If there were going to be a storm, perhaps it would be wise to return and wait until morning before making the trip. It would be bad to get stuck out here tonight, especially with the kind of load he was delivering. Enough to give one the creeps even in the daytime.

Marchester with its few hundred souls, hopelessly lost in the hills, too small or perhaps too lazy to incorporate itself, had been passed by without a glance when the railroad officials distributed spurs leading from the main line. As a result all freight had to be trucked thirty miles across the country from Littleton, the nearest town on trackage. But there wasn't much freight, as the officials had suspected, and although Jeb Waters drove the distance only twice a week, he rarely returned with more than a single package.

Today, however, the load had stunned him with its importance. In the van, back of him, separated by only the wooden wall of the cab, lay a coffin, and in that coffin

was the body of Philip Carr, Marchester's most promising son. Philip Carr—Race Carr they had called him because he was such a driving fool—was the only man who could have brought the town to fame. With his queer-looking Speed Empress, the racing-car which was a product of his own invention and three years' work, he had hoped to lower the automobile speed record on the sand track of Daytona Beach, Florida. He had clocked an unofficial 300 miles an hour in a practise attempt, and the world had sat up and taken notice.

On the fatal day, however, a tire had failed to stand the centrifugal force, and in a trice the car had twisted itself into a lump of steel. Philip Carr had been instantly killed. There was talk of burying him in Florida, but Marchester, his home town, had absolutely refused. And so the body had been shipped back to Littleton, the nearest point on rails, and Jeb Waters had been sent to bring it from there to Marchester.

JEB hadn't liked the idea. There was nothing to be afraid of, he knew, but somehow when he was alone in these Rentharpian Hills, even though he had known no other home since a child, he always felt depressed and anxious for companionship. A coffin would hardly serve to ease his mind.

The wind was mounting steadily, and now the first swirls of snow began to appear. The cab of the van was anything but warm. A corner of the windshield was broken out, and the rags Jeb had stuffed in the hole failed to keep out the cold.

Premature darkness had swooped down under the lowering clouds, and Jeb turned on the lights. The van was a very old one, and the lights worked on the magneto. As the snow became thicker and

thicker Jeb was forced to reduce his speed, and the lights, deprived of most of their current, dimmed to only a low dismal glow, illuminating but little of the road ahead.

Yet the miles rolled slowly by. The snow was piling in drifts now. It rolled across the hills, a great sweeping blanket of white, and swirled like powder through the crevices of the cab. And it was growing colder.

Frome's Hill, the steepest rise on the road, loomed up abruptly, and Jeb roared the rickety motor into a running start. The van lurched up the ascent, back wheels spinning in the soft snow, seeking traction. The engine hammered its protest. The transmission groaned as if in pain. Up, up climbed the truck until at length it reached the very top.

"Now it's clear sailing," said Jeb aloud.

But he had spoken too soon. With a sigh as if the feat had been too great, the motor lapsed into sudden silence. The lights blinked out, and there was only the gray darkness of the hills and the swishing of the snow on the sides of the cab.

For a full moment Jeb sat there motionless as the horror of the situation fell upon him. Snowbound with a corpse! Twenty miles from the nearest habitation and alone with a coffin! A cold sweat burst out on his forehead at the realization of the predicament.

But he was acting like a child. It was ridiculous to let his nerves run away with him like that. If he could only keep from freezing there would be no danger. In the morning when it was found he hadn't reached Marchester the people would send help. Probably Ethan would come. Old Ethan. He would come in that funny sleigh of his. And he would say:

"Well Jeb, howdja like spending the night with a dead 'un?"

And then they would both laugh and

drive back to town. . . . But that was tomorrow. Tonight there was the storm—and the corpse.

He set the spark, got out, and cranked the engine. But he did it half-heartedly. He knew by the tone of the engine when it had stopped that it would be a long time before it would resume revolutions.

At length he resigned himself to his plight, returned to the cab and tried to keep warm. But the cab was old and badly built. The wind blew through chinks and holes in great drafts, and snow sifted down his neck. It suddenly occurred to him that the back part of the van, which had been repaired recently, would give better protection against the blizzard than the cab. There were robes back there too, robes used to keep packages from being broken. If only the coffin weren't there! One couldn't sleep next to a coffin.

Another thought followed. Why not put the coffin in the cab? There was nothing else in the van, and he would then have the back of it to himself. He could lie down too and with the robes manage to keep warm somehow.

In a moment his mind was made up, and he set about to accomplish his task. It was hard, slow work. The coffin was heavy, the cab small and the steering-post in the way. Finally by shoving it in end up he managed it successfully, and then going to the back of the van, he went in, closed the door, rolled up like a ball in the robes and lay down to sleep.

**S**LEEP proved elusive. He stirred restlessly, listening to the sounds of the storm. Occasionally the truck trembled as a stronger gust of wind struck it. Occasionally he could hear the mournful Eolian whine of the power lines. Powdery snow rustled along the roof of the van. And the iron exhaust pipe cracked loudly as the heat left it. Minutes dragged by, slowly, interminably.

And then suddenly Jeb Waters sat bolt upright. Whether or not he had dozed off into a fitful sleep he did not know, but at any rate he was wide awake now.

The van was moving! He could hear the tires crunching in the snow, could feel the slight swaying as the car gained momentum. He leaped to his feet and pressed his eyes against the little window that connected the back of the van with the cab.

For a moment he saw nothing. A strip of black velvet seemed pasted before the glass. Then the darkness softened. A soft glow seemed to form in the cab, and vaguely he seemed to see the figure of a man hunched over the wheel in the driver's position.

The van was going faster now. It creaked and swayed, and the wheels rumbled hollowly. Yet strangely enough there was no sound of the engine. Jeb hammered on the little pane of glass.

"Hey!" he cried. "Get away from that wheel! Stop!"

The figure seemed not to hear. With his hands grasping the wheel tightly, elbows far out, shoulders hunched low, he appeared aware of nothing but the dark road ahead of him. Faster and faster sped the van.

Frantically Jeb rammed his clenched fist through the window. The glass broke into a thousand fragments.

"Do you hear?" he cried. "Stop, blast you! Stop!"

The man turned and leered at him. Even in the half-glow Jeb recognized the features — that deathly white face, the black, glassy eyes.

"Oh, my God," he screamed. "*It's Philip Carr!*" His voice rose to a hysterical laughing sob. His hands trembled as he clutched the careening walls, striving to keep his balance.

"Philip Carr," he shouted. "You're

dead. You're dead, do you hear? You can't drive any more."

A horrible gurgling laugh came from the man at the wheel. The figure bent lower as if to urge the van to a greater speed. And the van answered as if to a magic touch. On it raced into the storm, rocking and swaying like a thing accursed. Snow swirled past in great white clouds. The wind howled in fanatical accompaniment.

Jeb plunged his arm through the broken window and clawed for the throat of the driver.

"Stop!" he screamed. And then he gurgled in horror as his hands touched the ice-cold skin.

Suddenly with a lurch the van left the road and leaped toward the blacker shadows of a gully. A giant tree, its branches gesticulating wildly in the wind, reared up just ahead.

There came a crash!

\* \* \* \* \*

"It's odd," said the coroner, and frowned.

Old Ethan scratched his chin.

"It 'pears," he said, "as if that danged van engine went and stopped right on the top of that hill. Then Jeb, he musta gone into the back of the van to keep warm, and durin' the night the wind started the thing a-rollin'. It come tearin' down the hill, jumped into this here gully and ran smash agin the tree. That's the way I figure it. Poor old Jeb!"

"Yes," replied the coroner, "but there doesn't seem to be the slightest injury on Jeb's body. Apparently he died of heart-failure. And the corpse of Philip Carr! . . . The crash might have ripped open the coffin. But that doesn't explain why the body although set in rigor mortis is in a sitting position. The way his arms are extended, it looks almost as though he were driving once more."