

FANTASTIC UNIVERSE.

HENRY SCHARF

Publisher

SHELDON WAX

Editorial Director

HANS STEFAN SANTESSON

Editor

J. WILLIAM LUSZCZ

Art Director

MARCH 1960	Vol. 12 No. 5
Murderer's Chain	10
by <i>Wenzell Brown</i>	
Bruggil's Bride	18
by <i>Robert F. Young</i>	
The Rejected Sorcerer	29
by <i>Jorge Luis Borges</i>	
Skies of Infamy	31
An Article by <i>Lester del Rey</i>	
Israel's Lunar Probe	40
by <i>Shalom Cohen</i>	
The Perverse Erse	41
by <i>Adrien Coblenz</i>	
Time For Survival	44
by <i>George O. Smith</i>	
The Mind Thing	48
by <i>Fredric Brown</i>	
The Abominable Coalman	78
A Special Feature by <i>Ivan T. Sanderson</i>	
Fannnotations	80
A Monthly Feature by <i>Belle C. Dietz</i>	
The Marrying Monster	82
by <i>Claus Stamm</i>	
Two-Man Space Cabin	87
A Special Feature	
Beep No More, My Lady	92
by <i>Robert Bloch</i>	

the perverse erse

by ADRIEN COBLENTZ

THE EVENING crowd had thinned at Moriarty's in South Bend, and only the regulars were left, a small group at one end of the dark oak bar, chatting quietly. At that moment a short gaunt man entered, and in a very thick brogue ordered a glass of Tullamore Dew. Finishing his drink he sighed deeply and put a thick manila envelope on the bar. He sighed again and at this Phineas O'Rourke put down his beer and remarked, "Sure now, that's the most mournful sound I've heard since the day me grandfather fell down the stairs with a case of the real Irish in his arms; twelve bottles broken, it were."

The stranger turned toward Phineas, and his face had the haunted look of a man who has looked upon some incredible catastrophe testing the very limits of man's sanity and barely survived. Again he sighed, then lifted the envelope with his left hand and waved it vaguely in

Phineas' direction. His voice broke as he spoke. "I had to, I really had to. After all, as head of the department of research anthropology at the university, I'm duty-bound to report this. But they wouldn't accept it; in fact, they—politely, of course—suggested I take a sabbatical until I got over it. I understand their position, and perhaps releasing this information would have a terrible effect on Erin, but in the name of truth and science, it should be known."

At the mention of possible harm to the Emerald Isle, the whole group perked up their ears, and John Gaffney politely asked, "Is it something you could be telling us about? Sure and it's interested we'd be if it has to do with Ireland." The rest of them nodded and added a chorus of ayes.

The sad-looking man sighed again, looked at his empty glass and, nodding to the bartender, to refill it, began opening the manila envelope.

"I suppose I ought to introduce

myself first. I'm Paul Corscadden, assistant professor of anthropology. Though born in the old country, I was raised here in the midwest—caught between two cultures, as it were."

At this point, the bartender, caught up in the unfolding of this tragic story, commented, "But your brogue..."

"Yes, of course," interrupted the professor, "it returned during my field trip to county Mayo three months ago. But that's getting ahead of the story. Here..." Reaching into the envelope, he took out a manuscript, "let me just read the article to you."

The bartender refilled all glasses as the group settled back, lighting pipes, to listen in intense curiosity tinged with dread somehow conveyed by the utter misery in Professor Corscadden's voice.

AN EXPLANATION FOR THE LUPRACAN PHENOMENON AS DISCOVERED IN AN INVESTIGATION OF THE CULTURE OF EIRE.

"Long considered to be wholly mythical, the little Irish elf, commonly known as the Leprechaun, has an enormous amount of folklore associated with it. Such tales as..." Here the professor interrupted and said, "This is unnecessary; I'm sure you all know the background to this field study; let me get to the crux of the matter." And turning to the last pages in the manuscript, he began again.

"Perhaps the most universally known legend associated with Luracan is that associated with the pot of gold each of the elves is supposed to possess. It has been rather universally observed among the natives of this island, that if one captures one of these sprites, it will beg desperately to be released. If the captor does not do so, it will next resort to all sorts of trickery and magic.

Failing this, the tightfisted individual who maintains his grasp on the little man will then be offered a pot of gold, ostensibly the life savings of this immortal creature. It is invariably at this point that, conditions being what they are in Ireland, the fortunate individual who has contrived to trap a lugharcán (anthropologists always delight in technical terms' interpolated professor Corscadden, using the interruption to sip from his refilled glass and seeming to relax a bit as the power of the golden brew began to take effect) "agrees to the bargain. There are no known records of what might happen or what the next efforts of the leprechaun might be were his captor to still refuse. Indeed there is something a bit ominous in the absence of such information. This background material should be borne in mind as I describe an experience I had while doing research in a hamlet deep in the heart of the area under investigation.

On leaving the pub—a logical place for interviewing the local townfolk—I took what I thought to be a short cut to my quarters, through a small wooded area. It was pleasantly shaded and dim. Suddenly, in the shadows there was a movement and just as it caught my eye, whatever had moved froze into immobility. As I walked towards it to investigate, the creature flushed and ran. With some difficulty I pursued it, suddenly realizing it was a little old man! It was with the greatest of difficulty that I was able to maintain my cool, scientific detachment as I realized that I was close to the possibility of realizing the researcher's dream, the objectivation of certain data previously thought to be spurious. Just at the edge of the wood, the figure stumbled and I was able to get a firm grasp on its arm. It spoke in a pathetic voice, pleading to be released (first in Gaelic), then, recognizing my weakness in that

tongue, in English), and it would have had to be a cruel man indeed (or one who knew of the pot of gold) to have resisted such a piteous request. Notwithstanding, I firmly drew him toward the meadow, intent on getting a clear picture of this amazing discovery. The creature's pleadings grew most intense at this point, and for a moment, he seemed to change into some sort of snake-like creature (an obvious impossibility in Ireland), but before it was able to do anything else, I had brought it out into broad sunlight. The explanation for his terrible need to be released into the shadows and not be publicly viewed became horrendously clear. So shocking was my realization of this phenomenon that my hands became paralyzed, and I could not hold my captive. With a cry of gratified relief, it fled to the shadows of the woods while I sank to the grass in stupefaction.

It has been only after full consideration of the tremendous impact that release of this information will

have on the peoples of this fascinating culture, of the devastating effect it will have on their sympathizers in this country and others where their descendants have gone, that I decided that in the interests of science and true knowledge the facts *must* be known. It is therefore with terribly mixed emotions and deepest sympathy for those who must be hurt that I make this information public: The leprechaun, for such it must have been, was, from head to toe, including his hair, a brilliant shade of orange!"

A pall of silence hung over the room when Professor Corscadden had finished speaking. With bowed head, the tragic figure slowly replaced the document into the folder, then wiped at the tears on his cheek. The group, themselves moist-eyed, looked sympathetically at the professor, then quickly averted their eyes to avoid staring at the unsightly blotch on his right hand, an orange blotch with an uncanny resemblance to a shamrock.