

Weird Tales

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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, \$2.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. English office: G. M. Jeffries Agency, Hopefield House, Hanwell, London, W. 7. 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 450 East Ohio Street, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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Contents for June, 1927

- Cover Design** ----- **C. C. Senf**
Illustrating a scene in "A Suitor From the Shades"
- A Suitor From the Shades**----- **Greya La Spina** 726
A human, touching ghost-story about a lover who returned from the grave to blight his sweetheart's happiness
- The Dark Chrysalis (Part 1)**----- **Eli Colter** 747
Here we have, at last, the epic of the microbe-hunters—a three-part scientific thrill-tale about cancer
- The Fourth Dimension**----- **Charles Ford** 767
Strange was Ripley's experience when his racing canoe turned over—a five-minute ghost-story
- The Arctic Death** ----- **Wilford Allen** 769
Out of the North it came, that dread death that touched every living thing with a killing cold

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

- Fog-Faces** ----- **Robert S. Carr** 780
Verse
- Out of the Grave** ----- **Eldridge Morton** 781
Dr. Roousek had a weird plan to thwart his rival, but underwent an experience of stark terror in consequence
- The Left Eye** ----- **Henry S. Whitehead** 789
A powerful story of crime and retribution—a tale of immense spiders and a gruesome murder
- The Man Who Was Damned** ----- **Charlton Lawrence Edholm** 801
Vulture of Vulture's Rock, Geier von Geierstein suffered eery torments from the man he had murdered
- The Choking of Allison Grey** ----- **Guy Pain** 805
No white man was suffered to look upon the God of Windina and live, for the Mandingo people considered this a sacrilege
- Explorers Into Infinity (Conclusion)** ----- **Ray Cummings** 813
A three-part weird-scientific serial about a madcap adventure and a voyage through space—and what a voyage!
- Ghost Lore** ----- **Gertrude Wright** 824
Verse
- The Dream That Came True** ----- **Victor Rousseau** 825
The tenth in a series of stories, each complete in itself, dealing with Dr. Ivan Brodsky, "The Surgeon of Souls"
- Advice** ----- **Frank Belknap Long, Jr.** 831
Verse
- The Land of Creeping Death** ----- **Edna Bell Seward** 832
A tale of wild and desperate adventures among a race of head-hunting savages in India
- Sorcery Past and Present** ----- **Marguerite Lynch Addis** 840
Cagliostro, St. Germain, Murrell and other famous sorcerers are depicted in this enlightening article
- Weird Story Reprint**
The Song of Triumphant Love ----- **Ivan Turgenieff** 844
The exotic mystery of the Orient breathes through this eery tale of Italy of the Middle Ages
- The Eyrie** ----- **857**
A chat with the readers

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"The spider was as large as a prize peach, with great, waving, metal-like mandibles."

PIERRE GODARD was a French Canadian by descent, whose grandfather had departed the purlieus of Montreal for the good of his miserable hide in the days of Riel's Rebellion and settled in that indefinite area of scanty-soiled farmland along the western shore of Lake Champlain between Keeseville and Plattsburg.

The degenerate stock of the Godards, long impoverished since the era of its plebeian origins in France, did not recover in the descendants of the original fugitive. Pierre, the grandson, combined in his make-up the native cussedness of the lower class "canuck" with the skinflint qualities which his lifelong residence among the narrow-minded yokels with whom he consorted had readily imparted. Shiftless, furtive, mean-souled, he eked out an existence on his few barren acres of poor land

which was endurable only because there was neither in his heredity nor his experience any better standard by which he could realize to the full the utter meanness of everything that conspired to make up his life's record.

At nineteen Pierre had married Katie Burton, a flat-chested, sallow-faced slattern of his own age. At the end of five years of sordid married life, four brats of their begetting littered up the dirty kitchen of Pierre's cabin through the long, cold days of the northern New York winter, and spent their summers rolling about in the dirt at the roadside and making faces at the occupants of the automobiles which passed in a wavering, irregular string, all day and most of the early evening, along the State road between Keeseville and Plattsburg.

That is, there were four brats—and Kathleen. To what ancestor of Pierre or Katie Kathleen could have been a "throw-back" is one of those obscure ethnic mysteries which are so baffling when they emerge in the families of recognized people. In Kathleen's case, it baffled no one, since there was no one in particular to remark this fairy among the ugly gnomes who pretended to be her brothers and sisters, this glorious little swan among the rough ducklings of the Godard brood.

Kathleen had always been utterly different from the rest. By the time she was six or seven, her positive characteristics were already strongly developed. She stood out from the rest of her sordid family like a new-minted gold coin among pocket-worn pennies. By natural choice, and habitually, she was dainty and neat. Dirt never stuck to her, somehow. The rest of the brood were different from each other only in the varying ugliness of their budding dispositions and the equally variant qualities of their general detestability of appearance and habit. All the rest, for example, would fight at the drop of the hat to gain possession of anything that turned up unappropriated, that even vaguely suggested value to their joint scrutiny. In these snarling contests, Kathleen, coolly aloof, was uninterested. The rest possessed in common that coarse, scrubby hair of indeterminate color which characterizes the children of outdoor-living peasants the world over. Kathleen's, a shimmering glory of delicate ringlets, shone burnished copper in the afternoon sun when she swept off the rickety back porch or daintily threw a few grains of hard corn to Pierre's scraggly hens.

At sixteen she was as coolly aloof from the blandishments of the coarse young men of her neighbor-

hood as ever she had been to the scrambling hickerings of her family. All such advances left her wholly uninterested. What dreams and aspirations lay behind those clear blue eyes, those eyes like the blue of the Caribbean at noon, no one had ever guessed, that is, no one except the good priest, Father Tracy, who came over from one of the neighboring towns for mass every Sunday morning, and on alternate Saturday nights and before First Fridays, to hear the confessions of this outlying portion of his difficult flock. To Father Tracy it had been for some time clear that the lovely body of the little Kathleen harbored one of those rare souls, delicate and fragrant, which burn with the desire to offer themselves wholly to the Love of God. Here, the good father knew, or strongly suspected, was a budding vocation for the religious life, a vocation which it was one of his rewards to cultivate and foster.

As yet Kathleen was too young to leave her home, even if that had been feasible, and enter upon a novitiate with the good sisters at Plattsburg, or, perhaps better still, in her case, with some other good sisters much farther away from the place of her sordid origins, but for this vocation, as he watched it grow, at first weak and trembling up toward the dim light of a possible fulfillment, then later with a kind of thin, but pure and steady flame, Father Tracy said many novenas of thanksgiving. It was one of his chief sources of happiness, and, as was natural in such cases, Kathleen responded to his interest in her, and through his gentle, kindly leading of her soul, was beginning, as she fulfilled her maturity, to see the distant light more and more clearly.

This vision she cherished with all her heart, and if it begot in her an almost perceptible wistfulness, it did nothing to minimize the cheerful

kindliness with which she went about the performance of her daily tasks, or the cultivated discretion with which she had laboriously learned to meet and neutralize the changeable moods of her vicious father and slatternly, loose-minded mother.

THE wind-swept habitation for God which she had made of her pure little heart was rudely battered on a certain Thursday morning in the month of August in her seventeenth year.

Pierre, her father, who combined with the shiftless existence of a small peasant-farmer the more adventurous and profitable avocation of a bootlegger's runner for a Plattsburg operator, was frequently away from home at night and even for days at a time, when he was engaged in doing his part in bringing consignments of illicit merchandise down from unknown points in nearby Canada, either overland along the State road or by devious and rutted byways, or, what was an easier though somewhat less direct method much favored by "the profession," "up" the lake on dark nights, a process which was more lucrative because there were less people to bribe, and correspondingly somewhat more dangerous, as requiring a landing on the shores of Vermont across the lake, or somewhere on the New York side.

He had been away on one of these expeditions for two days, and had returned sometime during the small hours Wednesday night. On that Thursday morning, after two nearly sleepless nights, unkempt, ugly as a bear with a sore nose, he pushed his way into the kitchen about 9 o'clock and demanded something to eat.

Kathleen brought him his food and he ate in a brooding silence. She waited, sitting on the step below the open doorway, for him to

finish, so that she might wash his dishes and tidy up the table after him, softly humming a tuneless little song, her mind entirely other-worldly.

Pierre, having finished his breakfast, came straight to the point of a certain matter which he had been cogitating for several weeks.

"Come here," he said.

She rose and came to the table, expecting that he required another cup of coffee or something of the sort.

"Shut the door," barked her father.

She closed the door leading into the small hallway out of the kitchen, wonderingly, and returned to her father's side.

"How old are you?" he asked, looking at her as though he were appraising her.

"Seventeen."

"Seventeen, eh?" His eyes went over her again, in such fashion that, without knowing why, she felt suddenly choked.

"Ah, seventeen. Old enough! Now listen. That is old enough. You are going to marry Steve Benham. I got that all fixed, see. Me an' him, we talk about it a lot, and Steve is all right for it."

The choking feeling nearly overcame her. The blood seemed to suffuse her whole body and then recede somewhere, leaving her icy cold and afraid. Marriage had never entered Kathleen's mind. And Steve Benham! Benham was a brutal-faced young tough who, with greater advantages such as are offered to the denizens of great cities in their worst aspects, might have shone as a criminal of the lower type — a yegg, a killer for hire, the ready and effective tool of some brutal organized gang. As it was, he had taken advantage of such opportunities as presented themselves to his somewhat restricted field of develop-

ment. He was one of Levine's crowd in the bootlegging operations, a close associate of Pierre Godard's.

"What the hell's the matter with you, now?" roared Pierre, curbing his voice slightly in view of his desire for secrecy. This was his lookout, and none of Katie's business. He could handle his own girl all by himself without his wife's having any part in it. Benham had offered him two hundred dollars to put it through for him, and that two hundred he meant to have,—as soon as possible, too.

"Steve's all right, ain't he? What's the matter with Steve? Now cut out this blubberin'." Kathleen's lips were trembling in a colorless face, her eyes big and bright with the tears she was forcing to remain unshed. She knew the resources of this brute of a father which an inscrutably unkind Providence had inflicted upon her.

Pierre, his anger mounting by leaps and bounds, glared at her, his ugly face rendered hideous by a savage snarl, his clenched hand showing white at the knuckles as he gripped the table's edge.

"O daddy, I can't, I can't!"

Kathleen's restraint had broken down under this unexpected and crushing blow. She sank down in a chair at the side of the table, and buried her lovely head in her hands, her body shaken with convulsive sobs.

This weakening aroused all the half-latent brute in Godard. With a savage curse, he seized Kathleen by the hair, dragging her face up from the table, and with the back of the other hand dealt her several cruel and heavy blows.

She sank, as she shrank away, to the floor, a shuddering heap of misery and pain.

Pierre rose, his anger partially allayed, and looked down at her. He kicked her, but lightly, in the side.

"Get up out of that, an' get to hell out of here and clean yourself up. Steve's comin' in about noon, an' I'm goin' to tell him it's all set for him. Don't you dast do nothin' to spoil it, neither, you hear? Now git up, an' beat it along an' get yourself prettied up."

He seized her roughly by the shoulder, dragged her to her feet, and shoved her through the door into the hallway.

Upstairs in her tiny little room, she lay across the bed, bruised and shaken, trying to collect her wits. One refuge and one only occurred to her, for even under the stress of this unexpected manifestation of her father's known brutality she had no idea of giving in to his demand and receiving Steve Benham as a suitor.

Trembling, shaken in every fiber of her delicate body, but with her almost unformulated resolve burning within her like a bright, strong flame, she dragged herself resolutely to her feet, and began painfully to change her clothes. She had decided to go to Father Tracy for protection.

An hour later, very softly, she crept downstairs. It was past 10 o'clock, and she would have to manage to elude her mother. Her brothers and sister had not been about the house, she remembered, since their breakfast time. Her mother would be below. She had been out in the chicken-yard when her father had come into the kitchen for his breakfast. He had gone out immediately after she had come upstairs, probably to report progress to Benham! She shuddered, and crept down the stairs like a mouse.

She could hear her mother aimlessly pottering about in the kitchen. She slipped out of the seldom-used front door and out to the gate and along the road. As she turned the first corner, she met her sister

Eunice, walking beside one of the town-boys.

"Where you goin' all dressed up?" enquired Eunice, her pert face alive with interest in this unexpected apparition of Kathleen in her best dress and Sunday hat. Kathleen bit her lip. This was a wholly unexpected, an entirely unavoidable, misfortune. She was utterly unused to deceit. The truth was her only resource.

"I have to go over to Villanova to see Father Tracy," she replied simply. Eunice's eyes opened wide in astonishment. She said nothing, and Kathleen, walking as rapidly as she could, passed the couple and continued on her way.

It was not until noon that Eunice arrived home, and Kathleen, with two hours' start, could not be overtaken.

GODARD, on hearing of his daughter's destination, was, for the time being, nonplussed. He would have to think this over. It was a wholly unexpected move on Kathleen's part. Cursing her in his black heart, he betook himself, accompanied by a fresh bottle of Levine's commodity, to the barn, and spent the afternoon in consultation with the bottle.

About 5 o'clock, having had a brief nap, and awaking in an uglier mood than ever, he came back to the house for another bottle, and with that he disappeared until dark. He did not come into the house for his supper, and to the summons of his son Ernest he replied only with such fervent curses that Ernest, edified, returned to the house to warn the rest of the family to leave the "old man" alone.

About 10 o'clock, alone, he set out in his Ford car. The family heard him go, but this meant nothing to them. They were used to his blind rages and to his goings and comings at all hours.

Exercising that kind of low cun-

ning which he had inherited from his disreputable ancestors and which had served him well in his many evasions of the officers of the law of the State of New York, he did not drive through the neighboring small village where Kathleen had met her sister walking, but took a devious way through obscure mountain roads to Villanova, the larger town which lay several miles inland from the lake shore and where Father Tracy lived.

He left his Ford several rods up a wood road at the foot of a mountain near the edge of the town, and threaded his way through the more obscure streets in the direction of the rectory.

Very few people were abroad, but when he arrived at the edge of the back-yard of the parochial residence he observed with a certain satisfaction that the house was lighted in what he supposed to be the pastor's study on the first floor.

He had brought the automatic pistol which always accompanied his professional journeys over the Canadian border, but his ride in the pure Adirondack night air, and the necessity for concentration in driving over the rough mountain roads, had dissipated the effects of the two bottles of cut whisky which he had consumed, to that degree that as he approached the house with murder in his black heart, he did so with all the native cunning he possessed keyed to the last notch, and, indeed, in a state of almost preternatural caution. But within him, unleashed, burned the evil fires of rage, disappointment, and hatred against his daughter and this good priest, which had scared and hardened his evil soul to the point where he would stop at nothing.

Under the stress of this stimulation, he decided suddenly not to use the pistol, and he looked about the yard for a suitable weapon. The

devil placed one to his hand. There, near the back porch, lay an ideal club, a section of thin gas-pipe left that very day by the local plumber who had fitted a new section to the hand-pump which supplied the kitchen. He picked up the pipe, which was about two feet in length, and balanced it in his hand, a devilish grin contorting his bleared features.

Very softly he approached the house on the side which lay in shadow, and took his stand under the lighted study window. Cautiously he raised himself to a level with the lower edge of the window, and peered through the transverse aperture left by an imperfectly pulled-down shade.

Kathleen sat with her back to him, within two feet of the open window. On the other side of the table sat the priest. Kathleen was speaking. He craned his neck to listen, his teeth now, unconsciously, bared.

"I think it would be better for me to go to the convent out there in the West, Father," she was saying, "for as you say, the farther away I go the safer I would feel."

The priest made some reply, of acquiescence and approval, unintelligible to Godard, who was now busily engaged in removing with the delicate touch of a repairer of watches, the fasteners from the wire screen which separated him from his prey.

It came out in his hands without a sound, and before the priest had finished his remark, Godard was in the room. Cursing frenziedly, though still softly, for he was still under the influence of his cautious obsession, he sprang like a tiger through the window, and with one terrific blow had crushed his daughter's lovely head like an eggshell.

Father Tracy, overcome with horror and momentarily helpless in the face of this berserk attack out of the calm mediocrity of his side-yard, was the next victim. With unspeak-

able blasphemies on his crusted lips, foam in the corners of his mouth, Godard was upon him, and the iron bar fell again and again until all human semblance was gone and a heap of huddled pulp on the rapidly crimsoning floor of his quiet study was all that remained mortal of the kindly priest of God.

Then, shivering under the fearful reaction of his holocaust, Godard, exercising the last remaining power of the stimulation of his low cunning, blew out the lamp, and as silently as a shadow slipped out through the opened window onto the grass beneath.

HE TURNED back along the shadow of the house, but before he had reached the open yard behind, he bethought him abruptly of the detached wire screen which he had left leaning against the side of the house. He returned, catlike, and busied himself with refastening it. Just as he snicked home the last of the four patent fasteners, footsteps approached along the sidewalk from the farther side of the house, and he crouched like an animal against the side of the house in deep, protecting shadow. The footsteps, accompanied by two unconstrained voices, -and punctuated by raucous laughs, continued past the house. Godard held his breath until it seemed to burn within his breast, and, furtively, catlike, watched with unwinking, small eyes the two uncertainly-outlined figures pass the house. At last they were gone, and noiselessly he slipped again along the side of the house in the protecting shadow, and disappeared in the tangle of weeds at the end of the yard.

Again, by back streets, he threaded his way tortuously toward the mountain road where he had concealed his car. As he stepped cautiously out onto the main road which led into the village of Villanova, he

almost ran into two large men who were standing, smoking silently, at the roadside. Involuntarily he stopped, and the two turned toward him. A blinding flash dazzled his eyes as one of the men turned the gleam of an electric flashlight in the direction of the furtive shape which had broken in upon their meditation. At once Godard was recognized.

It was the two men who had passed the rectory while he was replacing the wire screen in the window. Both hailed him by name.

"What you a-doin' 'way out here this time o' night, Pierre?" came the full bass of Martin Delaney.

"Goshamighty! Thought you was a ghost or somep'n!" It was the squeaky voice of Louis Le Grand.

Shaking in abject terror, the stimulation of his blood-lust entirely dissipated and no longer supporting him, Pierre Godard could only stand, his knees shaking and knocking, and goggle back at his interlocutors. At last, after the passage of several moments, and a new look, one of curiosity, had implanted itself on the faces of the two countrymen. Godard managed to gasp, in a dry throaty voice, not at all like his own, something about a piece of business here in Villanova; and not waiting to ascertain what effect his unusual preoccupation might have upon Delaney and Le Grand, he hastened at a kind of shambling trot down the main road toward his hidden car.

Both Delaney and Le Grand were very much mystified at Godard's unusual behavior. The two cronies, commonly bereft of all but the usual topics of local conversation, which were anything but interesting, made the most of this mild mystery. Therefore it was very firmly implanted in their rather obtuse minds that there could be only one possible author of the horrible crime which had been committed in the rectory, when the

little town buzzed and seethed with it the next morning.

By 10 o'clock of that Friday, a posse was out after Godard, under the direction of a deputy sheriff and equipped with three automobiles, and had traced him as far as Willsboro Point by an imperfection in one of his tires, when the search was abruptly terminated by finding the car itself, which he had abandoned at the side of the Point road, at the intersection of another road which led down to the shore of the lake. It did not require more than the very average intelligence of deputy sheriff Maclear to come to the obvious conclusion that he had got across the lake and into Vermont, a conclusion corroborated by the statement of an irate resident camper who had been searching during the past hour and a half for a missing St. Lawrence skiff in which the camper had planned to go perch-fishing that morning, and which could nowhere be discovered.

The posse drove back to Willsboro station, and notified the Vermont authorities at Burlington, by telegraph. Then deputy sheriff Maclear reported to his superior, who got in touch with Albany asking requisition papers on the governor of the State of Vermont for a fugitive who had, the night before, brutally murdered his own daughter and a blameless priest of God.

But the Vermont authorities, although they took due action upon the telegraphed information, which contained an exact description of Godard, failed signally to get on the track of the fugitive from justice who had left the New York shore, unmistakably, from Willsboro Point. Every usual precaution was taken, and for some time it was surmised that Godard, familiar with the lake shores from a lifetime of contiguous residence and from his professional activities as a rum-runner, had man-

aged to land on the Vermont side and make his escape into the mountains. The greatest puzzle was what could have become of that St. Lawrence skiff which he had discovered so opportunely.

Some of the clearer-headed of those who set themselves to solve this problem came to the conclusion that Godard, desiring to conceal from his pursuers the point of his departure inland in Vermont, had scuttled the boat near the shore's edge, which he could easily have managed, either by smashing a hole or two after landing, weighting down the skiff with rocks, and shoving her out into the deep waters of the lake; or by doing the scuttling before landing, and swimming ashore. At any rate there was, on the Vermont side, no trace either of the fugitive or of the delicate little vessel in which he had left the New York side.

AS GODARD sped away from the vicinity of Villanova it required from him every particle of concentration he could summon to drive at all. He opened up his dingy little car, which had, despite its battered appearance, an excellent engine, and hitting the high spots of the twining, rough mountain roads, he concentrated every effort in the blind urge to put as many miles as possible between himself and the scene of his horrible crime.

It was only when after several miles of incredible bumping and swaying he had reached a State road, that a definite objective for his flight began to take form in his harassed and befuddled mind. As he gave fragmentary thought to this pressing problem, something of his native low-cunning reasserted itself. His evil mind began to function. It first became plain to him that he could not return to his squalid home. He had been seen, and recognized.

His one hope was that the crushed and mangled bodies of his unfortunate victims might not be discovered until morning.

There was no good reason why they should be discovered. The priest, as he knew very well, lived alone except for a superannuated old woman who was his housekeeper, and this ancient crone had unquestionably retired for the night long before his arrival in Villanova. Being ancient, and decrepit, she could be trusted to sleep through everything until morning. Barring a night-call for Father Tracy, the chances were excellent that the bodies would not be discovered until sometime the next morning. It was now a little after midnight. It would be light around 4 o'clock. He had something like four hours to work in.

He speeded up the car along the lake shore southward. He would go "up the lake" — as the southerly direction, for some inexplicable reason, was called, locally — away from Canada. Canada had been his first lucid thought; but that, as he reasoned cunningly, would necessitate a wide detour or else passing through Plattsburg, and he wished to risk neither the loss of time, nor the dash through a good-sized city, even at 1 o'clock in the morning. Therefore he turned south, in the direction of Essex.

As he neared Willsboro, the town just north of Essex, a brand-new idea occurred to him. By abandoning his car somewhere hereabouts, he could get an earlier start for crossing the lake into Vermont. With every mile he traveled, the lake narrowed, but straight across from Willsboro it would be only four miles, and, he reasoned, he would rather be out on the lake in the dim dusk of early morning than attempting to conceal his car and steal a boat in anything approaching daylight.

Some early-morning fisherman would be sure to see him!

A little past the Willsboro railroad station, therefore, his idea having begotten another, in his cunning brain, this time something in the nature of an inspiration, he turned his car sharply to the left, grinning evilly as he acted upon his newest hunch, and ran back, nearly at right angles with his previous course, down upon Willsboro Point. This is a peninsula, several miles in length, running northeasterly—a section of fine farmland in the center, its two shores thickly populated by summer campers, city people for the most part. No one, pursuing, would ever imagine that he had turned off, he reasoned. Besides, the city people at the camps had canoes, and in a canoe, from somewhere near the Point's end, he could, with the greatest ease, make his unseen way out to one of the Four Brother Islands, conceal the canoe in some dense thicket of underbrush, and effectually hide out. There were, too, lake-gulls' eggs in abundance on the islands, and no one would suspect, until it was too late, that he had done otherwise than attempt to make his escape, either into Canada (his own first idea) or across the lake into Vermont.

The car was his immediate problem, but there was no way of solving that. There was, as he well knew, no water along the shore deep enough to permit his sending it at full speed over the edge into the lake, and so hiding it effectually.

He left it directly in the road, and slunk down to the lake shore at his right in search of a canoe.

His luck held. At the very first camp he reached he found not only canoes but a St. Lawrence skiff, a staunch type of boat, round-bottomed, sharp-nosed at both ends, a boat capable, like a canoe, of being managed with a light paddle, but although equally fast, infinitely

stauncher and less dangerous than any canoe.

Silently he launched out into the lake, and with swift, yet noiseless paddle-strokes shot his stolen skiff out into the black darkness in the direction of the Four Brothers. . . .

These islands, "*Les Isles des Quatre Vents*" of the *voyageurs*, are old haunts of the lake smugglers. They lie, from the viewpoint of one approaching them directly from the Point shore, in the order of a mouth, nose, and two eyes, roughly speaking. The nearest, called "the mouth," was sighted after a few minutes of vigorous paddling by Godard, who passed it to the right or southerly direction. It had upon it a cabin, former residence of the keeper of the gulls, which are protected by state law. Godard was not looking for the comforts of cabins! He passed "the nose," a low-lying, swampy island, and paddled on to the island which would correspond to the left eye. This, the most rarely visited of the islands, infested with gulls, presents, like its fellow "eye," a precipitous shore all around, and is heavily forested with evergreens and thick, virgin underbrush.

GUIDED precisely by the noise of the gulls, which are constantly bickering, and then by his own keen eyesight, Godard carefully navigated the little island, finally landing and drawing the skiff into a tiny bay which was little more than a cleft in the guano-covered rocks. He concealed the skiff, despite the darkness, with immense cleverness, and began the difficult ascent of the cliff.

At last, bruised, spent, and befouled with guano, he reached the summit, and half walked, half crawled through the tangled underbrush toward the almost impenetrable center.

In his ascent he had disturbed countless nesting gulls, and their din,

to his strained and tautened nerves, was distracting, but the increased noise did not trouble him. The gulls were always at it, day and night, and such an increase would not be heard a mile and a half away on the sleeping Point. It was, curiously enough, the spider webs that really annoyed him. Undisturbed for centuries, these midnight spinners had worked and spun and plundered the air without hindrance.

As Godard pushed his precipitous way up the rocks and then again through the almost impenetrable underbrush, he was constantly brushing away long, clinging webs, which crossed and recrossed before his face and neck, and about his scratched and bleeding hands and wrists.

As he penetrated farther and farther toward the slightly conical center of the little island, it seemed to him that both the restraining pressure and the clinging tenacity of the webs were on the increase, but his native wit assured him that this impression was due to his fatigue and the reaction from the enormous amount of bad whisky he had imbibed during the afternoon.

He was, indeed, in the very depths of reactive depression. He cursed softly and bitterly, with a despairing note of self-pity, as the webs, ever thicker and stronger, as it seemed, appeared almost to reach out after him, to bar his way to effectual concealment.

At last, trembling in every limb, the salt sweat running into his parched mouth, shaking and weak, he observed that he was stepping slightly downhill. His progress since leaving the upper edge of the cliff had been slightly ascending. He had reached the approximate center of the island.

Wearily he paused, and almost sobbing out his bitter curses, tore fretfully, with trembling fingers, at

a great mass of thick, silky web that had attached itself to his mouth.

As he looked about him through the darkness, and felt with his hands for a comparatively level place on which to sit down, he almost shrieked. He had put his hand down on something feathery, soft, and yielding to the touch. He looked, horrified, at the ground. Gibbering in mortal terror, he drew a box of matches from his pocket, and, cupping his hands, cautiously drew one across the side of the box. The flare of the safety-match revealed something white. He looked closer, stooping near the ground and carefully guarding the flame of his match, and he saw that it was the body of a gull.

Something, he thought, something that seemed as big as his two fists, scampered away through the underbrush, awkwardly, a lumpish kind of thing. A mink, or weasel, his reason reassured him.

The match went out, burning his fingers, and a pall of sudden blackness fell upon him. Terrified, less moved with the caution of a lifelong habitude for concealment, now, he struck another match and examined the gull by its yellow flare.

From the bird's throat ran two thin streams of blood. The blood stained his hands as he picked it up. The gull was warm, living. It struggled, sinuously, faintly, in his hands. All about it, about its head and about its legs, and pinning its powerful wings close to its side, ran great, silken swaths of spider's web. The gull muttered, squeakingly, and writhed weakly between his hands. With a scream he could not suppress he hurled it from him and attempted to rush away from this place of horror.

But now, weakened by his exertions, his forces sapped by long debauchery, his nerves jangling from the terrific stress he had put upon them that night, he could not run.

All about him the underbrush closed in, it seemed to him, as though bent malignantly upon imprisoning him here among these nameless, silent, spinning demons which had destroyed the gull.

He had hurled his matches away with that same flinging motion begotten of his horror. It was utterly impossible to recover them now.

The thick blackness had closed down upon him again at the burning out of the second match. He could feel the blood suffuse his entire body, and then recede, leaving him cold. He shivered, as he suddenly felt the sweat cold against his sodden body. Chill after chill raced down his spine. He whimpered and called suddenly upon God, the forgotten God of his erratic childhood.

But God, it seemed, had no answer for him. A soft touch came delicately upon the back of his clenched right hand. Something soft, clinging and silky, passed around it. Suddenly he shrieked again, and spasmodically tore his hand loose. But even as he struggled to free his hand, a terrible pain seared his leg, a pain as though he had stepped under water upon a sting-ray; a pain as though a red-hot poniard had been thrust far into his calf; and then something soft and clinging fell upon his head and he could feel the thick strands of silk being woven remorselessly through his hair and about his ears. . . .

As he sank to the ground, his consciousness rapidly waning, the first **clinging**, composite, deliberate strands went across his eyes. His last conscious thought was of his daughter Kathleen's soft, silky hair. . . .

IT WAS not until nearly two weeks later that the skiff came to light, when four large rowboats slowly approached *Les Isles des Quatre Vents* from the direction of the lake side of the base of the Point. Crowded into

the boats were the boys from Camp Cherokee making one of their annual boat-hikes to the four islands. Their course naturally brought them first to the island which has been called "The Left Eye."

The St. Lawrence skiff, loosened from its primitive fastenings by a heavy storm which had intervened, had slipped out several feet from its concealing underbrush.

"Oh, look! Somebody's out here already!" shouted a sharp-eyed youngster in the bow of the foremost rowboat.

"Can't we land here, Mr. Tanner?" asked one of the older boys when all eyes had sought out and discovered the skiff. "We have plenty of time. Nobody ever comes to this island, they say, and most of us saw the others last year."

Consulting his watch, his mind on lunch ashore, the counselor in charge of the boat-hike gave his consent, and the four rowboats drew in close to the spot where Godard had made his landing. Mr. Tanner looked closely at the skiff.

"I shouldn't be a bit surprized," he remarked, slowly, "if that were the skiff that was stolen from down on the Point a couple of weeks ago!"

The boys chattered excitedly while the boats lay off the shore of "The Left Eye," Mr. Tanner considering. It was not impossible that the murderer, Godard, lay concealed on this island! No one had hitherto thought of such a possibility.

Mr. Tanner came to a conclusion, after rapid thought. He would take the skiff, thus cutting off the murderer (if indeed he were concealed on the island) from any probable escape. So far it appeared a clear course.

Two reliable, older boys, placed in charge of the salvaged skiff, returned it to its owners, who promptly telephoned the sheriff.

Mr. Tanner conducted his protesting flotilla across to the island which

has been called "The Mouth"—the island on which stood the hut, and where the boys' temporary camp-site had been planned. The oars moved reluctantly, for the boys wanted to land and "hunt the murderer." Mr. Tanner, whose responsibility lay in another direction than the apprehension of criminals, preferred to proceed according to schedule.

Two hours later a laden rowboat put off from the Point and approached The Four Brothers. The watching boys, thus, as it were, augmented by the authorities, could be restrained no longer.

Mr. Tanner was able to manage it so that his four rowboats followed the official rowboat to "The Left Eye." Beyond that he could not control his Indians!

The boys nearly swamped their boats in their eagerness to disembark. . . .

In the end it was one of them who did, actually, discover Godard's remains.

"Gosh!" the rest heard him shout. "Look here, everybody! Here's a thing like a mummy!"

The spot was soon surrounded, the more agile boys distancing the slower-moving sheriff and constables.

Godard's body, easily identifiable from its clothing, lay, or, more precisely, hung, in the thickest tangle of all the tangled bushes and brush which made the central, highest point of the little island almost impenetrable. At first sight, it gave the impression of a bundle of clothes rather than a human body. It was, as the boy had cried out, virtually a mummy, though sodden through the dragged clothes (which Godard's progress through the tearing brush had greatly disarranged) by the effects of the heavy storm which had revealed the skiff.

It gave the appearance of a human body which, as though by some long process of time, had dried up to a

mere fraction of its original bulk. It swayed, held free of the ground by the heavy brush, in the brisk breeze which was blowing "up the lake" from the cold north.

The grayish appearance of this strange simulacrum of a human form, which at first puzzled the men when they approached to disengage it from the tangled bushes, was found to be due to innumerable heavy strands of broad opalescent silky webbing, webbing which had been wound about the head, about the hands and arms and legs, webbing now frayed and torn in places by the wind and the friction of the bushes.

One of the constables, a heavy, rather brutal-faced person, pulled at it and rubbed it from his hands on his canvas overalls.

"Looks for all the world like spider web," he remarked laconically. "What d'you s'pose it can be, Herb?" addressing the deputy sheriff in charge.

Herb Maclear, the sheriff, pushed his way through the brush close to the body. He, too, examined the web, touching it gingerly with his finger, and then rubbing his finger as though something uncanny, unwholesome, had touched him. The boys, sensing something dreadful, fell silent. Several pushed their way toward Mr. Tanner, and stood near him.

Maclear, pale now, stooped and seemed to be looking at something near the ground. "Gimme that stick!" he ordered. One of the constables handed him what he demanded, and with it the sheriff poked at something on the ground. Their curiosity overcoming the general sense of something queer about the whole proceeding, several of the boys and two of the constables shouldered through the brush toward the sheriff, now digging with his stick, his face red again from stooping and his exertions.

Those standing nearest observed that the sheriff was enlarging a hole that ran into the ground near the heavy root of one of the bushes, a hole about which were heavy warps of the same gray, shimmering web.

The stick broke through a soft spot, and sank far into the enlarged hole.

"My God!" they heard the sheriff say.

He played delicately with the stick, as though working at something that the ground obscured. He twisted and worked it about in the hole.

At last he drew it up, still carefully, gingerly.

And on its end, transfixed, there came into the light of that morning a huge, frightful, maimed thing, of satiny, loathsome black, like the fur of a bat, with glowing salmon-colored

striping showing upon its hunched back—a spider as large as a prize peach, with great, waving, now ineffective, metal-like mandibles. They saw its little burning eyes like harsh diamonds gleam once, before the sheriff, holding it on the ground with his stick, set his foot on the dreadful thing.

The wind blew cold from the north as the men, in a tight knot, half dragged, half carried the meager body of Pierre Godard hastily out through the retarding brush in silence, while a subdued and silent group of boys, closely gathered about their white-faced counselor, hurried down the declivity toward the edge of the cliff, below which they could see their boats, floating down there in the clean water.