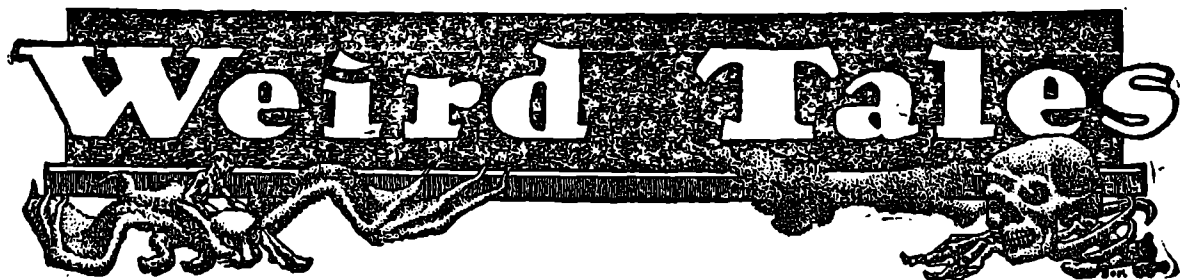


# Weird Tales



MARCH, 1952

Cover by Joseph Eberle

## NOVELETTES

**MORNE PERDU** . . . . . Alice Drayton Farnham 10  
*... a sleepless night, a spider bite on her arm, and she had seen goblins where no goblins were. Then all at once she heard the silence, like the crashing of drums.*

**THE HORROR AT RED HOOK** . . . . . H. P. Lovecraft 56  
*A master hand at tales of terror follows up the thought that awful, love is not, yet dead.*  
 (Copyright 1927 by Popular Fiction Publishing Company)

## SHORT STORIES

**THE MONKEY SHIP** . . . . . Garnett Radcliffe 26  
*Banda Bap, who is the god of monkeys, listened tensely for the voices that had left the forest.*

**THE MASK** . . . . . Curtis W. Casewit 34  
*The dead—they always look serene, features are never ghoulishly distorted.*

**THE SCARRED SOUL** . . . . . Seabury Quinn 41  
*... my body has to slay and haunt the place where my soul died.*

**THE PRISM** . . . . . Mary Elizabeth Counselman 51  
*Different folks, they show different color. Violet—can it be the color of saints and babies?*

**THE PLACE OF DESOLATION** . . . . . August Derleth 70  
*... a space-time warp, where time and space as we know them terrestrially, do not exist. How about a house that was built in it?*

**JUNGLE BEASTS** . . . . . William P. Barron 76  
*That which is alive hath known death; that which lives can never die.*  
 (Copyright 1923 Rural Publishing Company)

**VERSE** { **O GOLDEN-TONGUED ROMANCE** . . . . . Clark Ashton Smith 33  
           { **THE BRIDE OF DEATH** . . . . . Joseph Howard Krucher 69

**THE EYRIE** . . . . . 6

Published bi-monthly by WEIRD TALES, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the Act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 26 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, \$1.50. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession.

Copyright, 1952, by WEIRD TALES. Copyright in Great Britain Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

 178  
 Vol. 44, No. 3

D. McILWRAITH, Editor

# THE PRISM



by MARY ELIZABETH COUNSELMAN

*Souls look different when you see them through rainbow glass.*

WRECKERS were tearing down the old Jemison mansion on "the Hill" when Jeddy found the prism. I t to tell you about it. Now! Because I

. . . Well, I haven't got much time. The pain, you understand . . .

It was nothing in the world but a broken bangle off the big crystal chandelier that had

lighted the Jemisons' ballroom, back yonder when the old white-columned house was the center of Alabama's largest plantation, and music and laughter drifted out across the velvet lawns and formal gardens to the slave quarters in back. Jeddy had a right there; he was a kind of distant cousin, who used to work as a handyman and errand-boy for the family before they went broke and moved to Carolina. Besides, he was more of a help than a bother to the wrecking crew—bringing them water from the spring, holding their crowbars and hammers for them, or lifting some heavy piece of lumber; always with that eager vacuous grin that marked him for what he was. An imbecile, a harmless imbecile. A man with a child's mind. . . .

**O**R, ANYHOW, that was how everybody in Jemisonville regarded him. Especially after he started wandering around town, peering at people through that little piece of broken glass. Small pastimes like that seemed to fascinate Jeddy, as they would a kid. Like the time he found the constable's whistle and went around blowing it for a week or more, with that high silly ripple of laughter that always bubbled out of him when he was pleased. Only, the prism amused him longer than anything—long enough, in fact, to change our whole town, and maybe the county!

Jeddy was a huge hulk of a man, all of six feet tall if he would stand up straight, instead of shuffle along in that ape-like crouch, with his arms dangling almost to his ankles. Red hair—which was never cut unless Tom Kimball, the barber, managed to coax him into his chair in return for an errand—hung down over his low forehead like a sheep-dog's, Jeddy's bright shoe-button-eyes peered through it, like some animal hiding in the brush; and his broken buck-teeth showed in a continual grin. He wore the same faded blue shirt and overalls, day after day, until Zack Mobley, who runs the clothing store, would give him a new pair and take the old ones away from him.

Well—that was our Jeddy, who lived in one of the slave cabins out back of the Jemison house . . . and who blew the lid off our town like a tornado, about five months ago.

**L**IKE I say, nobody paid much attention to him. It was a familiar sight—as familiar as the fountain in the square, or Holy Roller preachers yelling in front of the courthouse on Saturday—to see Jeddy shambling down the street, playing with some silly thing he had picked up someplace. Something shiny, or that made a funny noise. When he found the prism and went to peering at everybody through it, we would just smile.

"Hi there, Jeddy! What ye got?"

And he would stop, grinning like a pleased baby, and squint at you through that piece of glass, cut in facets like a pendant and broken off across the middle. Jeddy never could talk plain, but those of us who had known him all our lives could make out what he meant by those few disjointed words he jabbered out: baby-words, in the deep guttural voice of a thirty-year-old man.

"Uh—Glass!" he would explain, squinting through the thing and hopping up and down like an excited kid. "See? It's all shiny! All . . . colors! Colors like rainbow!" If you happened to be facing the sun he'd move around to the other side, and peer at you silhouetted against the sunlight.

That was when it would happen.

**I**T HAPPENED first to Belle Freely, our local miss who was reputed to be no better than she should be. Jeddy was about the only man in town who was ever caught speaking to Belle on the street, in case their wives or some neighbor might be looking. Long ago, when she had turned up with a baby and refused to name the father, Jemison had branded her with the scarlet letter "A". The fact that she worked as a waitress in the "Busy-B Cafe", every day from six to midnight, did nothing to change local opinion concerning her means of livelihood.

But late one evening Jeddy met her in front of the post office, amid the snickers of those watching while they waited for the mail to be put up. As usual he stopped, grinning vacantly, to peer at Belle through his little broken prism. She stopped, smiling wearily, her drab blondined hair looking more dyed than ever in the setting sun.

Jeddy took one look at her, to a background of whispers and muffled guffaws. Then:

"Oh-h!" he blurted. "Uh . . . I never knowed you was like *that*, Miss Belle! My, you're *purty*. . . ! All *blue* like the sky in . . . in the summertime! Blue's a *good* color, uh, about the best color folks can be! Uh, they ain't many blue folks in this-here town. . . !"

He scowled suddenly, whirling on the group of idlers who were doing the whispering. Jeddy was a big man, like I said; and he was no pleasant sight, glowering through that long hair, with his lips drawn back from those buck-teeth in a snarl of anger. The boys began to edge away. Pretty soon there was nobody there, snickering at Belle Freely, except two evil-eyed poolroom hounds, who were in the habit of "bragging" about every woman in town—including the mayor's wife.

One of them, Shemp Hackett, nudged the other and winked.

"That your girl there, Jeddy?" he drawled. "That where you was last Monday night, when Old Man Lyle couldn't find ye to help him kill that weasel was after his chickens. ? A-visitin' with your girl, huh?"

Jeddy's scowl became a thundercloud. He took one step forward, swung his big ham-like fist—and Shemp was picking himself up off the sidewalk, with a cut lip and a very surprised expression.

"Duh, don't you talk like that about Miss Belle!" Jeddy roared at him as he, and also his wary-eyed buddy, backed out of range. "Don't *nobody* say bad things about Miss Belle no more, y'hear me? I've done seen her through my little rainbow-glass . . . and it don't *never* lie! The color it shows, that's what you are *inside*. And nobody, *not nobody*, can fool this-here little spy-glass! 'Cause it shows up the color you are, never mind how much you pretend. . . !"

Well . . . everybody laughed, of course, when the story got around.

Then, abruptly, everybody stopped laughing. Because, a nice-looking man came to town, hunting for a Julia Freeman—who turned out to be none other than our Belle. Seems the baby was not hers at all, but her dead sister's child. The father, who had been reported missing in action in the Pacific, had been engaged to Belle; but he had somehow lost his head and got her sister in

trouble. Belle protected her name, though, and left home, to work in a cheap cafe rather than give up her sister's child to an orphanage. . . It all came out when the man got Reverend Meecham to marry him and Belle, after telling him just how it was and what a fine character Belle, that misjudged lady really was.

**B**UT about Jeddy and his prism, there was still a lot of joking back and forth. The idea of Belle being a "blue person" struck people's fancy somehow or other, and they began to stop Jeddy on the street and ask him, just to kill time:

"Hi, Jeddy! How do *I* look through that piece of glass you got? What color am I?"

It tickled Jeddy, of course, all that attention. I doubt that more than one person a day ever spoke to him. But now everybody was speaking—even though he sensed, as a child senses such things, that we were only poking fun at him and his broken chandelier pendant.

He would stop and peer at anybody he met, though, just the same. Parting that shaggy bang of his, he would lift his prism up to one beady black eye and squint through it for a moment. Then he'd say, quite gravely and earnestly:

"You're a red person, Miz Boman. You got ways that hurt people around you—'cause red's a *hurtin'* color, and that's how you show up in my rainbow-glass. Mostly red, but shadin' off to orange around the edges."

"Well! I never!"

Miss Tessie Boman was our most sanctimonious church-goer. But she was also the biggest gossip in Jemisonville, and had broken up many a happy home with her tale-bearing.

"Who's green, Jeddy?" somebody would ask, snickering behind his hand. "That mean what we think it does?"

"Nope." Jeddy would shake his head solemnly. "If you're green, it don't mean like you're dumb. It jest means . . . well, that you ain't either bad or good, just in-between. There's a heap of green folks in this town," he announced cheerfully. "And maybe a few yellor ones, like Nurse Alison, or the Doc. Them are the ones that *help* folks in misery. The green 'nes do no *harm*."

but they jest, uh, kinda live for themselves. . . ."

"Well, who's violet, Jeddy? Is that a good color?"

"Duh-h, that's the best there is!" That grinning face would beam at his tormentor. "Only, uh, there ain't no purple folks hereabouts . . . 'Cept maybe Granny Hodges; she's a *mite* purple around the edges. And . . . and babies," Jeddy would add softly. "All babies is, duh, kinda lavender-blue. . . ."

SO THAT was how it went for about three weeks. Jeddy and his prism got to be a standing joke in Jemisonville. We talked about it at bridge parties and church socials, joshing one another that you need not try to wear "that yellow dress" or "that blue shirt," because your *true* color would show up in Jeddy's prism anyhow!

Of course, plenty of us took a peek through that little piece of glass. But all we ever saw was what everybody can see through a "translucent prism," as the Professor called it. Just rays of sunlight, broken up into all the colors of the spectrum. Maybe . . . maybe it was the *way* Jeddy held it to his eye. . . . Oh, *fiddlesticks!* Sounds like I believe. . . !

But then Professor Gowan, who reads a lot of crazy stuff nobody else would pick up, came out with the news that Jeddy's weird notion was by no means original. Metaphysical societies, he said, have long believed that an *astral body*—sort of a luminous mist that the soul, or personality, gives off—surrounds every human being. The Holy Men can see them—and those pure enough in heart to see people as what they are, instead of what they seem. Emanations, the Professor called them. Their colors range with the spectrum: from red, the most physical color, to violet, the most spiritual.

Scientifically, he says, the theory is sound enough . . . because it seems that the atoms of every chemical give up a vapor that can be determined by its color in the spectroscope. That's an instrument the astronomers use to find out what the stars are composed of, and how hot they are, and how dense. Maybe *people* give off a vapor, too. Maybe the kinds of chemicals we're made of, most-

ly, are determined by our characters, our personalities. . . .

I wouldn't know about that. I'm no scientist. And I'm no "higher thought" crackpot. I'm just a housewife and mother, and . . . and . . .

Well, all I know is what Jeddy said to me, that day outside the doctor's office. I spoke to him kindly, the way I always try to do, even though he is feeble-minded and a burden on the community. But my heart was not in it. *After what Doc Peebles had just told me?* My teeth were set hard in my lower lip, to keep the tears back. Tears of terror and despair, and hopelessness, and resentment. . . .

"Hello, Jeddy," I mumbled, trying to walk around his big hulking figure, standing there in the middle of the sidewalk to squint at me through his broken glass. "How's your peep-show working today?"

"Duh, fine! . . . Huh-huh! . . . Fine, Miz Mary!" Jeddy gurgled, like a big happy overgrown baby. "All colors! All pretty colors, folks are. . . !"

I tried to pass, but he would not move, so I waited patiently for him to finish his foolish little game. But I was twisting my hands together, fighting for self-control. . . .

Then, idly, I noticed how Jeddy's wide vacuous grin was fading. A frown of child-like bewilderment furrowed his low forehead—what I could see of it for that shaggy red bang. He peered at me intently through the prism.

"Duh, I . . . I ain't never see nobody like *that* before, Miz Mary!" he muttered, squinting harder at my silhouette against the mellow afternoon sunlight. "Uh . . . uh . . . I never see nobody that was blue in the middle and red around the outside! Uh, not them two colors right together. . . !"

I smiled stiffly, hardly hearing his queer words. For, what the doctor had just told me was gnawing away at my mind like an evil gray rat. I wanted to push Jeddy out of my path, and run, sobbing, down the street until I came to my own familiar doorway. John was there, I knew, talking to the nominating committee of the reform group. . . . But I would just burst right in and throw myself into his sheltering arms, sobbing out the truth.

What did it matter to me now, what

would it matter to John, that he had been chosen to run against Gerald Vincent? Vincent, our next Congressman? The most powerfully-entrenched and completely crooked man in our county?

IT WAS he who had torn down the old Jemison place, planning to build on its site a paper mill! A smelly, noisy paper mill in the center of our quiet residential area! Jemisonville was a farm community, anyhow, whose livestock depended on the purity of the little creek that flowed through our town. Broad Creek—which Gerald Vincent proposed to use as a dumping place for his mill waste. . . ! John, my husband, had been fighting the move for a year, with growing success.

But all that seemed so terribly unimportant now, compared with the terrible thing I was going to tell him in a few minutes. *Cancer!* The inoperable kind. And the thought of his being away from me, those last few months I had to live! Stumping the county for votes. . . ? No, I couldn't bear it. He wouldn't expect me to. When I told him, he would simply give up all thought of running against. . .

I came to myself. Jeddy was still standing there, peeking at me through his bit of chandelier pendant. What was it he had said? I started. *Red! Red, with a . . . a blue center. . . ?* I tried to pass.

"Duh, wait, Miz Mary!" Jeddy blurted excitedly. "Uh, the red part—it's . . . it's fadin' away now! Like . . . like the blue was *pushin'* it. . ."

My eyes widened, staring at him, at that foolish like piece of glass held up to his eye. Blue? Pushing away the red? Good, swallowing up the bad . . . as I thought what it would mean to John, to our town, to our whole county. Red? I wanted to hurt

everyone, because I was so hurt and afraid. Resentful! Why must I suffer all alone, just because . . . ? But . . . Jeddy had said . . .

Non-sense! It could only be a crazy coincidence! How could this poor imbecilic creature know what was going on inside me? See it through a little shattered glass ornament that had come off a chandelier. . . ?

I turned, though. I ran back up to Doc Peebles' office, and made him promise not to tell John or anyone until after the election. Until Gerald Vincent was defeated, and our little farm-town of Jemisonville was given back to its people. Until my husband was sent to Washington—to represent them as honestly as one man knows how, instead of fleece them and use them, as Vincent would have done.

Well—he's there now. I still haven't told him—and won't until the pain becomes too unbearable. Somehow, though, I'm not afraid anymore. I guess everybody has to die, one way or another. . . .

Jeddy? Oh, he's still around. Playing with a white flint arrowhead now, that he found up on the west slope of Bent Mountain. Seems he lost his prism someplace—probably that time he was chasing the butterfly across Old Man Lyle's cow-pasture. Yes, it's gone . . . and of course, the whole thing was just silly. I mean, the idea of people being a certain *color*, according to whatever chemical gas their souls give off! Now, me—I certainly wouldn't set myself up as a *blue* person. . . ! Fiddlesticks! I'm as mean as the next one!

But now and then, I can't help wondering (supposing it *was* true) what color *Jeddy* would be, viewed through that little broken prism of his.

Violet, maybe. . . ? The color of saints . . . and babies?