

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 31                      CONTENTS FOR JANUARY, 1938                      Number 1

Cover Design . . . . .	M. Brundage	
<i>"The Witch's Mark"—"He saw behind the loveliness that was hers, and knew her for a witch"</i>		
"Her Demon-Lover" . . . . .	Virgil Finlay	1
<i>Illustration of a passage in Coleridge's "Kubla Khan"</i>		
The Witch's Mark . . . . .	Dorothy Quick	3
<i>Shamus O'Brien risked his very soul for the red lips of Cecily Maltby—a strange and curious tale</i>		
The Canal . . . . .	H. P. Lovecraft	20
<i>Verse</i>		
The House of Living Music . . . . .	Edmond Hamilton	21
<i>A tragic weird-scientific tale about a composer who could re-create all visible things in sound</i>		
Roads . . . . .	Seabury Quinn	30
<i>A reverent weird tale of Yuletide and the Crucifixion, and a gladiator from the Northland</i>		
The Hairy Ones Shall Dance . . . . .	Gans T. Field	53
<i>A tale of terror and sudden death, and the frightful thing that laired in the Devil's Croft</i>		
Toean Matjan . . . . .	Vennette Herron	70
<i>A story of Java, and the incredible thing that the natives implicitly believe</i>		
The Voyage of the Neutralia (end) . . . . .	B. Wallis	77
<i>An epic of weird adventure and a strange cruise to other planets</i>		
Lost Dream . . . . .	Emil Petaja	96
<i>Verse, in memory of the late H. P. Lovecraft</i>		
The Light Was Green . . . . .	John R. Speer	97
<i>A brief weird railroad story by the author of "Symphony of the Damned"</i>		
Valley of Bones . . . . .	David H. Keller	102
<i>What weird tragedy took place in that African graveyard of a murdered people?</i>		
The Third Interne . . . . .	Idwal Jones	106
<i>A brief tale of a surgical horror in the Asiatic wastes of northern Russia</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
Ethan Brand . . . . .	Nathaniel Hawthorne	110
<i>A chapter from an abortive romance</i>		
The Eyrie . . . . .		122
<i>Our readers discuss the magazine</i>		

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 East 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 rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English office: Otis A. Kline, c/o John Paradise, 86 Strand, W. C. 2, 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 1938, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.  
COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

# The Light Was Green

By JOHN RAWSON SPEER

*A brief weird story by the author of "Symphony of the Damned"  
and "The Carnal God"*

**S**UDDEN madness at seventy miles an hour! Alone in the cab of a locomotive with a madman. Will Bryant, the engineer of the Fire Flyer, was insane. But why?

What had suddenly turned this man I had worked with for over six years, and had known as a quiet, steady-going person, into the raving madman I now saw before me?

His eyes violent, his face contorted with fear, he was cowering there in the cab, pleading with some invisible presence. For a paralyzing instant I felt that presence. But there was no time to lose. As the fireman of the Fire Flyer, I would have to assume Will's responsibility. There was no time to ask questions. I had to get to the throttle of that locomotive.

As I rushed to him from my side of the cab, he suddenly seized a shovel and struck me over the head. Blood trickled into my eyes, blurring my vision, and then I slipped away into unconsciousness with only a fading but horrible picture of Will Bryant, insane.

What happened after that in the cab of that engine, pulling a train-load of passengers seventy miles an hour, terrifies me constantly.

When I regained my senses after the blow Will had given me, I found him staring at the steam gage, and gibbering like an idiot. The air was set on the brakes, and the Flyer was pulled in alongside the main track, waiting for Number 93 to pass her.

W. T.—7

I must have been unconscious for fully fifteen minutes. During that time the Fire Flyer had thundered on her way with no one at the throttle—unless it was, as Will Bryant swears, the spirit of Nat Carson. Nat Carson had been dead for ten years!

There was nothing to do but turn Will over to the authorities, who committed him to an asylum.

Although I had been his closest friend, there were things in his life which he had never mentioned, even to me. The doctors, after much deliberation, decided remorse, coupled with a deep sense of guilt, had caused Will to have this intense belief in the return of the dead. I followed their theories with interest, and for some time believed that he would eventually realize that only his worry-ridden mind had produced the sight he claimed he saw in the cab that night.

But I know now that Will Bryant will never recover. The last visit I had with him made me see how hopeless it was. Some of the fear that comes to lock him in delirious madness now attaches itself to me.

I can still see him, the way he looked that last day I talked to him in Terrington Asylum; his eyes dull, a hopeless sorrow showing from within them as he said:

"Steve, I am sane, as sane as any man, but I can never take my place in normal society again. Don't you think I have tried to convince myself that there was nothing unnatural about that night? I've

gone over every detail of the affair, but the result is always the same: Nat Carson, dead though he may have been, sat in the cab of our engine; he pulled that train, and I know what he intended to do. I know, Steve! He was there. I saw him, I tell you. I did! I did!"

"Will, please!" I gripped his shaking hands and held them tightly. "Don't talk or think about it if it disturbs you. I only want to help you. I want to see you well again so that you can leave this place."

Will shook his head sadly.

"I don't want to leave here now, Steve. I feel safer here where they can watch me at night. I have a room here, Steve, where there are no train whistles blasting in my ears.

"Steve, I'm going to tell you everything, just as I see it. They call me crazy, but that is because they have no other term for my affliction. It is not really insanity; 'haunted' is the word.

**Y**OU remember hearing about the train wreck I was in ten years ago? As you know, Nat Carson was the engineer who allowed his train to run by a signal supposed to be set against him. I was firing for him then. See these scars on my arms—all from that wreck. We crashed through the rear of a freight train, plowed through a chain of box-cars as if they had been mere cigar boxes. Both of us missed death for no other reason than that it wasn't our time to go.

"At the Board of Investigation, I told them what I believed I should. I told them that Nat had been drinking a little. He did take chances, unforgivable chances like that. I used to warn him that some day he would be caught. Nat could be drunk and still not show it. Of course the fact that I was in love with his girl and had never really liked him had something to do with my testimony.

"At the trial he claimed he saw the signal as green. He swore the red signal set against us was green, and that I was a liar. 'You're sending me to hell!' he cried. But I stuck to my testimony.

"You know the rest; two weeks later Nat Carson killed himself. I tried to believe like all the others that he had done it because he realized the crime he had committed in risking the lives of all those passengers.

"The years went on. I was promoted to engineer, a regular 'hog head' with my own train to pull. I seldom thought of Nat any more; only when stories of that wreck were recalled would I think of him. That was only natural.

"Not until one night in the yards, years later, did I come face to face with what has doomed me. I had checked my engine over to the round-house hostler and was walking across to the dispatcher's shack. The steam and smoke from the trains was all mixed up with the fog that was settling down over the yards. Brakemen's lanterns were bobbing in and out among the cars. You know how it is on foggy nights in the yards. I wasn't paying much attention to anything when, out of that fog, a face leered at me, then vanished. It was quick, so quick that, although I was frightened, I did not believe I had actually seen it. Surely I had only imagined that I saw Nat Carson.

"'What am I thinking about?' I asked myself; even laughed a little. 'Must be seeing ghosts,' I said, and went on into the dispatcher's office.

"I didn't think any more about it. That's how much it meant to me then. People are often imagining that they see faces of those who are dead. They're like flashes, quick pictures from the subconscious mind.

"Two nights later, at the other end of the run, I saw a figure walking toward me. I noticed it particularly because it

seemed intent upon walking right through me. It was under a street lamp on the corner near my home. This time it did not disappear, and there was no doubt in my mind as to who it was. He stood there sneering at me, Steve! I couldn't move or talk as he eyed me with contempt, moved around me, and finally walked on down the street.

"All that night I tried to tell myself that it was only my imagination playing tricks. But why should it?

"For weeks I would see Nat Carson, always at night, usually in the yards or around my home. It was then that I began thinking of the testimony I had given at the Board of Investigation.

"That Nat Carson was trying to communicate with me from beyond the borders of this life seemed the only conclusion to draw. That he was accusing me of his death, there was no doubt.

"The last night before the thing really happened, I was looking at a green switch-lantern. A voice whispered in my ear: 'It's green! Green like the night we crashed that freight. Green, I tell you!'

"I turned and saw Nat Carson's face. I called out to him, but he turned and ran. From then on I could feel his presence all around me.

"You remember how you looked at me when I climbed into the cab that last night I took the run, Steve? I felt that somewhere on that train Nat Carson was hiding, waiting to confront me. Just before we pulled out I was on the verge of getting out of the cab and leaving the train.

"'A-b-o-a-r-d!' I heard the conductor drawl. From force of habit, I started my train.

"SLOW at first (I never jerked the Flyer, you know that), easy, evenly we started. I dreaded to see the lights from the station moving by. Gradually faster, yard lights, crossings, twinkling stars—green signals—open country! The Fire Flyer was on its way.

"The headlight's gleaming spear of silver shot through the darkness; wheels clicked over track joints; a crossing whistled by. She was rolling smoothly, powerfully on.

"'Green!' I called to you from my side of the cab when I saw the signal.

"'Green!' you answered back to me when you saw it. And from somewhere I heard that damned voice: 'It's green, green like that night we crashed into that freight!'

"I tried to control myself, tried to throw out the thoughts that were crowding into my brain. But as we rolled along, I found myself thinking: 'This *is* like the night we went through those box-cars!'

"Again I felt that cold breath upon my neck, eyes peering into my back. I turned, but no one was there—only the swaying coaches, and you down on the bridge tending your fire.

"Pulling myself together again, I peered straight ahead at the glistening track. Another green signal! 'Nat! Nat!' Each clack of steel upon steel seemed to sing out, 'Nat! Nat!'

"Again that voice, the feeling of his presence behind me. I wanted to cry out, to stop the train, and search for that voice. Conscience? I tried to tell myself that it should not bother me. Why didn't he leave me alone to run my train? I wasn't fit to highball a fast locomotive over the road with such voices, such icy breaths upon my back.

"Gladly I welcomed the lights of a

station, the first station on the run. I wanted to climb down out of the cab and remain there. Something horrible, I knew, lay ahead of me on that lone stretch of track. It was impossible to confess to you how I felt. Words would not come to me, Steve.

"Miles yet ahead, miles of torture. Would daylight never come? Perhaps that might drive away the awful fear.

"Speeding again in the country, only the lights from the interlocker towers five miles apart, only an occasional farmhouse with a lonely lamp lit. Shadows on the hills, creeping shadows, and that chilling breath, that voice: 'Green! It was green!'"

"This time the voice seemed louder, much more real and certain. Only by sheer force of mind could I keep my back turned to it.

"It came again! I had to look. A grim, awful-looking face was staring at me from the tender. I swear it was Nat Carson, and he spoke to me. Somehow I mumbled the words: 'Nat, where in God's name did you come from?'"

"'From the blinds maybe,' he laughed. 'Maybe I been ridin' 'em all night waitin' for this little stretch of track. Ten years since we rode side by side in the cab of an engine, ain't it? Ten years ago tonight we were ridin' along this same old road, you an' me. Only difference was that I was settin' at the throttle and you was tossin' coal into the belly of the old hog.

"'Watchin' your signals, pal? Crack train you're pullin' now. How's it feel to be settin' there watchin' the drivers go up and down?'"

"He moved toward me. I screamed because I couldn't help it. I wanted to beat out the sight of that leering face. It must have been at that time that I struck you with the shovel, Steve, although I do

not remember that. All I know is that Nat Carson, who was dead, who had been dead all those years, was now climbing onto my seat in the cab. Nothing I could do would make him go away.

"I saw him climb up onto the seat and take hold of the throttle. He said, 'I'm pullin' this train tonight. She's my train again!'"

"I tried to push him away. 'Nat, you're crazy!' I cried.

"'Crazy!' He laughed as his fingers pulled the throttle out, and the locomotive bellowed with the force of steam driving its wheels on to greater speed.

"'Yes, crazy! I've been crazy ever since that night when I saw the signal green. Then those cars . . . remember how we piled into 'em? Remember how the old 789 looked when she bit through that "crumm," plowed off the track, and dug her pilot into the dirt? Remember!'"

"'Nat, watch those signals!' I begged. 'Let me up there, Nat. Take your punishment out on me, but don't risk the lives of others.'

"The Flyer hit a sharp curve, bounced uncertainly from side to side a moment, then fled madly down the track.

"'Ten years ago,' Nat began slowly, 'ten years ago we both saw that signal green. But you lied! You lied to make me lose my job, to lose Lucille because you wanted her, and because you hated me. You told them about my drinking. In every way you put the blame of that wreck upon my soul. I thought I could escape it when I sought death, but it was still there. And now you're going to pay for every moment of doubt and torture. Tonight we celebrate the tenth anniversary of that wreck!'"

"'What are you going to do?' I asked hoarsely.

"'What am I going to do? He gave

the throttle another pull. 'I'm going to pull the Flyer tonight. Somewhere along this road there's a red signal set against us, and we're going by it, seventy miles an hour we're going by it!'

"'No, Nat! No! You can't do this!'

"'Seventy, eighty miles an hour we're going by it,' he chanted. 'And then, if you live, try to tell the Board of Investigation why you went by that danger signal. Try to tell them that a man who has been dead for ten years forced you to run by that signal. Listen to them laugh as you tell your crazy story. See the doubt on their faces as I saw it when I tried to tell them the signal was green.'

"Giving the throttle one final jerk, he sent the locomotive roaring like some wounded animal charging blindly to its own destruction.

"He sang out: 'The Flyer to Hell! No signals—clear track! Red means green, and green means nothing. A dead man at the throttle, pulling the fastest train that ever polished steel. We're on our way. We're highballing it to hell!'

"On we roared, with all those passengers slumbering in the Pullmans or chatting and talking. All of them innocently riding behind an engine headed for death—pulled by death itself!

"I closed my eyes and tried to pray. I don't know how long I stood there or what went on after that. The next thing I remember was hearing the scream of the whistle, the sound of the air being set on the brakes, the flanges biting into the wheels, and the train groaning to a stop.

"When I looked we were pulled onto a siding at Elva. Far ahead on the track beside us I could hear a train coming at full speed. It was Number 93. Before we left the last station there had been no orders to pull onto the siding to let 93 go by.

"All that time, Steve, our train had been out of our hands. You were unconscious; I was helpless. Someone pulled that train onto the siding! Who, Steve, who?"

**W**ILL was shaking now. Terror, relived, had made him a trembling, sobbing wreck.

"But, Will, if the spirit of Nat Carson intended to destroy that train, why did we find it safely side-tracked to permit another train to pass us as per changed-schedule?" I tried to reason with him, for my sake as well as his own, for now even I felt that perhaps it was true.

"There is only one answer," Will replied brokenly. "Nat Carson stopped at the last station before Elva and received orders side-tracking us. No matter what revenge he had planned for me, something would not let him kill the others. He took that train onto the siding, left it standing there, and went away; his revenge was realized. Just as I had sent him for ever from the cab of an engine, so he has sent me.

"Nat Carson pulled that train. Nat Carson's dead but he pulled that train. He still comes back to remind me that I sent him to hell! He'll come tonight, and tomorrow night, and every night of my life. Oh, God, help me!"

Will broke into uncontrollable sobbing. The attendants were rushing to him. Nothing I could say would calm him.

"Nat Carson's dead! I sent him to hell. He pulled that train. He came back to pull that train. Nat Carson returned from the dead!"

As I started to go, a thought came to me; a brilliant thought it seemed at the time. Those orders, received at the last station before the side-track at Elva, had to be signed! Will must have signed

them. Surely he had only gone into a trance of terror and imagined all he told me. If those orders were signed with Will's name they would prove everything to him. I would be able to recognize his signature no matter how shaken he might have been when he signed it.

I hurried to the station dispatcher, and, running through his orders, I found the date of Will's last run.

My heart stopped, then began beating wildly.

The signature on those orders was Nat Carson's!