

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

A MAGAZINE of the



BIZARRE and UNUSUAL

VOLUME XV

NUMBER 6

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: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeant's Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

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

FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright, 1930, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for June, 1930

- Cover Design ----- Hugh Rankin
Illustrating a scene in "The Moon of Skulls"
- The Eyrie ----- 724
A chat with the readers
- The Worm-King ----- Donald Wandrei 734
Verse; decoration by Hugh Rankin
- The Moon of Skulls (Part 1) ----- Robert E. Howard 736
An adventurous story of mystery and horror in the nightmare valley of Neguri—a tale of a mad people
- Haunted Hands ----- Jack Bradley 752
The hands of Tchianski the pianist were the hands of a killer—a gruesome story of diabolism

[CONTINUED ON NEXT PAGE]

[CONTINUED FROM PRECEDING PAGE]

- The Empty Road** ----- **Wallace West** 762
A thrilling tale about a man who was able to remember the future as well as the past
- In the Borderland** ----- **Pedro Diaz** 769
A weird story of extraordinary interest and fascination—a wholly strange tale of the electric chair
- Sonnet of Death** ----- **Edith Hurley** 776
Verse
- The Planet of Horror** ----- **Wilford Allen** 777
The weirdest interplanetary story ever written—a strange horror lurked between the planets
- The Last Incantation** ----- **Clark Ashton Smith** 783
A poetic and fanciful tale about a king who invoked the aid of magic to summon his lost love
- The Priestess of the Ivory Feet** ----- **Seabury Quinn** 787
An utterly strange story about a sinister love-cult and a kiss which meant death for him who gave it
- Across the Hall** ----- **August W. Derleth** 810
A brief and pathetic little tale is this, about a girl who could not finish writing her letter
- The Black Monarch (Conclusion)** ----- **Paul Ernst** 813
A stupendous five-part serial story of incarnate evil—a tale of an unthinkable doom hanging over mankind
- The Frog** ----- **Granville S. Hoss** 825
A peculiarly different story is this—about a scientist whose weird experiments brought disaster
- James Lamp** ----- **E. F. Benson** 829
Another fine tale by one of the best-known British writers of occult stories
- The Magic-Maker** ----- **Amelia Reynolds Long** 838
A peculiar little tale about a magician whose potions wrought strange magic
- Weird Story Reprint:**
The Rats in the Walls ----- **H. P. Lovecraft** 841
A story of cosmic horror, reprinted by popular request from WEIRD TALES of six years ago
- The Crow** ----- **Lida Wilson Turner** 856
Verse

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply Direct to

WEIRD TALES

Western Advertising Office:
HARLEY I. WARD, INC., Mgr.
340 N. Michigan Ave.
Chicago, Ill.
Phone, Central 6269

Eastern Advertising Office:
GEORGE W. STEARNS, Mgr.
Flatiron Building
New York, N. Y.
Phone, Algonquin 8326

The Magic-Maker

By AMELIA REYNOLDS LONG

MORTIMER smiled into his beard, and stirred the mixture in the crucible. "Soon he will be here, Pepin," he said to the little marmoset perched upon his shoulder; "this Hildebrandt who would have me renew his youth. . . . I knew a Hildebrandt once—back in the Golden Age when I was young. He was handsome, and his back had no hump, as mine has." His face hardened, and his voice grew bitter. "Women demand a comely face and well-formed person, Pepin."

The smart rap of a heavy stick upon oaken panels sent the echoes rocking about the vaulted ceiling. Mortimer crossed to the door, and opened it.

A man strode past him into the room. His dress paraded all the fopperies of youth, but his eyes were pouchy and his jowls were sagging. He had the unhealthy look of an old man who had spent his life in riotous living. He cast a curious glance around him, then flung his hat and gloves upon a table.

"Is it true that you have discovered the secret of youth and age, Dr. Mortimer?" he demanded abruptly.

"I told you so when I answered your letter, Lord Hildebrandt," replied Mortimer.

Hildebrandt jangled a fistful of gold pieces suggestively. "I suppose my name is not unknown to you," he remarked.

"No, it is not unknown to me." Mortimer regarded him from out the dark caverns that were his eyes. "In my youth I knew one of that name."

"What!" Hildebrandt started, and

scrutinized him sharply. His eyes rested upon the misshapen hump between Mortimer's shoulders. "You are not——?"

"But he was not a mighty lord," finished Mortimer.

Hildebrandt released his breath in a sigh of relief. The hunchback apparently had not recognized him; no more than had he, upon first entering, recognized the hunchback. A look of cunning crept across his face.

"Then your other Hildebrandt could not have given you red gold, as I can," he said with assumed carelessness; "as I will give you for—shall we say a little medicine?"

Mortimer's face was hidden as he bent over his alembic. "I do not want your gold," he said. "I am an alchemist. All I ask in return for my elixir of youth is that you tell me why you want it."

Hildebrandt laughed coarsely. "Why does any man want youth?" he returned. "Women demand a comely face and well-formed person."

"Then there is a lady concerned?" asked Mortimer.

"A beauty," answered Hildebrandt enthusiastically, "and too innocent to realize her own charm. But the old man does not please her. Ah, Mortimer, she should have known me thirty years ago!" He guffawed.

"The Hildebrandt whom I knew also loved a lady," said Mortimer. "But his love was not deep; after he had married her, he left her to die."

His visitor fidgeted uneasily. "The incident seems to have impressed

you." He strove to make his tone casual.

"The lady was she whom I was to marry," answered Mortimer.

Hildebrandt was silent. He dared not risk detection by saying more. He watched Mortimer furtively. In the red glow from the retort, the alchemist's features had become a demoniac mask. The nobleman found himself shuddering as he looked at it.

"I wonder, Dr. Mortimer," he said at last, speaking to relieve the oppressiveness of the silence, "why you do not take this elixir of youth yourself. Is it true that a doctor can not be cured by his own medicine?"

Mortimer smiled. "I do not take it because I am wise," he said. "Youth is too painful, too volcanic. Nine-tenths of our follies are committed in our youth."

"And our sins?" asked Hildebrandt idly. "When are they committed?"

"At all times," Mortimer replied gravely.

He left the room, and returned with two flagons of beaten silver.

"In one," he said, holding them up, "is the elixir of youth; in the other, that of old age. Are you sure you want youth, Lord Hildebrandt? Are you positive?"

Hildebrandt's eyes grew greedy. "Positive?" he sniggered. "Who would not be positive—for this?"

He took from around his neck a locket which he opened and handed to Mortimer. In it was the pictured face of a young girl; a face with the innocence of a child and the grace of an angel. Mortimer had once known another face like that.

"Remember," he said, holding Hildebrandt's eyes with his, "it has been wisely said that a man is most utterly damned by the fulfilment of his dearest wish."

Hildebrandt laughed. "Then let me be damned," he returned.

An instant Mortimer hesitated.

Then he closed the locket, and returned it to its owner. Uncorking one of the flagons, he poured part of its contents into a crystal beaker. The fluid scintillated like liquid emeralds.

"A pretty color," commented Hildebrandt; "the color of life."

"Two things, and two only, are green," said Mortimer; "young growing things, and festering mold." He poured the ichor into the crucible. There was a sharp report, and a puff of heavy black smoke arose and writhed its way to the brooding shadows of the ceiling. Mortimer chuckled; and the little marmoset, chattering with fear, sprang from its master's shoulder to seek safety on the ledge over the door.

Mortimer removed the alembic, and poured the hot liquid into a waiting chalice. "Drink," he said, extending it to Hildebrandt. The nobleman needed no urging.

"And now," said the alchemist, "you have only to sit in your chair and wait. The elixir works rapidly. Within an hour it will have altered you beyond recognition. While you wait, I will play for you."

He drew back the heavy curtains at one side of the room, exposing an organ. Seating himself before it, he began to play.

The first chords were hauntingly sweet, like the tender light that fills the sky at the close of a spring day. Hildebrandt scarcely heard them, so excited was he by the thing that was about to happen to him. Presently the music became troubled, and half-discords stole into its burthen. Gradually it crept into a minor strain of fear that worked its way into the small, high-pitched pipes of the instrument and went wailing about the chamber. Hildebrandt shivered uncomfortably. The long, black shadows in the corners darted toward and away from him. An unfelt draft stirred the velvet curtains that still covered three sides of the room. An unnatural chill was permeating the

air. He moved his chair closer to the brazier.

Suddenly the music broke into a wild macabre dance, pierced with eldritch yells and shrieks. It beat against the walls with the force of great wings. It swept through the chamber, taunting, gibbering, derisive. The marmoset screamed with terror, and pressed its little hands over its ears. Hildebrandt tried to rise, but the volume of sound pinned him to his chair; he tried to cry out, but it crammed his voice back into his throat. Then as abruptly as the revel of horror had begun, it was ended, giving place to the slow, cumbrous rhythm of a funeral march.

Hildebrandt's heart was beating to suffocation, and his breath whistled in his lungs. "Stop, stop!" he cried frantically. His voice was thin and cracked, so that he hardly recognized it. He put out a trembling hand; and as his eyes rested upon it, his brain reeled in horror. It was the bloodless, emaciated hand of a very old man!

Mortimer rose from the organ. "Did you think, Hildebrandt, that I did not know you?" he asked. "I suspected your identity even before you arrived. But you did not know me, or you would not have come, eh?" He regarded the other through half-closed, speculative eyes. "I had intended to give you the elixir of youth," he went on, "and let you drown yourself in your own folly. I would have done it had you not

shown me the locket. **But I could not let you drag down with you another so like—but let it suffice that I gave you the other elixir.** You are an old, old man, Hildebrandt. In a few months you will be dead."

Hildebrandt began to screech unintelligibly for mercy; then his eye fell on the other flagon. Craftily he began to edge toward it.

Mortimer read his intention. With a single gesture he seized the flagon, wrenched out the cork, and poured its contents upon the hot coals of the brazier. There was a blinding flash of white light, and the flames leaped high in the air, then collapsed upon themselves. With a howl of despair, Hildebrandt clawed at the hot coals.

With the toe of his slipper Mortimer spurned back the puling, sniveling wretch at his feet. "You make a gratifying picture," he commented. "After all, this way is as satisfying as the other would have been."

"You can't leave me like this," whined the dotard. "You couldn't leave me to die!"

"Old man," asked Mortimer, "can you go home alone, or shall I accompany you?"

Hopelessly Hildebrandt got to his feet, and took up the jaunty hat from the table. It fell down over his eyes with an air of ribald buffoonery. Leaning heavily upon his stick, he stumbled from the room.

Mortimer smiled silently into his beard.

