



# Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 24                      CONTENTS FOR SEPTEMBER, 1934                      Number 3

Cover Design . . . . .	M. Brundage	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The People of the Black Circle"</i>		
The People of the Black Circle . . . . .	Robert E. Howard	274
<i>A weird novel featuring Conan the Barbarian</i>		
The Jest of Warburg Tantavul . . . . .	Seabury Quinn	296
<i>A ghost story of vivid power and gripping human appeal—a story of Jules de Grandin</i>		
Naked Lady . . . . .	Mindret Lord	317
<i>A tale of voodoo and a millionaire's strange scheme for vengeance on his wife</i>		
The Sinister Painting . . . . .	Greya La Spina	325
<i>An eerie story of a fiendish murder and a midget psychic investigator</i>		
The Return . . . . .	Julia Boynton Green	334
<i>Versé</i>		
Vine Terror . . . . .	Howard Wandrei	335
<i>A weird-scientific tale, about vegetable vampires that lusted for animal and human food</i>		
Sable Revery . . . . .	Robert Nelson	351
<i>Versé</i>		
The Trail of the Cloven Hoof (part 3) . . . . .	Arlton Eadie	352
<i>An astounding weird mystery novel by a British master of eerie fiction</i>		
The Pale Man . . . . .	Julius Long	373
<i>A queer little tale, about the eccentric behavior of a strange guest in a country hotel</i>		
<b>Weird Story Reprint:</b>		
The Coming of Abel Behenna . . . . .	Bram Stoker	377
<i>A weird tale of the sea</i>		
A Cloak from Messer Lando . . . . .	August W. Derleth	389
<i>A short story about Cesare Borgia and the magic of a mediaeval sorcerer</i>		
The Eyrie . . . . .		394
<i>An informal chat with the readers</i>		

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, \$3.00 a year in the United States, \$4.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Serjeants' 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, 1934, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.

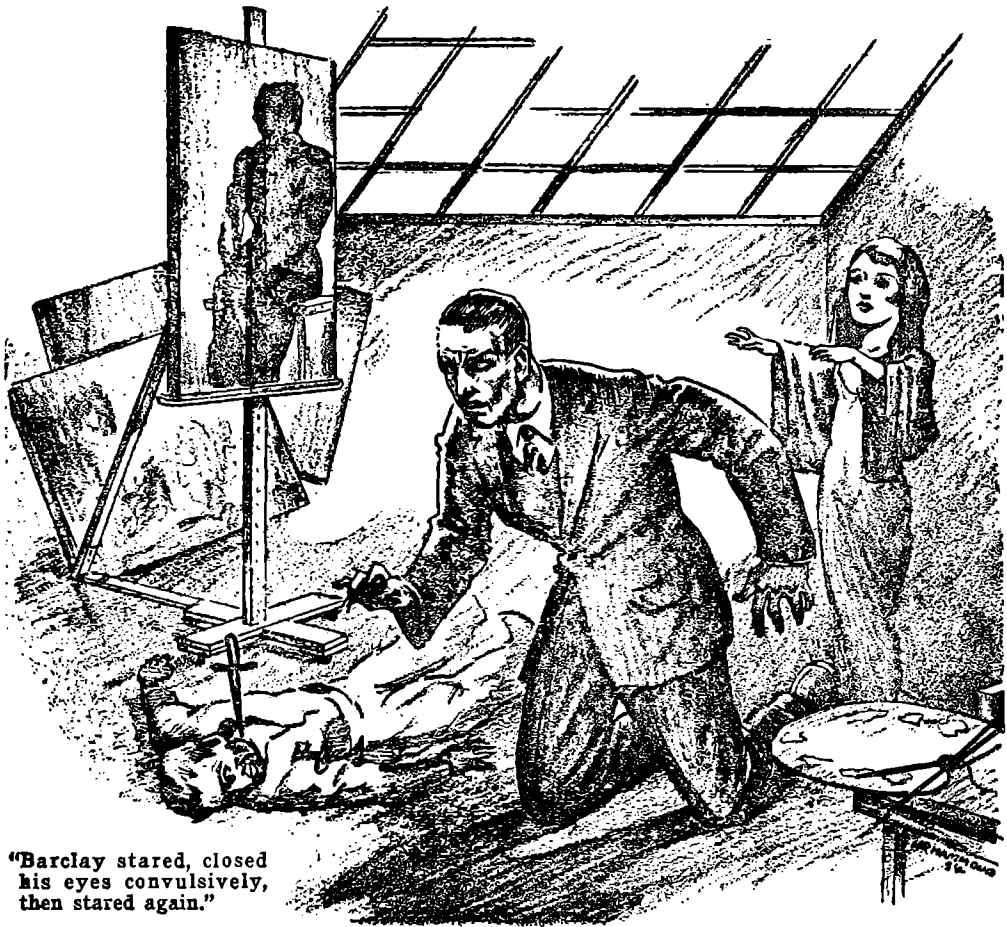
COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**

# The Sinister Painting

By GREYE LA SPINA



"Barclay stared, closed his eyes convulsively, then stared again."

*An eerie story of a fiendish murder and a midget psychic investigator—by the author of "Invaders From the Dark" and "The Devil's Pool"*

THE taxi drove off, leaving Funk on the Hoddeston lawn, surrounded by valises. Funk was thinking it more than merely odd that Barclay, for whose coaching he had come prepared to spend a month, had not met him as planned. He tried the screen door; it was hooked inside.

"Hello, in there!" he hailed hopefully.

There was no response. The Hoddes-

ton farm lay drenched in a torpid lethargy for which it was obvious more than the July heat must be responsible. Within the house, no one stirred. On the surrounding fields, no one was abroad. Even the usual sounds of the farm animals were hushed.

Funk was unpleasantly affected. Surely the entire household had not gone to meet his train and somehow missed it.

He carried his traps to the stoop, crossed the yard to the barnyard, and halloed again. He knew of old where Barclay's studio was, so he set off down the path toward the grateful shade of the woods.

The gray stone walls of the old building soon glinted through the tree trunks and heavy foliage. A strong conviction possessed Funk that Barclay was not within. In fact, he found the studio door padlocked. He noted that the west window was rudely boarded up. He walked around the studio to the north.

Here the trees had been cut down, and the studio wall was entirely of glass. He peered in with deepening curiosity, but apart from the usual litter of easels, painting paraphernalia and accessories, canvases in serried rows against the walls, his attention was almost immediately drawn to a painting propped against the south wall where the full light from the opposite windows poured in revealingly.

"Rum go!" Funk muttered, puzzled. "That never is Barclay's work. And he would never have let a student perpetrate such a monstrosity of line and crude color."

He pressed his face to the glass, cupping it against the outside light.

"That old man," Funk said aloud, amazed, "may be crudely done, but he's also absolutely horrible. His hands—ugh, they're dead hands. Bloodless—waxen—aaarrgh! Something about the way he's sitting there—drooping as if he hadn't the strength of himself to sit erect, and was being held by something—something without, that you can't see. . . . I don't like the thing. It's ugly. There's—something wrong with it."

He said this last with conviction, and as he exclaimed became aware of another gaze fixed upon himself. He snapped upright and wheeled quickly. Waiting

patiently for him to finish his examination of the studio's interior stood a man in patched, stained blue overalls.

"Well?" snapped Funk sharply, a bit taken aback.

"Mr. Barclay's at the house, sor. You're Mr. Funk? I'm Mulcahy, Hoddeston's hired man."

Funk nodded. "All right. I'm coming. How did Mr. Barclay come to miss my train?"

"We was all down to the police station, sor." Mulcahy fell in behind him.

"Police station?" echoed Funk. "What's been going on here?"

"I found Mr. Oakey dead in the studio this mornin', sor."

"What!" Funk whirled and confronted the Irishman.

"There's somethin' wrong in there, sor. I saw blood on the ould divil's beard." The man's voice quavered.

"Snap out of it, Mulcahy. Are you referring to that—picture?"

"I am that, sor."

"Blood on the old man's beard? Ridiculous! I saw none."

Mulcahy insisted stubbornly: "Blood it was, sor. An' the poor young man's was all drained out av him, sor."

Funk stiffened to deep attention. "Ha! This sounds intriguing. Blood on the old man's beard?"

"An' drippin' from his dead fingers, sor. An' not wan dhrop left in the corpse, sor. Blood—all over the dommed ould divil's whiskers, an' his dead fingers, sor. Máry Mother!" Mulcahy crossed himself with pious haste.

"Who did that painting?" Funk demanded, turning again toward the house.

"A mon be the name av Silva, sor. He's afther bein' a cabinet-maker, but he got to thinkin' he cud paint, so he made that beauty back there, divil fly away wid him!"

"He sure can paint!" muttered Funk cryptically.

"He's mixin' somethin' wid his paint that only devils from the Pit can give him," the Irishman declared darkly. He hesitated, then rushed on: "Sor, the night before the poor lad was murdered, there was a fine canvas of Mr. Barclay's cut into ribbons, and Mr. Oakey's prize picture the same. What might that mean, along with the poor lad's bein' killed the next night? An' Silva only gettin' honorable mention last week, where he was lookin' for first prize?"

"Looks as if Silva had a motive," declared Funk as they walked into the barnyard.

LIFE was stirring normally about the farm now, as if a ban of enchanted silence had been lifted. Funk could see Barclay's bulky body leaning over the valises on the front stoop. He hailed his friend, then asked Mulcahy hastily: "What do the police say?"

"Anny of us might have done it, sor, but the studio was locked from the inside. An' there's no motive. An' they can't figure where the poor lad's blood wint, sor." Back of the simple words pushed a dark significance of terrible things.

"Looks as if there were more here than appears on the surface."

"Right you are, sor. From now on, Tom Mulcahy wears a blessed medal next his hide, day an' night."

Funk met Barclay's welcoming hand with a heartening grip.

"Sorry to have missed you, Funk, but this ghastly tragedy has dislocated all plans. I—I was fond of the boy," groaned Barclay, his face working. "He had a gift, had Harry. I—I was looking forward to what he would do with color in the not far future. And now—" his voice broke.

"Where's my room, Barclay?" Funk gathered up his bags and followed the other painter up the front stairs.

Both men lighted cigarettes in silence. Barclay stared abstractedly from the window, while Funk unpacked rapidly, puffing clouds of smoke about himself as he tossed shirts, underwear, ties, into the open bureau drawers.

"I want to know how Silva's painting got into your studio," he said at last, with an air of relief as he finished his work.

"So you are taking that attitude?" Barclay asked, his eyes heavy.

Funk did not attempt to evade the implied issue. "Anybody but a crass, materialistic jackass would," he responded quietly.

"I didn't know you went in for that sort of thing. I've no time for anything but painting. Just making a living takes most of my time these days, Funk."

The younger man's eyes snapped. "A very little suffices for me. I'm too fascinated with studying the truths underlying the illusions of material existence. Not that I've gotten very far, but what I know, I *know*."

"Then perhaps you can say what's unnatural about poor Harry's death? I know there's—something wrong about it."

"Something wrong!" echoed the younger man thoughtfully. "Yes, there's something wrong—and uncanny—about this lad's death. As to its being unnatural, there are many strange and little-known laws operating along lines so new to us—" He broke off there, his expression clearing as if an illuminating idea had suddenly clarified the situation for him. "I believe the poor chap's death is due to an extremely interesting example of the transference of an evil will-to-power."

Barclay wheeled from the window, say-

ing abruptly: "I didn't tell the police what I felt lay behind this tragedy. I have no hankering to live in an insane asylum. Now I have a faint hope that *you* may be able to appreciate the strangeness of my experience. Listen!

"Manuel Silva settled here a few years ago and has been doing well as a cabinet-maker. Recently he learned that I got from three hundred dollars up, for a canvas. He thought this an easy way to get rich, but I refused to teach him. You know, I never take any but advanced students of decided promise. My refusal roused Silva's furious resentment.

"I have instituted an annual art exhibit in town. Silva entered three canvases, to force my hand. They were rather terrible. One was a blacksmith, dark, sullen, sinister; he was hammering viciously at what appeared to be a battered crucifix. Another was a farmer slaughtering a wretched hog that somehow looked like a naked man; the butcher's face wore a too realistic grin of sadistic enjoyment as he wielded his bloody knife. The third—the third was the painting you've just seen in my studio.

"Harry's entry took first prize; this was inevitable. I felt inclined to encourage a couple of young local artists, so gave them honorable mention. Not to slight Silva's pride, I included him.

"The night before the canvases were removed, Harry and I were in the gallery, and he pointed out that someone had deliberately cut the honorable mention ribbon on Silva's canvas so that it hung in dangling strips. Odd, that, eh?"

"You're opening vistas," replied Funk, lighting another cigarette from the one he had been smoking. "You are absorbingly interesting."

"I criticized Silva's painting, observing that Harry was right when he said it gave him the jitters, but that in just that

degree it possessed a touch of wild genius. Harry pronounced it ghastly, to paint a hunched-up old man as dead as a door-nail, his hands frightful, decomposing—yet sitting up there—ugh! Silva's colors were crude, his drawing distorted—just how, it would be difficult to say, but—wrong, you understand—wrong.

"I said I dared not encourage Silva because of a very strange quality in his work—that something wrong. And then we both nearly jumped out of our skins, for in the dusk behind us someone broke into an ugly chuckle, and we turned to see a dark figure slouching out. It was Silva, and I realized that he'd heard me pronounce him an evil genius. Harry made light of my compunctions, but I was disturbed.

"We confronted the old man in the painting once more. As twilight gained the room, a murky dusk seemed creeping into the very canvas. Its shadows deepened. The old man merged into his dark background; all but his pallid face, his grayish beard, the waxen fingers dropping over his angular knees. It *was* wrong. Entirely wrong. And then all at once Harry twitched my sleeve, and exclaimed, 'Let's get out of here!' and we turned and plunged into the street, stricken by some subtle panic so obsessing that it was not until we were back at the Hoddeston farm that we realized how foolish and unreasonable had been our flight."

**F**UNK lighted another cigarette. "We went sketching next day," Barclay went on, "and Hoddeston brought our canvases back to the studio. That night he told me that Silva had sent me one of his for a gift; so Harry and I went down to see which one. We lighted candles, and really, we got a nasty shock. The flickering, inadequate candle-light made that old man appear more than ever

an entity with a horrid existence independent of his painted presentment. Harry said, 'My God!' in a kind of comic dismay.

"I knew instinctively that Silva was up to no good; he bore me malice. His very gift seemed to convey dire menace. In the pale candle-light the old man's beard appeared to rustle stiffly as if his lips were parting under its bushy shelter. Of course, I could not *see* anything, but I *felt* that I was seeing a pale dead tongue flick moisture over dry dead lips. Ugh!"

"That must have been an odd sensation," cogitated Funk aloud, as he expelled a thick cloud of smoke. "You make it very clear."

"Yes? Well, there's more of it, Funk. Oakey and I went over our canvases to check on their return and good condition. We were satisfied. Just remember this point, will you? We padlocked the studio door and went off to bed. When we went in next morning, the padlock was undisturbed, and all the windows locked on the inside.

"But one of my best canvases had been slit into ribbons. And Harry's, which had taken first prize, was completely demolished, even the frame. That last act of vandalism made me feel bad. I'd been sure the boy could cash in on his work, and he needed the money. He took it like a Spartan, but he told me he was going to sleep in the studio that night, for he felt sure that Silva had done the damage.

"I agreed, although I couldn't figure out how Silva could have gotten inside. So last night I left the boy there. He said he was going to hang something over the old man's gosh-awful face. I offered to stay with him, but he wouldn't have it. This morning——" Barclay broke down, turning back to the window with a suspicious gulp.

"Mulcahy told me," Funk hastened to say, lighting another cigarette.

"It was ghastly, Funk. Mulcahy was howling 'Blood!' at every jump he took. Blood, he yelled, on the old man's beard!"

"H'm. How about the coroner?"

"Harry'd been dead for hours. Finger marks on his throat. Every drop of blood drained from his body," Barclay said with slow emphasis. "Mulcahy had seen him through the north windows. I had to break the west window to get in. The coroner said at first that he'd had a fit but finally decided he'd been killed by a person unknown."

"About the blood?" queried Funk.

"Mulcahy was right about it. Funk—I saw it, too."

"It's not there now," Funk declared.

Barclay nodded. "That's another strange thing. When I rushed over, I found poor Harry sprawling on the floor, his body all twisted in a grotesque, gruesome position. And so terribly white! As I threw myself on the floor beside him, something struck upon my inner ear. It was a sound. But *such* a sound! Even as I heard it, I knew I was hearing what could not be apprehended physically.

"I sprang to my feet and confronted Silva's hideous canvas. God, it was horrible!" He shuddered at the bare recollection. "The painted old man sat there motionless, but it was a sinister restraint, Funk. I stared, stricken by a horror that affected me with nausea, for I saw then that someone had smeared that ancient's deathly pallor with crimson that crawled down the painted gray beard. The dead hands that hung over the angular knees were dripping, every pallid finger-tip, with blood. *Blood*, Funk!"

"How do you know it was blood?" Funk demanded sharply.

"I—I touched it," whispered the old man, distastefully.

"And then?" Funk prompted, not ungently.

"A ghastly thing came to pass. I did not see it. I felt, rather than saw. I became aware with that inner sense of the movement of one of the old man's painted arms. It lifted with the jerking unevenness of an automaton, and passed across the stained gray beard. I say, it moved. I felt it move, yet at the same time I was aware that it was only painted, hence incapable of movement. It was a Something Else behind it that actually moved.

"I find it almost impossible to clarify my intuitions," Barclay deprecated despairingly, "other than to say that while the painted figure did not stir, I was yet inwardly aware that it lifted one arm and wiped away the crimson from its beard. Then it reached out on either side, to drag off that horrible drip from its waxen finger-tips against the painted grass that reddened under them.

"God! It was the more horrible because, although the figure did not show movement to my straining eyes, yet I saw the crimson life-blood of poor Harry disappearing from the canvas as those movements which I felt, rather than saw, took place. Of course this explanation is inadequate," he finished.

**F**UNK pushed the consumed tip of his cigarette to the fresh one he was holding between his thin lips. A cloud of blue smoke enveloped him, out of which his voice pronounced decidedly: "Not inadequate, my dear fellow. On the contrary, it is very enlightening; so clear that I believe we may yet punish the murderer of that poor lad."

Barclay's dreamy eyes burned with sudden fire. "I'd give a year of my life to accomplish that," he exclaimed fiercely.

"I hardly think so much will be re-

quired, but you may have to sacrifice one or two of your canvases. We'd better get the rest of Oakey's work over here. And Silva must learn that you are taking steps to protect Harry's work and your own. He must be informed that tomorrow night you yourself will sleep in the studio. That will bring him," Funk predicted darkly.

"You agree that it's Silva!" cried Barclay in relief.

"I've no doubt of it. But not *in propria persona*. He's projecting his astral body through that hideous old man, and he's already made a grave error."

"What do you mean?"

"He's permitted himself to savor human blood. Hence, he can not be permitted to — continue. He's dangerous, now. He will be yet more so, unless checked. I propose to do this in the only permanent way possible."

"We have no proof of his presence in the studio, Funk. Who would believe the intangible evidence of my experience?"

"No one, ordinarily," Funk agreed, adding quickly, "but *I* believe. And there is another person who will not only believe, but will furnish me with the means of putting a stop to Silva's murderous proclivities, without disturbing the authorities unduly," he finished dryly.

"Wouldn't it be wise to return that picture to Silva? Or cut it to bits and burn it?" suggested Barclay uneasily.

"Later," said Funk, queerly. "You see, Silva has somehow learned how to transfer his will-for-evil to that creature of his own making. It is through that same creation that we must reach him and stop his criminal career before it is too late."

Barclay sighed. "You speak as if you knew what you were talking about, Funk. I can't just understand you, but I feel

that you are somehow right. What do you wish done?"

"Get Mulcahy — or Hoddeston — to clear out all Oakey's canvases. Leave only a couple of your own that you don't particularly care about, so as not to stir Silva's suspicions overly. He'll imagine you're exhibiting. Then have Hoddeston step in and tell Silva what happened to the canvases in the studio, and ask him to have his moved out of harm's way. That will appear a kindly impulse on your part, and he will reply that he'll send for his canvas in a couple of days. He'll figure on polishing you off by then," finished Funk callously.

"Agreeable thought, that," sighed the older painter.

"Now, you're going to lend me your roadster. I'll be back tomorrow afternoon at the latest. Be sure Silva is given to understand that tomorrow night you'll be sleeping in the studio. Under no circumstances, however, venture in there tonight," Funk warned gravely. "Tonight Silva, or whatever wakens in the studio under the stimulus of his evil purpose, may have free play. But tomorrow night—ah, tomorrow night I shall be there, not you."

"I won't permit your getting into a nasty situation, Funk. This isn't your affair, after all. Harry was my protégé. It's up to me."

"Are you prepared to give effective battle to a painted demon, Barclay?" Funk's laugh was incredulous. "Can you, through that painted thing, silence forever the intangible, distant malefactor?"

"You can do such things?" said Barclay's hushed murmur.

"I shall know how to, before I return tomorrow afternoon."

"But how?"

"I'm going to someone who knows. I shall demand the secret. She will yield

it, I am certain. I'm going to see Gwen Carradorne."

"Where have I heard that name?" puzzled Barclay.

"Possibly in connection with her published brochures. Her *Reality of the Abstract* is fairly well known; it's discussed everywhere."

"Quite likely," sighed Barclay. "I seem to remember it vaguely."

"Now," pursued Funk briskly, "how about your car?"

IT WAS dusk when Funk returned on the following day. The seriousness and abstraction that wove a cloak about him struck Barclay's curious inquiries into silence. A certain high air about the younger artist forbade imperiously any break upon that lofty mood. Funk's first query was, Had Silva been duly informed of the occupation of the studio that night?

"He knows. He told Hoddeston that he would call for his unappreciated masterpiece in a couple of days." The words were significantly emphasized.

"I rather fancied he'd say that. He knows you'll be there tonight?"

"Hoddeston told him, if there were any further trouble, I'd sleep there from tonight on, to protect his painting."

"Excellent!" Funk rubbed his hands together and blew a cloud of thick smoke from the cigarette in one corner of his mouth. "And was there any?"

"Yes. Last night the two canvases I'd left were demolished."

"Good! He'll be expecting you to sleep there tonight. Let's have supper. Then I'll run into town and fetch Miss Carradorne. She insists upon coming out; the time was too brief to prepare me to handle the situation single-handed."

"That's extraordinarily kind of her, Funk. But if she is to be at the studio tonight, why not I?" Barclay insisted.



"She would have handled it alone, only that she——" Funk broke off suddenly, looking apologetic. "Sorry I can't be more explicit, but she bans discussion of herself unless she decides to come out into the open, which she rarely does. She's—well, wait until you meet her, if she permits it," Funk broke off, in a kind of embarrassment. "You'll understand then. But believe me, she is worthy the highest respect and admiration a human being could expect."

**F**UNK did not have to drive to town. Between dusk and dark a shining dark blue car with a special delivery body slipped into the driveway. From the limousine-like front two uniformed men alighted and walked to the rear of the car. There were wide doors there, which they proceeded to open. They withdrew, with the utmost care, a strange anachronism; a blue-and-black-and-gold decorated sedan chair, small and delicate. They placed themselves between the shafts and started toward the farmhouse.

Funk exclaimed, and sprang down the steps to meet that odd equipage. He bent over what was obviously an extended hand, white in the dusk. Barclay, staring, saw the young artist touch his lips to those extended fingers. A child's high, shrilly sweet voice gave an order, and the chair-bearers carried the sedan chair toward the barnyard. Funk followed, calling back as he went.

"See you tomorrow morning, Barclay." With that, he disappeared after the chair into the soft darkness beyond the barnyard.

Barclay felt that he could not sleep. He was intensely irritated that Gwen Caradorne should have sent a child to take her place in what he felt must be a post of danger. He went down to the shining automobile and walked around it with

curiosity. The rear doors had been closed, and nothing marked it as out of the ordinary save, perhaps, the expensive type of shock-absorbers for a delivery body; and of course, what looked very like a periscope set in the top, as much out of place as was a modern child in a sedan chair.

He sat at his window, fell asleep there in his chair, and did not waken until Mrs. Hoddeston tapped at his door, calling that Mr. Funk and the little girl had returned. She volunteered that the little girl was a perfect little French doll.

Barclay took the stairs three at a stride. In the hall Funk sat on a hassock which brought his face slightly below the level of the small oval countenance of the child, who sat sedately on the hall chair.

Barclay noted with an artist's appreciation the bloom on her dazzling cheeks; the straight nose; the richly scarlet mobile lips. He approved the curling black lashes, finely penciled arching eyebrows, sleek black bobbed hair. Her creamy silk dress, rather longer than worn by most children of her age (apparently about six), was smocked in a knowing fashion with bright colors. Her feet were inappropriately encased in high-heeled French slippers.

All this the artist in Barclay captured at a glance, just as he took in the beauty of the slender, tiny hands, of the taper fingers, and the eloquence of every gesture. A strange, an unusual child, this. His leaping footsteps brought upon him a lifting of fringed eyelids, and what he felt shrinkingly was a glance of indifference. He stopped short at the foot of the staircase, abashed at this disdainful glance.

He knew all at once why this child's frock was longer than customary; why her tiny feet wore adult-styled foot-gear; why sophistication animated those taper

fingers. The cobalt blue eyes that regarded him from the child's elfin face were the eyes of a grown woman. They were the informed eyes of one who has passed through the fires of varied experiences; the eyes of one who has gazed unafraid upon unveiled mysteries. The child was *not* a child, but was an exquisite midget, a creature set apart from the entire world by her miniature proportions.

Funk sprang up, caught the other man's hand and drew him down to the hassock, himself sinking upon the floor so that both men's faces were below the level of the midget's.

"Barclay," Funk said, in a tone of repressed excitement, "Miss Carradorne permits me to present you."

"Honored, Miss Carradorne," mumbled Barclay, still confused under the keen gaze of those faintly derisive blue eyes. He understood it, after a minute; she was touched with amusement at his discomfiture.

An elfish smile twitched at one corner of her scarlet lips, and she actually turned away those too-shrewd eyes as if to spare Barclay's feelings, a kindly gesture which did not serve to tranquillize him, for there was just a touch of condescension in her half-smile.

"Mr. Funk has been showing me these canvases from your studio," she said, slowly, in a shrilly sweet voice. "I would very much like that snow scene; it is charming. If you will tell me the price——?"

Barclay's embarrassment vanished. Here he could be sure of himself.

"I would feel honored if you would accept it as a proof of my gratitude for your having come here," he began, but his eyes questioned Funk.

"You are anxious to learn the outcome of last night's plans?" said Miss Carradorne's high voice lightly.

Suspended in the bosom of her frock by a slender platinum chain was a platinum whistle which she put to her lips and sounded. At once the bearers of the sedan chair came up the steps and into the hall, holding the chair close to their mistress. Like some bright bird, so airy and graceful was her lithe movement, she seemed to fly from her chair into the sedan's shelter. She waved one tiny hand. The bearers took their light burden outside, slid it into place in the rear of the waiting automobile. They mounted into the front, and the car slipped noiselessly away down the road, bespeaking the many-cylindrical motor by its very silence and power.

**B**ARCLAY stared after it, amazed. "So that strange little thing is your wonderful Gwen Carradorne? Why didn't you warn me?"

Funk lighted a cigarette hastily and began surrounding himself with smoke. "Why didn't I? Because she won't be talked about. She's proud and sensitive. She considers her miniature body the ultimate of human perfection, and won't permit its comparison with what she considers our gross bodies. And she's abnormally proud of her brain. She has reason to be. I think it is the most highly developed I have ever known. As an occultist—she's the seventh daughter of a seventh daughter——"

Funk broke off brusksly. "You are anxious to know about last night? She has forbidden me to divulge details, but I may tell you briefly that Silva will never again repeat his evil act."

"He was there, then, last night?" gasped Barclay incredulously.

"Not *in propria persona*, but his familiar was already locked in with us, when I bolted the door behind Gwen and myself."

"What do you mean?"

Funk sighed resignedly. "Let's go down to the studio. It's easier to understand, when you've seen things with your own eyes."

The telephone rang. Mrs. Hoddeston ran out of the kitchen and answered it. An expression of horror settled on her placid face.

"Manuel Silva's been found dead, with a knife-wound in his throat," she called, and gave closer attention to the telephone.

Funk beckoned Barclay silently, and the two hurried across the barnyard and into the woods. With the key Barclay had loaned him, Funk unlocked the padlock. He pushed the studio door open. Words seemed superfluous.

Spread on the floor lay a painted canvas figure, pinned down by a knife through its throat. The edges of the canvas were sharply defined as if just cut out

of the painting leaning against the south wall with a neatly trimmed vacancy in its center.

Barclay stared, closed his eyes convulsively, then stared again.

"I couldn't have done it alone," Funk kept repeating in a kind of feverish excitement. "*She* furnished the *power*. She'd have done it herself, but she's too—I mean," he corrected himself hastily, "*he* was too tall."

Barclay stared, motionless. He was absorbing the details of a bizarre thing which confirmed him in his hasty resolution to burn Silva's painting without delay.

The empty space in the painting distinctly outlined a drooping, seated figure. The painted canvas shape lying on the floor, pinned down by the knife through its pallid painted throat, could have filled that vacancy twice over.

It was a full length, standing figure. . . .

---