

Weird Tales



MAY, 1951

Cover by Lee Brown Coye

NOVELETTES

NOTEBOOK FOUND IN A DESERTED HOUSE Robert Bloch 14

*The boy knew all sorts of stories about witches and devils
and bat men that suck your blood, and haunts . . . so
he was sure things were moving in the wood.*

THE KEEPER OF THE KEY August Derleth 52

*Its altars suggestively low—as if made for creatures
that crawled rather than went upright.*

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THE LAST GRAVE OF LILL WARRAN Manly Wade Wellman 28

*For Lill—a hunter would leave his gun, a drinker would
leave his bottle of stumphole whiskey, a farmer
would leave his plough standing in the field.*

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*If we ourselves are images in the dreams of some
fantastic one who slumbers on a mystic island,
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But is death a dull business?*

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on whatever part of the garden you wish.*

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D. McILWRAITH, Editor



The Last Grave of Lill Warran

By Manly Wade Wellman

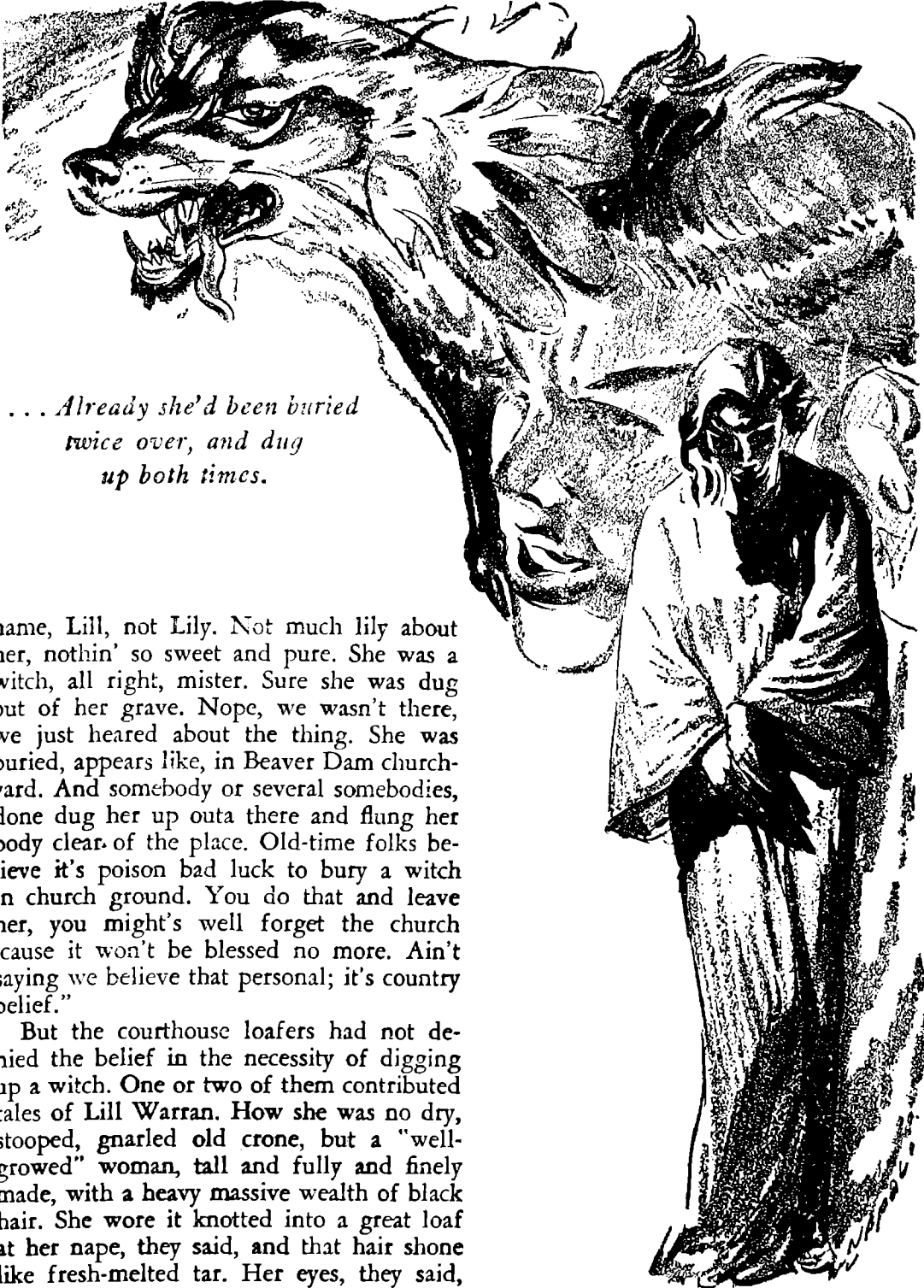
THE side road became a rutted track through the pines, and the track became a trail. John Thunstone reflected that he might have known his car would not be able to travel the full distance, and in any case a car seemed out of place in these ancient and uncombed woods. A lumber wagon would be more in keeping; or a riding mule, if John Thunstone were smaller and lighter, a fair load for a mule. He got out of the car, rolled up the windows, and locked the door. Ahead of him a path snaked through the thickets, narrow but well marked by the feet of nobody knew how many years of tramping.

He set his own big feet upon it. His giant body moved with silent grace. John

Thunstone was at home in woods, or in wilder places.

He had dressed roughly for this expedition. He had no intention of appearing before the Sandhill woods people as a tailored and foreign invader. So he wore corduroys, a leather jacket that had been cut for him from deer hides of his own shooting, and a shabby felt hat. His strong-boned, trim-mustached face was sober and watchful. It did not betray excitement, or any advance on the wonder he expected to feel when he finished his quest. In his big right hand he carried a walking stick of old dark wood.

"Yep, yep," the courthouse loafers at the town back on the paved road had answered his questions. "Lill Warran—that's her



*... Already she'd been buried
twice over, and dug
up both times.*

name, Lill, not Lily. Not much lily about her, nothin' so sweet and pure. She was a witch, all right, mister. Sure she was dug out of her grave. Nope, we wasn't there, we just heard about the thing. She was buried, appears like, in Beaver Dam churchyard. And somebody or several somebodies, done dug her up outa there and flung her body clear of the place. Old-time folks believe it's poison bad luck to bury a witch in church ground. You do that and leave her, you might's well forget the church 'cause it won't be blessed no more. Ain't saying we believe that personal; it's country belief."

But the courthouse loafers had not denied the belief in the necessity of digging up a witch. One or two of them contributed tales of Lill Warran. How she was no dry, stooped, gnarled old crone, but a "well-growed" woman, tall and fully and finely made, with a heavy massive wealth of black hair. She wore it knotted into a great loaf at her nape, they said, and that hair shone like fresh-melted tar. Her eyes, they said, were green as green glass, in a brown face, and her mouth—

"Huh!" they'd agreed to Thunstone. "You've come a far piece, and it's like you seen a many fine-looking women. But, mister, ain't no possible argument, you seen

Heading
by
Vincent
Napoli

Lill Warran and that red mouth she had on her, you'd slap a mortgage on your immortal soul to get a kiss of it."

And the inference was, more than one man had mortgaged his immortal soul for a kiss of Lill Warran's mouth. She was dead now. How? Bullet, some said. Accident, said others. But she was dead, and she'd been buried twice over, and dug up the both times.

Gathering this and other information, John Thunstone was on the trail of the end of the story. For it has been John Thunstone's study and career to follow such stories to their end. His story-searches have brought him into adventures of which only the tenth part has been told, and that tenth part the simplest and most believable. His experiences in most cases he has kept to himself. Those experiences have helped, perhaps, to sprinkle gray in his smooth black hair, to make somber his calm, strong face.

THE trail wound, and climbed. Here the wooded land sloped upward. And brush of a spiny species grew under the pines, encroaching so that John Thunstone had to force his way through, like a bull in a swamp. The spines plucked at his leather-clad arms and flanks, like little detaining fingers.

At the top of the slope was the clearing he sought.

It was a clearing in the strictest sense of the word. The tall pines had been axed away, undoubtedly their strong, straight trunks had gone to the building of the log house at the center. And cypress, from some swamp near by, had been split for the heavy shingles on the roof. All around the house was bare sand. Not a spear of grass, not a tuft of weed, grew there. It was as naked as a beach by the sea. Nobody moved in that naked yard, but from behind the house came a noise. *Plink, plink*, rhythmically. *Plink, plink*. Blows of metal on something solid, like stone or masonry.

Moving silently as an Indian, John Thunstone rounded the corner of the log house, paused to make sure of what was beyond, then moved toward it.

A man knelt there, of a height to match John Thunstone's own, but lean and spare, after the fashion of Sandhills brush dwellers. He wore a shabby checked shirt and blue dungaree pants, worn and frayed and washed out to the blue of a robin's egg. His sleeves were rolled to the biceps, showing gaunt, pallid arms with sharp elbows and knotty hands. His back was toward Thunstone. The crown of his tow head was beginning to be bald. Before him on the ground lay a flat rectangle of liver-colored stone. He held a short-handled, heavy-headed hammer in his right hand, and in his left a narrow-pointed wedge, such as is used to split sections of log into fire wood. The point of the wedge he held set against the face of the stone, and with the hammer he tapped the wedge butt. *Plink, plink*. He moved the point. *Plink*.

Still silent as a drifting cloud, Thunstone edged up behind him. He could see what the gaunt man was chiseling upon the stone. The last letter of a series of words, the letters irregular but deep and square:

HERE LIES

LILL WARRAN

TWICE BURIED AND TWICE DUG UP
BY FOOLS AND COWARDS

NOW SHE MAY
REST IN PEACE

SHE WAS A ROSE OF SHARON
A LILY OF THE VALLEY

John Thunstone bent to read the final word, and the bright afternoon sun threw his shadow upon the stone. Immediately the lean man was up and his whole body whipped erect and away on the other side of his work, swift and furtive as a weasel. He stood and stared at John Thunstone, the hammer lowered, the lean-pointed wedge lifted a trifle.

"Who you?" the gaunt man wheezed breathily. He had a sharp face, a nose that projected like a pointed beak, with forehead and chin sloping back from it above and below. His eyes were dark, beady, and close-set. His face was yellow and leathery, and

even the whites of the eyes looked clouded, as with biliousness.

"My name is John Thunstone," Thunstone made reply, as casually as possible. "I'm looking for Mr. Parrell."

"That's me. Pos Parrell."

Pos . . . It was plain to see where the name suited the man. That lean, pointed snout, the meager chin and brow, the sharp eyes, looked like those of an opossum. A suspicious, angry, dangerous opossum.

"What can I do for you?" demanded Pos Parrell. He sounded as if he would like to do something violent.

"I want to ask about Miss Lill Warran," said Thunstone, still quietly, soothingly, as he might speak to a restive dog or horse. "I see you're making a gravestone for her." He pointed with his stick.

"And why not?" snapped Pos Parrell. His thin lips drew back from lean, strong teeth, like stained fangs. "Ain't she to be allowed to rest peacefully in her grave some time?"

"I hope she will," said Thunstone. "I heard at the county seat about how she'd been dragged out of her grave at the churchyard."

Pos Parrell snorted. His hands tightened on hammer and wedge. "Now, mister, what almighty pick is it of yours? Listen, are you the law? If you are, you just trot your law back to the county seat. I'm not studying to hear any law. They won't let her stay buried at Beaver Dam, I've buried her here, and here she'll stay."

"No," Thunstone assured him. "I'm not the law."

"Then what are you? One of them reporters from the newspapers? Whatever you are, get off my place."

"Not until we've talked a bit, Mr. Parrell."

"I'll put you off. I got a right to put you off my place."

Thunstone smiled his most charming. "You do have the right. But could you put me off?"

Pos Parrell raked him with the beady eyes. "You about twice as big as me, but—"

He dropped the hammer. It struck the sand with a grim thud. He whipped the

lean wedge over to his right hand, holding it daggerwise.

"Don't try that," warned Thunstone, and his walking stick lifted in his own hand.

Pos Parrell took a stamping stride forward. His left hand clutched at the tip of Thunstone's stick, the wedge lifted in his right.

But Thunstone drew back on the stick's handle. There was a metallic whisper. The lower part of the stick, clamped in Parrell's grasp, stripped away like the sheath of a sword, revealing a long, straight skewer of gleaming blade that set in the handle as in a heft. As Parrell drove forward with his wedge, Thunstone delicately flicked the point of his sword cane across the back of Parrell's fist. Parrell squeaked with pain, and the wedge fell beside the hammer. Next instant Parrell was backing away hurriedly. Thunstone moved lightly, calmly after him, the sword point quivering inches from Parrell's throat.

"Hey!" protested Parrell. "Hey!"

"I'm sorry, but you'll have to listen to me."

"Put that thing down. I quit!"

Thunstone lowered the point, and smiled.

"Let's both quit. Let's talk."

PARRELL subsided. He still held the hollow lower length of the stick. Thunstone took it from him and sheathed his blade.

"You know what?" said Parrell, rather wearily. "That's about the curiousest place I ever seen a man carry a stab weapon."

"It's a sword cane," explained Thunstone, friendly again. "It was made hundreds of years ago. The man who gave it to me said it was made by Saint Dunstan."

"Who was that?"

"He was an Englishman."

"Foreigner, huh?"

"Saint Dunstan was a silversmith," Thunstone told Parrell. "This blade in my stick is made out of silver. Among other things, Saint Dunstan is said to have twisted the devil's nose."

"Lemme see that thing again," Parrell said, and again Thunstone cleared the

blade. "Huh!" grunted Parrell. "It got words on it. I can't make 'em out."

Thunstone's big finger tapped the engraved lettering. "*Sic pereant omnes inimici tui, Domine,*" He read aloud. "That means, 'So perish all thine enemies, O God.'"

"Bible words or charm words?"

"Perhaps both," said Thunstone. "Now, Parrell, I want to be your friend. The people in town are pretty rough in their talk about you."

"And about Lill," said Parrell, so faintly that Thunstone could hardly hear. "But I loved her. Lots of men has loved her, but I reckon I was the only one loving her when she died."

"Tell me," urged Thunstone.

Parrell tramped back toward the cabin, and Thunstone followed. Parrell sat on the door sill and scuffed the dirt with his coarse shoes. He studied the back of his right hand, where Thunstone's skilful flick of the silver blade had raised a thin wale and shed a drop of blood.

"You know, you could have hurt me worse if you'd had a mind," he said.

"I didn't have a mind," Thunstone told him.

Again the shoes scuffed the sand. "I prized up my door stoop stone to make that marker for Lill's grave."

"It's a good one."

Parrell gestured to the edge of the clearing. There, in the shade of the pines, showed a mound of sand, dark with fresh digging, the size and shape of a body.

"I buried her there," he said, "and there she'll stay. At the last end, I reckon, she knowed I loved her and nothing could change it."

A rose of Sharon, a lily of the valley. Lill Warran had been no sweet lily, the court house loafers had insisted. Thunstone squatted on his heels.

"You know," he said, "you'll feel better if you talk about it to somebody who will listen."

"Reckon I will."

And Pos Parrell talked.

Later Thunstone wrote down Parrell's story from memory, as a most interesting record of belief in the supernatural, and

also belief in a most beautiful and wilful woman.

LILL WARRAN was called a witch because her mother had been one, and her grandmother had been one. Folks said she could curse pigs thin, and curse hens out of laying, and make trees fall on men cutting them. They wouldn't hear of things like that happening by chance. The preacher at Beaver Dam had sworn she said the Lord's Prayer wrong—"Our Father, who *wert* in heaven." Which meant Satan, who'd fallen from the Pearly Gates, the way it says in the book of Isaiah. No, the preacher hadn't read Lill Warran out of church, but she stopped coming, and laughed at the people who mumbled. The old folks hated her, the children were afraid, and the women suspicious. But the men!

"She could get any man," said Parrell. "She got practically all of them. A hunter would leave his gun, a drinker would leave his bottle of stump-hole whiskey, a farmer would leave his plough standing in the field. There was a many wives crying tears because their husbands were out at night, following after Lill Warran. And Nobe Filder hanged himself, everybody knows, because he was to meet Lill and she didn't come, but went that night to a square dance with Newton Henley. And Newton grew to hate her, but he took sick and when he was dying he called on her name."

Pos Parrell had just loved her. She never promised to meet him, she tossed him smiles and chance words, like so many table scraps to a dog. Maybe it was as well. Those who were lovers of Lill Warran worshipped her, then feared and hated her.

That, at least, was witch history as Thunstone had read it and researched it. The old books of the old scholars were full of evidence about such seductive enchantresses, all the way back to the goddesses of dark love—Ishtar, Ashtoreth, Astarte, various names for the same force, terrible in love as the God of War is terrible in battle. To Thunstone's mind came a fragment of the Epic of Gilgamesh, lettered on a Chaldean tablet of clay five millennia ago. Gilamesh had taunted Ishtar's overtures:

Thou fellest in love with the herdsman
 Who ever scattered grain for thee,
 And daily slaughtered a kid for thee;
 Thou smotest him,
 Turned him into a wolf. . . .

"It didn't prove nothing," Parrell was protesting. "Only that she was easy to fall in love with and hard to keep."

"What did she live on?" asked Thunstone. "Did her family have anything?"

"Shucks, no. She was orphaned. She lived by herself—they've burned the cabin now. People said she knew spells, so she could witch meat out of smokehouse into her pot, witch meal out of pantries onto her table."

"I've heard of people suspecting that of witches," nodded Thunstone, careful to keep his manner sympathetic. "It's an easy story to make yourself believe."

"I never believed it, not even when—"

Parrell told the climax of the sorry, eerie tale. It had happened a week ago. It had to do with a silver bullet.

FOR silver bullets are sure death to demons, and this was known to a young man by the name of Taylor Howatt, the latest to flutter around the fascinating flame that was Lill Warran. His friends warned him about her, and he wouldn't listen. Not Taylor! Not until there was prowling around his cabin by something that whined and yelped like a beast-varmint—a wolf, the old folks would say, except that wolves hadn't been seen in those parts since the old frontier days. And Taylor Howatt had glimpsed the thing once or twice by moonlight. It was shaggy, it had pointy ears and a pointy muzzle, but it stood up on its two legs, part of the time at least.

"The werewolf story," commented Thunstone, but Parrell continued.

Taylor Howatt knew what to do. He had an old, old deer rifle, the kind made by country gunsmiths as long back as the War with the North. He had the bullet mould, too, and he'd melted down half a silver dollar and cast him a bullet. He'd loaded the deer rifle ready, and listened for several nights to the howls. When the thing came peeping close to an open window, he caught

its shape square against the rising moon and fired.

Next day, Lill Warran was found dead on the foot path leading to her own home, and her heart was shot through.

Of course, there'd been a sheriff deputy down. Taylor Howatt was able to claim it was accidental. The people had gathered at Lill's cabin, and there they'd found stuff, they said. One claimed a side of bacon he said had hung in his smoke house. And another found a book.

"Book?" said John Thunstone quickly. For books are generally interesting properties in stories like the story of Lill Warran.

"I've been told about it by three folks who swore they seen it," replied Parrell. "Me myself, I didn't see it, so I hold I ain't called on to judge of it."

"What did those three people tell you about it?"

"Well—it was hairy like. The cover all hairy and dark, like the skin of a black bear. And inside it had three parts."

"The first part," said Thunstone, "was written with red ink on white paper. The second part, with black ink on red paper. And the third, black paper, written on with—"

"You been talking to them other folks!" accused Parrell, half starting up.

"No. Though I heard the book mentioned at the court house. It's just that I've heard of such books before. The third part of the book, black paper, is written on with white ink that will shine in the dark, so that it can be read without light."

"Then them folks mocking me heard what you heard about the like of the book. They made it up to vex my soul."

"Maybe," agreed Thunstone, though he doubted that the people of the Sandhills brush would have so much knowledge of classical and rare grimoires. "Go on."

The way Parrell had heard the book explained, the first part—red ink on white paper—was made up of rather simple charms, to cure rheumatism or sore eyes, with one or two more interesting spells that concerned the winning of love or the causing of a wearisome lover to depart. The second, the black ink on red, had the

charm to bring food from the stores of neighbors, as well as something that purported to make the practitioner invisible, and something else that aided in the construction of a mirror in which one could see far away scenes and actions.

"And the black part of the book?" asked Thunstone, more calmly than he felt.

"Nobody got that far."

"Good," said Thunstone thankfully. He himself would have thought twice, and more than twice, before reading the shiny letters in the black third section of such a book.

"The preacher took it. Said he locked it in his desk. Next day it was gone. Folks think it went back to Satan himself."

Folks might not be far wrong, thought Thunstone, but did not say as much aloud.

PARRELL'S voice was wretched as he finished his narrative. Lill Warran had had no kinsmen, none who would claim her body at least. So he, Parrell, had claimed it—bought a coffin and paid for a plot in Beaver Dam churchyard. He and an undertaker's helper had been alone at the burying of Lill Warran.

"Since nobody wanted to be Christian, nothing was said from the Bible at the burying," Parrell told Thunstone. "I did say a little verse of a song I remembered, I always remembered, when I thought of her. This is what it was."

He half-crooned the rhyme:

"The raven crow is a coal, coal black,
The jay is a purple blue,
If ever I forget my own fair love,
Let my heart melt away like dew."

Thunstone wondered how old the song was. "Then?" he prompted.

"You know the rest. The morning after, they tore her up out of the grave and flung her in my yard. I found her lying near to my doorstep, the one I just now cut for her gravestone." Parrell nodded toward where it lay. "I took her and buried her again. And this morning it was the same. There she lay. So let them all go curse. I buried her yonder, and yonder she'll stay,

or if anybody says different I'll argue with something more than a law book. Did I do wrong, mister?"

"Not you," said Thunstone. "You did what your heart told you."

"Thanks. Thank you kindly. Like you said, I do feel better for talking it over." Parrell rose. "I'm going to set up that stone."

Thunstone helped him. The weight of the slab taxed their strength. Parrell drove it into the sand at the head of the grave. Then he looked to where the sun was sinking behind the pines.

"You won't be getting back away from here before it's dark and hard to pick the way. I'll be honored if you stopped here tonight. Not much of a bed or supper doings, but if you'll so be kind—"

"Thank you," said Thunstone, who had been wondering how to manage an overnight stay.

They entered the front room of the little cabin. Inside it was finished in boards, rough sawn but evenly fitted into place. There was an old table, old chairs, a very old cook stove, pans hanging to nails on the walls. Parrell beckoned Thunstone to where a picture was tacked to a wall.

"It's her," he said.

The photograph was cheap, and some slipshod studio artist had touched it up with colors. But Thunstone could see what sort of woman Lill Warran had been. The picture was half length, and she wore a snug dress with large flower figuring. She smiled into the camera, with the wide full mouth of which he had heard. Her eyes were slanting, mocking, and lustrous. Her head was proud on fine shoulders. Round and deep was the bosom into which a silver bullet had been sent by the old deer rifle of Taylor Howatt.

"You see why I loved her," said Parrell.

"I see," Thunstone assured him.

PARRELL cooked for them. There was corn bread and syrup, and a plate of rib meat, hearty fare. Despite his sorrow, Parrell ate well of his own cooking. When the meal was finished, Parrell bowed and mumbled an old country blessing. They

went out into the yard. Parrell walked slowly to the grave of Lill Warran and gazed down at it. Thunstone moved in among the trees, saw something that grew, and stooped to gouge it out.

"What you gathering?" called Parrell.

"Just an odd little growth," Thunstone called back, and pulled another. They were the roots called throughout the south by the name of John the Conqueror, great specifics against enchantment. Thunstone filled his pockets with them, and walked back to join Parrell.

"I'm glad you came along, Mr. Thunstone," said Parrell. His opossum face was touched with a shy smile. "I've lived alone for years, but never so lonely as the last week."

Together they entered the house. Parrell found and lighted an oil lamp, and immediately Thunstone felt the impact of eyes from across the room. Swiftly facing that way, he gazed into the face of the portrait of Lill Warran. The pictured smile seemed to taunt and defy him, and to invite him as well. What had the man leered at the court house? *You'd slap a mortgage on your immortal soul to get a kiss.* That picture was enough to convince Thunstone that better men than pitiful, spindling Pos Parrell could find Lill Warran herself irresistible.

"I'll make you up a pallet bed here," offered Parrell.

"You needn't bother for me," Thunstone said, but Parrell opened a battered old wooden chest and brought out a quilt, another. As he spread them out, Thunstone recognized the ancient and famous patterns of the quilt work. Kentucky Blazing Star, that was one of them. Another was True Love Fancy.

"My old mamma made them," Parrell informed him.

Parrell folded the quilts into a pallet along the wall. "Sure you'll be all right? You won't prefer to take my bed."

"I've slept a lot harder than what you're fixing for me," Thunstone quickly assured him.

They sat at a table and talked. Parrell's thoughts were still for his lost love. He

spoke of her, earnestly, revealingly. Once or twice Thunstone suspected him of trying for poetic speech.

"I would look at her," said Parrell, "and it was like hearing, not seeing."

"Hearing what?"

"Hearing—well, more than anything else it was like the sound of a fiddle, played prettier than you ever heard. Prettier than I can ever play."

Thunstone had seen the battered fiddle-case on a hand-hewn shelf beside the door of the rear room which was apparently Parrell's sleeping quarters, but he had not mentioned it. "Suppose you play us something now," he suggested.

Parrell swallowed. "Play music? With her lying out there in her grave?"

"She wouldn't object, if she knew. Playing the fiddle gives you pleasure, doesn't it?"

Parrell seemed to need no more bidding. He rose, opened the case, and brought out the fiddle. It was old and dark, and he tuned it with fingers diffidently skilful. Thunstone looked at him. "Where did you get it? The fiddle, I mean."

"Oh, my granddaddy inherited it to me. I was the onliest grandboy he had cared to learn."

"Where did he get it?"

"I don't rightly know how to tell you that. I always heard a foreigner fellow—I mean a sure-enough foreigner from Europe or some place, not just somebody from some other part of the country—gave it to my granddaddy, or either traded it to him."

Thunstone knew something about violins, and judged that this one was worth a sum that would surprise Parrell, if no more than mentioned. Thunstone did not mention any sum. He only said, "Play something, why not?"

Parrell grinned, showing his lean teeth. He tucked the instrument against his jowl and played. He was erratic but vigorous; with training, he might have been brilliant. The music soared, wailed, thundered, and died down. "That was interesting," said Thunstone. "What was it?"

"Just something I sort of figured out for myself," said Parrell apologetically. "I do

that once in a while, but not lots. Folks would rather hear the old songs—things they know, like Arkansaw Traveller and Fire In the Mountains. I generally play my own stuff to myself, alone here in the evenings." Parrell laid down the instrument. "My fiddle's kept me company, sometimes at night when I wished Lill was with me."

"Did you ever know," said Thunstone, "why we have so many fiddles in the American country localities?"

"Never heard that I recollect."

"In the beginnings of America," Thunstone told him, "frontier homes were lonely and there were wild beasts around. Wolves, mostly."

"Not now," put in Parrell. "Remember that crazy yarn Taylor Howatt told about shooting at a wolf, and there hasn't been a wolf around here since I don't know when."

"Maybe not now, but there were wolves in the old days. And the strains of fiddle music hurt the ears of the wolves and kept them away."

"There may be a lot in what you say," nodded Parrell, and put his instrument back into its box. "Listen, I'm tired. I've not slept fit for a dog these past six nights. But now, with you here, talking sense like you have—" Parrell paused, stretched and yawned. "If it's all right with you, I'll go sleep a while."

"Good night, Parrell," said Thunstone, and watched his host go into the rear room and close the door.

THEN Thunstone went outside. It was quiet and starry, and the moon rose, half of its disk gleaming pale. He took from his pockets the roots of John the Conqueror, placing one on the sill above the door, another above the front window, and so on around the shanty. Returning, he entered the front room again, turned up the lamp a trifle, and spread out a piece of paper. He produced a pen and began to write:

My Dear de Grandin:

I know your own investigations kept you from coming here with me, but I wonder if this thing isn't more interest-

ing, if not more important, than what you chose to stay and do in New Jersey.

The rumors about Lill Warran, as outlined to you in the letter I wrote this morning, are mostly confirmed. Here, however, are the new items I've uncovered:

Strong evidence of the worst type of grimoire. I refer to one with white, red and black sections. Since it's mentioned in this case, I incline to believe there was one—these country folk could hardly make up such a grimoire out of their heads. Lill Warran, it seems, had a copy, which later vanished from a locked drawer. Naturally! Or, super-naturally!

Presence of a werewolf. One Taylor Howatt was sure enough to make himself a silver bullet, and to use it effectively. He fired at a hairy, point-eared monster, and it was Lill Warran they picked up dead. This item naturally suggests the next.

Nobody knows the person or persons who turned Lill Warran twice out of her grave. Most people of the region are rather smugly pleased at the report that Lill Warran wasn't allowed rest in consecrated churchyard soil, and Pos Parrell, grief-stricken, has buried her in his yard, where he intends that she will have peace. But, de Grandin, you will already

have guessed the truth they have failed even to imagine: if Lill Warran was indeed a werewolf—and the black section of the grimoire undoubtedly told her how to be one at will—if, I say, Lill Warran was a werewolf . . .

Thunstone sat up in the chair, the pen in his fingers. Somebody, or something, moved stealthily in the darkness outside.

There was a tapping whisper at the screen Pos Parrell had nailed over the window. Thunstone grimly forebore to glance. He made himself yawn, a broad hand covering his mouth—the reflex gesture, he meditated as he yawned, born of generations past who feared lest the soul might be snatched through the open mouth by a demon. Slowly he capped his pen, and laid it upon the unfinished letter to de Grandin. He rose, stretched, and tossed aside his leather jacket. He stopped and pretended to untie his shoes, but did not take them off. Finally, cupping his palm around the top of the lamp chimney, he blew out the light. He moved to where Parrell had spread the pallet of quilts and lay down upon them. He began to breathe deeply and regularly. One hand, relaxed in its seeming, rested within an inch of the sword cane.

The climax of the adventure was upon him, he knew very well; but in the moments



to follow he must possess himself with calm, must appear to be asleep in a manner to deceive the most skeptical observer.

Thus determined, he resolutely relaxed, from the toe-joints up. He let his big jaw go slack, his big hands curl open. He continued to breathe deeply and regularly, like a sleeper. Hardest of all was the task of conquering the swift race of heart and pulse, but John Thunstone had learned how to do that, too, because of necessity many times before. So completely did he contrive to pretend slumber that his mind went dreamy and vague around the edges. He seemed to float a little free of the pallet, to feel awareness at not too great a distance of the gates of dreamland.

But his ears were tuned to search out sounds. And outside in the dark the unknown creature continued its stealthy round.

It paused—just in front of the door, as John Thunstone judged. It knew that the root of John the Conqueror lay there, an obstacle; but not an obstacle that completely baffled. Such an herb, to turn back what Thunstone felt sure was besieging the dark cabin, would need to be wolfbane or garlic: or, for what grew naturally in these parts of the world, French lilac. John the Conqueror—Big John or Little John, as woodland gatherers defined the two varieties—was only "used to win," and might not assure victory. All it could do, certainly, was slow up the advance of the besieger.

Under his breath, very soft and very low, John Thunstone began to mutter a saying taught him by a white magician in a far-away city, half a prayer and half a spell against evil enemies:

"Two wicked eyes have overshadowed us, but two holy eyes are fixed upon us; the eyes of Saint Dunstan, who smote and shamed the devil. Beware, wicked one; beware twice, wicked one; beware thrice . . ."

In the next room, Thunstone could hear sounds. They were sounds as of dull, careful pecking. They came from the direction in which, as he had seen, was set the closed casement window of Pos Parrell's sleeping chamber.

With the utter silence he knew how to keep, Thunstone rolled from his

pallet, lying for a moment face down on the floor. He drew up one knee and both hands, and rose to his full height. In one hand he brought along the sword cane.

The pecking sound persisted as he slid one foot along the rough planks of the floor, praying that no creak would sound. He managed a step, another, a third. He was at the door leading to the next room.

His free hand groped for a knob. There was none, only a latch string. Thunstone pulled, and the door sagged silently open.

He looked into a room, the dimness of which was washed by light from the moon outside. In the window, silhouetted against the four panes, showed the outline of head and shoulders. A tinkling whisper, and one of the panes fell inward, to shatter musically on the boards below. Something had picked away the putty. A dark arm crept in, weaving like a snake, to fumble at the catch. A moment later the window was open, and something thrust itself in, made the passage and landed on the floor.

The moonlight gave him a better look at the shape as it rose from all fours and faced toward the cot where Pos Parrell lay, silent and slack as though he were drugged.

John Thunstone knew that face from the picture in the room where he had slept. It had the slanted, lustrous eyes, the cloud of hair—not clubbed, but hanging in a great thunder cloud on either side of the face. And the wide, full mouth did not smile, but quivered as by some overwhelming pulse.

"Pos," whispered the mouth of Lill Warran.

She wore a white robelike garment, such as is put on dead women in that country. Its wide, winglike sleeves swaddled her arms, but it fell free of the smooth, pale shoulders, the fine upper slope of the bosom. Now as in life, Lill Warran was a forbiddingly beautiful creature. She seemed to sway, to float toward Parrell.

"You love me," she breathed at him.

The sleeper stirred for the first time. He turned toward her, a hand moved sleepily, almost as though it beckoned her: Lill Warran winnowed to the very bedside.

"Stop where you are!" called John Thun-

stone, and strode into the room, and toward the bed.

She paused, a hand on the blanket that covered Parrell. Her face turned toward Thunstone, the moonlight playing upon it. Her mocking smile possessed her lips.

"You were wise enough to guess most of me," she said. "Are you going to be fool enough to try to stop what is bound to happen?"

"You won't touch him," said Thunstone.

She chuckled. "Don't be afraid to shout. You cannot waken Pos Parrell tonight—not while I stand here. He loves me. He always loved me. The others loved and then hated. But he loves—though he thinks I am dead—"

She sounded archaic, she sounded measured and stilted, as though she quoted ill-rehearsed lines from some old play. That was in order, Thunstone knew.

"He loves you, that's certain," agreed Thunstone. "That means you recognize his helplessness. You think that his love makes him your easy prey. You didn't reckon with me."

"Who are you?"

"My name is John Thunstone."

Lill Warran glared, her lips writhed back. She seemed as though she would spit.

"I've heard that name. John Thunstone! Shall I not dispose of you, right now and at once, you fool?"

SHE took a step away from the bed. Her hands lifted, the winglike sleeves slipped back from them. She crooked her fingers, talon fashion, and Thunstone saw the length and sharpness of her nails.

Lill Warran laughed.

"Fools have their own reward. Destruction!"

Thunstone stood with feet apart. The cane lay across his body, its handle in his right fist, the fingers of his left hand clasping around the lower shank that made a sheath.

"You have a stick," said Lill Warran. "Do you think you can beat me away, like a dog?"

"I do."

"You cannot even move, John Thunstone!" Her hands weaved in the air, like

the hands of a hypnotist. "You're a toy for me! I remember hearing a poem once: 'A fool there was—'" She paused, laughing.

"Remember the title of that poem?" he said, almost sweetly, and she screamed, like the largest and loudest of bats, and leaped.

In that instant, Thunstone cleared the long silver rapier from its hiding, and, as swiftly as she, extended his arm like a fencer in riposte.

Upon the needle-pointed blade, Lill Warran skewered herself. He felt the point slip easily, smoothly, into the flesh of her bosom. It grated on a bone somewhere, then slid past and through. Lill Warran's body slammed to the very hilt, and for a moment she was no more than arm's length from him. Her eyes grew round, her mouth opened wide, but only a whisper of breath came from it.

Then she fell backward, slack as an empty garment, and as Thunstone cleared his blade she thudded on the floor and lay with her arms flung out to right and left, as though crucified.

From his hip pocket Thunstone fished a handkerchief and wiped away the blood that ran from point to base of the silver weapon forged centuries before by Saint Dunstan, patron of those who face and fight creatures of evil.

To his lips came the prayer engraved upon the blade, and he repeated it aloud: "*Sic pereant omnes inimici, tui, Domine. . . . So perish all thine enemies, O God.*"

"Huh?" sleepily said Pos Parrell, and sat up on his cot. He strained his eyes in the dimness. "What you say, Mister? What's happened?"

Thunstone moved toward the bureau, sheathing his silver blade. He struck a match, lifted the chimney from the lamp on the bureau, and lighted it. The room filled with the warm glow from the wick.

Parrell sprang out of bed. "Hey, look. The window's open—it's broke in one pane. Who done that?"

"Somebody from outside," said Thunstone, standing still to watch.

Parrell turned and stared at what was on the floor. "It's Lill!" he bawled in a quivering voice. "Sink their rotten souls to hell,

they come dug her up again and threw her in here!"

"I don't think so," said Thunstone, and lifted the lamp. "Take a good look."

Moving, he shed light down upon the quiet form of Lill Warran. Parrell knelt beside her, his trembling hands touching the dark stain on her bosom.

"Blood!" he gulped. "That's fresh blood. Her wound was bleeding, right now. She wasn't dead down there in the grave!"

"No," agreed Thunstone quietly. "She wasn't dead down there in the grave. But she's dead now."

Parrell examined her carefully, miserably. "Yes, sir. She's dead now. She won't rise up no more."

"No more," agreed Thunstone again. "And she got out of her grave by her own strength. Nobody dug her up, dead or alive."

Parrell stared from where he knelt. Wonder and puzzlement touched his grief-lined, sharp-snouted face.

"Come out and see," invited Thunstone, and lifted the lamp from where it stood on the bureau. He walked through the front room and out of the door. Parrell tramped at his heels.

The night was quiet, with so little breeze that the flame of the lamp barely flickered. Straight to the graveside Thunstone led Parrell, stopped there and held the lamp high over the freshly opened hole.

"Look, Parrell," Thunstone bade him. "That grave was opened from inside, not outside."

Parrell stooped and stared. One hand crept up and wiped the low, slanting brow.

"You're right, I guess," said Parrell slowly. "It looks like what a fox does when he breaks through at the end of his digging—the dirt's flung outward from below, only bigger'n a fox's hole." Parrell straightened up. His face was like sick tallow in the light of the lamp. "Then it's true, though it looks right pure down impossible. She was in there, alive, and she got out tonight."

"She got out the other two nights," said Thunstone. "I don't think I can explain to you exactly why, but night time was the time of her strength. And each time she came

here to you—walked or crept all the way. Each time, again, she could move no more when it was dawn."

"Lill came to me!"

"You loved her, didn't you? That's why she came to you."

PARRELL turned toward the house. "And she must have loved me," he whispered, "to come to me out of the grave. Tonight, she didn't have so far to go. If she'd stayed alive—"

Thunstone started back to the house. "Don't think about that, Parrell. She's certainly dead now, and what she would have done if she'd stayed alive isn't for us to think about."

Parrell made no reply until they had once more entered the front door and walked through to where Lill Warran lay as they had left her. In the light of the lamp Thunstone carried her face was clearly defined.

It was a calm face, a face at peace and a little sorrowful. Yes, a sweet face. Lill Warran may not have looked like that in life, or in life-in-death, but now she was completely dead, she was of a gentle, sleeping beauty. Thunstone could see how Parrell, or any other man, might love a face like that.

"And she came to me, she loved me," breathed Parrell again.

"Yes, she loved you," nodded Thunstone. "In her own way she did love you. Let's take her back to her grave."

Between them they carried her out and to the hole. At its bottom was the simple coffin of pine planks, its lid thrown outward and upward from its burst fastenings. Thunstone and Parrell put the body into the coffin, straightened its slack limbs, and lowered the lid. Parrell brought a spade and a shovel, and they filled and smoothed the grave.

"I'm going to say my little verse again," said Parrell. Standing with head bowed, he mumbled the lines:

"The raven crow is a coal, coal black,
The jay is a purple blue,
If ever I forget my own fair love,
Let my heart melt away like dew."

He looked up at Thunstone, tears streaming down his face. "Now she'll rest in peace."

"That's right. She'll rest in peace. She won't rise again."

"Listen, you mind going back to the house? I'll just watch here till morning. You don't think that'll hurt, do you?"

Thunstone smiled.

"No, it won't hurt. It will be perfectly all right. Because nothing whatever will disturb you."

"Or her," added Parrell.

"Or her," nodded Thunstone. "She won't be disturbed. Just keep remembering her as somebody who loved you, and whose rest will never be interrupted again."

Back in the house, Thunstone brought the lamp to the table where he had interrupted his letter to de Grandin. He took his pen and began writing again:

I was interrupted by events that brought this adventure to a good end.

And maybe I'll wait until I see you before I tell you that part of it.

But, to finish my earlier remarks:

If Lill Warran was a werewolf, and killed in her werewolf shape, it follows as a commonplace that she became a vampire after death. You can read as much in Montague Summers, as well as the work of your countryman, Cyprien Robert.

And as a vampire, she would and did return, in a vampire's travesty of affection, to the one living person whose heart still turned to her.

Because I half suspected all this from the moment I got wind of the story of Lill Warran, I brought with me the silver blade forged for just such battles by Saint Dunstan, and it was my weapon of victory.

He finished and folded the letter. Outside, the moon brightened the quiet night, in which it seemed no evil thing could possibly stir.