

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE



Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 325 N. Capitol Ave., Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1913, at the post-office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$4.50 a year in the United States; \$3.00 a year in Canada. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in our 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. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor. Copyright, 1924, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company

Contents for December, 1924

Cover Design.....	Andrew Brosnatch	
Death-Waters.....	Frank Belknap Long, Jr.	9
<i>Snakes—and a Black Man in a Black Lake</i>		
The Earth Girl.....	Carroll K. Michener	16
<i>A Distant Planet—Destruction of a Civilization</i>		
With Weapons of Stone.....	C. M. Eddy, Jr.	28
<i>Cavemen—Primitive Love—the Saber-tooth Tiger</i>		
The Death Clinic.....	Otto E. A. Schmidt	34
<i>Weird Revenge of a Great Surgeon</i>		
Cave of Murdered Men.....	W. Benson Dooling	47
<i>A Fantasy</i>		
Kaivalya.....	Mrs. Edgar Saltus	49
<i>Fourth Dimension—Hypnotism—Crime</i>		

(Continued on Next Page)

(Continued from Preceding Page)

A Tryst With Death	Edgar White	58
<i>A Rendezvous at the Tomb</i>		
The Valley of Teeheemen (Part One)	Arthur Thatcher	61
<i>Two-part Novel—Airplane Falls Into Strange Valley</i>		
Black Temple Band	Elwin J. Owens	87
<i>Six Black-robed Men—and a Weird Cave</i>		
His Family	C. Franklin Miller	93
<i>A Mad Colonel in the African Wilderness</i>		
A Hand From the Deep	Romeo Poole	98
<i>Strange Tale of Quack Surgery</i>		
After	Denis Francis Hannigan	106
<i>Beyond the Door of Death</i>		
Creeping Mist	Thomas B. Sherman	108
<i>Crime of a Man Who Was Already Dead</i>		
The Silent Five	Anthony D. Keogh	116
<i>A Haunted House and a Secret Society</i>		
The Case of the Russian Stevedore	Henry W. Whitehill	123
<i>Facts in the Strange Death of Dr. Dinwoodie</i>		
Voodoo	Estil Critchie	128
<i>Haiti—Worship of the Green Serpent</i>		
The House of Dust (Conclusion)	L. A. Botah	132
<i>Two-part Mystery Serial</i>		
Youth	Howard R. Marsh	156
<i>Storiote of Shattered Hopes</i>		
Fairy Gossamer	Harry Harrison Kroll	159
<i>A Cave of Hungry Spiders</i>		
The Song Eternal	Galen C. Colin	163
<i>Through the Ages It Sang to Him—of Love</i>		
The Crimson Crucifix	H. Thompson Rich	170
<i>A Birthmark—an Innocent Kiss—and Disaster</i>		
The Eyrie		175
<i>A Chat With the Readers</i>		

For Advertising Rates in WEIRD TALES Apply to

W. B. ZIFF CO.

Transportation Building
Chicago

Architects Building
New York

Bryant Building
Kansas City



BENEATH a scrawny tree, two shadowy figures stood whispering.

"He has bought the place, and says that he will stay," growled the first.

"He must be removed by the thirteenth. You know the law!"

"I will find a way. Give me Number Three to help."

"I will see Three tonight. . . . Silence forever."

"The Five supreme," answered the first shadow.

His voice, as he finished, ascended in pitch to a ridiculous squeak.

Solemnly saluting, the two melted away into the darkness.

SEVEN nights later, John Keifer crashed wildly out of his house and sped over the dank lawn before it, screaming like a man who is tottering on the brink of insanity. Then his feet found the weed-incrusted brick walk, which, strangely enough, afforded him some relief. As he was a man of courage, his cries subsided and he turned and looked behind him at the place he called home. Above him it loomed, weird, menacing. Over to the left, a green slit of window betrayed the library he had left so hur-

riedly. John Keifer shuddered. He was cold as well as afraid, for he was attired in only his bathrobe and slippers. Suddenly he faced about, and with a wary eye over one shoulder, marched off down the road, fearful at every step that a something would drift from that evil room to strangle him.

Before he had taken a dozen steps he stopped and listened. Drawing nearer, another pair of feet rasped the pavement. Keifer wished with all his soul that he had a gun or a pocket-knife or a club, or anything that would lend comfort to a man on a lonesome road at a lonely hour of the night. His spirits had acquired such a pessimistic hue that the possibility of the newcomer being anyone else than a thug never entered his head. Whoever he was, he must pass under that street lamp.

"Ah!" sighed Keifer. Next door neighbor, and in his hand an ugly cane! No doubt, aroused by the turmoil, he had come down the road to investigate. Keifer knew him slightly, but at this moment felt sweep over him a great wave of fondness, almost affection, for this man.

"Smith," he said, "I am certainly glad to see you."

He earnestly shook Smith's hand.

"Um-m," replied Smith. Keifer thought he could read in his eyes the suspicion that he, Keifer, had been drinking. Perhaps Smith had never formed a habit of meeting elderly gentlemen attired in bathrobes promenading the streets in the chill hours of the morning. John was irritated anyway, feeling as undignified and helpless as a man in a barber chair; and so he condemned Smith's lack of confidence, swearing and cursing fluently.

Smith stared at him a moment, torn between the desire to laugh and rage at Keifer's scathing remarks.

"I didn't say a word about drink, my friend. Let me help you home to bed."

"No—No! For the love of heaven don't go near that house!"

He spoke with such feeling that Smith was impressed. Keifer saw his advantage, and seized Smith's arm.

"Come on. If you'll put me up for the night I'll tell you all about it."

This last remark was a bribe. He knew that Smith, being a lawyer, must have a well developed bump of curiosity. Whether the bump concerned itself with spirits of the earthly or heavenly variety troubled him not at all if it would put any roof over his head but his own. A moment's thought, and Smith nodded assent to John's proposal. His was not the whole-souled, back-slapping cordiality of the usual host, for he felt rather doubtful of John, and feared that he might prove troublesome before long.

After a short walk, they reached Smith's home, a small place that radiated a cozy, common-sense atmosphere, and made Keifer feel less skeptical about the solidity of the universe. Smith brought Keifer into his den. Keifer knew that it was his den, for the walls of the room looked as if they had been transplanted from a sporting-goods store. Drawing chairs up to a newly-awakened fire, Smith

reached a box of cigars from under a table. When he had enveloped himself in a cloud of soothing Havana smoke, he spoke to Keifer.

"Now for the story. Tomorrow is Sunday, and I can sleep late, so you can go as far as you like."

Keifer seemed to be dreaming with his eyes open. The ash on his cigar grew long, and finally fell, a tiny gray heap, upon the carpet. Sharp-eyed Smith noted that his hand trembled. He began abruptly.

"Maybe you think I've been drinking. But I haven't. Don't use liquor, for most of my life has been spent in the tropics where such a thing would be suicidal. No more than any other man, I've never believed in ghosts or such stuff. But tonight. . . ."

Eyes dark with thought, Keifer seemed to be staring through Smith into the past. Smith squirmed uneasily. Then Keifer again took up his story, a tinge of horror in his voice.

"I live by myself, and work into the small hours of the morning upon a book I am writing. Several nights ago there came three taps on my window, and the door behind my back swung open. It was touched by no living man, for I was in the hall before anyone could have gotten away. Next night, at the same hour, the same thing happened. This time I had the window curtains drawn apart, and could see that no one touched the glass. Tonight after the taps, and after the door had opened, I became conscious of a presence behind me. Perhaps you know the feeling. A sort of sixth sense is the cause of it. I forced myself to turn and look. There stood a huge, shapeless, grinning black thing, with hands outstretched for my throat.

"I suppose I played the baby. My nerves are unstrung anyway from a fever I picked up in the South. For the time I became a howling lunatic with but one thought: to get out of that room and get out quick. I felt

like a man in a nightmare—paralyzed, could hardly lift my feet. I knew that the monster behind me was gaining in leaps and bounds. . . . About the time I came to myself, you happened along."

Keifer relapsed into glum silence, and Smith, between puffs, studied him. Smith was no fool, and could see that he was entertaining a man of intelligence, perhaps a celebrity in a small way. Then he cross-examined Keifer. Bit by bit he took his story apart and scrutinized the pieces carefully.

"Got any servants?" he questioned.

"I told you I hadn't."

"Seen anybody wandering around your place lately?"

"No. Some time ago, though, I chased away an Italian."

"What! An Italian?"

"Yes. Nothing peculiar about that. He said that he had come up from the railroad, and as he didn't know my house was occupied, was taking a short cut through to town. You know my grounds run back near a mile to the railroad."

"Hum-m," grunted Smith. "There may be something in this. You see, there's a story—Oh, rats! It's impossible. We'll look over things in the morning."

OVER an excellent breakfast, Keifer met Smith's wife, a fluffy little creature, who, true to the nature of woman, viewed the events of the night before from an alarmingly superstitious angle. Blue eyes wide with excitement, she told of the man who had last lived in Keifer's home. He had been an artist. With his wife he lived in a sort of modest comfort. Then one day he returned home to learn that his wife had cast her lot with another man who could give her fine clothes. He promptly hanged himself in the attic and his body hung undiscovered for five days.

"And ever since," she finished, "his spirit has haunted that house. That's what they say, anyway."

This sad tale added to Keifer's downcast spirits. He hurriedly gulped down a cup of hot coffee to hide his emotion. Smith's wife seemed troubled.

"But that's not the worst of it," she began, "I don't know how true it is—"

Happening to glance at her husband, she stopped suddenly, for he was madly motioning her to be silent.

"As far as ghosts are concerned," Smith interrupted, "I am a skeptic. Let's take a look at your haunted house."

Pushing back their chairs, and reinforcing themselves with the friendly aroma of several more of Smith's cigars, they sauntered off down the road on their ghost hunt. Gray-headed Keifer, attired in a dashing modern suit of Smith's clothes, made an appearance that would have given a tailor the nightmare.

"Gloomy old place," Smith ventured, surveying Keifer's home with disfavor.

Keifer said nothing. His eyes seemed to reflect the melancholy stare of its vacant windows. Smith suddenly became interested in a scrawny little tree abreast the library. He examined its bark, and then followed Keifer through the French window that had served as a means of hasty exit the night before.

The room had the earmarks that sometimes betray a bachelor establishment: papers thrown about, dust, and a general air of untidiness. The green student lamp was still burning its sickly glow battling hopelessly with a glorious burst of sunshine from the uncurtained windows. Smith took inventory of the room, walking around, hands in pockets, and finally arriving at the windows.

"O-ho!" he cried, with the air of a man who has just made a significant discovery.

He stepped through the window on to the porch, and picked from the window pane a tiny, flattened white ball.

"Hard dough," he pronounced, after tasting it.

Then he rummaged around under the window and found several similar balls. Keifer took little interest in his strange antics, but Smith seemed greatly encouraged.

"Lead me to that door," he commanded, "the one that opens."

Keifer pointed to the door. Smith turned the knob and then released it. The door, of its own weight, swung ponderously open. Leaving a gap of perhaps a foot, it stopped, and Smith stepped into the murky hallway. As his eyes became accustomed to the gloom, he discerned towering walls covered with moldy tapestries, and, in the foreground, a massive flight of stairs. The floor and stairway were hidden beneath a heavy carpeting into which his feet sank without sound.

Keifer stood behind Smith in the doorway, and Smith moved aside to allow him to pass, taking his hand from the knob on the outside of the door. To his surprise, his fingers stuck to its lower surface. He examined the knob, picking from it several wads of a dark, sticky substance.

"Ah-ha!" he announced another discovery. "Do you chew gum?" he asked Keifer, who scowled at this seemingly irrelevant remark.

"No!"

"Then how come you've got it stuck all over your door knob?"

"Maybe that artist's wife—"

"No artist's wife ever enjoyed this gum, although I'd believe it of her. It's soft and sticky. You know how gum hardens in a few days after it's been chewed."

"Uh-huh," vaguely answered Keifer.

Smith went down on his hands and

knees to search the floor. His fingers plunged into a small, round hole.

"What's this?" he asked.

"It leads to the basement," Keifer explained. "Used to be a speaking tube there, I believe. Here's another one, if you get any pleasure out of them."

He pointed to a similar hole in the wall running into the library at the height of his head.

Smith sat down on the floor, staring in turn at the door knob and at the two holes.

"Item number two for the little black book," he murmured softly.

They went back into the library.

"Where did you see that ghost?" he questioned.

Keifer indicated the spot.

"It seemed to be between that tapestry and my chair."

Smith inspected the tapestry, which occupied nearly one-half of the wall opposite the windows. It was of a faded yellow, the figures traced on its surface so blurred that they seemed to blend into the background. He sounded the wall behind it, finding it as honestly solid as any wall should be.

"Sure you had all the doors and windows locked?"

"Locked and double-bolted after that first night."

"Why didn't you look that hall door—the one with the chewing-gummed knob?"

Keifer hesitated.

"Put it down to stubbornness, if you like. No man or beast ever before bluffed me. If anything wanted to come through that door, it could, and I would settle matters with it on this side. I was knocked off my balance, but leaving that door unlocked preserved some of my self-respect."

"I see," nodded Smith.

A CAREFUL examination of dust-coated window sills and floors throughout the house failed to discov-

er traces of a midnight prowler. The dining-room looked as if it had been unused for decades. A huge, polished surface table occupied the center of the room, and in one corner stood a massive clock. After examining the dust-coated table top and the motionless clock pendulum, Smith shook his head in relief. Finally he asked to see the basement. Keifer led the way down a flight of rickety steps.

Smith stood on a box and tried the window. It swung noiselessly open. He tried to squeeze through. Had his body been several inches less in diameter he might have made it. But although Smith was not a large man, passage for him through that window was as effectually barred as if the window had never existed. He facetiously shook his finger at it.

"You could tell tales," he whispered.

Then Smith prowled about in the semi-darkness until he found a pyramid of boxes in the center of the floor. With a lighted match he examined the topmost box, snorting at what he saw. He snorted again in much the same way when he shifted his gaze to the ceiling directly overhead.

"All right. Let's go. No more down here."

Again in the library he seated himself opposite Keifer, who was sourly frowning.

"Has anybody got a live, healthy grudge against you?" queried Smith.

"Not to my knowledge."

Smith's manner became grave.

"You said you were in the tropics. Did you ever have anything to do with the Camorra?"

"No."

"Well, all this looks to me like the work of some filthy foreign secret society. I'll tell you what I make of it. Two persons are running this thing, and they certainly show diabolical cunning. One of them crawls through that cellar window—don't ask me how. He kneads a wad of

chewing gum between his jaws. Up the cellar steps he goes, and along the carpet in your hall. When he reaches the door, he takes from his pocket a piece of cord like this, which I found on the cellar floor. He buries one end of the cord in the gum, and sticks it to the door knob in such a way that when the cord is run through that hole in the floor, and he yanks on it from his perch on the pile of boxes in the basement, the knob turns and the door swings open. A harder tug will, of course, detach the cord from the gum, and almost destroy all evidence. I suppose the fellow in the basement starts the fireworks from his end when he hears the taps on the window."

"But, my friend," said Keifer, "who tapped on the window, and how?"

"Very simple," assumed Smith, feeling that he had the raw material of a clever detective. "It struck me all in a flash. He used a blow-gun, or a beanshooter, so that he wouldn't make any noise, and shot dough balls at your window from that tree outside. Its bark is scraped off in places, showing that somebody climbed it recently. Here are several of the wads of dough, and the chewing gum I picked off the knob. See the track of the cord in the gum, and notice how that ball was flattened on one side when it hit your window!"

"But how about the black monster?" queried Keifer, leaning back in his chair. "That will take a lot of explaining."

"Yes, it will. I suggest that we let it rest for a while. But there's something I think I'd better tell you. Several months ago, before you moved in, two boys were taking the short cut through your place from the railroad. They saw lights in the dining room, and peeped through the shutters to see who was inside. What they saw frightened them half to death. Around a table stood five black-robed figures, all watching the clock, which

had begun to strike twelve. They didn't wait to see more, but ran for their lives. The next day, feeling bolder perhaps, they went back. They found the back door open, the dust rubbed off the dining-room table, and the clock going. That's the story they told. Somehow I never put much faith in it until today. Then, too, a neighbor, walking past, swore he saw lights in the dining-room. The funny part of it is, the lights were seen each time on the thirteenth of the month. Tonight is the thirteenth."

"Well, what shall we do about it?"

"We'd better wait for them. I think you've got mixed up with a gang of cut-throats who have made this house their hang-out, probably because they know it's avoided as being haunted. They're playing with you in cat-and-mouse fashion."

"Yes, we'll wait. This isn't Italy. I'll see if a man can be chased out of his own home."

The more Keifer thought about it the angrier he got. Blue veins appeared in his face, and he gripped the arms of his chair spasmodically.

After talking a while, they left, dining at Smith's table. Night was falling when they returned for their vigil. Before leaving home, Smith had carelessly dropped a revolver into his pocket. Keifer outlined their plan of action, and prepared the stage for the coming of the villain. He left the windows unlatched, and lit the green student lamp. Smith he seated in a corner so that he could not be seen from outside. Then he placed himself at his desk, where he worked furiously, from time to time delving into weighty volumes piled within reach of his arm. Once his coat swung against the arm of his chair, giving forth a metallic thud, which is foreign to the habits of an ordinary coat under such circumstances.

"Gun," breathed Smith.

The silence was broken only by the furious scratching of Keifer's pen.

As time wore on, the tension increased, until Smith felt an insane desire to jump to his feet and yell. He had wound the clock in the dining room, and it boomed out the passing hours: Eight—nine—ten—eleven—

Then came Keifer's hushed voice, almost a whisper. His lips scarcely moved, and the pen scratched on.

"Ready, I heard a step."

Smith started violently. Time passed and nothing happened. Suddenly there came a tap on the window. Then another and another. The door knob jerked, squeaked, and the door slowly swung on its hinges. Smith felt that he would strangle from the furious throbbing of the pulses in his throat. He awaited the signal from Keifer, whose actions portrayed the most abject terror. Then a long cone of light shot out from the tree before the window, and rested on the tapestry—Keifer's black monster!

"NOW!" barked Keifer, whirling in his chair and leaping for the window.

Smith by his side, he raced for the little tree. For an instant the light glistened on two drawn revolvers. Then it was extinguished, and there came a scraping sound. Rounding a clump of bushes, they saw a shadowy figure flying diagonally across the lawn toward a walk that led to the back of the house. Keifer sank his fingers into his companion's wrist. Crazed by the man hunt, Smith had raised his gun to shoot.

Back toward the rear of the house they sped, feet crunching on the gravel walk. When they reached the end of the path, the fugitive in front was joined by another, who must have come from the basement. The four crashed wildly down the garden, leaping bushes, dodging trees, the gap between them narrowing but a trifle. A pale moon cast patches of ghostly light through the trees. It was like a scene taken from a fairy book, demons

pursued by the forces of good, for the two in the lead fled soundlessly, and were black from head to foot. Suddenly one of the demons half turned and hurled something at Smith's head. He caught it as it flew by, and as he ran, examined it, finding it to be an electric flashlight.

Then the fugitives curved to the left, and a patch of fire, a winking red eye, appeared. It rapidly drew nearer. Keifer was in the lead. In a moment the two in front came within the glare cast by the flames of a camp fire. Keifer grunted, "There's the rest of 'em," and forced more speed from his aching legs. Anger had given him endurance.

Then one of the demons shouted, "Run, Run! Old whiskers is after us," and upon the last word his voice rose to a ridiculous squeak after the fashion of a boy whose voice is changing.

Keifer and Smith, upon their heels, smashed through the brush, and out into a little clearing. In the center was a fire, and over the fire a pot was bubbling. Three black-robed figures rose to their feet to flee. But it was too late.

"Stop, or I'll drill you!" snarled Keifer, waving his revolver.

Smith came alongside, and exhibited his artillery. Simultaneously the five halted, and ten hands went into the air.

"Tear off that black stuff, and let's have a look at you!" commanded Keifer.

The five obediently struggled a moment, and off came the black, sack-like garments, revealing five boys, ghost-white.

"Sainted godmother!" cried Smith, breaking the silence.

Keifer's face changed expression. Then he replaced his gun in his pocket, and sat down upon a log, and laughed, long, loud, and heartily. He slapped and slapped his knee. It

seemed tied to his voice, for at every slap there came a fresh burst of guffaws.

"Did—did you kids work that knob and do all those things?" ventured Smith.

"Uh-huh."

"Why?"

"Well, we wanted to scare ole man—Mister Keifer outa here by making him think his house was haunted."

"But why scare him out?"

"Well, you see—this is the Silent Five, and we meet at twelve midnight on the thirteenth of every month in the old haunted house. Tonight's the thirteenth, and we couldn't meet with him there—he wouldn't let us."

"You cold-blooded, ruthless scoundrels," Keifer gurgled.

Things weren't clear to Smith yet.

"How did you make that black monster?" he asked.

The boy smiled wanly.

"I read it in a library book. Flash that light in your hand."

Smith pressed the button, and then he had the answer to the riddle. The light was fitted with double lenses, and on the inner lens was painted a miniature of Keifer's ghost.

"I shined it on that big yellow curtain, and it sure worked fine. You see, Mr. Keifer looks like a sort of a nervous person, and we figured we could get away with all this stuff."

"You had me on the way to the madhouse," said Keifer, wiping his eyes. "Now, I'll tell you what. You admit Smith and me to membership in your order, and I'll let you hold your meetings in my dining-room. All right? Then, as it's not twelve yet, we'll hold the usual meeting in the usual place. But first, let's eat. I think those potatoes on the fire are about done. Smith, have a boiled potato?"