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**THE WHITE
WOLF**

by FRANKLIN GREGORY

— ALSO —

THE GREEN SPLOTCHES

by T. S. STRIBLING

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**THE
WHITE WOLF** Franklin Gregory 12

What irresistible, unnameable evil drew Sara Camp-d'Avesnes to a strangely familiar hovel in Philadelphia's reeking slums? And what connection had her odd disappearances with the horror that shocked the Pennsylvania countryside?

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Novelette

**THE
GREEN SPLOTCHES** T. S. Stribling 76

Helplessly, prisoners of their own terror, they waited for whatever unearthly doom would descend upon them. . . . For scientists and savages alike sensed the strange menace utterly new to mankind, forecast in the frightful manifestation

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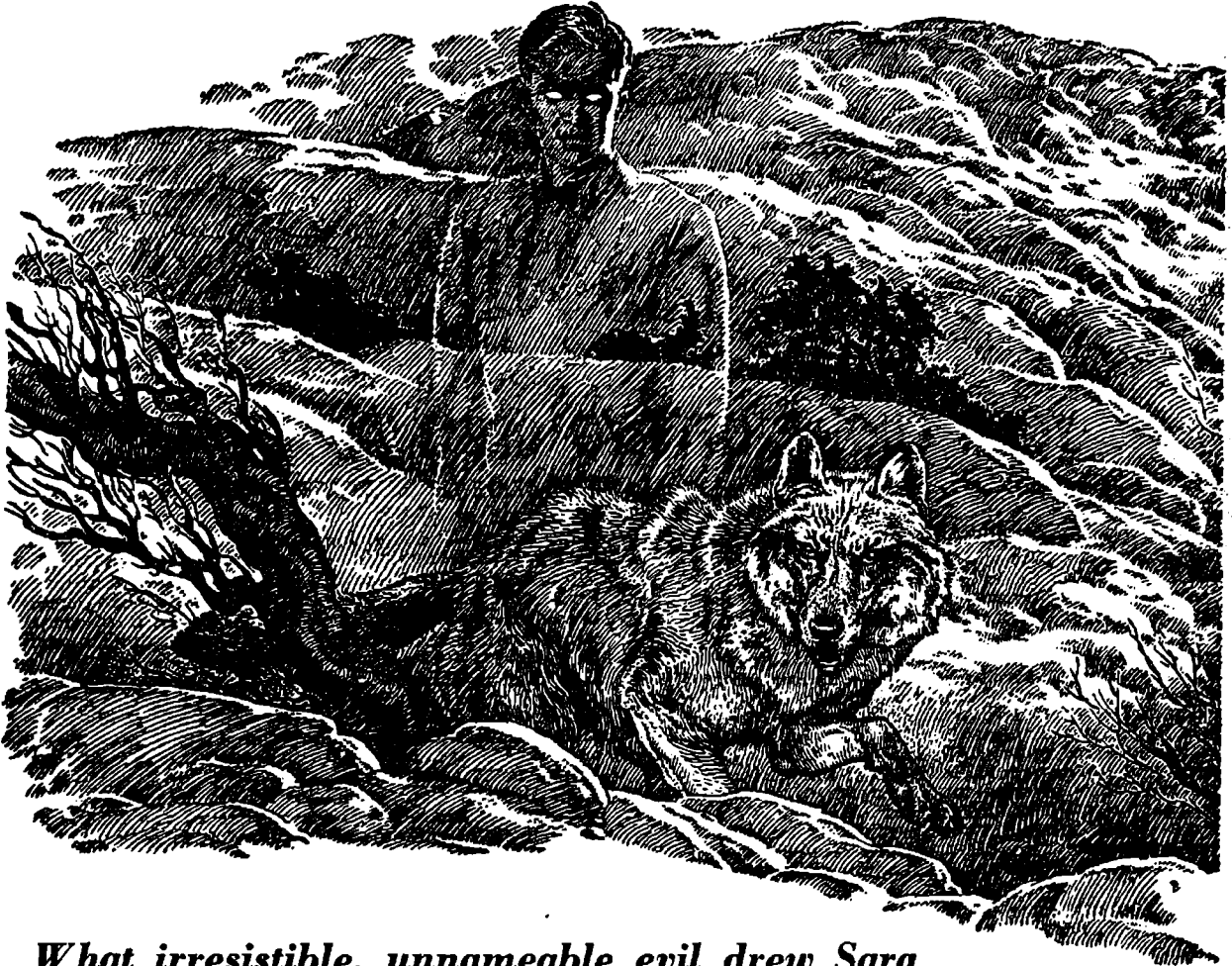
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THE WHITE WOLF

By Franklin Gregory



What irresistible, unnameable evil drew Sara Camp-d'Avesnes to a strangely familiar hovel in Philadelphia's reeking slums? And what connection had her odd disappearances with the horror that shocked the Pennsylvania countryside?

IT WAS the boast of Pierre de Camp d'Avesnes that the wild fragrance of the perfume for which his name was celebrated could not be duplicated. Not in the five and one-half centuries his family had possessed the formula in their native France, nor the one hundred and fifty years since their escape to America, had the secret been lost.

Pierre used to explain about it, sitting in the overstuffed luxury of the Bankers and Manufacturers Club—his poorer eye, the one with the drooping lid, fixed wistfully on the fat cigars in the mouths of his economic-royalist auditors.

Old Henri, Comte de Saint-Pol, had started the thing. He had been on the last of the



Men now whispered of ghouls; of the
hellborn; of the bewitched undead. . . .

Crusades with Louis IX, and later, knocking around in Zorrania only a score of years in advance of Marco Polo, had picked up the secret.

As a matter of course, the Comte de Saint-Pol, aside from hunting and making war, did nothing for himself. The manufacture was left in the hands of two dependent families, each halving the secret—and the labor. And the ladies and gentlemen of the house d'Avesnes henceforth possessed their individual odor, which became as distinctive to their line as their coat of arms.

Not a member of the club but had heard Pierre tell the story.

"We must have been a pretty stinking lot," he would say, and would blow his nose with the large white handkerchief he stored in a tail pocket of his baggy suit coat. The very thought of himself using perfume was abhorrent.

He talked a good deal about his family; their estates along the Somme; their love of the hunt; how Gervase, his great-great-grandfather, escaped the Revolution and, after a two-month buffeting in an English brig, reached Philadelphia with no other capital than the family formula. But for some reason, and in spite of the luxuriant growth of the family tree, Pierre had never penetrated further back, conversationally, than old Henri. He did tonight.

It was Halloween. It was raining. Ben McCallister had gotten up and said he supposed he'd better drop over to the Bellevue for his daughter's party. Pierre had said Sara would be there, and McAllister left. Grillot (Biddle, Baker & Grillot, Bonds) watched him leave, then turned and stood at the tall, wide, heavily draped windows, peering out into the evening traffic of Broad Street. Behind the creases of his frown you would have thought he was pondering some heavy financial matter—the City Housing Authority's \$32,000,000 issue of debentures, perhaps, or the pawning of the Municipal Gas Works. As a matter of fact, he was simply watching the tracings left on the wet pavement by the tires of motor vehicles and wondering what happened to them when they disappeared. He said, suddenly, without turning his head toward the group of men sitting behind him:

"It's the night when witches walk."

"Witches don't walk, sir," grunted Dr. Hardt. "They ride. Ghosts walk."

Grillot said nothing; merely kept looking at the rain. Dr. Hardt added:

"Not that I ever saw one. But—"

The others knew what the "but" meant. The massive psychiatrist referred to his own one-time interest in the occult.

There was a silence, of voices. Manning Trent, sinking back in his leather lounge chair and pulling at his corona, squinted at Pierre. He thought he saw that gleam in Pierre's pale blue eyes which usually preceded one of his stories about his family. Yet there was something doubtful about the gleam this time; as if Pierre was giving more than ordinary thought to what he was going to say; or, more accurately, was weighing the advisability of saying it at all. Hanling, who manufactured beltings, saw the gleam, too.

He groaned, "Oh, Lord!"

He really didn't mean Pierre's stories ever bored him. It was simply his way of being funny. But his exclamation had the effect of prolonging the silence, of permitting the fleshy-faced Pierre to chew his thoughts into finer particles.

Pierre chewed. He fingered, as he always did when thoughtful, the big mole on his right cheek. He shifted his not inconsiderable bulk and he looked at Trent as if asking for some signal. He always did that. It was a little rite between the two men, attesting that their bond was somewhat closer than with the others. Pierre's eyes asked:

"Looking for an argument?"

And Trent, who always liked to hear Pierre argue about anything (indeed, every story Pierre told wound up with an argument better than the tale and Pierre never cared which side he took), nodded gently. Pierre picked at his mole.

Pierre said, "I never saw a ghost walk, either. I never saw a witch ride. But I've an ancestor...."

Grillot, whose sharp financial brains were gambling on which of two raindrops would be first to reach the window sill, turned around.

"I don't believe," Pierre said. "I've ever told you about old Hughes. He was one of the Comtes de Saint-Pol, too. But considerably before old Henri's time. My father—you remember Father, Manning—was pretty much ashamed of him. As if what somebody did a thousand years before you came along had anything to do with you."

Hanling's nose wrinkled.

"A thousand? The last time I heard of your family, it was seven hundred."

Trent said, "Let him alone, E.B."

GROOVES appeared in Pierre's wide forehead. He didn't like those interruptions. "Well, say eight hundred, then. And I'll say now, gentlemen, it's about as far back as I can trace my people, though I imagine old Hughes had a father, the same as the rest of

us. Only . . . well, I've always thought it might be the Devil.

"I mean that. There probably wasn't a crueler man ever lived. Nor more cowardly. And that goes for any of your present-day dictators. Men like Hugues always have enemies. Hugues had them by the dozen. Two of them were the Comte d'Auxi and the Comte de Beaurain-sur-Canche.

"You can read about 'em in your history books. Hugues got Auxi and Beaurain on the run and they and their gang made a bee-line for the Abbey of Saint-Riquier. That's at Ponthieu, northeast a bit of Abbeville on the Somme and pretty close to the English Channel. You'll find it on any map. Anyway, Hugues chased the two counts to the abbey, attacked it and burned it." Pierre held a finger to his nose. "It was," he said slowly, "on July 28, 1131. More than three thousand men, women and children were killed."

Dr. Hardt coughed.

"Three thousand, sir? Look at what Hitler did to Warsaw and Rotterdam. Look at London!"

Pierre inclined his thick neck slightly.

"Yes, yes, of course. But there's no law now. The church hasn't any power. But it did then. At least, there were understandings. And one of them was you couldn't attack the abbey. But Hugues didn't stop there. He continued to pillage Ponthieu. The abbot got away to Abbeville and sent a messenger to the king of France. Louis le Gros got up on his high horse and started after Hugues with an army. Hugues got scared and ran off to the Pope.

"Innocent thought it over, called in a few cardinals, and finally told Hughes he wasn't sure he could save his soul. But maybe . . . well, if Hugues built a new abbey . . . well, His Holiness would see what he could do."

Hanling asked, "Did he?"

"He did. He built a bigger and better abbey and he endowed it with most of the family fortune. Cercamp, they called it. Hugues' life was saved, and he thought his soul was, too."

Dr. Hardt said, "Well, sir, wasn't it?"

Pierre replied slowly, "I don't know. But it is known that for more than four hundred years it was not at rest. Hugues de Camp-d'Avesnes, Comte de Saint-Pol, haunted that district for generation after generation. He was seen time after time, always at night, slinking among the ruins of Saint-Riquier. He was not seen as a man. He was seen as a wolf, a huge, white wolf burdened with chains. And on still, dark nights they said you could hear his bay from the forest as if he were in pain."

Grillot turned on the balls of his feet and stared out the window. It had stopped raining. He knocked his pipe against an ornamental iron ash stand. He said, gruffly, over his shoulder:

"You believe that?"

Pierre's eyes sought those of Manning Trent. It was again that secret signal of understanding, a question in a glance, silently asking:

"Well, Manning, which side shall I take?"

Trent's nod was imperceptible to the others.

Grillot said, still not turning, "I mean, damn it, in a general way. Do you believe in ghosts?"

Pierre's answer was in his most irritating tone, that which the others had learned was an invitation to debate.

"It isn't," Pierre said with casual assurance, "a question of believing, at all. It's simply a matter of accepting known historical facts."

"Trash!" exclaimed Grillot, and he turned, facing from his towering height the bulky, seated Pierre.

"Stuff and nonsense," Hanling said.

"Really, sir," said Dr. Hardt, "isn't that just a bit on the long side?"

"And how about the wolf?" Grillot demanded. "How'd anybody know it was this ancestor of yours?"

"Of course," chided Hanling. "Now, if the wolf had *looked* like Hugues. . . ."

"As a matter of fact," Pierre said, "the eyes did."

MEANWHILE, at the McCallister ball, young David Trent sat alone, desperately handsome, marvelously at ease, slender, immaculate. His face was lean and long and it was hollow of cheek. The tanned skin was *neither old nor young, but there were lines* . . . adding, Sara thought, a touch of the dignity of experience. He wore a terse, dark mustache suggestive—and only suggestive—of the sinister; and his carelessly elegant evening dress was, unlike most of the others about him, an expression of marked personality.

That personality, so definitely present in his clothes and in his face, was still short of exact definition. There was in it a hint of other climes, almost of other ages and other worlds. And this hint of cosmopolitan quality was intensified by the features—a nose Greek and classical, hair black and Latin, eyes almost Oriental.

Once the eyes looked at Sara. She felt naked before them. Yet, half screened by narrowing eyelids, they burned with an understanding Sara never fancied could exist in any human. Uncomfortably she lowered hers.

"Who is he?" David Trent inquired in the studied drawl with which he had combated his early speech impediment. Sara could only shrug her bare white shoulders.

There were others at the McCallister party who wondered, too, as they passed his table. And even Mrs. Constance McCallister, here introducing her daughter Cecile to society, caught herself more than once glancing discreetly at the man. It would never do to let him know she did not recognize him.

An hour passed. And Sara and David danced and drank the McCallisters' champagne. Then, suddenly, for no reason apparent to her, Sara's spirit seemed to dry up. And with it dried up the spirit of this tropical garden into which the McCallister railroad gold had transformed the ballroom. The banks of misty green acacia lost their loveliness; the artificial waterfall grew less lively; the exotic fish in the pool at the base of the fall lost something of their beauty.

She noticed the strange man had left his table. She said:

"Cecile's party's awfully dull."

And Sylvia Ambler, sitting at their table, said with the crude forthrightness of the very young, "Let's scam."

Sylvia's escort, Chick Hunt, thought it a good idea. And so did Ann Curtis and Beefy Collins. And Sara said, in an odd sort of voice:

"I know just the place to have our fortunes told. Halloween too. They say he's grand."

But afterwards, holding up her green chiffon gown to step into the Trent's car, Sara wondered how she knew. She had never been there before. She was certain of that. And when she had said, "They say he's grand," she wondered what she meant by "they." She could not recall anyone having told her. And that troubled her; for usually her memory was tenacious.

She wondered, as Roger, the Trent chauffeur, stopped at a red traffic light, if it was another of those inexplicables which occasionally beset her, such a compulsion as sometimes reached out at her from God alone knew where. No, no. Not that. She must have read about him somewhere. She snatched eagerly at this solution. She must have read about him.

The car reached South Street, the Lenox Avenue of Philadelphia's Harlem. Sara leaned forward and issued a curt instruction to Roger. The car turned east.

"My dear," purred Ann. "You certainly seem to know your way down here."

Sara's full red lips set.

Chick Hunt said, "Say, isn't this where those arsenic murderers were?"

Sylvia shivered deliciously.

"Somewhere in here," Beefy volunteered. "Farther east, I think."

Passage was slow. Sidewalks were crowded; the street was filled with oddly assorted traffic; late hucksters' wagons, trucks, long green trolley cars.

The street was still wet after the rain. And it was still dirty with the litter of the day. Cans of ashes and rubbish spilled over at the curbs. It was a Philadelphia street.

Sylvia thought, What a godawful funny place! Funny idea for Sara. . . .

Ann thought, She's so cold, so aloof, never really one for a lark like this!

Big, broad-shouldered David Trent frowned. Didn't like the neighborhood. He pressed Sara's smooth, cool hand.

There were smells in this street you found nowhere else. Those rose from the seething humanity, from the refuse, from the hills of vegetables and fruits and chickens and rabbits in front of the lighted windows of the shops, from exhaust pipes and gutters.

There were noises: the shrill cries of cursing urchins, the yaps of the vendors, the *clunk-clunk* of a trolley car's flat wheel, the deafening squawk of an auto horn, jaded laughter.

The buildings were old, rickety Colonial structures in the best and worst Philadelphia tradition: red brick, narrow of front, with slate roofs sloping toward the street.

A traffic tie-up stopped them in front of a herbalist's window, first of a string of similar shops along Voodoo Row. They could see odd, repulsive merchandise in the window: a bottled rattlesnake, a skull, dead bats and stuffed owls, and, in a yellowing liquid in a jar, what appeared to be a human fetus.

These were the shops that pandered to the ignorant, the superstitious, the wretched; they were the shops where were sold "graveyard dirt" and "compelling incense" and "chasing-away goods." Behind one of the windows moved the long-gowned shadowy figure of the witch doctor.

"Such a palpable fraud!" Sara exclaimed, as the limousine began to move. And Sylvia, her eyes narrow, asked:

"But how do you know?"

Sara stared at the scene, and she gave Roger directions. The limousine swung into Ninth Street.

"Slow, Roger."

The car slowed, and Sara, her face pressed to the window, looked out. She was puzzled. The street was familiar! Could she, she wondered, have seen this street with such clarity and in such detail by only reading about it? It did not seem sane. But what else could it be? Never, combing even her childhood, could

she recollect having been anywhere near it.

Here the quaint narrow houses had small white stone steps with rails of wrought iron on either hand. They had solid doors set in arched white frames. A single gas lamp on an iron standard midway to the next intersection lit the brick-paved street. And when the limousine rolled to a stop, it was to the door behind that lamp that Sara unerringly led the rest.

The maid said, "You wanna see the doctor?"

Chick Hunt said airily, "That was the general idea."

THE maid led them into a cold, bare hallway. Her slippers scuffing, she beckoned them along the passage until they reached a point midway through the house. She opened a door and guided them into a large, windowless room. And then she left them.

The room was as naked as the hall. There were no chairs, no tables. No carpet covered the wide planks. There was light, but its source was obscured and it seemed unreal. As they entered, a gaunt gray cat—either so old or so serene as to be oblivious to their presence—stood up, stretched, and paced imperially out of the room through a far door that stood half open.

Through that door the sounds of words lifted.

"Well, what do they want?"

The question was imperative. The tone was cold. Sara thought there was an overtone faintly familiar of something—the time, perhaps, when she heard the gasping rattle of death at the bedside of an aunt.

There was a mumble from the maid. Ann's flesh crept. Then, without warning, the doctor appeared at the door. And Sara gave a little cry.

It couldn't be, she thought. It *couldn't* be! Yet here were the same face and the same eyes of the man who, only an hour before, drew so many questioning glances at the McCallister ball. He advanced a few paces, teetering with each step as if either he were slightly drunk or his shoes—of such fine-grained leather they might have been tanned from human hide—pinched his feet. And yet, despite this ambulatory uncertainty, he seemed at ease, his hands shoved into the pockets of his gray double-breasted suit coat.

He stared blandly at his intruders. He inspected them, one by one. Finally, his eyes, from their small sockets, rested upon Sara's white face. Yes, they were the same eyes that in the ballroom had denuded her soul; there could be no other pair seeming, as these, to hold the wisdom of all sin.

Yet Sara's companions did not recognize him.

Beefy said feebly, "Look here—"

But the man was attracted only to Sara. She wondered why. Sylvia's fresh face was prettier; Ann's more inviting. Her own; the cheek bones were too high, the face too long, her mouth too big, her nose too prominently French, and her complexion—except for the garnet red of her lips—much too pale.

At length, the man demanded of the room at large, "Why do you come here?"

Chick Hunt said, "Why the idea was. . . . We wanted our fortunes told."

The lean face clouded. It turned toward Hunt.

"You think I use my wisdom to tell fortunes?"

Sara detected a note of derision. Hunt looked at David Trent. Trent glanced questioningly at Sara. Lamely, she said:

"I thought. . . ."

"I do not tell fortunes," the man said. The tone was final. But when he added, "I am a healer, I cure souls and I cure bodies, I cure them with faith," Sara knew he lied. And somehow she felt the lie was directed more at the ears of the others than at hers.

Chick reached into his pockets, drew out a roll of bills.

"If it's only a matter of money," he began.

He never finished. With tottering yet lightning movement, the man was before Hunt.

"Son—" And his tone was now cold contempt. "You are indeed naïve if you believe that money buys all things."

Chick—the hot-headed Chick Hunt of Penn's Varsity—shook with anger. His hands clenched.

"Why, damn you!" he snarled. And before David could check his arm, he'd struck. But the man was not there. He was back in the center of the room, teetering in those queer, uncomfortable shoes. And Sara saw something else; he had lost his composure. At the blow? He had not been struck. At what Chick had said?

Chick struggled to free himself from David.

"Now here," Beefy pleaded. "Let's scram. It's his place. Somebody'll call the cops and we'll all be in a jam."

David and Beefy led Hunt toward the door. The girls followed. But Sara found no will to leave. She moved, yet muscular progress seemed impeded by a wall of unfelt force. That was why she was last to reach the corridor, the last to reach the outer door. It was why, standing doubtfully at the door, she felt the tall lean man immediately behind her, his awful eyes upon her. She felt a touch, ice cold, upon her wrist. When she glanced down, she saw his hand.

PIERRE DE CAMP D'AVESNES chuckled with satisfaction as he boarded the last train in the Reading's Market Street sheds. He still saw Hardt's frown; Grillot's red face and disbelieving eyes; and he still heard Hanling's irritated snort of contempt which he knew was only a cover for his defeat.

He could have filled the bill for Guy de Maupassant's Joseph de Bardon. For he had wit without much depth, a general knowledge without real learning, and quick perception without serious penetration. These three qualities he had exhibited with considerable shrewdness that night, to the discomfort of some of the others.

Oh, he had led up to the subject casually enough. The argument about the spirit world had reached the point where Grillot was knocking holes in the various planes that Manning Trent suggested, lie beyond this life. Pierre extracted a crumpled envelope from his pocket and, pencil in hand, drew upon it. He did it quite obviously but the effect was that of a cat watching a mouse hole, and finally Mouse Hanling stuck his head out.

"What's that?" he demanded, leaning forward.

"This?" Pierre's round fleshy face attained such dignity as it could. "It's a one-dimensional world."

"All I see's a straight line." Hanling snorted.

The others looked too.

"That," said Pierre, "is because you lack imagination."

"You wouldn't mean," inquired Trent, "that it's one of the three dimensions humans perceive?"

"Exactly," said Pierre. "Length."

"Trash!" exploded Grillot. "That's as abstract as a four-dimensional world. You can't have one human dimension without the other two."

Pierre inclined his thick neck.

"Certainly. That's why I say Hanling has no imagination. But, see here. I'll put a man down here—a one-dimensional man. Let's call him X. His knowledge, his power, are limited to this one dimension, this straight line. It's his only world and it runs in both directions to infinity. He can travel upon it, forward or backward.

"Now, let's say he's traveling forward. He meets with a two-dimension rock-slide. It had length, but it also has height. How'll he surmount this rock slide so he can continue his journey?"

Hanling pursed his lips.

"Go around?"

"There's nothing to go around," said Pierre.

"Well, dammit, let him climb over, then."

Pierre's smile revealed his irregular teeth.

"Impossible. You forget, he's a one-dimensional creature and hasn't the power to leave his one-dimensional world, which he'd have to do if he climbed over. The result is, you have to accept this fact: this obstacle of two dimensions is, to him, a mystery. It is a fence between his own world and some other world he can't penetrate and can but dimly comprehend."

Grillot frowned. He grunted:

"I see *that*. It's sense."

Pierre looked at Trent, whose eyes showed he thought he knew what was coming. Pierre said:

"So let's follow up and see where we get. We'll place a two-dimensional creature in this one-dimensional world. We'll call him Y. He travels along the line, comes to the two-dimensional rock-slide and *he* climbs over. Now if you were in X's shoes, wouldn't that appear to be a miracle?"

Hanling conceded grudgingly he "guessed that was so."

"Of course," said Pierre. "So, in the eyes of X, Y becomes a god. And not only can god Y climb over the object, he can lift the rocks into the air directly above the one-dimensional world. He can carry them over X's head and replace them on the other side of him, much to X's concern. He can turn the rocks upside down."

"Very well," said Hanling, "where's all that get us?"

"It gets us," continued Pierre, "to the two-dimensional world in which Y himself lives and where he is not a god at all. His world had length *and* height. He can rise straight up and he can dig straight down, besides traveling forward or backward. But he knows nothing of the world to the right or to the left. For him, that world has no existence.

"But one day he comes to an object that has three dimensions. It has the two qualities of his own world, length and height, but it also has breadth. He can still climb over as before, but he cannot go around. To do that he would have to step out of his own world. So, if you or I, living in a three-dimensional world, were to come along and pass around the object, Y himself would be confronted with a miracle."

"All right," said Hanling impatiently. "But I still don't see—"

"Just this," interrupted Pierre. "Why isn't it possible for us, living in our three-dimensional world, to find ourselves facing the same problem . . . a miracle we might call the fourth dimension?"

"You mean—"

Pierre persisted. "I ask, what would be so incredible about this room we're sitting in, sealed tight, windows locked, doors bolted, having that chair you're sitting in, Hanling, removed from it along the fourth dimension? Yes, and you along with it, too!"

THE train rolled to a stop at the Oak Lane station. There was a momentary pause for the discharge of passengers; then, smoothly, the train rolled out. Now Pierre's face was sober. The left eyelid drooped a bit more. He stared out into the night, seeing nothing. Was there, he wondered, just a grain of truth in the argument he'd used to try to convince the others?

He'd never given much thought to things like that. The world, in which he'd always had a pretty good time, was quite an objective thing to him. And he'd never bothered his head a great deal about what might lie on the other side. He heard Hanling again:

"All supposition!"

He heard himself replying. "Certainly. But the three dimensions are only a *human* conception. Do you think they're necessarily the only combination?"

Now, why in the devil did he think of that?

Justin Hardt had coughed importantly and inclined his houndlike head and had finally spoken with that bombastic air of last-word authority for which, even more than his medical knowledge, he was celebrated.

"Don't, sir," he said, with a direct look at Hanling, "let the man befuddle you with such tish-tosh. I, who have made a study of the subject and believe nothing, can give you a much better argument. And," turning to Pierre, "a much briefer one. I merely ask, what makes wood burn up into smoke and makes the smoke disappear?"

There was general laughter. Until Grillot broke in abruptly with dead seriousness:

"I don't know. A man gets to thinking about things sometimes and he goes whacky. I get to thinking about figures. They're simple little things. I've dealt with 'em all my life. There are only ten of them and after that there are just the same figures over and over again in combinations. But—well, I get to thinking sometimes that there's some mystery about 'em. Take a bond issue, just for example. One little abstract fraction of one per cent can make a whale of a lot of difference.

"I'll worry stiff sometimes figuring what premium I ought to offer and what interest rate I'll accept on an issue of upstate municipal debentures. The wrong figure will spell the difference between profit and loss. And if there's enough in it, it might spell ruin. And

again, if the interest I win is a bit high it'll mean—in terms of actual, physical sweat—that some poor fish will have to swing the pick a bit harder to pay the tax that meets the terms."

Pierre nodded eagerly.

"I know what you mean. It's the same with the chemistry of perfumes. You add two odors and you'll get a third entirely different from either of them. That's magic."

"It's science, sir, and there's no magic to it," growled Hardt.

Pierre shrugged.

"Have it your own way. But some people believe that this world and other worlds are in tune with each other on certain vibratory thought waves. They reach that conclusion through analogy, after studying the vibratory qualities of common objects about us. They purport to see magic everywhere—and for proof they say that if you change the rate or the mode or the degree of the vibrations of any given object, you change the object itself."

He looked straight into Hardt's face. And Hardt taunted:

"Like my wood and smoke, sir?"

"Yes, and like ice turning to water and then to steam. Or like a cat's inability to see any color save gray, while we, boasting better perception, have our spectrum but can't see the diversity of color that lies beyond."

"But neither of you," interposed Trent, "says exactly what you mean. You're trying to prove or disprove something that's beyond your comprehension. But you have only human words to work with. As a newspaper man, I know how damnably weak words are! I'll publish an editorial. Three hundred thousand readers see it. Each one gets a slightly different impression from the other and all of them a somewhat different idea than I tried to put across. For each reader qualifies that editorial in the light of his own experience, knowledge, or mood at the time.

"Hell, I'm not being exact myself. What I'm trying to say is, I believe with you and your figures, Grillot, that there's a magic in words, too. Ever notice how a word lingers on the rim of your consciousness long after it's been spoken?"

"Oh, yes; yes, of course."

"Of course. Same tone, same inflection. It'll get buried under a pile of other words, but a long time later some faint suggestion will draw it up again. Or perhaps, by that time, only a haunting memory of it, not quite identified for what it is, will strive toward the surface."

Dr. Hardt fingered the black ribbon of his pince-nez.

"And where does that get us, sir?"

"Just this. If a word, frail and weak, as I

said, and a human invention in the first place and seldom accurate, will survive, like that, why can't personality?"

Dr. Hardt's nose wrinkled.

"A very poor argument, sir. In the first place, if you were acquainted with psychology at all, you would realize that there's a definite physiological reason both for the retention and revival of the memory image, the word.

The word is apprehended, registered and fixed, the strength of the impression depending upon attention and the impressionability of the cortical neurones. It is retained in the cerebral neurones. It is returned to the surface consciousness when the brain cells are stimulated by a new nerve impulse. And that is all there is to it, sir."

Trent had been sitting back, the tips of his fingers against each other, a smile of amusement growing on his lean face.

"Quite all, Doctor?" he asked.

"Quite."

"And you are prepared to state precisely the magic that makes those neurones function as they do?"

Dr. Hardt merely stared at him.

On the train, now, Pierre considered the conversation item by item. Nothing to worry about, he thought; just a lot of crackpot talk. He tried to recapture the joviality with which he had got aboard. He glanced behind him to see if there was anyone in the coach he knew. He looked out the window. The lights of Jenkintown, Glenside, Willow Grove arrived, hesitated beside the train, and then moved backward swiftly.

H'mm. He'd always been such a damned skeptic, too.

At Hatboro, Heinrich was waiting with the station wagon.

He was feeling more himself twenty minutes later when the station wagon rolled into the winding lane which, before the Revolution, was the Old Post Road and which now led through groves of great oaks to the house. He entered by the long hall, and noticing a light to the left, in the library, went in.

Sara was sitting on a turtle stool, her knees drawn up, her long shapely hands clasping her ankles. She was staring moodily into the dying embers of the fire.

He said cheerily, "Hello, pet."

Sara did not reply.

THE next morning Sara did not come down for breakfast. Pierre ate alone, sitting at the chaste maple table across from the massive fireplace. In the old days, when Fountain Head was a tavern, the dining room had been the kitchen and the fireplace had a reason for existence. You could walk without stoop-

ing into that fireplace, its back wall of firebrick blackened by the smoke of generations. You could sit down on either side of the colossal spit on little stone seats to toast your toes. It was little changed. The old iron crane, supporting the fat iron pot, still swung to one side; the smoke-worn bellows, the selection of pokers, the tongs, were still in place. Pierre kept the smoke gate half open for ventilation.

But the rest of the room was not at all what it had been, even in Pierre's childhood. Angelica had seen to that. They hadn't been back from their honeymoon a month when her nervous fingers were busy "rearranging," as she called it. Actually, it amounted to a domestic hurricane. All the old old solid furniture was discarded; there were days Angelica spent combing old attics and basements and antique shops for spindly things she described as "pieces." And finally, when Pierre returned one night, she was able to display proudly an "authentic restoration."

Never since had Pierre been exactly comfortable in the room, despite the fact that the fireplace had escaped the storm. But it had not interfered with his appetite. He had left things exactly as they were, even after Angelica went away.

Angelica. . . .

Queer little thing, he thought; always fluttering about like a hummingbird. Always doing, always changing. He had picked up a copy of the Social Register once and, thumbing the pages idly, had come across his name along with the Cadwaladers and the Chews and the Clothiers and the Cromwells, the Curtins and the Curtises—not far behind the Bid- dles, not far ahead of the Drexels.

The register read: *Camp-d'Avesnes, Pierre de. Fountain Head. Old Trenton Road. Mrs. Absent.*

There had never been a divorce.

Odd, he considered, that he had never missed her very much.

Heinrich's plump wife, Freda, appeared through the pantry door beside the fireplace. She moved with heavy, purposeful steps to the table. Pierre had never seen her change her stolid German expression. He had never heard her change her abrupt formula:

"The fruit I serve." A little later, upon her re-entrance, "The scrapple I serve."

The tone was always the same—mournful.

Pierre ate with relish. There was no trouble in his mind that food could not cure. For he was jovial by nature. Minor depressions leveled off more easily with him than with others. And even the moods of Sara, the child Angelica left behind sixteen years ago, bounced from him like a rubber ball.

She was in one of those states now, or she would have been down to breakfast. He'd had a taste of it when he found her by the fire last night. H'm-m. She'd snap out of it.

He glanced toward the large window with its little square panes set deeply into the two feet of stone wall, starting almost at the floor and ending almost at the ceiling. It framed a landscape of autumnal glory.

In the foreground the oaks blazed crimson. Between their branches wide ribbons of morning sunlight slanted, printing great blocks of gold upon the lane. The lane, once a segment of the old Trenton Post Road, disappeared through the wood, coming up short half a mile beyond on the other side of Mt. Neshaminy.

Through the trees and to the left Pierre could see the foot of the hill, which was all that it was in spite of its pretentious title. If you climbed its grassy slopes and stood at the summit and looked south and west, and if it was a clear day and you used a little imagination plus a pair of binoculars, you could see Valley Forge. If you turned north you could see the gloomy Hexenkopf. And if you made a quarter turn toward the east, you could see the low-lying hills where Washington crossed the Delaware to strike at the Hessians.

Pierre looked at the lane, at the oaks, at the carpet of jeweled leaves upon the ground. It must be hell, he thought, to be blind.

He drank his coffee meditatively. Queer girl, Sara. Hope she marries well. Been seeing quite a bit of young Trent lately. H'm-m. He liked that. Manning and he got on so well. They've even torn down the fences between their adjoining grounds.

Let's see. She's been out two years now. He'd done it himself, though there was a horde of bothersome aunts who wanted a finger in it. He was proud of his lone achievement. They'd stayed in town that winter with a suite at the Warrick. The introduction had been at a tea dance after the Army-Navy game. Very nice, people were. Everybody had made it a point to stop in after the game. Later there had been a formal dinner at the Bellevue on her birthday.

Well, where was she now? Martyring herself with the little concentrations of the Junior League; doing the things expected of her and hating herself for it.

He drained his cup. She ought to get married. Damned if he wouldn't marry her himself if he were twenty years younger and she wasn't his daughter.

The pantry door opened. Freda poked out her stolid face.

"Heinrich the car has ready," she announced.

Pierre pushed back his chair and got up.

UPSTAIRS in her room, on the other side of the house, Sara sat at her vanity. She sat motionless, her hands in her lap, a scarlet negligee draped about her rounded white shoulders, her long black hair with its blue tints cascading down her back. The reflection in her mirror revealed soft curves half concealed by her lacy slip.

David had kissed her that night. And that night returned to her, each detail sharply delineated upon her memory: the passionate warmth of August, the sigh of the wistful breeze through the wood, the prodigal aromas rising, an invisible mist, from field and garden. She had remained a long, long time in his arms. She had been happy. But now she was uncertain, bewildered. The meaningless dissatisfactions and the felt but undeciphered yearnings of her lonely childhood seemed to be returning.

What in the devil was it that she wanted?

She must have inherited very much from Pierre. She possessed his sensitive nature. But where he, like a connoisseur, tasted life casually in little pieces—his eyes drinking in the beauty of a landscape; his ears, the loveliness of music; his nostrils, the delicate perfumes of flowers and their essence—she, conscious of the abundance of life, absorbed the whole of it at once through all her senses.

Like Pierre, she leaned to the hours after dark. But where Pierre liked them for the companionship they brought, the theater, the city lights, the new interests arising from the intercourse of man relaxed, she liked them in all their quiet nakedness.

A chill October night with the wind sweeping vagabond clouds across the stars; the depth of oak wood, its mystery deepening the farther she penetrated into it; a moonlit winter's walk along the banks of the Neshaminy, its waters gurgling and splashing over rocks; an early summer night when, sitting rigidly on the long, wide porch, she gazed out into the torrential rains. . . .

Night gave her a measure of peace; day left her without ease.

Yet, if these differences between father and daughter were founded on similarities, there were more basic differences. Pierre was kind. She, fundamentally, was cruel. There was the time when, in childish passion, she had beaten a puppy mercilessly with her fists. And when the puppy cringed, she felt glad and beat it all the harder. Punished, she felt not the least sorry. She learned to control herself in time. Custom bade she must. But ever since, each time she saw a dog, she felt she'd met an enemy.

"But why don't you like dogs?" Ann asked once.

"Don't know. I can't stand them. Give me the creeps."

"Afraid of them?"

"Perhaps."

She reserved another feeling for horses—contempt.

"Curious," Manning Trent said to Pierre one day when they were cantering along a saddle trail, "that Sara doesn't ride. You like it so well. And so'd her mother. She's got such a damned good build for it, too."

"Better than I have." Pierre grinned, and touched his paunch. "Never could get her to look at a horse. Says her own legs are good enough for her."

"Ha. They're good legs, all right," Trent admitted. "But every man jack of you, and woman, too, was horsy."

"I know."

Pierre did not worry about it. He was tolerant to the point of indifference when it came to interfering with the likes and dislikes of others.

Sara's contempt for horses deepened to hatred for cattle and sheep and domestic livestock in general. There was the occasion when, visiting a neighboring farm, she'd inadvertently come upon the butchering of a pig. She didn't turn away as most girls would. Instead, she stood and watched, experiencing a sadistic satisfaction as the animal, blood geysering from a vein, legs beating frantically, squealed in hysterical agony and died.

She accepted cats and placed no faith in them. There was always one about. She knew it for what it was—treacherous, selfish, vicious. She never stroked it; but if it leaped into her bed at night, she permitted it to stay—kneading the pillow, ramming its head against hers in a false display of affection, singing its guttural, monotonous song. It was wild, and she felt cousin to it.

But if the cat were cousin, other wild creatures—more fierce, more cruel—were blood sisters. How eagerly, as a girl, she had watched the lions and tigers at Fairmont Park snatch at their large chunks of raw meat.

Mostly, however, on those visits to the zoo, she had spent time on end in the Reptile House. And there, fascinated, she would stand staring at the slim black cord of cobra as it slithered among its rocks or, its head rising like a rocket from its coil, spitting its venomous white poison at the glass that separated watcher and watched.

She did not think of these things now. Almost beyond consciousness, she heard the station wagon rattling out of the yard and along the lane in the direction of the highway, car-

rying her father. The sound was lost in the picture of the previous night.

Why were those adolescent longings, buried so long in her new love, re-emerging?

Why should an immaculately attired, slender, lean-faced man with a trick mustache—a man who teetered precariously in his shoes even as he assumed an urbane air, a man for whom she even felt repulsion—appear to be the spring which released them?

What unearthly force could have drawn her to that house—that house which, objective honesty compelled her to admit, had never before entered her experience?

Her left wrist burned where he had touched her. The fingers of her right hand caressed the spot. When she withdrew them, she looked at her wrist—and then, eyes widening, stared. There was a mark on her white flesh; a tiny crescent, seemingly tattooed, seemingly indelible.

Chapter Two

DAVID said, with that slow precision that sometimes made his listeners impatient, "But where'd you get the idea the man told fortunes?"

Sara, utterly miserable, said, "I don't want to talk about it."

David's big, powerful right hand reached for the lighter on the dashboard and held it to the cigarette drooping from his mouth. More to himself than to her he said:

"Good thing we got out of that mess. Specially for Chick's sake. If anyone had called the cops, Chick would have been tossed off the team. It was after hours, anyhow, and we need him for Navy."

"You talk like a rah-rah boy," Sara replied. "You sound as if football were more important than . . . going to jail. What do you care about football and Penn? You never played. You never went there."

She bit her lip. She knew, instantly, she'd hurt David. She knew as well as he that he'd never been able to play football and, for the same reason, had never gone to college. David, on his part, lapsed into diplomatic silence.

They had had these quarrels before. Always, before, Sara had been contrite; had anticipated making up. She knew she was usually wrong, that she always wound up by saying something nasty. Now, she found with growing wonder, she didn't care.

They were driving back from a farm near Easton where David had attended an auction of Ayrshires. Sara was still wondering why she'd gone along; was beginning seriously to

question whether she wanted a farmer, even a gentleman farmer, for a husband.

They were winding along a section of the old Canal Road above New Hope, paralleling the new broken-down barge canal whose course, intercepted every few miles by rusty locks, lay between them and the Delaware. Save for the hard surface and an occasional red or green gasoline pump, the road was virtually unchanged from the days of the French and Indian Wars. Here were taverns, red-roofed stone barns, stone houses that were old when the Revolution began. Here were covered bridges of a later period.

Up on the hillsides to the west, sumac spilled its crimson paint. In the gullies the haze of late day gathered along the runs. Out of that blanket of deepening mists great swamp maples raised their scarlet crowns. In the foreground the solid topaz of a poplar stood aloof.

The haze clung, too, to the river on the east. It clung in little patches where the white hunger rocks jutted out of the shallow waters. Beyond the river the wooded Jersey hills burned in yellow and red and fading green.

David, glancing at Sara, asked:

"Where did you get the wrist watch?"

"In Jenkintown this morning. Shopping."

"Thought," said David slowly, "you didn't like wrist watches?"

Sara was evasive.

"Oh, I guess they're nice."

David was puzzled. He revealed his wonder in the creases about his pale gray eyes and along his wide forehead. He remembered, just before last Christmas, saying something to the effect that Sara never wore a watch. He didn't say so, of course, but he was thinking a watch would make a nice gift. But she'd told him then she didn't like them. Indeed, she liked nothing that bound her—belts, straps, garters, girdles. And, thank her stars, she had a figure that could do without them.

David shrugged, lounged back into the seat, giving the road his attention. He was a big fellow. When he was a child he'd been afflicted with a spinal ailment. People, even Manning, thought he would be a permanent cripple. But David, moodily watching other youngsters at play, possessed a patient courage. There were good doctors. And David faithfully followed their instructions. There were braces. There were little exercises; then there were exercises that called for more exertion. It was slow work. It took the years of his childhood and the years of his youth. It took unending patience.

He couldn't go to school. His lessons came

from tutors. He couldn't go to college, but he read voraciously, systematically. In the end, violent exercise was forbidden. But he became a slow, sure swimmer; a slow, well-balanced skater. He found that walking satisfied, and so he hunted—not that he loved to kill, but because a gun slung under his left arm was a comfortable thing and balanced one of the two remaining marks of his early affliction: the sideward, downward pull of his handsome head which compelled his broad right shoulder to slope. People did not notice that at first. What usually impressed them instantly was the hard solid nature of his body and his thick unruly hair which, although he was but twenty-six, was now cream white.

Sara, again feeling the burn beneath her wrist watch, was relieved that David did not pursue the subject. She knew he would bring it up again when she least expected it; just as again he had referred to the man on Ninth Street. Tenacity in his search for explanations was characteristic of him.

Her wrist throbbed. A dozen times in the privacy of her tiny room she had examined that tiny crescent. How did he place it there? Why? Was it branded by a wisp of hot wire he might have held? Or had he managed somehow to paint a drop of acid on the flesh? She knew only that the pain served constantly to remind her of him and of his eyes, which attracted even as they repelled.

Sara's lower lip trembled. Emotions damned up for months in the reservoir of her self-restraint spilled over. She sobbed and her body shook with the sobs. But there were still no tears when David, freeing a hand from the wheel, pulled her gently to him.

She was quiet at dinner that night. She was quiet as she and Pierre sat in the library.

Once the public room of the Fountain Head, the library, too, had for its central fixture a fireplace—but one that boasted ivory-painted elegance. Its narrow, classically carved mantel and fireboard were supported by slender fluted columns, each well worn midway from the base where travelers, lounging in chairs, had parked their feet in warm and solid comfort. Some of those feet, tradition said, were shod in the boots of Washington and Knox and Hamilton and Sullivan when, on cold winter nights, they mapped their campaign against Cornwallis.

Pierre, pretending to read the *Bulletin*, a considerably less scandalous newspaper than the *Herald* which Manning Trent published each and every morning, peered over the masthead at Sara, sitting on a spindly love seat, the book on her lap open to a page she wasn't reading.

Pierre would have remarked how pale she looked; remembered, just in time, that she was always pale, yet the suggestion was in her face. It lay in the deepening shadows under her eyes; in the very restlessness of her body; in her attitude of listening for some far-off sound.

She had anticipated any questions about the watch by showing it to Pierre at dinner.

"Very pretty," he'd said. "I always thought—"

He didn't finish what he'd begun. Sara knew he wouldn't. Always considerate, he continued, instead: "—that a watch would look lovely on you, pet."

He had noticed that it was very plain; white gold without ornament or stone; just such a watch as a girl who had never liked jewelry would select. But—where in damnation did she get *that* idea?

Her silence beginning to wear on him, he put his paper aside.

"Book any good?"

She shrugged, her rising shoulders sending radiant ripples down along the soft clinging velvet of her blouse.

"The usual thing," she said with assumed cheerfulness. "Boy meets girl. . . ."

She started to recite the plot, hoping to throw off the weight that was hourly becoming more burdensome. Pierre pretended to listen. Actually, he was proudly inspecting her inch by inch from the trim points of her patent-leather pumps to the hem of her pleated skirt; to the allure of her white, slender throat; to her black hair done primly back, revealing ears that were the shapeliest feature of her head.

Suddenly she ended her recital. She closed the book, replaced it on an end table, got up. She moved to the French doors which opened upon the veranda running half the length of the house. Beyond, the lawn swept down toward the Neshaminy. The shadows of trees lay on the lawn, relieved by wide and ragged patches of golden moonlight. Where the lawn ended the gold was transmuted to silver as the fast-running waters of the creek caught and held the light, cast it away and took it back again. In the field beyond the creek corn stood in shocks, casting triangular shadows upon the black earth.

"I think I'll go for a walk," Sara said.

IT WAS fifteen minutes past three o'clock the next afternoon when a cab drove up to Eighth and South Streets. A young woman, chic in a silver-fox jacket that reached just short of her hips, stepped out. She handed the driver a bill and walked away with long, swaying strides.

She walked west on South Street, knowing full well how the ragtag and bobtail of that ragtag street were staring at her.

At Ninth Street she turned. A moment later she rang a bell. Almost instantly the door opened.

A man with a lean, handsome face and a small mustache appeared.

"I thought you would return," he said.

He guided her along the passage to the rear of the house and into a small chamber which, she found, had need of only the most meager furnishings. His personality filled every crack and crevice and corner.

He seated her, and then seemed to forget.

He started working over some papers. Sara had no idea what they were. But his preoccupation was total.

She studied his face. She noted again the chiseled lines that somehow had an eternal look: the length in the thick black brows; thick hair that might have been touseled by all the winds of the world. She started as she remembered a portrait in a book Pierre had at home—Francis Barrett's engraving of the demon Ashtaroth.

She was extremely conscious, though they were lowered, of his eyes. She was glad that they did not look at her.

She could not tell how long she sat there, nor when it was that she began to feel a change within herself. The pull and tug of self-questioning still went on. But now a new growth seemed to manifest itself. It was as if a tentacle reached out toward her from somewhere in the room—a tentacle that was as immaterial and yet as actual as a current of electricity. Watching the man at the desk, she became positive that the current flowed from him.

The current was switched off.

Perhaps fifteen minutes passed, in which she sat relaxed—and receptive. And then again the flow of that force began, sweeping into her with even greater strength. But this time it brought with it something else: a fragment of knowledge, as if the current were lighting a small incandescent lamp from the ray of which she could search (but only a little way) into herself. The weak beam turned first in one psychical direction and then another, hesitating and then moving on; revealing to Sara parts of herself that, formerly, she vaguely had perceived but never understood.

The light swept the shadows from the old longings and exposed those longings in clearer outlines; yet the outlines, while giving promise of greater limning, were still so incomplete as to create tantalizing interest. And the promise, too, was of such delights, such

ecstasies as Sara had never dared to imagine.

The thought occurred to her that, for these, the price must be great. Then, just as the light seemed burning brighter, the man at the table stood up. He said:

"I think that will be all—today."

Sara stood up. She stood uncertainly.

"Who are you?" she asked.

He answered, "You would not believe me if I told you."

A moment later she was walking in the street, on her way home.

That night Pierre noticed that she was more nervous than ever. She toyed with the silver at dinner, stared at her plate, ate little. He said gently:

"You don't seem to have much appetite, dear."

"Well enough," Sara said curtly.

He remained silent, then, for a little. But at length his concern overcame his natural tolerance.

"I think," he said, "a tonic would do wonders for you. How's a trip to Europe sound? Portugal? Spain? Take the Clipper to Lisbon? Better yet, South America."

She said nothing. He began to expand.

"I've some business I could do in Buenos Aires."

Sara said shortly, "I don't want to go anywhere."

And she got up and left the table. But when she reached her room, she collapsed on her bed. She did want to go somewhere; she did want to get away. What contrariness forced her to answer Pierre as she did?

Emotion shook her. But she did not cry. Never in her life had she wept. She sat upon the edge of the bed; she could see her reflection in the long mirror on the wall. She would go down and tell Pierre she wanted the trip—and she would add that it was awfully thoughtful of him. But she didn't.

Pierre, sitting below, stirred his coffee thoughtfully.

"Damn the girl!"

Anybody could see she needed a change. But Pierre, who thrived on debating questions that didn't mean a thing, shrank from argument with Sara about anything that mattered. He realized later that it might have been the one time in his life when he should have forced his will on hers.

* * *

Another day; again Sara sat stiffly in the room where the gaunt gray cat preened herself and the lean-faced man busied himself with the innumerable papers at his table.

Again, as before, there was a period of absorption. Sara relaxed, and she received. Under the brightening ray those clouded

hungers focused into sharper tastes. From vague values they took on some semblance of positive appetite. But it was still only a semblance, still unrecognized. She knew only that she was stumbling down some spiritual or psychical lane, serving a novitiate for an order the purpose of which escaped her.

Again, during a moment when the current withdrew, Sara questioned, "Who are you?"

And again the man gave the same answer.

"I think I would believe you," Sara said.

The man smiled thinly.

"If I said the name, all this"—and the gesture of a graceful hand embraced the room—"would melt away. You, too, will find that out some day. We explain nothing. We admit nothing. That is confession." Slyly, he added, "And if confession is good for the soul, it also closes the world we wish to enter."

"You," Sara asked, "have entered?"

The man threw back his head and laughed.

"One enters his own home," he said. "You would enter through surrender."

She thought about that. Then:

"If I surrender?"

"You would not know this world."

"But the other. What would it be like?"

"That," he replied, "is what you are learning."

There were other visitors that afternoon. When the first—a fat greasy-handed Polish woman—entered the room, the period of receptivity ended.

The woman squatted down in a chair beside Sara. The fastidious girl, at any other time, would have found discreet reason to remove herself. That she did not was evidence, even to herself, of a profound change of character. She sat quietly until she was dismissed.

As she made her way down the corridor, she met still another woman even fatter than the Pole, even more unkempt. The woman leered at her as she passed.

Outdoors, Sara paused in the dirty sunlight that filtered through the city's smoke. Her head throbbed. She drew a cool hand across her hot temple.

This was insanity, she felt.

"This must stop," she said.

The effluvium of decaying foods, emanating from an uncovered garbage pail at the curb, assailed her nostrils. The sudden realization that the odor was not unpleasant gave additional vehemence to her declaration.

"No," she said. "No, no!"

The negative sounded false.

She felt that from the windows behind her the man's scorching eyes were staring at her.

She moved on, aimlessly, the fashionably dressed object of all the truck drivers and loungers and drunks with which the neighborhood abounded.

But even as she moved away, she felt the magnetism of the house behind her. She was empowered to swim against the stream for the moment only, she knew, because it was the will of that man with the ice-cold hands and the mincing walk.

She moved heavily, unmindful of her direction. And what did direction matter when, with a velocity she was unable to brake, she was being propelled toward some target she had not chosen for herself; indeed, when horrifying outlines were but dimly suggested by those lightning flashes of knowledge.

A red neon sign attracted her. She walked through the door. She sat down at a little table in a dirty barroom. The oilcloth on the table was crumbly with broken pretzels glued to the cloth with sticky beer. Near her chair on the floor stood a china cuspidor, tobacco juice dripping down its sides.

Sara ordered a drink. . . .

WHEN you walked into the Salon de Camp-d'Avesnes, in the smart shopping district of Chestnut Street, you found yourself not in one of those modernistically mirrored, chromiumed and ebony-enameled palaces of trade, but rather in a museum. You were not buttonholed by one of those chic wenches with the trick French accent who, while catering, looks down her pretty nose at you. You were left to roam at perfect ease.

If, by chance, you had a mind to perfume, there was a glass case discreetly out of the way at the rear and discreetly attended by a serene, well turned-out woman in middle life. It was Pierre's way of explaining to the world that not only was he proud of his museum but that he could get along quite well without trade.

The room itself was elegant in the gold and white and satin of royal and eighteenth-century France. But you appreciated at once that the chamber was only a setting for the many exquisite objects.

Here, on this slender Louis XV stand, stood an Egyptian jar, disinterred from the tomb of a Pharaoh when it still held the fragrance of the perfume it had once contained.

Here, in a case, were samples of the first vials brought to France from the Holy Land by crusading knights.

There were sachets from the court of Queen Elizabeth. There were matching necklaces and rings, whose centers held perforated boxes for perfume.

There were gold and silver and ivory

castlettes and printaniers which appeared in the courts of England and France a century after Elizabeth. There were perfume lamps and perfume pans and perfume bellows, fore-runners of the atomizer.

There were thirteenth-century finger bowls, which once held rose water.

There were papier-mâché rouge boxes hoary with age. There was a mother-of-pearl coffret in which Catherine the Great stowed her perfume flacons, her pomade jars and ivory manicure tools. And from all ages and all countries there were rare and costly vases.

Yet, it was not this room Pierre called his "crossroads of the world."

This was the large vault at the rear in which he stood this Saturday morning, staring vacantly at a row of glass jars.

There were products here worth more than their weight in gold. There was soft fatty civet from Abyssinia. There was castor from Russia. There was Tonquin musk from Tibet, benzoin from Siam, storax from Asia Minor. The oils of ylang-ylang and jasmin, of rose and palmerosa were here—oils measured by the precious drop. There were balsams and gums. And there were also synthetics and isolates, for chemistry had brought the Salon de Camp-d'Avesnes a very long way since Gervase had set up his little shop on Front Street.

A shadow crossed the steel door to the big vault. Pierre glanced up.

"Oh, hello, David."

"Busy?"

"Not at all, son; come in."

David stooped to enter the vault. He peered at the illuminated shelves.

"Quite a place you have here."

Pierre beamed.

"Just about anything you'll find in the trade. Never been here before?"

David, inspecting the labels on the containers, shook his head.

"Got ambergris?"

Pierre grinned.

"I knew you'd ask that right off. Everybody does. Seems all the public knows about perfume is what they read in the papers—fishermen picking up a chunk along the beach. Yes, I've a little. That's it there. Don't need much. Use it only in one of our products. Gives diffusiveness, you know. You probably didn't."

David pulled out a pack of cigarettes and started to light one. Pierre held up a pudgy hand.

"Not here, please. Too big an investment and smoke's insidious. . . . Jasmin oil there. . . . What's on your mind?"

There was a bench in the vault and David

sat down, legs wide apart, hands loosely clasped between.

"Sara," he said with frank directness.

Pierre looked at David shrewdly.

"H'm-m-m."

Pierre's left eyelid dropped and he fingered his mole. He said:

"She's been pretty restless lately."

"It's more than that," David said. "She's—growing pretty cold."

Pierre said, "H'm-m."

He said it with more force. He added, "Think there's someone else?"

"N-no," David said hesitantly. "No. I'm pretty sure of that. I don't know what. I thought perhaps—you'd know."

Pierre, too, sat down on the bench. He didn't look at David. He stared at a bottle labeled "methyl phenyl acetate," a puzzled look in his eyes.

"I think she's sick," Pierre said gruffly. "But you can't tell her anything. She's bull-headed like her mother. Been moody. Got circles under her eyes. Noticed last night her dress was loose. Losing weight, I wouldn't wonder. Needs to get away, that's what. But when I said so, she flounced out of the room."

Pierre's eyes, usually so merry, were somber now. He became contrite.

"My fault, I suppose. Don't bring her up right. A man can't raise a girl. Shouldn't have tried."

David hoisted one leg over the other, leaned back and jammed his big hands into his trouser pockets.

"I don't think," he began slowly, "it's that so much. I think. . . . Well, there might be something wrong with . . . well, with her. . . ."

Pierre tapped his temple with a fat finger.

"You mean here?" he asked in surprise.

David nodded.

"Can't see how you figure," Pierre said.

"I don't. It's only something I feel."

"H'm-m. I know. You're sensitive to things. I am, too."

"Maybe," David said. "And maybe it's something else. Do you remember Heath, the Great Dane we had that got hydrophobia? I could tell something was going wrong, but I couldn't tell what. And those Ayrshires of ours. Why, people think one cow's just like any other. But they aren't. Each one's a little different. And sometimes I see where one's becoming quite a bit different, gets some crazy idea in her head and wants to raise the devil."

David fell silent then. Along with his other troubles, he had suffered a speech defect when younger. He had learned to control his words, to force one to follow the other in slow measure—and never to say too much. He'd said too

much now and he knew anything else he said would jumble up.

Pierre's eyes remained fixed on the bottle of synthetic odor of gardenia.

"What's the answer?" he asked finally.

"W-well," David said slowly, "I thought maybe if she saw a doctor. . . ."

"She won't."

"I thought she wouldn't. But if there was some way of having a doctor see her, without her realizing. I mean—"

"Just a regular sawbones?" asked Pierre sharply.

"N-no. A specialist."

"A psychiatrist?"

"That was my idea. I just didn't want to say it."

Pierre nodded.

"Might help. Might not. Hardt's a good man." He added, cautiously, "So people say. But I know him pretty well. If I could get him up to dinner tonight. . . . I'd want you there, too."

JUSTIN HARDT was a spare man with a very good opinion of himself and a booming voice. He was tall and he had long legs and he was fifty-six. His face was long and the leathery flesh hung in folds at the chin, giving him somewhat the loose look of a bloodhound.

His forehead was high and at the temples his brushy brown hair was beginning to show traces of gray. When he looked directly at you as he always did in conversation, his slate-blue eyes peered penetratingly through pince-nez glasses which were insured against breakage by a length of black silk ribbon running down to some secret recess of his vest.

The vest itself and its two dozen double-breasted companions which hung in his handsome bachelor's chambers at the Racquet Club were of the novel breed the world terms "fancy." There were checks and stripes and extravagantly woven patterns in colors that ranged from cream and dull yellow to blues a tint too brilliant and greens a tint too bright.

Their jeweled buttons gleamed against the immaculate cloth, but, on the whole, on such a man as Dr. Justin Hardt, they did not look out of place—either with the semi-cutaway and striped gray morning trousers which encased his person by day or the dinner coat into which he invariably shrugged at five o'clock each afternoon.

Into this dinner coat Dr. Hardt had shrugged at his regular hour this afternoon to appear at seven for dinner at the Fountain Head. And there, with the dogmatic dignity which characterized his lectures at the Graduate School of Medicine, Dr. Hardt filled every

cranny of the library with his resonant bass voice.

It was said of the doctor that if he did not scare you to death he would bludgeon a cure into you. He excelled in expressing his own firm convictions. And he expressed them with a warmth that bordered upon the rudeness for which his own social stratum is notorious.

Tonight the quiet detachment of his host provided fertile ground for Dr. Hardt's bombast, so that he was not in the least disturbed by the tardiness of Sara.

"No, sir, that is not so," he was saying in reply to an observation by Pierre about the death of Sigmund Freud. "I studied under Freud thirty-one years ago and know how wrong you are. He borrowed much more from Herbart than from either Charcot or Bernheim."

Pierre glanced thoughtfully at his watch.

"The fact is," Dr. Hardt boomed on, "Freud was wrong on many counts."

David, who was standing at the French doors peering expectantly into the shadows of the lane, turned around. He picked up a hammered silver cocktail goblet beaded with icy sweat. He sipped at it.

"She ought to be here by now," Pierre said.

"Did she have her car?" asked David.

"Yes. Drove me down quite early."

David suggested, "Why not phone the garage?"

Pierre moved reluctantly to an alcove beside the fireplace. He picked up the ivory-enamelled handset instrument and asked for a number.

There was something joyous in the nature of Pierre de Camp d'Avesnes that, despite worry, could not be entirely subdued. It was not that at this moment he was untroubled. But the brightness of eye, the little smiling curve about the mouth (outward evidence of his fundamental belief in the rightness of all things) contributed to lessening the gloom with which he thought he spoke.

"Car's still there," he said.

"She'll be along," Hardt said, cheerily.

David, who knew Pierre better, asked, "Didn't she leave any word?"

Pierre shook his head.

A wide beam of bright light glared at that moment against the square panes of the French doors and stamped blocks of brilliance on the room's opposite wall. The sound of an automobile in second gear was heard. The sound of tires crunching on gravel stopped abruptly. The three men could hear a motor idling.

Pierre moved wonderingly through the open door into the large, long hall. He passed on to the front door. Almost as he reached it,

it swung open in his face. Sara staggered in. She giggled. Her low, musical voice was thick.

"Lo, Pierre."

Pierre stared at her.

"Smatter? Never see 'body drunk?"

She reeled past him, saw four people in the library, started in, staggered and grabbed at the door frame.

"Lo, Doc Hardt. N'know you had twin."

Hardt stiffened. Then she saw the two Davids. She approached them unsteadily. As she neared, the two Davids merged into one and she grasped at his coat lapels and looked up into his face.

"Darlin'. M'drunk. Glorious' drunk. Darlin'. Cab man waitin'." She tried to nod in the direction of the door. "Son'gun want' eight dollar bring me all way Sou' Stree'." Her long lashes and the white lids drooped over her eyes. "Pay'm, somebody."

David was holding her when she passed out.

* * * *

It was the following Tuesday before David's vigil was rewarded. Sunday, Monday, and for six hours now he had stood in the doorway of a vacant store front on South Street.

He fretted. There was work to be done on the farm. He hated inaction. Instead, all that he had for result was a carpet of burned cigarette butts on the cement—and that cement became harder every hour.

He had carried Sara to a sofa, had brushed past Pierre in the hall and had gone outdoors to pay the cabby himself.

"Where did you find her?" he asked.

The cabby said, "She barged up to me on South Street near Ninth."

"Did she say where she'd been?"

"No. But I think she's the same one I seen come out of a bar right across from my stand."

David had spent a restless night. A hundred times he asked himself: But what was she doing there? And a hundred times he remembered their Halloween lark.

He pondered the gleanings of his knowledge of the world, things he had read, had heard, had seen:

Amazing cults into which some emotionally unstable women were drawn.

The strangely intricate methods of procurers and blackmailers.

The fascination used by unscrupulous rascals in plying their trades.

That man, now. David himself had felt attracted to him and couldn't explain it. But what a salesman the fellow would make with that personality!

He tried to analyze, with as much detachment as his heart permitted, the young woman who was Sara. Far too sensible, he concluded, to be "taken in." She had judgment, she had taste, she was discriminating, she was scarcely the sort to fall for a phony.

And suddenly David felt that the fellow was not a charlatan. All right, what was he, then? What could he be doing?

He dropped a cigarette butt on the cement, crushed it with the toe of his shoe. And then he looked up—and there was Sara stepping out of a taxicab.

He watched her turn into Ninth Street. He sauntered to the corner. When he reached it, she was already halfway along the block. Yes, it was the same house. He saw her stand for a moment on the stone stoop, a gloved hand resting lightly on the iron rail. He saw the door open and close behind her.

HE STROLLED past the house, casually—so he pretended—glancing at its curtained windows. A block farther on he turned and retraced his steps. He passed the house and a few other houses until he came to a vacant lot. Then he took up a new station.

He could see the stoop. After a time, he saw another woman enter. And another.

And he saw a fat one come out and waddle slowly in the other direction.

An hour passed. David became uneasy. He felt the neighbors across the street were peering at him from behind their curtains. Once a policeman walked by and looked at him sharply.

When another thirty minutes passed, David began to worry. Then the door opened and Sara appeared. She stood a moment in front of the house, then began to walk slowly toward him. He wondered:

"She can't miss seeing me. What will she say?"

But when Sara reached the vacant lot, David saw that she walked with the dazed tread of a somnambulist. She looked neither to her right nor to her left. And when she was so close that David could, had he wished, reached out and touched her, he saw that her face—if it were possible—was more white and her lips more scarlet.

Impulsively he walked rapidly after her, caught up with her and grasped her by the arm.

"Sara!"

She stopped. Her head turned slowly. At first there was no note of recognition in her blank face.

"Sara, for Lord's sake. . . ."

She leaned forward, peering at him as if she were hunting something in the dark. Then recognition came. Her eyes blazed hatred. And while David stood in his tracks, bewildered, she shook herself free and marched away. . . .

* * *

David did not retain his secret. He did not, it is true, trouble Pierre. But he stopped at a doorway on Spruce Street. There was only one difference between that doorway and a hundred other doorways in this center of the city's medical profession. The brass plate, which was just like all the other brass plates, bore the name: *Justin Hardt, M.D.*

A trim maid in a black dress and white lace-edged apron opened the stained-glass door. She led David into a large airy reception room. Double doors, leading into the doctor's office, were closed. After about five minutes they opened. Dr. Hardt stuck his houndlike head out.

"Oh, hello, Trent."

He motioned David in and seated him in a cozy chair on the opposite side of his wide mahogany desk. He offered David a cigarette and sat back, his full lips half parted, his blue eyes sharply on David's face, his fingers adjusted to his glasses. He was blunt.

"What's on your mind?"

David was equally blunt.

"Sara de Camp-d'Avesnes."

Hardt "h'm-m-ed."

"I don't cure dipsomaniacs," he said coldly. "Get Fulton."

"But she isn't," protested David, "a dipsomaniac."

"She looked like it the other night."

"It was the first time," David replied deliberately, "that I ever saw her drunk. And even if she were one, it certainly would fall into your specialty."

Hardt's tone was belligerent.

"No, sir; I draw the line there."

David leaned forward, his arms resting on the flat top of the desk, the fingers of his huge hands entwined.

"There's something there more than that," he urged.

Hardt nodded slowly.

"I dare say," he returned coldly. "There usually is something behind the craving. But I stay away from those cases. They injure my practice."

Words tangled in David's throat as they always did when he became excited. He struggled to control them. Finally:

"Now, see here, Doctor. If I can show you that there are other things—that—well, led up to that night. . . . I know—I admit—well, hang

it! When a person's drunk is no time to give 'em a going over. I'm not crazy enough not to know that. . . . I mean, I don't know anything about your work, but there were probably symptoms there that—if you saw 'em when she wasn't drunk—you'd assign to some other causes."

He was actually pleading. Dr. Hardt continued to stare into his face. His confidence in his own beliefs made him a hard man to convince of anything. But he listened, if impatiently, to David's recital.

David began by describing the changes in Sara in the last two months; the growing lack of interest that finally became listlessness; its change, with almost clocklike regularity, to nervousness that took her on lonely walks.

She had grown thinner; had lost appetite; yet there seemed to be no physical pain, for she made no complaint.

He told of the Halloween visit; how, since that night, her irritability had trebled.

"She goes back there," he said, and he described his vigil.

Dr. Hardt shifted his position with impatience.

"She goes back there?" he repeated. "Well, why?"

"I don't know. But you and I know that no young woman of good breeding messes around in that part of town."

"Unless she is addicted to drugs," Hardt said.

"I wasn't aware that dipsomaniacs go in for narcotics."

Hardt did not smile.

"Not normally."

"Well?"

Dr. Hardt picked up a pencil and began to tap it on the desk. And then he began to tap it thoughtfully against his teeth.

"If I return," he said, "will you guarantee she won't be drunk?"

David considered. He remembered that Sara had passed two saloons and had stepped into a cab.

"Yes," he said. He reached for the telephone and made arrangements with Pierre.

* * *

It was eleven o'clock when Dr. Hardt took his departure from Fountain Head. He had watched with interest Sara's reaction when she learned David was staying for dinner. Her eyes smouldered with a fury for which David had found no words that afternoon save to term them maniacal. And Hardt was not so sure but what David was right.

And then the fire went out and the eyes froze. And Sara, throughout the meal, seemed unaware of David. She had paid little attention to her food, save for the meat course.

She had sipped her wine sparingly. But—and Pierre noticed this with increasing complacency: and David, with wonder—she chatted brightly with Hardt throughout the entire hour.

Hardt considered, with the analytical detachment essential to his trade, that somehow she had divined the reason for his visit; that some super-intelligence (not uncommon in certain types of insanity) had warned her that he and she were pitted against each other as antagonists; and that, being a woman, she had thought to use her charm to throw him off the scent.

It might, of course, have been Hardt's imagination. He was prone to look upon each of his cases as a contest between the patient and himself, in which each sought to outwit the other. He had little time for the practitioner who approached the problem by attempting to gain the confidence and friendship of the diseased. There was a natural enmity there, he felt, and the more honest one was about it, the sounder the final cure.

Sara left them to themselves after the desert. When they found her in the library, she had changed again. At first, it seemed to be reserve; but later, Hardt saw that she seemed to be listening for something. He saw a certain tenseness of muscle take her. It was revealed in her hands, which she gripped so tightly in her lap that the blood left them. And then the tenseness melted away before impatience. The fingers entwined themselves and released themselves and re-entwined themselves. Finally, without a word, she got up, threw a wrap about her shoulders and went outdoors.

Hardt, who had been prepared, after talking with David, to see physical fatigue (and indeed there were deep hollows under her eyes) was surprised when he moved to the French doors. Across the lawn he saw Sara striding with cat-like agility.

He shrugged into his topcoat, and stood for a moment in the wide hall, fumbling in his pockets for a cigarette. He found one and inserted it between his lips and started fumbling for a match.

David said, "Well?"

Pierre looked up with gentle expectation.

But Dr. Hardt said savagely, "Good night!" And he jammed on his hat and left.

A WEEK passed. And then another. David, uncertain whether he was ashamed he had spied on Sara, did not try again. He called at the house on four occasions. It was with trepidity, and he was uncomfortable in Sara's presence. He could see by the calculation of her look that she neither forgave nor forgot their encounter on South Ninth Street.

And that calculating look was something new in Sara. It had a hard quality dissociated from the Sara with whom David had fallen in love. Indeed, every change that manifested itself in this tall slender girl seemed to rob her of something of her feline softness and replace it with a harsh veener. David noticed that even the manner in which she handled her cigarette had changed: from feline daintiness to the jauntiness of a woman of the streets.

Dr. Hardt called three times, each time at dinner. And each time, Pierre thought, the man went away muttering to himself. He had known Sara most of her life; a sketchy enough acquaintanceship, true, but enough to assure him that he was watching the disintegration of a personality. And yet, what troubled him and what his self-assurance would not permit him to confess aloud, was that he was unable to classify the girl's mental make-up.

Meanwhile, Sara, three times in every seven days, appeared at the house on Ninth Street. Finally, there came an afternoon:

She sat, with the absorbing rigidity of a yogi, on a chair in that room where that man sat at his table. She was more aware, as each minute passed, of a serenity that flowed into her being. She was now beyond any resistance. In this state she yielded to the forces that played upon her. The time that previously had been but momentary in its flashes of understanding now lengthened into a vista of dry-point detail. In that vista she saw herself and the things that, more than life, she desired. Obscure longing was at last defined.

When she finally arose to go, the man nodded to her. He said nothing, but the understanding between them was as complete as if he had said:

"The next time is the end."

She was not impatient during the two days that intervened. Once during that time David called and found her complaisant. Even the scorn in her eyes was veiled. She agreed to ride to a neighboring farm. But on the way over and the way back she seemed absorbed with her own thoughts. And David did not press her to talk.

He, too, sensed the approach of a crest in her life.

The day came. . . .

Had you seen her, walking south on Broad Street, you would have seen only a smart young woman with whom you wouldn't mind becoming acquainted. She wore her clothes with feminine distinction. You were properly aware that she was a woman. But if you had more proximate traffic with her than a passing glance, you might have feared the avidity of her eyes.

She passed South Street and turned east on

Fitzwater until she reached a maze of narrow streets and ugly alleys. Blindly, she turned first into one and then another, her eyes searching the scene ahead of her. Here? Not here. She walked on. And then, out of a twisted lane she emerged in a deserted intersection where, bravely snuggling the great wall of an abandoned factory, stood a tiny neighborhood grocery. In front of the grocery stood a rickety coach; in the coach a fat-faced dark-eyed baby slept quietly.

Sara braked her pace. Her breath caught. She glanced to the right, to the left. She glanced behind her. Her sharp eyes peered through the dirty glass of the store's front. Then, with one movement, she swooped like a hawk, gathered the child into her arms, and walked on.

She found her way to Ninth Street. She walked north. The child slept.

* * *

It was five hours later. Sara stood, doubtful, as if she had just emerged from a bad dream into the reality of daylight, in front of the house on Ninth Street. Her back was turned to it. She no longer held the child. There was hardly memory.

Or, if there was memory, it was more in the ragged form of those same lightning flashes which first had illuminated her mind when she began visiting that house.

The man—the fat baby, the Pole and the fatter woman; and the odor of burning fat. A pot with a black, fatty ointment.

Sara convulsed with shudders. It couldn't be! It was a nightmare. These things could not happen! Thank God for that! Thank God! And then her glance lowered to her hands. There was a black, greasy filth beneath the nails, clinging to the skin.

Wondering, she examined them more minutely. But suddenly, like ice water drenching her, she became conscious of the raucous screaming of a newsboy across the street:

"Woman Kidnaps Baby!"

He screamed it again and again.

"Readallaboutit!"

Now memory flooded her senses. Irresolute, then trembling, then appalled, she stared about her. Her hands clutched. But where was her purse? She turned back to the house. She hesitated. Go back there? There? Limply, she walked back up the steps. She put her hand to the knob of the door. She turned the knob and the door swung in and she entered.

There was something wrong. She could not know, in her fright, that it was only the mustiness of age. But as she advanced along the silent corridor, she was struck by something

else: the depth of undisturbed dust upon the floor.

Chapter Three

PIERRE sat—stout, comfortable and satisfied—in his favorite chair in front of the fire. He had an excellent book on his lap. On the footstool at his feet the cat was curled. And, since there would be no blending for the next ten days, he was stealing the luxury of a pipe.

A pipe was a good thing. You tamp the tobacco to just the right hardness and you smoke it slowly, without heating up the bowl too much. And damn the perfume business, anyway!

Still, all in all, the fact he was rarely able to smoke might add to the ultimate luxury.

It did not take much to make Pierre happy. Sara, for instance. She really had improved, he thought. He'd noticed it tonight for the first time. The girl seemed actually to possess more animation. She hadn't sat, as she usually did when they ate alone, like a dolt. She had talked almost eagerly. Pierre, not one to search for deceptions, did not consider that she might have been seeking escape.

It was then that Manning Trent barged in. There was never much formality between the two men. Usually Trent merely walked in, picked out a soft chair and slumped into it—his long, thin legs stretched out and his cynical eyes darting about the room. But tonight he didn't sit. He confronted Pierre with an unfolded copy of the early edition of his *Herald*.

"You hear about this?" he demanded.

Reluctantly, Pierre put his book aside and glanced at the bannerline—eight columns of 120-point boldface type.

"Read about it hours ago in the *Bulletin*," he said with what he hoped was the proper note of disparagement. He was more interested in observing that Sara had entered the room and had seated herself quietly in a corner chair.

Trent, whose cynicism was interlarded with streaks of excitability, exclaimed, "Yes, sure! But you didn't hear they found the baby's head!"

Pierre sat upright.

"How's that?"

"You heard me well enough. They found the baby's head. Damned strange thing! Makes your blood boil. Found it in an alley between Eighth and Ninth near South."

Pierre heard a faint "oh-h" from the corner. He sucked at his pipe and became, after the first shock, more judicial. He said:

"H'm-m."

He scratched an ear.

"What fiend would do a thing like that?" Trent demanded. And when Pierre did not reply, Trent exclaimed, "A perfect outrage! Know what I've done? I've offered five thousand dollars for the capture of the baby's kidnaper."

There was a pause, and then Pierre said, "You mean your paper has."

"The woman was young," Trent said. "Somebody—lounger or somebody—saw her pick the baby up. Didn't think anything of it at the moment. Natural enough to pick up your own baby and go into a store. Not that he saw her go in."

"That's so. But this head."

Trent was unwrapping the cellophane from a cigar.

"Checks. Wasn't so badly battered up it couldn't be identified. But, godamighty, where's the torso?"

Pierre's eyes were on the corner of the room. The picture he saw there was that of a young woman of fashion who was disinterested in the conversation of men. Sara was examining her fingernails with the critical look of a female about to change her manicurist. Pierre said:

"Not being either the kidnaper or a clairvoyant, I couldn't say. Did the fellow get a good description?"

He thought, with satisfaction, that Sara was beginning to take an interest in the talk. She seemed to lean forward slightly, and then to settle back when Trent said:

"So-so. Young, pretty, blonde. But you know how those things go. Get a dozen witnesses to the same thing and you'll get a dozen different reports."

Sara got up and walked out of the room.

She was walking across the lawn, a light throw over her shoulders, when she heard David's voice behind her.

She halted, and her shoulders sagged in resignation.

"Lo, Dave."

"Just drove over to get dad." David explained. "He's awfully upset tonight."

Sara replied:

"I noticed."

"Is he still in there?"

"Yes."

"Still—talking about that baby?"

Sara said, "Really, I didn't notice what they were talking about."

David thought he caught a false note. He became, quite suddenly, angry.

"That's a lie!" he exclaimed.

Sara stepped away from him. The mere movement forced him to plead:

"Please, that was a lousy thing to say. I'm awfully sorry. Guess I'm upset, too."

She remained aloof. But she was feminine enough to goad David on.

"I don't have the reputation of telling lies," she said icily. She realized instantly she had gone too far. David stepped forward and grabbed her by her shoulders. He shook her.

"And that's a lie!" he said. He said it between his teeth and this time he knew there would be no retreat. "Do you know where that child's head was found? Back of that house, that's where!"

He thought that she shuddered under the touch of his strong hands; then he felt the muscles of her shoulders stiffen.

"But, David," she asked, "why this? What does this have to do with me?"

He felt himself weakening. But a cloud that had obscured the moon passed over and he could look down into Sara's changed face.

"I think—plenty," he said. "What were you doing there?"

"Where?"

"That house."

Sara whispered, "Are you insane?"

David released his grip. And then he was aware that she had turned and was walking down toward the creek—a rather defiant figure, checkered by the shadows from the branches overhead.

* * *

The autumn was long that year. And down along the Neshaminy the woods retained their rich coloring far into November. In the clearings and in the fields, the amber corn stood in the shock; and pumpkin and squash lay between the shocks.

It had been a good year. There had been rains, and the Neshaminy was full. It raced joyously between the moss-clad rocks and grassy banks still green. And thwarted here or there by a small boulder, a current would explode into a silver shower of spray, and then race with abandon around the boulder.

Occasionally you would see a brace of gaily feathered pheasants strut into the open from a thicket. They would pause and listen warily, for men in hunting clothes were now about. You could hear their guns, now distant, now near.

Or you might see a rabbit hop through the field of shocked corn and disappear. And if you were lucky, and quiet, you might come upon a woodchuck sitting on its haunches, its forepaws—almost like human hands—tightly clutching some tidbit.

Pierre looked for these things. Each Saturday afternoon he tramped or rode through the woods and fields. He was not negligent of the beauty of the scene. And more than once he

drew to a halt and watched the gray squirrels playing tag among the branches of the swamp maples.

He was aware of the earthy perfumes, of the fresh smell of the wet grass along the stream banks, of the bitter exhilarating smell of burning leaves. The crackle of dry leaves underfoot and the distant baying of a dog were good things to hear. Yet, over and above all this, and even shadowing his obnoxious optimism, Pierre found his thoughts reverting again and again to Sara.

The change in her was now so definite. She had settled into a cycle. The nocturnal walks, once casual, were now nightly occurrences. They began shortly after dinner—a dinner at which she ate so little that Pierre wondered how she retained her strength.

The walks lasted longer than before. Often Pierre would be in bed when he heard her footsteps in the upper hall and the sound of her closing door. If, by some chance of a good book, he remained up until one or two in the morning, he might see her. But he was up and away the next day long before she was up. And Freda, serving his breakfast on one occasion said:

"The *Fraulein* in the day sleeps. Is ill the *Fraulein*?"

A man, Pierre thought, could have too good a nature. He should put it up to her: "You'll have to change your ways, Sara. Your life's become simply abnormal." And yet each time he shrank from it.

He knew that she no longer went into the city. She had dropped completely from the social orbit in which she had moved. She did not trouble to reply to invitations. She issued none. Her work with the Junior League was history. And, finally, David stopped coming.

Pierre himself did not change the manner of his life. Twice a week, regularly, he remained in the city. One of these nights he spent at the club; the other, either at the Academy of Music or at the theater. Yet something of the flavor of other seasons was lacking.

Ahead of him, as he walked this afternoon, his prize flock of white ducks waddled in their military formation across the path. They seemed hurried. They seemed excited. But they kept their formation and they kept close together as if for protection. They waddled a few feet along the path and then they turned into the wood and disappeared.

A little farther on, Pierre stopped. White feathers littered the ground. Some of them bore crimson stains. To one side, between the open roots of a tree, he found a mangled duck. It was half eaten. In the soft earth, leading off into the tangled brush, he saw doglike footprints.

The prints were large. Immediately Pierre pictured Heinrich's big Newfoundland and he became angry. It was one thing about which Pierre, usually so easy going, was adamant. A dog must be either a good dog—or no good at all.

He turned back along the path to look for Heinrich. The path led through the woods along the Neshaminy, crossed the creek on a narrow wooden bridge, and led up to the lawn.

He walked around to the back of the house and in through the kitchen door and into the expansive kitchen. Freda, at the large sink, was washing each of the thirty-two pieces of the small cream separator.

Pierre paused for a moment. To voice an angry word here was like breaking into a pleasing concerto. And Pierre was too sensitive to speak until he had absorbed the color: the strings of drying red peppers and the half dozen smoked hams hanging from the ceiling beams, the rows of apple jelly sparkling where the sun struck them, the Mason jars purple with grape juice, the small crock of rich yellow butter.

Finally: "Where's Heinrich?"

Freda, in slow motion, turned around and wiped her red hands on her checked apron.

"In the barn perhaps you find him, maybe."

She stared at him questioningly, her hands akimbo on her wide hips.

"That dog of his. He's killed one of my ducks," Pierre said.

She shook her head unbelievably.

"*Nein*. The duck Fritz would not kill."

Then she muttered something that Pierre, turning to go, did not quite catch. Had he still been looking at her, he would have seen a curious sight: Freda making a sign familiar to any Pennsylvania Dutch believer in hexerei—the sign of the horned fingers.

Pierre walked the two hundred feet across the back lawn to the barn. The barn, screened from the house by large oaks, was of a later date than the house. It had been built by a German immigrant, and was of an architecture distinct from the English Colonial of Fountain Head. It was of stone and frame and it was fronted by a large portico.

Under the eaves, visible to Pierre as he approached, two odd symbols enclosed by a circle were painted on the wood. Casual observation might lead one to think they were mere decorations. But a study would have shown that there was no balance; that there were no such symbols on the other side of the barn. Had you asked Heinrich what they were, he would have shrugged:

"Just for nice."

But Pierre, regarding them, knew that they

were gruttafoos—the toad's foot—and that they kept the livestock from harm by evil spirits. He mused:

"Wish they'd keep my ducks from Fritz." He added. "Silly idea."

His thoughts reverted with amusement to that night at the club when he had made out such a good case for the supernatural. "Too good a case," he considered. Still, all in all, queer things did happen in the world. What was Hardt, anyway, but a modern warlock—poking about with the greatest mystery of all, the mind?

Heinrich appeared from the barn, a rake in his hand. Pierre walked up to him and shoved his hands in the pockets of his leather jacket.

"That dog of yours," he began.

Heinrich, gaunt and tall in blue denim overalls that were faded by many washings, leaned on the rake.

"When I let you bring him here, you promised there wouldn't be any trouble. Well, he's killed one of my ducks."

Heinrich looked at Pierre sorrowfully.

"Fritz killed a duck?"

"That's what I said."

Heinrich shook his head with wondering slowness.

"It can't be so, Mr. Pierre. Fritz—too much I know Fritz. Gentle is Fritz. Old is Fritz. Good I feed Fritz. I make out it don't make sense, Mr. Pierre."

There was actual alarm in his brown face. He leaned more heavily on the rake. He stared down at the rake's teeth.

"Look, Mr. Pierre. Mandel's dog there is. That is Bryn over at the village near. In the township made Mandel Bryn keep. But loose again is Bryn."

Pierre said with determination, "Get Fritz."

PIERRE tramped over to Manning Trent's house that night. The way led along the old Post Road through the north end of his own land, around to the back of the high hill, down into a gully and then up a rising slope. It was through woods until he reached the wide lawn of Trent's house.

It was a moonless night, but the stars were out and by their light Pierre could see the big stone Norman house which Trent's father had built in the '80's as a country seat. It was solid and substantial and its wide front porch, running the length of the house, faced the State Highway a quarter of a mile distant. You could see the lights of automobiles on the road. Some of the cars turned into the narrower country road leading east to the village; and when they did, from the porch you saw only the occasional flicker of a red tail-light.

Mrs. Trent, a lean wooden-faced woman

who never let her husband forget that her own family arrived in Philadelphia early enough to attend the first Assembly, came to the door herself. Pierre considered with malicious amusement that that, in itself was quite a compromise for her.

Pierre and Julia Trent had never been great friends. They passed amenities, but beneath the surface lay a certain antagonism. It had served him right, she thought, when Angelica left him. Pierre was too democratic; didn't keep enough servants around. Julia Trent could not be accused of that.

Manning was at his desk in his study. He had a batch of proofs before him and was going over them with a thick pencil.

"Monday's editorials," he said. "Have to watch everything down there like a hawk. Those fools would sell the presses from under me if I didn't look out." He put them aside. "What's on your mind?"

Pierre settled into a chair.

"Mandel's a tenant of yours, isn't he?"

"Mandel? Yes. Has that ten acres down this side of the village. Why?"

"His dog tore up one of my ducks."

Trent picked up his burning cigar.

"Oh. So you're getting it now?"

Pierre's left eyelid drooped lower, and his right eye blinked.

"What do you mean?"

Manning explained.

"Dave lost one of those Angora nannies he brought up from Texas and he's hopping mad. Night before last."

"I don't see what that's got to do with my duck," Pierre said. He added quickly, "It's not the duck I mind, but if Bryn is loose again. . . ."

Trent leaned back and sent a cloud of smoke reeling toward the ceiling.

"Maybe Bryn's loose. Maybe he isn't. I don't know. But the talk is there's a wolf around."

Pierre said, "Nonsense." But only then did he recognize what it was Freda had said, what he hadn't caught at first: "*—die wolf.*" He said:

"I thought it was Fritz at first. That's Heinrich's Newfoundland. But the footprints didn't match. What's this about a wolf?"

"So far," explained Trent, "just talk. You know how those things get around. This goat—Dave was trying to use 'em for a Northern cross-breed—was killed in its pen over on the west forty. That's down near the creek. David's man found the body in one corner when he went down to feed 'em yesterday morning. It was badly chewed up. Over in the opposite end of the pen the other goats were huddled together like scared—"

"—sheep," Pierre finished with a grin.

"All right. Marie, that's Julia's maid, sleeps over the garage. She said about midnight she heard a commotion down that way. She said the night before she heard a wolf howl. Well, if anybody's ever heard a wolf, you can't mistake it."

Pierre suggested, "Maybe she never heard one before." He sat back and crossed his pudgy legs and tapped his fingers on the arm of the chair. He said, "Hell, there haven't been any wolves in Pennsylvania since I was a boy."

"That's wrong," Trent said. "There was one trapped near Kane a year ago."

Pierre fingered his mole reflectively.

"H'm-m. I remember. It was a lobo. Probably hiked down from Canada."

"It was not a lobo. It was a Pennsylvania timber wolf."

"Anyway," Pierre observed, "it was the last one. The story said so. I read it in your paper."

"You don't always believe everything you see there, do you?"

"If I didn't, how could I believe there was any wolf at all?"

Trent, nettled, fell silent. But finally he remarked:

"That so-called 'last one' of anything doesn't mean much. Why, over in England they kept killing off the last wolf every year right up to the year eighteen hundred."

"I'd rather believe Heinrich's theory," Pierre said. "He was down at Mandel's."

"Did he see Bryn?"

"Naturally not. Bryn wasn't there. That's how he knew. You can't see something there when it isn't."

"Heinrich could. Drinks, doesn't he?"

"Not if I catch him." Pierre added: "If it is Bryn, you've got to do something. As I said, it isn't just one duck. Nor one goat. Next time, Bryn might go for some youngster. He's a big ugly brute; biggest police dog I ever saw."

"What could I do?"

"Either get rid of Mandel or make Mandel get rid of the dog."

Trent stared absently at the desk.

"He's a good tenant. I wouldn't want to run him off. And there's just another possibility. You remember that fool up in the Poconos—McFatish, McFadden, Mc. . ."

"McFanahan. Breeds wolves. Peddles 'em to zoos."

"That's it. Isn't there a bare chance some of his might have escaped and come down this way?"

"Might. He'd never admit, though," Pierre said.

"If he did, he'd lose his breeder's license."

"They're lobos, of course. You said so yourself when we stopped off that time we were fishing near there."

Manning agreed.

"I ought to know a lobo when I see one," he said. "I used to hunt enough up in Canada. That's where McFanahan got his first pair."

Pierre was not satisfied when he took his departure.

ADOLF MANDEL was a widower. He was wiry and tough and red. He lived in the old Marcus place, a narrow, story-and-a-half white frame house set back from the county road just west of the village of Friends Meeting. He lived there alone, if you didn't count his five dogs of all colors and breeds. When people spoke of Mandel's dog, they weren't thinking of the other four. They meant Bryn.

Mandel worked the ten acres he rented from Maning Trent. He worked them hard. From early spring to late fall he gardened. He sold the produce. He had chickens and he sold the eggs. He had two fresh cows and he sold the milk. Sometimes he did some odd jobs.

He had two loves: the dogs and his beer at night. And on Monday evening, after the frugal supper he cooked for himself, he left the house and went into the county road and turned toward the village.

His goal was always the same—the big barn-like inn owned and operated by John Craven as a clearing house for fact, fiction and alcoholic beverages.

The inn's first owner had built it of brick at about the opening of the nineteenth century. The second owner had plastered over the brick. Now the plaster was falling away in places and showing the brick again. The only exterior evidence of modernity was a blue neon sign: *Beer, Wines, Whiskey*.

There was an atmosphere of permanency about the Well, from which not even the new neon sign (1934) or the new bar (1897) could detract. And men who knew John Craven's father in the '80's saw so little difference in the now-aging son that they were not conscious of a break in the continuity of ownership.

John Craven now was in his late sixties, a chunky, deferential man of middle height with thin, gray hair and colorless eyes. He always stood ready to loan a man a dollar or to listen to his troubles.

He was behind the bar when Mandel walked in. And he was agreeing meekly with Klonesterman, the little red-faced carpenter

who had a body like an ape and a voice like a bass drum.

"We oughter have a wolf hunt, that's what we oughter have!" Klonsterman said, nodding his head vigorously.

"Ye-ss," whispered John Craven.

Farney, the hired man at the Waters, set his drink down on the bar aggressively and said, "But if it is Mandel's Bryn. . ."

Mandel forced an opening for himself between Farney and Klonsterman and plinked a nickel on the bar.

"Who said it's Bryn?" he asked angrily. "It ain't Bryn. I keep him locked up like the commissioners said."

He held the stein to his lips, blew off the foam, drank. Then he replaced the stein and drew the back of his hand across his lips.

"Look," he demanded, turning to Craven. "Look. It don't make sense I'd go agin the commissioners, does it, John?"

John Craven drew thoughtfully on his cigar stub.

"No-o-o," he said slowly. "No-o-o, it don't."

"See there!" cried Mandel triumphantly. Craven was embarrassed. He said, after a moment:

"Y'know, there was a reporter feller up here from the city today. Came in here, he did."

Meade said, "Met him. Old man Trent sent him up. It was Dave's goat was lost first."

Farney, who was gaunt and white-haired, gulped his whiskey.

"Ol' d'Wigney los' a duck, too. Heinrich Derhammer tole me."

"A duck ain't nothin'," Mandel countered. "A fox'r a ferret mighta done that."

Farney shook his head.

"This weren't no ferret. Leastways, Heinrich Derhammer said there was tracks about . . . in the mud like. Like a dog's tracks." He leered at Mandel, then added hastily: "Or a wolf's."

Klonsterman shook his head.

"Ain't been a wolf in these parts close comin' to fifty year," he said. "'Member the last'n kilt. I was just a kid. But Pa an' alla men, they fit to died. They got out an' they tracked'm down. They spread out fanwise an' they closed in. Took three-four days. Found'm down the creek back of Miller's place, near Lacey's Lane, that's where."

The men jabbered. It remained for little Nellie Sage, who was called a bit queer in the head, to create the real excitement—before a bug-eyed audience of women.

The following Saturday night she ran into Pott's General Store, out of breath, just before closing time.

"I seen it!" she screamed. "I seen it! I seen it jest now, over on Lacey's Lane!"

She stood panting, while half a dozen farm wives and village women—there for their last-minute Saturday-night shopping and a bargain of gossip—gazed at her with astonishment.

Nellie was nineteen and pretty in a pale sort of way. She was simple, hadn't had much schooling, and was maid-of-all-work for the Dawsons, whose farm was divided from the Trent estate by the Caldwell place.

Mrs. Potts, the fat wife of the store-keeper, grabbed Nellie by the shoulders.

"You seen what?" she demanded. She shook the girl.

"I seen it! I seen that thing!" Nellie shrieked.

"That big dog?" asked Mrs. Tilson, shifting her market basket from one arm to the other.

"'Tain't no dog," Nellie said stubbornly. "I seen it. Never seen nothin' like it. I was walkin' nice as you please along the lane an' I come to the bridge over Bowling Creek near where the Millers used to live. I was walkin' to one side—the side toward the old dam—an' I crossed the bridge, an' right there it was, square in the middle of the lane."

"What was?" demanded Mrs. Potts.

"I keep tellin' you, don't I?" Nellie cried. "This thing. Big as life and white as snow it was. An' it had red eyes an' sharp teeth an' it looked at me—goshamighty, I near died! Near scared out of my wits. I was! It looked like the pictures of wolves!"

Her story went the rounds. It differed in detail, depending on who told it. Truth is a loose commodity, and it wasn't very long before some folks were telling how it was Mrs. Trent, not Nellie, who saw the thing, although nobody explained what the haughty Mrs. Trent would be doing walking along Lacey's Lane at night.

The thing grew in the telling. It became as big as a horse. It had the head of a tiger. Mrs. Trent was down for a week from fright.

Some of the men visited the spot and followed an old path along the bank of the creek. They found the prints of some sort of an animal, which seemed to bear out Nellie's story. But the prints were vague and they disappeared at the bank of the creek farther down.

THE rolling, somewhat wooded land of the Tilson farm sprawled on the south side of the county road, midway between the village of Friends Meeting and the Trent estate. Immediately east was the old Marcus place. The west line was the State highway.

Bowling Creek, cutting down from the

north, crossed Lacey's Lane, a half mile north of the Tilson buildings which fronted the county road. The creek skirted the farmyard, meandering south through the Tilson land and beyond, finally to join with the Neshaminy.

The last evening of November was fair and warm. And Leroy, who was four, was playing in the farmyard near the creek after supper. Near-by in the barns, his father—big, red-haired Henry—and his eldest son, Frank, were at chores.

It was dark, but the lights from the house and the electric bulb atop the barn gable illuminated the yard. And there was more light, too, when Mrs. Tilson threw open the kitchen door and stood, looking to her right, and then to her left.

"Leroy!" she called. "Leroy! Bedtime!"

There was no answer.

Mrs. Tilson's eyes sought the shadows of the shrubbery. Her voice rose:

"Leroy!"

She waited a moment. Then:

"Now where's that little dickens gone?"

She descended the steps and began touring the yard. She walked around to the front of the house, where the floodlight from the barn did not penetrate. She stood a moment, listening.

"Leroy!"

Her voice was tired. A car rolled out from the village and sped west. It passed the Marcus place and slowed down for the bridge in front of the Tilson house. The headlights glared on the lawn, erasing shadows of shrubbery and trees, and then replanting the shadows at bizarre and shifting angles. Mamie Tilson took the opportunity to glance all ways at once about the lawn.

Seeing her there in the white blaze of the lamps, you would have said she looked careworn and tired. She was not a large woman; she was not strongly built. Work on a farm is hard—and Mamie Tilson had borne six children.

"Leroy!" she called once more, and then continued on around the other side of the house where the lawn ended at the creek's bank.

She walked slowly to the barn and stood at the wide doorway. Tilson and Frank, seated on little one-legged stools, were milking the two Guernseys. The milk purred in rhythmic jets into the pails.

"I can't find Leroy," Mrs. Tilson said wearily. She passed the back of a thin, blue-veined hand across her forehead.

"Just about through," Tilson said. "Help you look, Mama."

He got up. He poured the milk into another

pail. He walked into the tool room and returned with a flashlight.

"I thought he was with you," Mrs. Tilson said. "I wouldn't worry—but that *thing* and all. . . ."

"Now, now, Mama. . . ."

But Hank Tilson couldn't find Leroy either. And so he returned for Frank, who lit a lantern. They began searching along the creek.

"Little cuss, always wanderin' around," Frank said impatiently. He was eighteen and he had a date that night with the Potts girl.

They searched down the creek and through the woods till they came to the fence between their land and the Waterman's.

"Don't seem's he coulda gone this fur," Hank Tilson said. He stood in a clearing of the wood and swung the beam of his flashlight from one clump of bushes to another. He called out:

"Leroy!"

An echo replied. Then Frank exclaimed:

"Listen!"

He held his lantern higher and its circle of light widened. He looked downstream into the Waterman land. Hank Tilson sent the beam of his flashlight in that direction.

"Thought I heard a rustle," Frank explained. "Like. . . ."

"Pheasants maybe," Hank Tilson said. "Lots of 'em down here."

Margaret Potts didn't have her date that night. Hank Tilson went back to the house and he called two of his neighbors. And they told neighbors, and within two hours a score of men were beating through the woods and fields.

They spread out. Some, just on a hunch, went upstream till they reached Lacey's Lane. And some went as far west as the State Highway. But since Trent's land on the other side was enclosed by a close-barred iron fence, they didn't figure it necessary to go farther.

From the county road, night motorists could see in all directions lanterns and flashlights bobbing. And in the back lanes automobiles, loaded with men staring ahead and with spotlights swinging slowly in arcs, rolled in low gear.

The news reached the Well, where Klonsterman and Adolf Mandel were locked in a beery debate. Mandel left to join the search, and a few minutes later Klonsterman staggered out and was next seen weaving his uncertain way toward the Tilson farm.

But Leroy was not found that night.

It was ten o'clock the next morning when Tip Farney, who worked for the Watermans across from Fountain Head, left the neat, white stone Waterman house and tramped across the east pasture. He had a cross saw

with him and he figured on looking over some fallen trees. He came to the woods along Bowling Creek south of the Tilson land and he followed the stream down to its confluence with the Neshaminy in the southeast parcel of the Waterman farm.

There, by the light of day, lay the mangled blood-coated body of a little child.

STATE troopers came. Reporters and photographers followed. The State Troopers gathered at the spot.

"My God!" one exclaimed. "Look at that flesh!"

Another trooper gasped. And a third, eyes studying the ground said:

"God! See them tracks? Looks like the kid was dragged here!"

"Dog tracks, they look," said the first trooper.

"That's Bryn," Farney said with conviction.

"Bryn? Who's Bryn?" one of the troopers demanded.

"Adolf Mandel's police dog," Farney muttered with growing anger. "Lives up next to the Tilsons; dog's a bad'n."

They found a trail of broken twigs and brushed leaves leading uncertainly from the edge of the Tilson yard a mile and a half south to the confluence of the two streams. Hank Tilson looked on in stupor.

"But why—" he croaked. "Why didn't we see that last night?"

"Be hard," a trooper said, "at night even with a lantern. And maybe you weren't looking for—this."

"No, no," sobbed Hank. "My God, not this!"

The trooper added, "And some of the men tramped over it. You can see where they obliterated the trail. Now—see there. Here the tracks come out again and that's where the kid's body was dragged, breaking those twigs."

And then, after Hank Tilson went home to break as best as he could the tragic news to Mamie, the coroner arrived from Doylestown.

"Good Lord!" he cried. "Looks like the kid's been eaten. See those teeth marks. What's been going on 'round here?"

Slowly, the troopers absorbed the story: David's prize Angora goat, Pierre's duck, Nellie's alarm.

A trooper who specialized in such things made plaster casts of the animal's prints. They measured the distance between each imprint of each pad.

"Got a long stride for a dog," the trooper said.

"Bryn's a big dog," Farney said viciously.

"Were there any prints like this where this girl saw this thing?"

"Some of the men went down," Farney replied. "They said they found prints. I dunno. I wasn't there."

"We'll match 'em," the trooper said with decision. "How about those others?"

"You'll have to ask Dave Trent an' ol' d'Wigney."

There was evidence, from the confusion of prints, that the animal had remained for some time at the confluence of the streams. Then the trail led up the Neshaminy on the north bank. Here the prints in the soft earth were not so deep.

"Wasn't carrying the kid's weight any more," a trooper said.

The trail led for perhaps a hundred yards until, in the ooze of the creek's bank, it disappeared.

"Smart dog," a trooper observed.

"The tracks'll be on the other side," another said.

But when the troopers waded across the creek and began to examine the ground with minute care, they were puzzled. There were no tracks.

"Maybe waded downstream?"

"Dogs aren't that smart."

"Or came back on the side it left on?"

Two troopers on each side of the creek, they made their way upstream. They progressed another hundred yards. Finally:

"Found something," said a man on the south bank.

He pointed down to a point between the stream and a path that led west to the State Highway.

"H'm-m. It's smudged. Here's a better one over near the path. Hell! That isn't what we're looking for."

The other troopers gathered around, looked down. They saw a faint print of a small shoe. Then another and another.

"Like a kid's shoe—or a woman's," a trooper said.

Farney announced, "Might be. Kids come down here to play sometimes."

They searched for an hour for a reappearance of the beast's marks. They found none. So they went to Adolf Mandel's house. A crowd of angry neighbors stood in the yard.

Adolf Mandel stood at the front door of his house, facing the crowd.

He held a shotgun loosely under his arms and he shouted:

"One step more'n I'll shoot. I'll shoot, damn you! I'll shoot!"

"We want to see Bryn!" one of the crowd screamed.

"Bryn's been in all night, I tell you. I

keep him penned up like the commissioners said! An' you get offa this place."

"Get the dog!" a farmer shouted. "Kill the dog!"

"Thinka that poor Tilson kid!" shrieked an angry voice.

"Ha. There's Jim, gonna round to the back. He'll get at him."

Red-faced, burning with rage, Mandel glanced to his left. One of the men had de-toured and was sneaking toward the rear.

It was then that Klonsterman arrived. He shouldered his apelike self through the crowd. Mandel saw him and cursed:

"You're the one done this, damn you! You'n Heinrich Darhammer an' all your dirty lies!"

Klonsterman spoke loudly, but he seemed to whine, too.

"Tain't what I come for. I come to tell what's true."

"Git the dog!" a man yelled.

Klonsterman turned to the others.

"Lissen, why don't ya? I know Bryn was in his pen last night. I seen him!"

Immediate quiet prevailed. Mandel turned amazed eyes toward him.

"Me'n Adolf was in the inn together, wan't we, Adolf?" Klonsterman bellowed.

Slowly, wonderingly, Mandel nodded.

"We was there when word come the kid was lost, wan't we?"

Again Mandel nodded.

"An' you went out to jine the search, ain't that so, Adolf?" Klonsterman questioned. "An' then I follered."

The restiveness of the crowd was reborn.

"Hell!" spat one man. "That don't mean nothin'. He went home an' called Bryn in an' then joined the hunt."

"No, he didn't," bellowed Klonsterman. "No, he didn't. I follered him an' I seen him on the road and he went right smack past here an' on up the road to Tilson's."

And the crowd grew quiet.

"And I come right here myself," Klonsterman continued, triumphantly, "an' I went 'round in back an' looked in the pen an' there—by jingo, there was Bryn!"

THAT night Manning Trent dropped in at Fountain Head. The weather had grown suddenly colder, and a wind had risen and rain had begun to fall. The rain on the roof sounded like the endlessly spasmodic roll of a snare drum.

The wind grew and the rain fell in waves. And some of the rain found its way down the chimney and fell sizzling on the log on the irons.

"And they're searching in this!" Trent exclaimed.

He walked to the French doors and looked out, his cigar gripped between his teeth. Pierre stood beside him. Together they saw lanterns bobbing in the storm—prints of yellow light, moving erratically.

"What else can they do?" asked Pierre. "Can't have that damned thing around."

Trent nodded.

"They're over at my place, too. There must be two hundred men out—besides the troopers." He paused to look as a light came nearer along the creek and then disappeared toward the back of the house. "Dave's out too," he said. "Tramping around." He laughed shortly, without humor. "Don't think he's so much worried about that hound as he is about keeping the men out of his rose garden. He's awfully proud of that garden."

"Reward up?" asked Pierre.

"Yes," said Trent, who was a member of the Township Board of Commissioners. "We put a reward up this afternoon when we met. Five hundred dollars. Isn't much, but the board hasn't much to spend."

He turned toward the heavy smoking stand where a siphon bottle of seltzer water and a decanter of Scotch stood. He mixed a high-ball. Pierre watched him enviously.

Trent sat down, stretched out his long legs and sipped at his tall glass.

"Did you hear it wasn't Bryn?" he asked.

"Not exactly."

"It wasn't. The police matched those prints they found by the body. They found some where David's goat was killed and they found those near Lacey's Lane. They said they matched up—same animal and all that—but not Bryn."

"I stayed in town after the concert last night," Pierre said, "and didn't see a paper till this evening on the train home. Heinrich did say the troopers were over and wanted to see where the duck was killed."

Trent got up again and moved to the doors. The rain was slanting into the porch.

"I'll put up another five hundred," Pierre said.

"Match it."

Sara appeared while Pierre and Trent still talked. She shed her raincoat and her rubbers in the hall by the open door. She came into the room quietly, making a wide circuit of the room, keeping her eyes fixed on the fire until she reached a chair in the far corner.

Trent's eyes filled with admiration. Here, he thought, was a girl after his own liking. He liked her loose walk, her calm detachment. He liked the look of her body, the way she dressed. Not many girls could boast her style.

He mixed a drink and offered it to her,

while Pierre looked on silently. Pierre had noticed on recent evenings—on those rare occasions when he was still up when she came in—that her nocturnal tramps seemed to revive her drooping spirits. Were she pale and restless when she left the dinner table, she had a touch of color in her cheeks when she returned. And her lips would seem even more full and more red and her eyes more bright.

This was not so now. Pierre said gently:

"You weren't gone long tonight, dear."

She touched her lips to the glass rim and shook her head slowly.

"There are men about," she said wearily. "They have guns. I was afraid."

"You're right," Trent said. "Some of those fellows are liable to take a pot shot at anything."

She did not respond. She sat and listened to them talk. Or *was* she listening to them talk? Shortly, Trent left. And for a long time Pierre sat and looked at his daughter.

His daughter!

But she was so unlike him. Suddenly, reason deserted Pierre—Pierre, who was so usually reasonable. He did not pause to think. There are times when frayed threads break within even the gentlest nature. He got up and walked to her corner and he faced her and looked down into her smoldering eyes and his own eyes were sultry.

"You have to tell me what's the matter!" he commanded. There was almost a note of anger in his voice. Yet there was frustration in the anger.

Sara looked straight ahead of her. She said nothing. And Pierre swore.

"Damn it! You're the coldest thing I ever saw. Haven't you any feelings? Don't you react to anything?"

Still she remained silent.

"Do you know a little boy has been killed?" Pierre demanded. "Do you know the whole countryside is out in arms? And you sit and say nothing! Day after day you sit. Week after week goes by and you don't say half a dozen words! Do you know there's hell loose in Europe? I doubt it. I haven't seen you once in the last month look at a newspaper. I haven't seen you with a book. Day after day you mope in your room. Night after night you go prowling about."

He faltered.

"You never play for me any more," he said, more quietly. "You don't eat. You don't see any of your friends."

And then Pierre's shoulders sagged and the energy left his voice. He placed a hand tenderly upon her shoulder.

"Oh, my darling," he pleaded. "My pet,

what is the matter?" His eyes glistened. "You're all that I have, dear. I hate to see you like this. I thought Hardt could tell me. But he can't."

She moved at the mention of Hardt's name.

"Is that why he had been here so often?"

Pierre nodded.

"He is a psychiatrist, isn't he?" she asked.

Again Pierre nodded.

"And you think—perhaps—I am mad?"

Pierre could not bring himself to reply. She said, with such detachment that she might have been examining her soul from a window:

"I may be. I don't know. I have strange feelings. Sometimes—I think I am living in another life, in another world. And sometimes I feel that all this has happened before. Long ago."

Her eyes fell and her long slender hands grew limp. Pierre asked:

"But where do you go at night, dear?"

She shook her head vaguely.

"I don't know." And when she saw Pierre's surprise, she said, "I must walk. I've always liked to walk. But—now it seems a passion. I feel I must, I must. When I come back to the house I feel somehow satisfied." She added: "So satisfied that—that nothing else seems to matter, except—oh, I want David so much."

Pierre said nothing. There was nothing for him to say.

Chapter Four

THE rain ended the next noon. A gray December canopy of clouds hung over the countryside. The hunt went on.

Word spread of the added rewards of Pierre and Trent, and the number of hunters grew. In Philadelphia and in New York, city editors assigned reporters and photographers to the hunt for the duration. Not strangely, for they were newspapermen, they set up headquarters in the Well.

At first the hunters centered upon and spread out fanwise from the points where the beast had left its tracks. They beat the brush and the woods along the Neshaminy and the Bowling. At first they worked loosely—in pairs and quartets. And it was each man for himself. But on the third night Farney was shot.

He was shot in the leg by an excited hunter who thought he was the quarry. After that the State Troopers took more rigid control.

The men then were organized in sections. Each section was led by a trooper. And the troopers studied maps and spotted the sections at widely separated points, so that a great circle with a diameter of four miles was formed. And then each section began to close in toward the center.

It took two days for all sections to meet at the center. But all that was scared up were a few pheasants and hares. And that night, five miles up the Neshaminy and well outside the original circumference of the circle, a baby cried.

It was the Heath baby at the Heath home in the village of Melton Crossing.

The Heaths were young. They had come from Canada. Dan Heath operated the village

filling station. The station was located at the junction of two pikes. Behind the station the Heath cottage faced the Hatboro Pike. It was a one-story white house of frame with a wide lawn. It stood between the filling station and the Neshaminy and its creek-side lawn was partly lighted by a street lamp down the road.

Dan Heath was at work at the station when it happened. His pretty wife, Mary, was washing the supper dishes in the kitchen. Little Dan, not a year old, was asleep in his crib in his room. His room faced the creek-side of the lawn and the window was open wide; the night, for December, was warm.

Mary Heath heard little Dan whimper. And then she heard him cry out in fright. She wiped her hands on her red-checked apron and went into the dining room, and into the living room. She went to the nursery door and she opened it quietly. She looked. And she froze—

For in the subdued light from the living-room floor lamp she saw a huge white snout framed in the open window. Its jaws hung open and its sharp teeth glittered. Saliva dripped from its limp red tongue and its eyes glared hungrily across the room at the crib where little Dan lay crying. On the sill rested two big white hairy paws.

Mary Heath screamed.

She raced across the room and slammed down the window. The window caught for an instant on a toe of one paw. The beast yelped. Then, tugging free, it shot—a white streak—across the yard and disappeared in the shadows of the brush.

Dan Heath found his wife unconscious by the window, his son sobbing. And when he had bathed her head in water and she had opened her eyes, she began trembling as though chilled to the bone.

"Is he all right? Is he all right?" she kept asking.

Slowly, incoherently, she told what happened. And she kept saying:

"Its eyes. I never saw an animal's eyes like that! Everything about it was vicious—except those eyes. They seemed almost human. They seemed to plead."

And still later when she had gained some measure of composure—"I know a wolf when I see one. They can say what they want about dogs, but I wasn't born and brought up in Alberta for nothing."

That night, about the village of Melton Crossing, the hunt was intensified under a full moon.

• • •

There is a point on the boundary between



They knew that certain crones
worshipped the devil there. . . .

the de Camp-d'Avesnes and Trent estates, in the north sections, where the Neshaminy crosses from the latter ground to Pierre's. And there is a path along the south bank. And there, that night, David Trent walked alone.

The moon's white light filtered through the bare branches of the trees and spread a crazy lace upon the earth. David absorbed the beauty and walked in solemn loneliness.

What an insane thing life was, he thought. And his thoughts returned insistently to Sara. It seemed ages since he had seen her—but, at most, it must have been only three weeks. He tried to count the days.

Lord! he'd been so happy before. He wondered if the wreckage might, in much part, be blamed upon himself. Certainly, as a lover, he had been unromantic enough; had spent too much time with the farm; had fought shy when Sara wanted him to join in some youthful deviltry. Had he been afraid of life, afraid of her, or afraid of his own emotions? He remembered telling her:

"Life's well enough—to watch. The trouble is a fellow feels once in a while like sticking his fingers into the machinery. But he can't do that. He's liable to pinch 'em."

Sara had said, "But if everybody felt that way, there would be nothing in life to watch."

"I suppose so," he answered glumly.

Now he wondered: Was it that shyness that made him lose her? Was that why she became so cold? Or was it his suspicions in a mad moment? His maniacal outbreak that night on the lawn? But how could David possibly know what went on in her mind?

He tramped moodily along the path. He thought of his Ayrshires. Something wrong with them, that was definite. They hadn't been producing as they should, even for the winter months. The vet had been over, had found nothing wrong—physically. They ate well enough, but they didn't give. Suddenly David knew that they made no difference.

The path forked and one branch went through the wood onto higher ground and one ran down close to the creek, and David paused in indecision. And pausing, he thought he heard a quiet splash in the waters. And then he saw Sara striding easily up the bank.

IF, CONSCIOUSLY, David did not know why he was walking through the woods, he knew now from the tumbling of his heart.

Sara saw him and was not startled. She said, simply, "Hello, David." As if she had expected him.

He stepped toward her, stopped.

"But you can say something, David?"

He looked down at her face.

"What can I say?" he asked.

She said, softly, "You can say why you haven't been around lately."

He stared at her then. He stammered helplessly, "I—I didn't think you wanted me. You were—so cold."

Wistfulness crept into her voice.

"I do not feel cold, David."

Almost imperceptibly, she leaned toward him. And David felt a vague discomfort—as if some blurred signal were warning him of some equally indefinite danger. It was but momentary. And then he had her in his arms.

"Darling."

Over and over, again and again he kissed her smooth full lips. Over and over he stroked the velvet of her hair; and gently his fingers caressed her soft cheeks. But finally, when he held her out at arm's length to gaze at her, and to delight in that gaze, he was surprised at the look of her. There was impassioned yearning, hunger so vividly portrayed that he became afraid.

Arm in arm, they turned and walked back along the path. They walked without words. And David trembled. He could not analyze this thing that had happened. But he knew, with definiteness, that here was a relationship he had never felt when they were together before. Then he had adored Sara—but within the bounds of reason. Now, reason had fled; control had gone. Instead, a merciless compulsion attended him, grew more intense with each passing moment. The touch of her hand inflamed him.

They stopped once in a patch of moonlight. The discomfort seemed to return to David. He felt that, when she turned her face up toward his, the yearning in her eyes was but a mask; that behind the mask was calculation. It was as if she were watching, with the scientific coldness of a biologist, the hot growth within him unfold.

And so he stood, dimly fearful.

They kissed. And she smiled mistily. And then they walked on. And after a little they stopped again and David lit a match for cigarettes. Her hand held the cigarette to her lips. And in the flare of the match David saw her fingers.

"Dearest! Why, what's happened?"

He felt the pain his own. But she only glanced at her swollen fingers and shrugged gently.

"Not much. Still throbs a bit. I slipped and fell back there and cracked my hand against a tree."

Anxiously he lit another match to examine her injury.

"More like you'd crushed it," he said. He was aware that she was looking at him curi-

ously. Then she dropped her cigarette and with both palms reached up and stroked his face. And he dropped his cigarette. And again they were in each other's arms. They clung to each other.

They clung to each other. And when the first dizziness of delight passed, David felt that her kisses were more cruel than sweet. They were harsh. They hurt. In the breathless pause that followed he tasted blood from his lip.

* * *

An insulated wall rises between the classes of society, so that one class cannot really know the thoughts and reasoning of the other. Though each may hold possession of precisely the same facts, each will interpret those facts differently in the light of its own culture.

So Pierre and Manning Trent, materialistic men, spoke only of objective possibilities. But at the Well, men who feared God were not unequal to coating a problem with a paint of supernatural evil.

They were too close, for one thing, to the Hexenkopf—and to all for which the Hexenkopf stood. They could see, from high hills on clear days, that forested Witch's-Head frowning starkly against the northern sky. And they remembered the dark stories of their grandfolk of how the witches from the very Dutch country in which they lived had gathered there.

There were men at the Well who had been close to the Hexenkopf—so close that they could see the ominous lights on the lower slopes. They knew that magic herbs grew there and that trees were stunted and died young. And they knew that certain crones worshipped the devil there.

Their forefathers had come from the north of Germany to the New World in the cramped holds of tiny wooden ships. They had brought more than themselves and their worldly pos-

sessions. They had brought their centuries-old beliefs.

For them, evil was a terrible reality. They feared God, but they feared the devil more. Their faith in demons was as real as their bodies and their spirits. And in the strength of that faith they had moved a mountain. Their horror of that damnably infamous Blocksberg in the Hartz was transferred, with their arrival in the Pennsylvania Dutch country, to the gloomy Hexenkopf of the Delaware Valley.

So, by that same metaphysical process, they had transplanted the hunger rocks from their native Rhine to the Lehigh. And they knew for a certainty that when the flat white rocks were uncovered by receding waters, the year would be a year of famine.

Hexerei still flourished beneath the coating that the less discerning described as twentieth-century civilization. Heinrich Derhammer drove Pierre's brand-new ninety-horsepower station wagon. But, when Freda was ill of a complaint, he was not averse to driving in that same station wagon fifteen miles over back roads to the farm shack of old Hans Ehlers, the hex doctor. There, for a dollar, Freda would buy a salve. In itself, she knew, the salve was not potent. Its potency was conceived by the immaterial ingredients which old Hans injected into it—the ingredients of conjuration.

And was there not the fine black stallion the Caldwells owned? Had it not come trotting down the road the day after August Hausler disappeared? The constable took it to the pound, but no owner was located. And finally, at auction, the Caldwells bought it.

"Queer piece," they said at the Well. "Queer piece it turned up the day after Augie went away. And along the same road he was last seen. Hear tell it's of high spirit, too."

Nobody came out and said what each one secretly thought. In the code of those at the

Well this was not done. A stating of ominous fact was sufficient. Not because one feared the jeers of his fellows, but because it was dangerous to name names and to place the finger too specifically on certain points that were better left alone.

That was why the experience of Nathan Messner and Heinrich Derhammer was received with the solemnity it deserved, and without comment.

It was four nights after the incident at Melton Crossing. Nate and Heinrich, armed with rifles, were tramping up the Neshaminy "to see what we might make out." There had been a light snow in the afternoon and then the skies had cleared and the stars hung brightly low like the points of icicles.

They had left Pierre's land and followed the path through the Trent place and into the small canyon through the hills back of the Caldwells. At the north mouth of the canyon the hills opened out, and there was more wood. And there was scrubby growth about under the trees. Suddenly Messner gripped Heinrich's arm.

"Hear that?" he whispered.

They stood rigid, ears acute. To their left, away from the creek, they heard the soft crunching of a moving pressure upon the snow and the muffled crackle of leaves beneath the snow. The sound neared. Heinrich slowly raised his rifle.

Then, into the clearing not twenty feet away, a huge white beast trotted. It was sleek of form and long of snout and its white teeth shone. Behind it, but vaguer to the eye because the shadows of the shrubbery fell across it, a second animal drew up short.

Heinrich took aim. He fired. The white beast leaped into the air, somersaulting out of sight.

"Him I got!" Heinrich cried.

"Ja!" yelled Nate.

Bedlam broke loose from behind the tangled brush. Heinrich and Messner followed. The sharp thorns of the thicket caught at their clothing. They plunged on in the wake of Messner's flashlight.

"Not far it can go," Heinrich muttered. But Messner had paused and was studying the ground.

"They's tracks," he said, "but they ain't no blood."

The animal sounds were distant now. And finally, there were no sounds at all. Moodily, Heinrich looked at the ground. They retraced their steps to the clearing. There was no blood there. Heinrich said wonderingly:

"Never did I miss like that a shot."

Messner's face was grim. He said with studied significance:

"Ya didn't miss. Ya had a perfect bead on him."

"Between the eyes right in," Heinrich agreed. He shook his head slowly, unable to comprehend.

He added, "But where is the blood yet?"

The men stared off into the wood.

"Smart devil!" grumbled Messner. "No wolf's so smart. Must have dog blood."

"*Nein*. It was the wolf. With your eyes you saw. Behind it another. A gray, a littler one."

"Whoever heard of a white wolf?" Messner demanded. "Snow white."

They fell silent then. For from a far distance across the country they heard a wolf's bay, at first low and whimpering, and then louder and louder and more piercing until, reaching a high hysterical note, it stopped abruptly. In the sobbing catch at the very end there was a quality almost human.

"Shall we follow the tracks?" Messner asked after a moment.

But Heinrich, trembling, stammered, "Not any more of this I want."

And he turned and staggered back along the path.

THE next day Pierre and Manning Trent lunched together in town. Trent lit a cigar over his coffee and wriggled his nose.

"Damned difficult," he said, "to imagine such a thing." His eyes roamed about the dining room where smartly tailored men and women sat at small tables; where suave black-jacketed waiters bent over the tables. "I meant, dammit, right here in the middle of civilization. Off in Central Europe or up North, I'd say 'yes.'"

"Still, I remember during the last war. I had the Paris edition then, you remember, and spent about a year there at the start. The wolves, packs of 'em, came right down to the suburbs. Two or three reasons: it was a bad winter and the Germans didn't leave 'em anything for forage, and I understand they were pretty much frightened by the big guns."

"None of that holds here," Pierre observed.

"No, and there's only the one wolf."

"Heinrich said two."

"I wouldn't believe Heinrich."

"But I asked Messner, too. He said the other just seemed to be a regular gray wolf. I walked up there this morning with Messner."

"Find anything?"

"Not tracks, if you mean that. The snow had melted. But—" Pierre drew a white envelope from his inside coat pocket. He opened it and withdrew a folded paper. He unfolded the paper and spread it before Trent.

Trent examined it, frowning at first and then dropping his jaw with surprise. It was a tuft of coarse white hair.

"Snow white," he breathed softly.

Pierre nodded soberly.

"Found it caught on a wild-rose bush."

"Why in thunder," demanded Trent, "didn't one of those two fools shoot?"

"Heinrich claims he did. Point-blank, at close range. And—they couldn't find any blood."

Trent snorted.

"Bah! He's either lying or was too scared to aim straight."

Pierre, never nervous as long as Trent had known him, tapped his fingers on the table cloth.

"I don't know," he said. "I don't know. I'm beginning to wonder if I'm crazy or if the rest of the countryside is. And, by the way, where was David last night?"

Trent glanced up, startled.

"Eh? What's that got to do with it?"

"Nothing," Pierre said quickly. "But I'm talking about craziness, so I wondered if you knew he and Sara were seeing each other again?"

Trent smiled.

"I'm glad to hear it, Pierre."

Pierre picked at his mole.

"I'm not so sure, Manning. Somehow, I'm afraid for Dave. They're back together but she's as moody as ever. Moodier, maybe. She goes grousing around the house, quiet as a ghost. I'm afraid she'll be a—oh, I was going to say bad, but it's a dull word—devilish influence on Dave. She's taking him on her nightly walks."

Trent nodded slowly.

"See what you mean. Come to think of it, David was out last night—pretty late. And the night before, too."

Keen observer of human nature, Trent could not but note the lines of worry on Pierre's normally placid face. He leaned forward and his eyes met Pierre's.

"By any chance," he asked shrewdly, "you've something else on your mind?"

Pierre was a long time in answering, a long time in staring into Manning's face.

"I don't know," he said at length. And he repeated it. "I don't know."

* * *

Justin Hardt described himself as consulting psychiatrist. Unless, as in Sara's case, it was necessary to observe a patient with discretion, he seldom left his office. And so it was something of an occasion for him to visit Pierre during business hours.

Pierre found him, on his return from lunch, in the main room of the Salon de Camp-d'Avesnes. He was stalking importantly about, examining the collection of *objets d'art*, and adjusting his glasses as he bent stiffly over each item. Pierre led him into his private office at the rear.

Dr. Hardt came directly to the point.

"I am up against a blank wall," he said.

It was enough that Hardt's egotism should permit him to make such a bald admission. But he went on:

"Nowhere, sir, can I find a case history to match hers."

Pierre sat dumpily back in his chair and folded his hands.

"But don't you always find everybody, everything, a little different? Take my business." He nodded toward a row of little vials on his desk. "Each of those is geranium oil. You can smell each one and *you* won't tell any difference. But one's Turkish and one's Algerian and one's French. *I* can identify each one blindfolded."

"Of course, of course!" thundered Hardt. "What I mean is that the gulf between Sara's symptoms and any other known type of abnormality is so wide it can't be bridged."

Pierre was thoughtful. At length he asked:

"Did you know she is amnesic?"

Hardt frowned thoughtfully, considering.

"Do you know that for a fact?"

Pierre shrugged.

"Those walks she takes. She told me the other night she doesn't know where she goes."

Hardt nodded. His lower lip protruded.

"She might be lying," he said. "Some patients are pretty clever, you know. Or there might be a hallucinatory condition there. I am convinced her physical health is basically perfect. Certainly, she hasn't lost weight."

"And she's even got more color now than ever before in her life," Pierre added.

"But she doesn't eat, sir."

"Not at meals. I've a hunch, though, she sneaks something on the side. I couldn't prove it."

The two men fell silent. Hardt, combing previous ground, said finally:

"And you say there's no family history of insanity on either side?"

Pierre bowed his head in reflection.

"I said that, yes," he responded slowly. "But I didn't check it. What I meant was, not to my personal knowledge. We've pretty complete family records, however. How about driving out tomorrow night? We'll run through them."

Pierre went home early that afternoon, heavier of heart than he had ever been. He warmed himself at the open fire in the library

and then went into his study beyond the library. He stood awhile, pursing his thick lips and staring absently at ceiling-high shelves of books. Finally, from one end, he recovered several thick and yellowed volumes.

He had not inspected them for years. He spread them out carefully on a long mahogany table. And he unfolded two expansive ink-smudged charts—the genealogical trees of his own family and of Angelica's.

He spent an hour with the charts and books. At first he merely thumbed the pages of the books. . . .

Francois de Camp-d'Avesnes, Conte de. . . .

The books were old. They were printed in French on old manual presses. Their paper was heavy and hand-made. Many of the pages were torn. Pierre translated automatically as he read.

"Hm. Arnaud. There was a devil if ever there was one. Helped massacre the Huguenots on St. Bartholomew's Day. Nice fellow."

Not the most charitable reading in the world were these old accounts of the family de Camp-d'Avesnes. But then, it wasn't one of the most charitable families. It was lusty and populous, warlike and adventurous, arrogant, headstrong, intolerant. But if most of its men were untamed, some of its members had possessed a gentler nature. There were scholars and artists:

Jacques,

who had thrown away everything to go to Italy and study under Cellini.

Léandre,

who had become a cardinal.

Discovery is not always a sudden flash of light upon truth. As often, like growth, it is simply the culmination of a long labor in the soil. So, already, the seed of discovery had germinated within Pierre; and had begun to grow, and had sent out tiny feelers. It would blossom with suddenness, and Pierre would see the blossom. But after a time, he would remember the feelers and the little shoots. He would remember how the unfolding of each tender leaf had left him with restless wondering. And he would ask:

"But why, why didn't I understand this, then?"

Perhaps the suspicion, so dormant in his mind he did not know it as suspicion of anything specific, needed—like the plant for fruition—the touch of sun-flooded reality.

Still daylight out, the sky was heavy with clouds. And Pierre turned on a green-glass-shaded desk lamp. He thumbed the pages more slowly, pausing to read and reread entire passages.

Victor . . .

"Now, what was there about Victor?"

He left the book open upon the table, and hung the Camp d'Avesnes family tree upon the wall.

"Yes, of course. Here it is. The one who married that ugly Bourbon. Put a touch of royalty in the strain."

He studied the chart in more detail—the main stem of eldest sons and sons of eldest sons.

Victor
Eugène
Armand II
Paul
Jérôme (l.g.)
Henri III
Gervase
Gaspard
Hilaire
Henri IV
Pierre

"And Sara," Pierre murmured. "End of the line—a woman!"

He had blandly shrugged off that genealogical fact before. He was too cynical a man to feel much pride in family. It was the individual that counted. He could examine, dispassionately, these old tomes and this chart and see them but as the record of a drama in which he appeared in a minor rôle in the last brief scene.

BUT, he wondered, was he warranted in examining his ancestors with so much aloofness? Heredity counting at all, wasn't it possible he'd have been a far different man but for the traits each of so many generations poured into the common vessel?

Gervase there, who fled the Revolution and settled in Philadelphia. Pierre had his business.

And Jérôme . . . hm, what's that "l.g." stand for?

He moved to the table and opened another volume, and thumbed the pages slowly. He asked himself impatiently:

"Why don't these books have indices?"

Getting there now. Here's Armand II. All about whom he married and whom he begat. Armand II wasn't much and there wasn't much about his life. Nor his son, Paul. Here it is—Jérôme Jacques, 1726-63.

Pierre began to read. He read carefully. "Oh, yes. Remember now."

And then his jaw dropped and he stared off into space, and his eyelid drooped still more.

"Utter nonsense, of course!" he exclaimed. And he got up and walked to the chart and ran his finger up the family trunk.

"Jérôme and before Jérôme, Paul. Before

Paul, Armand II. Before Armand II, Eugène. And Victor. And Victor's father, Henri II. And Guillaume. And then . . .

"Fernand, 1569-1625 (l.g.)"

Pierre counted them off.

"That's seven, all right. Still. . ."

And then he counted forward, beginning with Henri III.

"That's seven too," he said uncertainly. "But it's ridiculous—"

Uneasy of mind, he walked restlessly about the room.

"There's the disease, of course. But you wouldn't think it would wait so long to break out." He paused and he considered, in an effort to reassure himself: "Nobody denies there's such a disease. Or was. A form of madness, certainly. A type that couldn't possibly be hereditary. . . ."

He paused reflectively at the window. He looked out at the wide lawn and the creek skirting the far edge. Behind a line of stark leafless trees the clouds were breaking in the southwest and shafts of cold yellow from a sun now reaching near its southern terminus slanted through the trees. The light struck the trees and pressed long shadows on the lawn. And just then Sara walked around a corner of the house and paused in a patch of sunlight.

Pierre saw her. And then his mouth opened and his good eye grew large and round. He stared. And then he began to tremble so violently that he gripped the sill for support.

His thoughts in utter confusion, he sat in his study for half an hour; sat, his eyes open, seeing nothing.

"Have to take hold of yourself," he kept repeating. "Have to take hold."

The oftener he said it, the more shaken he was.

"Illusion," he said. "Illusion."

But he knew it wasn't.

"Have to take hold," he said.

His head was hot. His hands were ice. He arose and staggered slightly. Swaying, he walked into the library. Heinrich was there, bending over the fire to place a new log. He stood up and turned at the sound of Pierre's footsteps.

"Himmel! So white!" he exclaimed. "Is sick the Master?"

Pierre took command of himself for a moment.

"Don't be foolish, Heinrich," he said gruffly.

But even his gruffness was so unusual that Heinrich continued to stare. Pierre said:

"That's all, Heinrich."

Heinrich left the room.

Pierre went to a cabinet and opened it. He

selected a bottle of brandy. His hand shook as he poured. He gulped it, and poured another. And this time he added soda. Then he returned with the glass to the study.

He sat in a heavy leather chair and tried to relax. His jumbled thoughts and emotions seemed to take on some semblance to coherence.

He thought: curious how a little liquor will help straighten you out. He thought: ought to drink oftener. He thought. . . . Indeed, he tried to think of everything and anything but the one central overwhelming fact that kept hammering back at him. Finally he thought:

Have to face it.

It might have been time or decision or both, rather than the brandy, that in the end brought matters into focus. He could see now how his experience simply fitted into a pattern. It checked so nicely with so many happenings that previously had left him puzzled.

Sara, taking her nocturnal walks.

Sara, returning and entering the library and keeping in the corner. . . .

He talked to himself. He talked aloud. Finally, he could ask with almost a suggestion of his former urbanity:

"Well, then; what's the next move? Something's to be done. Must be some solution. Solution to everything else."

He charged himself, "Have to keep quiet, of course."

Then he questioned that. Of course? Suddenly he thought of David.

"Oh, my God!"

He couldn't keep quiet. You can't let a baby crawl into the path of a locomotive without at least making some attempt to save it. But. . . .

Take it up with Hardt? That idiot? Even with Manning? Pierre recoiled at the suggestion.

THE next night, within ten minutes of each other, Justin Hardt and Manning Trent arrived. They found Pierre as they had never seen him before: nervous, ashen-faced, dejected, and somewhat drunk. But Pierre had reached his decision.

He talked, at first a bit garrulously. He had framed what he was going to say, and how he would develop each item, point by point.

They sat about the fire in the library. Hardt, who liked to talk himself, became impatient. But he listened none the less. And that was all Pierre asked. Once in a while Trent broke in:

"Oh, now, Pierre! After all, we're men of experience—not imbeciles."

"We'll argue the points later," Pierre replied once. "But just now—"

And he went on talking.

Finally he finished what he had to say. Hardt said with his professional air of assurance:

"It is circumstantial evidence, sir. Every bit of it! And, sir, it is not very good circumstantial evidence at that."

"We may as well be frank," Trent said, and there was a hint of amusement in his eyes. "When a good, solid, substantial citizen goes off the deep end, he does it right. Plain fact is, Pierre, you're drunk."

Trent got up then and mixed a highball for himself. But Pierre cocked his head and listened. He said:

"She's coming down the stairs now. I'll call her in here before she goes out. I want you to take a very, very close look."

He arose and walked unsteadily to the hallway door.

"Pet, come here a moment."

Sara, dressed for a winter's walk, entered the library slowly, almost reluctantly.

"Stand under that light, dear. No not quite under. To one side."

Sara hesitated. She protested, "But why?"

Pierre's voice rose slightly.

"Do as I say, dear. Near that light."

She looked at her father questioningly. Then she obeyed. Pierre turned to Hardt and Trent. He kept his eyes on them; they, theirs on Sara.

Manning shook his head.

"Don't get it," he muttered. "What am I supposed to see?"

"Keep looking," Pierre said evenly.

Hardt said in a low voice, "Man, I see nothing."

Pierre glanced at the bewildered girl to reassure himself.

"You will. Keep looking."

Then, almost as one, both men gasped.

"That's all," Pierre said grimly. Wondering, Sara left the room. Nor did either Hardt or Trent take their astounded eyes from her until the door closed. Then—and only then—did either speak.

Trent's voice shook.

"Good God!" he exclaimed. "She hasn't any shadow!"

There was no occasion for the three men to speak for the next several minutes. There was little enough they could say; little enough—for the vocabularies of skeptics are of limited use in such situations. Too, when the first shock began to wear and paralyzed nerves began to react tremulously, both Hardt and Trent needed liquid stiffening—a fast one, and a long, tall one.

Hardt's face was white. His pince-nez spectacles tilted crazily on his nose and he did not trouble to straighten them. He sat slumped in a heavy chair and kept looking at the door through which Sara had disappeared. His pompousness was gone.

It was Trent who managed to speak first. He said with dull tonelessness:

"I suppose—this means she killed the Tilson boy."

He said it questioningly, as if he knew it for a fact, yet didn't want, couldn't bring himself, to believe it. Pierre did not give him the satisfaction of an answer. Instead, he, too poured himself a drink.

"Don't think I'm callous," he said, finally. "But I'm twenty-four hours up on you and I've had—well, time to recover from the first jolt. I—I'd been looking over the family history when I discovered it. She was on the lawn. The sun came out."

He stood by the heavy smoking stand where the whiskey bottle stood. He placed his glass on the table and walked the length of the library to the study door. He disappeared momentarily, then returned, carrying a book and the big chart. He staggered slightly.

"Couldn't quite figure," he said thickly, "that l.g. beside those two names—Fernand and Jérôme. But I know now. *Loup garou*—werewolf."

Trent took the book without enthusiasm and began thumbing slowly through it.

"You'll find it all there," Pierre assured him. "Even the story—remember?—I told at the club that night. The one about Old Hugues."

Trent said dully.

"Yes. I remember. Thought it was claptrap. And you, Doctor, argued the point. Amusing, of course. You. . . Did you believe it?"

"No. No, I don't think so. Or I might have connected it with Sara's—illness. But what I didn't tell that night—the part I forgot—was what you'll find in the book. Hugues' soul was finally saved. Saved? Well,—at least it gained quiet. But it was only at a price to the devil, a quite gruesome price."

He paused. He sipped from his glass. Hardt looked at him with glazed eyes. Pierre paused for so long that it seemed he had forgotten what he was saying. Trent impatiently prodded him:

"You were saying . . ."

"Yes. A gruesome price. The curse was to rest on the eldest member of every seventh generation. Well, there's your chart. You can count up. Sara's the seventh since Armand." He added with quick bitterness, "Thank God, she's the last, too!"

THERE are shocks in lives so violent they are not quickly absorbed. Absorption takes time, and only little by little is the full picture comprehended. So it was with Trent. He said abruptly:

"But man, this means she's lost her soul."

And then Hardt finally spoke, trying to pull himself together, trying to implement his words with something of professional objectiveness:

"I don't," he said, "believe in the soul."

Pierre shook his head.

"I do—now."

And then again there was a silence. And at length, again, Pierre began to speak:

"It wasn't that the curse just happened—automatically, so to speak. If you read the accounts there," he leaned forward and tapped the book open on Trent's knees, "you'll find a process. The devil made the approach to the doomed victim, who then became a warlock."

He stopped suddenly. Then he exclaimed:

"That's it! David told me about visits she made. Remember where that baby's head was found—the one you posted a reward about?"

Trent glanced up fearfully.

"Yes. Of course. Yes. South Ninth Street."

"She was visiting a house there. So David said. He followed her one day. He was pretty worried. I haven't the slightest doubt that it was there she sold her soul."

Trent shook himself. Reason was tiding back to replace his mental paralysis.

"Damned impossible business!" he exclaimed. Pierre said:

"Very well—but *you* saw."

"Hallucination," Trent said gruffly.

"And would we all three of us see it at the same time?" Pierre asked.

"Why not? There's mass delusion, isn't there? How about that, Doctor?"

"It's been known," said Hardt slowly.

Trent, reassured, nodded. He said:

"We might have been able to see anything after you gave us your rigamarole. Power of suggestion."

"I did not," Pierre replied evenly, "so much as suggest the absence of a shadow. All I said was to examine her closely."

Hardt nodded judiciously.

Trent was unconvinced.

"Matter of thought transference, then," he said sullenly.

Pierre's smile was grim. His hold on himself was tightening now and the effects of the liquor—potent for a man who hadn't had a drink in two years—were wearing thin.

"You wouldn't," he inquired smoothly, "argue against the occult by contending I used an occult power to show you something that wasn't?"

"There's nothing occult about telepathy at all," Trent maintained doggedly. "It's a scientific fact."

But Dr. Hardt shook his head.

"Scarcely, sir," he said. "There have been experiments. But nothing proved."

Then, again, there fell an island of tormenting silence. Trent arose and prowled nervously about the room. Suddenly he stopped in his tracks.

"My God!" he exclaimed. "She's out there now!"

Pierre said, gently, "And David's with her."

Trent turned on him.

"You can't mean . . ."

Pierre shook his head, gesturing with a shaking hand.

"I don't *know*. But Heinrich said there were two. You can telephone your house."

Trent reached for the telephone. He called his own number. His hand was steady. And his voice. He said:

"Oh—Julia? Is David in?" . . . His voice faltered then. "What time?" . . .

He replaced the instrument in its cradle. And now his hand shook. And his figure was limp as he crossed the room to his chair. It was not necessary for the others to question him.

"It was curious," mused Dr. Hardt, "about those two wolves. I read about them in last night's paper. The one, white—" He turned toward Pierre. "As was the case in your family, sir. The other, a smaller gray."

Trent's eyes were narrow.

"What's curious?" he demanded. "All it proves is that she—and, damn it! I won't believe it's she—picked up with some vagabond. Likely as not a renegade police dog."

Pierre's voice was subdued. "Heinrich said the gray was a wolf. And Messner said it was a wolf. And Nathan knows wolves. Fifty years ago he saw what were called the last Pennsylvania timber wolves and he says this—the gray—was identical."

Trent said angrily, "You're damned sure of yourself, Pierre."

Pierre said mildly, "Do you think *I* wanted to believe? I've been fighting this thing out with myself for the past twenty-four hours. I haven't slept. I know how you feel. With me, it was Sara. With you, so long as it was Sara, you could look at it halfway objectively. But with David. . . ."

"You don't *know* it's David!"

DR. HARDT, contrary to his usual bombastic manner, waited patiently for this side argument to end. Now that there was a pause, he continued:

"What was curious was your Heinrich's con-

tion that he shot pointblank at close range and—didn't hit."

He hesitated, then added, "I say it is curious because the old accounts often mention the immunity of were-animals to bullets." He laughed heavily, with abrupt embarrassment. "I think you remember, I wrote a brochure on witchcraft once. If it proved anything, it showed I did a good bit of research on the subject. It was," he smiled grimly, "entirely derivative."

"And if I recall," Pierre said, "the reviewers thought your treatment hardly sympathetic."

Hardt appeared not to hear him.

"There are some odd tales," he resumed. He added hastily, "Don't take me wrong. I myself, sir, have not the slightest faith." Pierre thought the tone a bit too defensive. "In general it is said there are two types of werewolves. The one, selling his soul to the devil, receives as the highest reward for faithful service as a warlock the ability to shift his shape at will. And some of the stories tell how no ordinary attack upon the beast will prove effective."

Trent said with a quick sneer, "Ah. And yet you tell us, Pierre, this crazy yarn about Sara coming home with smashed fingers the night of that thing at Melton Crossing!"

Pierre replied with a voice now beginning to chill, "I only told you—because it was true."

Dr. Hardt bowed his head thoughtfully.

"Smashed? Swollen, I believe he said. No blood was there?"

"I didn't see any," Pierre said.

"It is said," Hardt explained, "that sometimes they are bloodless. It might check. Of course, in the other type, there are many reports of werewolves revealed for what they—I say, allegedly—were by the loss of a leg or an arm in conflict with a huntsman.

"Petronius tells how a soldier, turned werewolf, was wounded in the neck by a pike. When he resumed human form, he had a bad gash in the exact spot."

Trent interposed suspiciously, "What do you mean, other type?"

"The type," explained Hardt, "that does not sell its soul to the devil."

Trent began, "Then how can a person become—"

Then, guessing such a terrible answer as he did not wish to hear, he stopped abruptly. But Hardt said brutally, "Contagion."

"Personal contact?" inquired Pierre.

"That, sir, is the supposition. Frazier quotes the *Toradja* belief that a man is either born a werewolf or becomes one by mere contact. A bite would suffice; the human would be doomed."

"Forever?"

"In cases of contagion, I believe, the curse is supposed to last seven years, unless the spell is broken."

Pierre, who had been listening intently, asked, "But for the former type, Doctor?"

"Life."

And once more there was an uncomfortably long pause.

Trent pierced a cigar and lit it. He lit it with the elaborate automatic lighter which Pierre kept on his smoking stand—the butt end of an old flintlock pistol. He snapped the trigger, and the steel hammer struck flint and gave flame. Trent held it a moment, examining it with an obvious attempt at self-command. He said wearily:

"At least, we don't *know* that David. . . ."

Pierre (and Dr. Hardt could see how the man was terrorized at the thought of being the only victim; how he clutched at each straw to draw someone, anyone, into his own horrible web) said:

"We don't *know*. But we surmise. I've good grounds to surmise. Sara told me how much she wanted David. And now—they're together."

If ever Trent felt like murder, he did now. He gripped the arms of his chair with his fists until his knuckles were drawn of blood. He glared at Pierre. And Dr. Hardt, whose lifelong study was the human mind, could see—even as he had deciphered Pierre—how eager Trent was to transfer his fear of the unknown to a hatred of something that was definitely flesh and blood. In mental turmoil he sought a scapegoat.

What Hardt did not know was that Manning Trent suddenly remembered David's return on a recent night from a nocturnal tramp. Ever solicitous for his son's welfare, he had observed that David's lower lip was split; it was stained with blood. His hands relaxed from the chair arms. And he held up his left, fingers outspread, and with the forefinger of his right began to count—back.

That was it! That was the night of Melton Crossing!

Had they met, then? He remembered kisses of his own youth.

Trent's head lowered and his hand stroked his hot forehead. After a time, from what seemed a long distance, he heard Hardt's voice:

"Those prints. Didn't I read where they led away from the Tilson child's body and disappeared at the creek edge?"

"You did," said Pierre.

"The reason I asked," said Hardt, "was that, so the stories go, the werewolf often changes his shape by rolling in water. A bap-

tism, in reverse, if you like. Is it true that your—ah, beast has been seen near the water each time?"

Pierre said, "Near by, usually. Seems to hug the watercourses."

"Perhaps," suggested Hardt, "for a quick change in order to avoid detection?"

The doctor spoke with a tolerant air. Pierre replied seriously:

"Perhaps."

"And were there not," pursued Hardt, "the prints of a human being across the stream from where the animal's tracks disappeared?"

"There were," Pierre said. "And now that you've brought that up. . . ."

He rose heavily from his chair and turned once more to the study. The eyes of both men followed him—Trent's, bitterly; Dr. Hardt's, with curiosity. When he reappeared, Pierre held a shoe box. He placed it on the coffee stand.

"I went over there this morning," he said. "It's on the Waterman place, just across the highway. Those prints were still there, most of them in pretty bad shape because of the wet weather. But there was one—frozen. . . ."

He held up a small plaster cast.

"I don't pretend," he said, "to be a detective. Still, heel and toe, here it is. And here—" he held up a woman's oxford—"is the shoe that matches. I took it—from Sara's closet."

Chapter Five

RETURNING home that night, Dr. Justin Hardt found himself in a strangely contradictory position. For the first time in his life he could not believe what his own eyes showed him.

Man of science, he had trained himself to believe nothing that was not proved by one or a combination of his five senses. Now, facing a critical test of this lifelong tenet, he had refused to accept his own criterion for truth.

The result was a gradual realization that the foundations upon which he had built his life were shaken. He was logical enough to admit that from the type of forceful personality that had regarded his own word as the final law, he might—possibly—be relegated to the class of an intellectually lazy agnostic who could only mouth:

"I do not know."

There was, moreover, another element in Dr. Hardt's personal problem. This was that some years before, purely out of curiosity, he had begun a study of witchcraft. He had penetrated the subject to some depth. He had accumulated a considerable library on magic, demonology and related matter.

In the light of what he knew, he could not drop the matter of Sara's lack of shadow by shrugging his huge round shoulders and observing that it was something beyond his knowledge.

Nor did the problem rest there. He might have felt much greater mental ease, despite what his eyes had shown him, had he been able to diagnose Sara's trouble. He hadn't. And he was honest about that.

Hardt was, in fact, so greatly troubled that when he finally reached his expensive rooms at the Racquet Club he removed from their shelves several books on the general subject of witchcraft. Then, robed and slippers and settled in his easy chair with the reading lamp adjusted at the exact angle, he began to thumb through them.

First troubling question to present itself was the fact of Sara's womanhood. He could not recall having heard of a female werewolf. Yet, when he had opened his copy of de Plancy's *Dictionnaire Infernal*, he discovered just such a case:

The year was 1588; the scene, the mountains of Auvergne. A friend of the husband of a woman who had shot off the right forepaw of a wolf and had kept the paw in a bag as a trophy. But when he opened the bag to exhibit his prize to the husband, to his horror he drew out a human hand. And on one finger was a ring which the husband recognized as his wife's.

There was that—and Hardt could not but remember Sara's swollen fingers and the story of Mary Heath.

On the surface, Dr. Hardt knew, there was a bond of sympathy between the so-called authenticated cases of werewolfery and insanity. In either instance, there was a dissatisfaction with self. Madness for the insane was release. So, with the warlock. There must be desires that can be satisfied in no other manner.

This, Dr. Hardt conceded, was reasonable. But he was still too skeptical to admit the possibility of winning the ability to satisfy a lust for blood by sale of one's soul to so improbable a character as Satan.

And here was another problem:

Was it not generally conceded that there could be no belief in metamorphosis into any particular animal in a locality where that animal had ceased to exist? Without the belief, what became of the alleged fact? And how long had it been since wolves were seen in this region?

The answer in this case, Dr. Hardt finally decided, would be the old curse on the family which—curses being taken at their face value—would not be expected to trouble itself too much about geography.

And then Dr. Hardt sat up!

"But, of course! There is the answer. Lycanthropy. Wolf madness."

He got up and walked back to his shelves and switched on a lamp.

"How long since I've heard of a case like that?"

It would be the reason, he knew—or, rather, theorized—that he hadn't recognized Sara's symptoms.

A natural form of insanity . . . rare nowadays . . . the patient became obsessed with the idea he was a wolf . . . went barking about . . . attacking people . . .

"Yes. Here's that case. At Pavia, 1541."

It was the case of a lycanthrope who, when captured in human form, maintained he was a wolf none the less; with a single difference, that his fur grew within him. Curious, some of his captors opened wounds in the body to find out.

And still, when Dr. Hardt had pored for an hour over the symptoms which physicians long before his time had recorded, he was not satisfied. Not that the symptoms for what was known as lycanthropy did not, at some points, fit Sara. What struck him time after time was the fact of those animal prints beside the dead body of the Tilson child; the fact that men had seen a wolf. . . .

He put down his books finally, strode into his dressing room.

"One thing certain. The girl must be placed in an institution. I will recommend commitment tomorrow. . . ."

The words bounced back.

He'd recommend!

And *what* would he recommend?

Good Lord! he could see the headlines:

FAMED PSYCHIATRIST OFFERS CASE OF LYCANTHROPY!

The thing would ruin him.

Well, then, he could say it was something else. Make out she was a manic-depressive. That would come about as close to it as anything.

But no. There would be the other doctors. *They* would know differently.

He considered the angles. And the more he mulled over each phase, the uglier under professional scrutiny his predicament became.

If there was an ounce of truth in the case, what an opportunity was presented to him—and his hands were tied!

PIERRE, after his guests departed, sat for a long time staring moodily into the dying fire. His mind clearing, he was inclined to

disapprove of himself for overindulgence. Yet, drinking had given him a cushion for shock; and now that he had gained perspective, he would not need it any more.

He had particularly avoided meeting Sara immediately after his discovery the day previous. Indeed, he had been in no condition to dine. He had not seen her that day, save for the moment that evening when Trent and Hardt were present. He dreaded meeting her alone.

He dreaded it.

And yet he did not feel fear of her. Rather, he felt overwhelming pity. And that pity, he knew, was the substance of his love. He knew that now there was only one pressing question, and that everything else—his business, his zest for life, his companions—must give way before it. The question was: How was he to save Sara from herself?

Ah, but it wasn't possible she was beyond salvation. Was she woman or devil or some creature halfway between and still capable of being pulled in one direction or the other? If only a person knew!

Exorcism!

He would try it, of course—if he could find a priest to take on the task. He'd not the faith himself. But where find a priest?

He would leave the Church out just so long as he could.

Too, there was another problem: he must find some means to protect his neighbors. Hmm. That would be difficult—plenty difficult.

He was standing by the French doors, his hands clasped behind him, his eyes on the wood along the creek. Suddenly, he started. Something white down there. Something white, close to the ground, moving slowly. It disappeared.

He stared at the place. Shortly from a little to the left, two figures emerged from the wood. And when they approached the house, Pierre—his breath in short gasps—identified them.

A moment later he heard David say good night to Sara at the front door; heard the door open, heard retreating footfalls on the gravel. He heard the door close. Better permit her to go to her room. Didn't want to see her, anyhow. But he walked to the door and called her.

She entered quietly, yet with the listlessness with which she had left completely gone. Indeed, there was a certain vibrancy in her step; a flush in her lips; an actual bloom on her cheeks.

"God knows what she's been doing!" Pierre thought. He could not keep his eyes from the floor where no shadow fell. He thought,

"Maybe she doesn't know." He said, then:

"Hello, pet. Have a nice walk?"

She said, "Why . . . I suppose so."

"Thought I heard David out there."

"Yes. Yes, you did."

"Where did you go?"

She glanced down at her hands, thoughtfully. Her brows were drawn in wonder.

"Why, really, I don't—quite remember."

Pierre's heart leaped. Thank God; thank God! She still doesn't know."

* * *

Manning Trent, too, remained up long after he reached home. But he was in no condition to sit in one place and think things through. He paced his study, then prowled about the house restlessly.

Julia was in bed. Good. He probably looked like a ghost—if he looked the way he felt.

David was still out. Dammit. Didn't used to stay out so late. He looked at his watch. One o'clock. Even love should have some limits.

He switched on a light in the long dining room and removed the stopper from a decanter. He poured himself a drink, held the glass to the light and watched the lambent amber. Then he put the drink down.

Might just have been the trouble over there, he thought. Might have been one drink too many plus suggestion. Pierre certainly had his fill. Himself, he'd stay off—till Dave came in, anyway. He started prowling about the house again.

He'd talk it over with David. Utter rot, of course. He'd get David to stay away from her. She was mad. And that was that. Otherwise Hardt wouldn't be about. No matter how much you like a man, you couldn't have your son marrying his daughter if she were a raving lunatic. He'd talk to Dave.

He was in the drawing room, off the main hall, when he heard David come in.

"That you, David?"

"Hello, Dad. Still up? Want something?"

He entered the room, big, comfortable looking, hatless, his white hair tousled. Trent gazed at him with admiring fondness. But then, as if drawn by some power beyond himself, his eyes lowered—to the hands—to the knees—to the feet—and there, on the floor, they sought for something they could not find.

"No, David. I didn't want anything."

WHILE this was happening, wiry Red Crane, crack photographer of Trent's *Herald*, leaned on the bar at the Well and sipped a Scotch and soda.

There were other newspapermen in the room—reporters and photographers from the New York and Philadelphia papers. They sat at the rickety tables, lounged over the bar. A pin-ball machine maintained a chatter of steel balls against pegs and ringing bells.

The usually placid, low-voiced John Craven, busier behind the bar than he had been in years, appeared somewhat flushed and excited by the sudden fame cast upon his establishment. He said:

"Ye-ss—ye-ss."

Just as he always had. But there was sometimes a catch in his breath.

The pay-station phone on the wall rang, and Painter of the *Times*, the most fastidiously dressed man of the lot, took down the receiver.

Then he turned to the room at large:

"Mirror's calling Doyle. Anybody seen Doyle?"

Doyle, in extravagant slow motion, detached himself from his beer and ambled to the phone.

"Yeh . . . Uh huh . . . Uh huh . . . Uh huh . . . Okay."

When he returned to the bar he loosed an oath.

"Calling me in, dammit. Claim the yarn's washed up."

Somebody consoled, "What the hell! Don't wanta die down here, do you?"

"Half-baked idea in the first place," another said.

"Nice while it lasted," Doyle observed. "Overtime'll pay my drinks for a month."

Allan Kane, photographer for the *Herald-Tribune*, lunged through the swinging doors, black leather camera case swung over his shoulder. He approached the bar.

"Hi, Red."

Tom Summers, *Herald* reporter, came in from the night. Sleepy-eyed, he took the place at the bar Kane vacated. He ordered a beer and stood looking at it. He said quietly:

"Gonna try again tonight, Red?"

Red Crane nodded.

"When?"

Crane held the underside of his left wrist up and glanced at his watch.

"Ten minutes or so."

"I need sleep," grouched Summers.

"Don't I?" retorted Crane. Then, "No kiddin', I think we got something. I was down there again this afternoon. Fresh tracks, right along the bank. Comin'?"

Summers said, "I suppose. But if we have to wait up all the damned night again, I'm bringing a bottle. We'd better leave separately. These mugs'd spike your tires if they figured we were pulling a fast one."

Summers drank up and left. A few minutes later Crane picked up his case, hung it on his shoulder and followed.

It was nine-thirty when Summers and Red Crane parked their car in a seldom-used lane in the woods west of the State Highway. Summers said:

"Boss's land, isn't it?"

"Trent's?" Crane's laugh was short. "I dunno. His place is over in that direction." He nodded to the east. "That perfume feller lives over there. South, I guess it is."

Both would have been surprised to know that, at that moment, Manning Trent, who paid their salaries each and every Friday, was in earnest conversation with not only "that perfume feller" but with one of Philadelphia's leading psychiatrists. And they would have been thunderstruck by the nature of the conversation.

They started down a path through the woods, Summers' flashlight picking out the way. It was downhill—down toward the Neshaminy.

The night previous they had hidden out near the confluence of the Neshaminy and the Bowling, where the body of Leroy Tilson was found. And the night before that they had camped even farther down the Neshaminy. But tonight:

"I'll show you where we went wrong," Crane said. "We were right in our first idea. This damned wolf or whatever it is keeps pretty close to the creek. The Tilson case proved that. So does the dead goat and the case up at Melton Crossing. But this afternoon I found. . . ."

He took the flashlight from Summers and led the way down a steep gravel incline.

"Here's the creek now."

Reporter and photographer emerged into a small canyon.

"Hell!" spat Summers. "I know this place. It's where Derhammer and Messner took a shot at it."

"Over that way," Crane amended, motioning upstream. "Well, do you see?"

"Hell, no."

"Look, Tom. If this thing wanders up and downstream and if it keeps close to the creek, it's got to come through this canyon. And if—"

"Check."

For the next few minutes, Crane busied himself with his case. He opened his camera and adjusted the lens. He inserted a bulb and checked the plate. He found a rocky ledge between two bushes several feet above the creek, affording a view both up and downstream. Then the two men made themselves comfortable and sat down to wait.

Fifteen minutes dragged by. Then, more slowly, thirty. Summers drew out a bottle, unscrewed the top and silently handed it to Crane. Crane drank. And Summers drank. And Summers put the bottle away and started to light a cigarette.

"Use it," Crane whispered. "Animals can smell a mile off."

"He'll smell us, anyway," Summers said.

"That's so. Where's the wind?"

They checked the direction of the breeze, found it from the north.

"That's okay," Crane decided. "Can't smell us up or downstream."

They waited. It was an hour now. An hour and a half. The canyon was dark, forbidding. Scrub pine on the shoulders of the canyon cast shadows on the creek and screened the starlit sky. The water below them gurgled quietly.

"This where you saw those fresh prints?" Summers whispered.

"Yeh."

They waited. An owl somewhere above screeched with startled suddenness. A rabbit scrambled through the dry leaves somewhere below.

Two hours.

Downstream, at Fountain Head, Dr. Justin Hardt was preparing to leave. Shortly, Manning Trent would return home, his mind troubled. And Pierre would sit in front of his log fire and stare.

Two hours and fifteen minutes. Upstream two miles was the Lambertson Farm.

Two hours and a half had passed when Summers clutched Crane's arm. They listened breathlessly.

There. . . . There it was again:

Plump, plump, plump—the faint padding of footsteps on moist earth.

Crane crouched, camera in hand, eyes on the creek below and the narrow path on the other side, meagerly illuminated between the splotches of black shadows by starlight. A dry twig cracked under Crane's feet, sounding to his tense ears like a blast of dynamite.

"Easy, Red."

The sound neared; stopped (and both men visualized the quarry pausing to sniff suspiciously); then the sound grew more distinct.

Pad, pad, pad. . .

At the canyon mouth now, Summers figured; where Heinrich and Messner had seen them.

There was rhythm in the sound; *pad-plump, pad-plump, pad-plump. . .*

And then—

With their own eyes, and simultaneously, they saw the long, low, moving shadows. Summers thought:

"Two! Derhammer's right."

He nudged Crane.

One appeared larger and whiter, Summers thought. And that would check. Crane steeled himself. He crouched, sighted. A hundred thoughts sped dizzily: would the bulb have enough penetration; little far, there; black, too black; speed right? Damn it! Need the telescopic. Gosh! If I pull this off. . . .

Summers, behind Crane, saw the slow leisurely approach. The beasts trotted as if tired. *Pad-plump*. They were more distinct now. They resolved into form. But they were still shadows. Why didn't Crane shoot?

Now they were directly in front of them. In a belt of starlight.

Flash!

Summers received a split-second impression of a huge, sleek white beast etched against the far rocks; of a red stain about the nose; of a darker animal drawing up the rear.

"Got it!" Crane shouted.

In the black oblivion that followed they heard a crashing from below; sounds receding, racing away.

THE next day Manning Trent did not go into the city. He breakfasted late—too late, purposely, to face David over the table. His eyes wore the telltale look of a sleepless night.

Julia, too, was up before Trent came down. From the open bay window in the cheerfully curtained breakfast room, Manning saw her long, low limousine—Roger at the wheel—roll out of the grounds and creep along the State Highway. Julia, a lady settled in her ways, never permitted Roger to drive more than twenty-five miles an hour.

"You are driving too rapidly, Roger," she would announce with asperity into the microphone which linked her glass-encased teneau to Roger's seat. Or again:

"Somewhat more slowly, Roger."

She had installed, in the rear, a separate speedometer. And the result was that Julia Trent crept wherever she went—and traffic crept behind her.

As the spotless black limousine disappeared at its discreet pace behind a hill, Trent was relieved. He just couldn't, today, stand up to her prying inquiries.

"You did not sleep well last night, Manning?"

"Do you feel, Manning, that the—ah—alcohol may have occasioned your restlessness?"

The tightness in the throat, the slight giddiness, the aching of neck and shoulder muscles so well known to the insomniac gripped Trent. Nor did he more than look at his food.

Have to work this out, he thought. No sleep. Can't think straight. But—have to work this out.

He sat, and his coffee grew cold. He stared out across the lawn, still green even in December. He stared beyond the lawn to his fields and woods, to tree-studded Mt. Neshaminy. Above the crowns of the trees and somewhat to the east of that tall hill, the copper work on a chimney pot glistened in the sun. Fountain Head. Unreasoning bitterness grew within him.

He felt angry with Pierre, with Sara, with Dr. Hardt, with everything and anything connected with Fountain Head. The entire landscape in that direction repelled him. Hadn't there been enough trouble at Trent Farms without borrowing from the neighbors? Wasn't the change in Julia's character through the years sufficient damnation? And David's long, long invalidism?

He speculated. Had David's illness left some weakness which paved the way to greater susceptibility to this—this horror?

Midway in his thought he shook himself—physically and abruptly. Good God! He was going on as if he believed this nonsense! In the plain light of the new day, he knew for certain that the events of the preceding night were only a passing madness.

Violently, he pushed back his chair to leave the table. The sound brought Wallace, the butler, into evidence. As he turned to leave, Wallace said with his usual stiff politeness:

"It was too bad, sir, about the Lamberton girl."

Trent stopped, turned. Wallace was already bending rigidly over the table to remove the dishes. Trent asked gruffly:

"What do you mean?"

Wallace, straightening, faced his employer.

"I am sorry, sir. I thought you knew. It was Elsie. She is the youngest, I am told; six years, I believe they said. She was found this morning in the woods back of their place. She was quite badly mangled, sir."

Dully, Trent stared at Wallace—Wallace, whose poker face would greet Doomsday without a wrinkle of emotion. Finally Trent asked:

"Dead?"

"Oh, quite, sir."

Trent's shoulders slumped. He knew the child's mother, Jennie Lamberton; prettiest girl in the township when he was a youngster. A misty recollection of a dance clouded thought for an instant; a summer romance; and then her marriage to Howard Lamberton, and her inheritance of her father's great farm on Pumpnickle Road. Trent began hesitantly:

"Was it—"

"The wolf? That is what they say, sir. But they say there were two of them, sir."

There was just enough trace of the histrionic in Wallace's pauses between sentences, just enough emphasis upon the numeral to give Trent thought. He looked narrowly in Wallace's face; he wondered if the man were not regarding him with a little too much interest.

"Somewhat," continued Wallace, "like the Heath case at Melton Crossing, sir. Elsie was asleep on the first floor and the window was up a little. Rather warm for December, you know, sir. But you would think, sir, that with this going on, people would close their windows. I understand the State Police have warned—"

Trent, still thinking of Wallace's sharp glance, interrupted impatiently, "What are they saying?"

"The police, sir?"

"People."

"Why, sir, I would not put any trust in gossip. You know how the talk goes on backstairs."

"Am I expected to?" Trent inquired dryly.

"I am sorry, sir. I did not mean to imply—"

"What are they saying?" Trent repeated.

"Really, sir, it is rather difficult to piece together. But since the experience of Heinrich Derhammer and Nathan Messner—perhaps I should say, sir, their alleged experience—people say that the things are—well, inhuman, sir."

"So are dogs."

Wallace bowed slightly.

"Of course, sir. But if you will pardon me, I intended to convey the reverse of what I said. They give the beasts human attributes."

"Bosh!"

"Exactly, sir."

And Wallace turned to the clearing of the table.

TOM SUMMERS, at Trent's order, drove from the village to Trent Farms. He had cleaned up most of the news angles of Elsie Lamberton's death. What with the night before, he was dead tired. He leaned back in a huge chair in Trent's library and faced his employer.

"Two sets of tracks?" asked Trent.

"That's right, but what you ought to know—" He was about to describe the adventure of himself and Crane. But Trent broke in:

"I don't want details. What's the talk?"

Summers lit a cigarette.

"The talk? Around the village?" He laughed shortly. "It's a throwback to the

Middle Ages. They're talking werewolves, Mr. Trent."

Trent simulated surprise.

"Rot!" he said.

"You can't tell the villagers that," Summers said. "And they think they've a couple of pretty good reasons. Derhammer's story is one."

"I don't trust Heinrich."

"But that isn't the whole thing, Mr. Trent. These neighbors of yours are pretty shrewd. They aren't forgetting that after the Tilson boy was killed, the troopers traced the animal to one creek bank—and found on the other side the prints of a woman's shoes."

Trent wrinkled his nose.

"There's a natural enough explanation somewhere, Mr. Trent. I've good reason to believe they *are* wolves. But you can't tell these people that. They keep saying there haven't been any wolves in Pennsylvania for fifty years. And the troopers checked with that fellow, McFanahan, up in the Poconos. And he claims he hasn't lost a single pup."

"So people say, 'No wolves.' And they say, 'If there aren't any wolves about, but if we've got something that *looks* like wolves, why—there you are!'"

Summers leaned forward.

"I don't mean they actually say it. They talk in and around it. But you get a blazing clear idea of what they mean—and it's pretty ugly, too. Good God, Mr. Trent! The way their temper's up. I'd hate to be in the shoes of anyone they suspect!"

Trent glanced up sharply. Summers thought he paled. And such was the chill of this suggestion that, at first, Trent was deaf to the importance of Summers' next words. Something about "another beat by Red Crane." About a picture. Only the professional excitement in Summers' tone stirred Trent from his horrendous contemplation.

"I was with him, Mr. Trent," Summers was saying eagerly. "Right out back of your place. We'd waited in different places three nights. They came along last night. And there *were* two. I saw them."

Trent leaned forward.

"Wolves?" he asked incredulously.

"They looked like wolves to me."

Trent's hand went to his forehead.

"Crane got the picture?"

"Yes, sir."

Relief, sudden and welcome, enveloped Trent. Why—that would solve everything.

"Thank the Lord!" he exclaimed fervently.

Tom Summers was puzzled.

"Best beat Crane's had," he said.

Trent took hold of himself.

"Where's Crane now?" he demanded.

"He stayed at the inn last night," Summers said. "It was too late to make edition after we reached the village. He left about half an hour ago for town, after getting the Lamberton pictures. He wants to develop that plate himself."

"I want a print," Trent ordered. "Have a boy bring one out. Right away."

* * *

It was a more composed Pierre who that afternoon tramped over to Trent Farms under the winter sun. His tread was still heavy and slow, but it possessed purpose. And when he met David in the south pasture, he could greet him with some semblance of cheer.

They chatted a few minutes. Once Pierre glanced at the ground, and knew that his suspicions, as far as David was concerned, were justified.

David appeared unhappy. He appeared nervous. He shifted his weight from one foot to the other. As much to fabricate conversation as anything, Pierre asked about the Ayrshires. David's reply was distant. And it was a curious reply.

"The Ayrshires? I don't know. Thinking it over today. Think I'll get rid of them. I never did like cattle."

Pierre glanced at him sharply.

"Why—" he began. Why. . . ."

And then he understood.

Trent said, when Pierre had seated himself in Manning's library, "All right. I saw it—when David came home last night. I mean, that it wasn't there. And I still don't believe it wasn't there."

"I'm not going to argue," Pierre said.

"And besides," said Trent, selecting a cigar from the humidor, "one of my lads got a picture of these animals last night. Back in the canyon. I'm waiting for the print now."

"Which proves—"

"I don't know what it'll prove. Dog, wolf or anything, it'll give us something to go on—and might prove an alibi."

Pierre shook his head.

"I just saw David. Manning, he *doesn't* have it. Don't you believe your own senses?"

Trent said roughly, "No. But I believe photographs. And this one will show nothing but two animals."

Pierre was silent. Then:

"I'm not going to argue. We're faced with something where argument doesn't help. You can shout your head off that something can't happen. But when it happens, words lose their meaning and you have to figure out what to do."

"I don't follow."

"You will. I'm thinking about their souls." He paused. "Have you?"

"No."

"I didn't think so. I didn't, either. A soul's never meant anything to me. Until I saw the change in Sara. And then I discovered that when you lose that, you lose everything."

"Are you sure," Trent asked, "that it is soul?"

Pierre shrugged.

"Call it anything. Character, personality, spirit. But it's something so vitally a part of you that when it changes or goes away, you change, too. It's like reason. Has any scientist ever seen, weighed, touched reason? Of course not. But when it goes, it leaves a person mad."

Trent bit viciously at his cigar.

"Damn it! I wish you'd stop talking like this. When that picture comes. . . ."

He got up and began pacing the floor.

"Manning, look here!" Pierre implored. "We're friends. That's why I can't help talking like this. Whatever this picture shows, it won't help Sara. That's what is driving me crazy. She's changed so terribly." He added slowly, "And so has David. Did you know he wants to get rid of his Ayrshires?"

Trent, at the other end of the room, turned abruptly.

"What's that? He loves those cattle!"

Pierre nodded.

"That," he said, "is what is so terrible." He added with apparent irrelevance, "Heinrich was telling me this morning how milk production is dropping."

Trent thought that over.

"Always does this time of year."

"That's what I told Heinrich. And he said that Buttercup Dairy's cattle hadn't produced a quart for the last week."

"I've said it before," Manning growled, "and I say it again: I don't trust Heinrich."

"I didn't either." Pierre sighed. "So I called Jason at Buttercup. It's true."

Trent passed his handkerchief across his hot forehead and sat down again.

"I know what you mean," he said finally. "That werewolves, witches, vampires go for cattle. Well?"

"And perhaps bear an antipathy for them?"

Trent frowned.

"Eh? Oh, you mean David. That is queer, his change."

"I won't argue," Pierre said. "I'm only interested in two things: souls—and little kids like Elsie Lamberton. I said it last night. I say it again. I'm convinced Sara's soul is gone. I'm convinced she is possessed. And that means we must give it back to her."

Trent's jaw was set.

"And—David?"

"I WOULDN'T know," Pierre said. He added, with calculation: "I should think that a person would have to believe in a malady before setting out to cure it."

"You're bitter, Pierre."

"I'm bitter. And I don't know—and I doubt the Church knows—if the soul is lost when the change occurs through contagion. But the job's cut out. We've got to make those youngsters well again."

"I was reading," Manning said, and his voice was tired and his words were slow, "the theory of werewolfery. I was reading here in the encyclopedia this afternoon. Remy and Guazzo and some others claim the metamorphosis is only true in appearance, but not in essential fact; that the appearance is caused only by a glamour created by Satan. If that is true, it's nothing but an illusion on the spectator's part. Which is—madness. Which isn't to be worried about."

Pierre's nod was slow and heavy.

"I've heard that theory. The alternative is that the Devil himself created an actual change. That there is no glamour. If that's true, and if we make no attempt to save Sara, her soul will be damned." He paused. "Do we dare take the chance that Remy is right? No, I can't see it."

Manning tapped the arm of his chair nervously.

"What are you going to do?"

"I'm going," said Pierre slowly, "to lock Sara in her room every night. We can't do anything else. Hardt refuses to have her committed. Won't touch the case. Well—I'm just as glad. She'll be home—and, maybe, I can do something."

Trent's eyes narrowed.

Pierre nodded.

"Exorcism."

"I should think, Manning, you'd be as interested in that as I. Manning, we *can't* let those two continue prowling. We *can't*, morally, permit any more. . . ."

Trent got up again. He walked to a window. He walked across the room. He returned to the window, which afforded a view of the state highway. He looked at his watch.

"Three o'clock," he said. "That print should have been up an hour ago."

He called the *Herald*, asked for the art department; and when he had that connection, he asked for Red Crane.

"Went out at noon, Mr. Trent," said the voice. "Hasn't returned."

Trent explained carefully.

"That's right, Mr. Trent. He *was* in the dark room. I think he *was* developing. What

happened to the picture I don't know. Will you hold on while I look or shall I call you?"

Trent held on. Finally:

"Mr. Trent? Nothing in his tank. Nothing on his rack except the Lamberton pictures. No picture of wolves, Mr. Trent. Canyon background? No. No picture like that."

Trent swore.

"Switch me to Mr. Morrison, please," he ordered. And in a moment he was talking to his managing editor. Again he explained carefully.

"Find Crane," he commanded. "Take a dozen men if you have to. Try all the hang-outs. I *must* have that picture. And bring Crane out!"

* * *

They found Red Crane in a Broad Street bar often and happily frequented by *Herald* men. He was drunk. He sat at a table and fingered a negative. He kept holding it up to the light. In front of him lay the print, stained with whiskey.

They bundled him into a car. They drove at top speed.

"Whazallabout?" he kept asking dazedly. Ray Holt sat beside him, rubbing his neck and back.

"Snap out of it, Red. The boss wants ya."

"Whazallabout? Fire me?"

"Hell, no. Some picture you took last night."

"Ugh. . . ." Then, with dim comprehension: "Wolf pishur." And he began laughing hysterically.

Holt and the others didn't know what it was all about. Boss got a crazy idea. They hopped. He was the boss. It took an hour and five minutes to reach Trent Farms, half of it through thick traffic. When they drove between the high stone pillars from the state highway, Crane was in slightly better shape.

Trent himself met the party at the door.

"I'll see Crane alone," he said. He led him into the library where Pierre was still seated. When he realized the photographer's condition, he poured him a drink—with much water and a little whiskey. Crane gulped it.

"You took a picture last night, Red."

"'Sright. Summers tell you?"

"I talked with him this morning."

Crane sat limply. He stared at the carpet. "Tellaboutwolf?" he asked, without looking up.

"He did."

Crane began to laugh crazily. The laugh ended with a brief sob. He began fumbling in his pockets.

"Saw wolf," he said. "Swear saw wolf. So Summers. Waited. Saw wolf. Two wolf."

Still he fumbled in his pockets.

"Thiz it," he said, and produced the print. Trent snatched at it. Pierre looked over his shoulder. Both men gasped.

It was a flashlight photograph, against a background of overhanging rocks, of Sara and David!

THEY were finished with theory, with argument. They did not even attempt to explain the magic of the photograph. Trent surrendered with obvious horror.

"I'll go along," he said. And he said, "Good God! What else can I do?"

But even as he said this, Pierre insensibly felt that Trent was drawing mental reservations; that he still sought somewhere a naturalistic key.

Pierre had this feeling when Trent answered his question:

"What about this fellow Crane?"

"Won't dare talk," Trent said. "That's why he got drunk. People would think he was crazy."

"But if Summers confirmed it?"

"He'd be just as crazy. And besides," Trent added slowly, "I don't thing they want to lose their jobs."

And again Pierre had the feeling when Trent said:

"We'll have to keep them apart, of course. Seems that's when they're at their worst. That's why I can't see any reason for locking up David, as long as Sara is locked up. He'll do nothing without her."

Pierre said, "That's your responsibility. But if he's running loose, and somebody notices. . . ."

"Lord! Do you think anyone has already?"

Pierre asked, "How would I know? It gets worse all the time. There's so damn many angles. We'll have to go slow. We'll have to be cautious with our inquiries. Hardt may help—and he'll keep his mouth shut. I hate to think what would happen if the people around here found out—that is, if they're anything like Freda and Heinrich."

Trent agreed. It was substantially what Summers had said.

"That's something," he said. "Freda and Heinrich. If *they* found out—"

Pierre bit his nether lip.

"I'll see you," he said. And he got up and left.

• • •

When he returned to Fountain Head, Sara was sitting in the library. She wore a velvet dress of rich deep emerald. It accentuated the curves of her body, gave her animal grace to a startling degree.

A magazine lay in her lap, but she did not look at it. She stared pensively, instead, out of the window. Shafts of dull yellow light from the lowering sun streamed through the window and fell on Sara. From the door, Pierre regarded her.

Waiting for the sun to go down, he thought miserably. She must spend her days waiting for that.

But tonight, he thought, would do her little good.

He entered the library and sat down. She did not look up. He stirred the log in the fireplace, and then he looked long and steadily toward her. He shook his head. He glanced down at his shadow. He thought, You never trouble about them. You take them for granted. Like air. They're part of you. But when they're gone, what a ghastly difference!

The evening paper had arrived. He picked it up and read. He read about the murder of Elsie Lamberton.

Dinner, by candlelight, found Sara's pensiveness gone. Pierre could see the animation rise in her. She smiled. Her eyes glistened. There was anticipation in her eyes.

Once, Pierre observed, she reached out and pushed a silver candelabrum farther from her. She reached hesitantly, as if she could not quite make up her mind; as if, Pierre considered, she feared the flame. Changes such as that, such trifling changes, in Sara's mannerisms and habits and character, gave Pierre his greatest fear.

She talked little; then, only in answer to his questioning:

"Do anything this afternoon, dear?"

"No." She thought it over. "No. I just read."

And again.

"I saw David today. He wants to sell his Ayrshires."

Sara said tonelessly, "Oh."

The candle flames cast long, thin, swaying shadows. Pierre studied the candelabra, as rearranged by Sara. He studied the angles. He wondered if Sara had moved the one to reduce suspicion. He decided not when Sara's glance fell upon her hand and she seemed to study it without comprehension.

Her hand, slender and white, held a fork. The shadow of the fork lay on the damask tablecloth; but only the shadow of the fork; as if it were suspended without support. Pierre breathed:

"Dear God!"

She glanced from time to time, and with an air of expectancy, out of the great windows toward the lane. That was the route David would take—if he came. *She* knew he would

come. But Pierre wondered what measures of restraint Trent would take.

The telephone rang. Freda materialized. She plugged an extension into the wall and placed the instrument before Sara. She pursed her lips and she wrinkled her bulbous nose. Her own thoughts would have said, "Such things newfangled I trust not."

Sara lifted the receiver, heard the click as Heinrich, in the kitchen, replaced the other. She said:

"Hello."

The word was alive, it was music to Pierre's ears.

She listened then. But when she spoke again, the music was gone. The tone was sodden.

"All right," she said.

Freda re-entered and removed the telephone and began taking away the dinner plates. When Sara said nothing, Pierre inquired:

"David?"

"Yes."

"Is he coming over?"

"No." She paused a long time. Then: "He said something—about Mr. Trent making other plans—in the city."

The colorlessness of her words was reflected, Pierre now noticed, in her lips. He thought, Ah, David must still have a chance. David is still not beyond control. Well, how would Sara react? He pulled out his watch. He said:

"Still quite early. Cornell's at the Forrest. Shall we drive into town and see her show?"

Sara said. "No."

Pierre had not been optimistic. Neither had he expected an answer so abrupt. He said:

"I really wanted to see her. But it's not much fun going alone."

That approach might sway her, he thought. But she only took longer in making a reply.

"I don't believe so. I—simply can't stand the city."

Freda had cleared the table. She had placed the desserts before father and daughter; had poured the coffee. She said simply:

"I go now."

At the door to the pantry she hesitated and looked lingeringly in Sara's direction and then down at the plate she held—Sara's, which Sara had scarcely touched.

FREDA'S words reminded Pierre that tonight, Saturday, was the Derhammers' night off. He was relieved. It simplified things so. For once in his life he was glad he did not maintain a larger domestic staff. Trent there: cook, butler, maid, chauffeur; yes, and David's hired hands.

At last Sara excused herself. Pierre heard her slowly climbing the stairs. He pushed his chair back, walked to the sideboard and poured himself a brandy. And then he, too, went to the hall and climbed the stairs.

The door to Sara's room stood slightly ajar. He heard water running in her bathroom. He passed on to his own expansive room at the front of the house and stood in the dark by the window. After a little he saw the station wagon bounce along the gravel lane; Freda and Heinrich off for their night out.

Pierre could almost chart their course; a visit to a rathskeller, a pause at the German Culture Club, a visit to one of the dozen-odd cousins where they would spend the night.

He saw the red tail-light flicker and die out. His fists tightened. He walked out of the room.

He hated this more than anything he had ever done in his life. As he reached into his pocket, the steel of the key chilled his fingers. He drew out the key.

Sara's door was still ajar. He closed it quietly. He inserted the key in the lock. And he turned the key. Then he walked back to his room and sat down. He waited.

At last, from the hallway, he heard a door knob turn. He steeled himself. This was it, he thought. He wondered, in the second that followed, if—actually—he would meet the test. When she called, when she pleaded, when she wept, would he maintain his purpose or would he surrender?

Here it came! The tug at the door. Another. A concerned pause. Then there followed a series of impatient struggles with the knob, movement translated by the sound of scraping and scratching.

There was another silence: Sara, probably, looking for her key. He could hear her moving quietly about the room. He heard drawers open and close. Then, another silence—a long, long silence.

Pierre waited for the sound of her voice. It never came.

He arose and moved through the darkness to a window that looked down upon the porch roof. From farther back along the house one of Sara's windows threw an oblong of yellow light upon the lawn. He looked at it a long time. He thought:

"I can stand anything but this."

He thought:

"I had no idea it would be like this."

He had been ready for anything; anything—except silent surrender.

At last he went downstairs.

He spent the evening in his study. It was directly under Sara's room. From time to time, he could hear Sara moving about above

him. She must realize, he thought. And then he remembered how, only last night, she was not certain where she had been. Perhaps, he thought, she only dimly knows that something is wrong. Perhaps that is the reason for her apathy.

"But that's animal-like!" he exploded aloud. And then he stood staring at nothing among the echoes of his own words.

He sat down at the long table. He took a pencil and a sheet of paper from a drawer. Have to be businesslike, he thought. Have to figure all the angles.

He got up restlessly and opened a window. A chill breeze blew in upon him. The night was cold and fine. The breeze blew his paper from the table. He recovered the paper. He sat down again.

Let's see: have to get rid of the Derhammers. Hmm. There's a problem, the biggest problem. He'd have to keep house for himself.

The business? And right before Christmas, too.

Well, he hadn't been training young Webster for nothing. He'd call him Monday and tell him he wasn't coming in for a week or two. Perhaps longer. Webster would know what to do.

It would look funny, he thought, discharging the Derhammers. Especially, when he wasn't closing up the house. If he closed up the house, that would be all right. Well, have to face that one.

And how about when nobody saw Sara? He could answer that with a cruise. South America? That ought to take long enough.

God! Had no idea there'd be so many complications. What about the livestock? Sell it? No. Better idea.

Item by item, he listed the problems. Problem by problem, he solved them as best he could.

Meals? He'd have to feed her. Not that she'd been eating much lately. Well, he knew the reason for that—now. The very thought sped a shudder down his spine.

Chapter Six

MANNING and David, father and son, flowed with the crowd at midnight out of the Forrest Theater. Trent said, with forced cheer:

"Well, David? Still like Cornell as well as ever?"

David's voice was flat.

"Well enough."

Their limousine rolled to a stop in front of the theater. They rode west on Walnut Street.

"Lovely night," Trent said.

David did not reply.

"How about a drink and a bite?" Manning said. David agreed listlessly.

They rode in silence. Neon signs—ruby and emerald and sapphire and amethyst—spread a carnival of color upon the streets. When they reached Broad Street, the crowds grew heavier and David withdrew farther into himself.

People . . . Streets . . . Pavements . . . Buildings . . . Steel . . . Lights . . . Traffic . . .

He had always preferred the open country. And now, on this first visit to the city since that strange passionate night with Sara, he found the scene almost unbearable. He would never return, he told himself, never.

Manning Trent could not have chosen worse for David's mood. He led David to the Club Ambassador—raucous, gaudy, gilt and velvet magnet for debutantes (and their titled escorts), married-but-tired males, and anyone else who could afford seventy-five cents per drink.

There was a little show upon a postage-stamp dance floor; the usual hefty soprano; the acrobatic Argentino dance team; the shapely young lady with almost nothing on at all except an accordion.

They found a table near the band. The band blared in David's left ear. The bedlam talk of the half-soused crowd around the horseshoes bar pounded on David's right.

The headwaiter, Karnes, a former waiter at the Bankers and Manufacturers, saw Trent and approached. Shortly, following a side conversation with Karnes, two pretty young girls descended upon their table.

It was, to say the least, not an outstanding success. Trent bought a round of drinks. And then another. David scarcely touched his first; failed to open his mouth. Chilled, the girls finally left. Manning thought:

"Lord! If I were a young fellow with David's money. . . ."

He thought, in passing, of Julia.

There was too much noise for conversation. But later, as Roger drove them home (with special instructions to take them the long way through Fairmount Park), Manning, bearing in mind his talk with Pierre, asked:

"How are the Ayrshires coming, David?"

David was running down the window on his side. He was putting his face as close as he could do it.

Somehow, the night air in the park made him feel infinitely better.

"Why," he said. "Why—I found a buyer for them this afternoon. Renshaw up at New Hope."

Trent could scarcely believe his ears.

"You're actually selling them?"

"Why—yes."

"Trying another breed, of course?" Manning asked hopefully.

"Why—no. No. I don't think so. You see—" David searched desperately for words. "Really, I don't care much for cattle."

Trent, baffled, tried again.

"But you always did, David. You always did. Especially these Ayrshires."

David shook his head slowly.

"No. I don't think so. I don't—remember."

Manning slumped back in his seat. Good God! He pulled a gold cigar case from his coat pocket; snapped it open, selected a corona. He bit at the end with the cigar smoker's ceremony; he pressed it gently from end to end to make it draw. He lit it.

In the flare of the match light, Manning saw that David looked very pale. He asked:

"What are you reinvesting the money in?"

David looked puzzled.

"What money?"

"The money from the cattle."

"Oh. Oh—I don't know. Hadn't thought."

"Goats?"

Absently David shook his head.

"No-o. No goats. I think I'll sell what I have."

Manning leaned forward. He tapped David sharply on the knee.

"Look here, Dave. You were always pretty sickly as a youngster. Damned sickly. And when you grew older, well, somehow, you never got around very much. Maybe I'm as much at fault as anything, letting you do what you wanted with the farms. Look here; how does a trip sound?"

Dave did not reply.

"I mean a *trip!*" Trent emphasized. "Months of travel. Go to South America. And after that, what's wrong with Hawaii? And Japan? India, Australia?"

He paused, to let it sink in. And then he thought of Julia.

"By George," Trent said, "I'll go with you, too."

But David shook his head. And he said with rising inflection:

"No." He repeated it with conviction: "No. All I want to do is to be left alone. Left alone! Hear me? I don't want anything—just to be left alone!"

MEANWHILE Freda sat on the edge of one of the two straight-backed chairs in Pierre's study. Heinrich sat on the edge of the other. Both stared, blank-faced, at Pierre who sat behind the long table.

It was difficult to tell which of the three was the most uncomfortable. Certainly Pierre

knew that the interview was not going well.

"You'll like it," he said. He tried to inject zest into his statement. "You deserve it. It'll be your home, your own home."

There was an embarrassing silence. Pierre added hastily:

"I've been wanting to do something like this for you for a long time. I don't like to call it a pension. I just want to show my appreciation for your working here so long. The livestock here. Well, that's yours, Heinrich."

Heinrich blinked.

"After all," Pierre said, "you've raised that stock, Heinrich. You've done all the work." He tried to appear jocose. "Good Communist practice, I believe, gives the worker the benefit of his own production."

Freda looked questioningly at Heinrich. Heinrich began, awkwardly, voicing the sentiments of both.

"We make out it's nice," he faltered. "But we make out we've grown this place too. We make out we ain't no more young, Mr. Pierre." His tongue stumbled to a halt. He looked appealingly toward Freda. She said:

"Hard it will make. Thirty-one years we stop here have. The old mister since."

Pierre nodded uneasily.

"I'm sorry," he said softly. But there was a new note of desperation in his words. "I just have to do it this way. I'm sorry I couldn't tell you sooner. But I didn't know."

In the ensuing silence, he heard Sara's movements in the room above.

"She's packing now," he lied. "She only decided to take the boat last night. It leaves tomorrow."

"Help she needs maybe?" Freda asked eagerly.

"She said she'd call if she wanted any. But I imagine you'll be pretty busy yourselves. I can loan you a couple of trunks and suitcases and you can take the light truck." He hurried on, "Let's see. It's fifty miles up there. Better get started by mid-afternoon. You can keep the truck as long as you need it. I'll have a shipper take the livestock up tomorrow."

He knew he was fumbling. He knew his reasons were shot with holes. He heard Heinrich's and Freda's unspoken questions:

But if staying here you are, who up the place keeps?

We make out it is better us to stay.

Alone in this house a man? Himmel. It makes bad.

"Fact is," Pierre said, as if answering his own conscience, "I'm thinking of selling Fountain Head." He added: "I was up there a few weeks ago. The last tenant left things in good shape. It's completely furnished.

There's plenty of fuel and you can take what food you'll need until tomorrow. Later—I'll give you the deed."

He said this with an air of finality and he arose. Freda heaved heavily to her feet. Heinrich stood up, fingering his cap. Pierre hoped the suddenness of his announcement would leave them too dazed to form suspicions until they had gone—and then he didn't give a damn.

Freda stood perplexed in the doorway. Finally, "Is sick the Fraulein?"

For the first time in the interview, Pierre told the truth.

"Yes."

Freda said, after another moment of concentration, "I hope well gets the Fraulein."

"The sea air will do wonders," Pierre assured her. He waited patiently for the Derhammers to leave, but still Freda stood uncertainly. At last she asked:

"But for supper tonight too yet?"

Pierre, realizing how much more complicated everything was than he had even dreamed, was brought up short. And when he hesitated, Freda said, wagging her head:

"Up the cold supper I fix before."

Pierre could have kissed her for that.

He sighed, but he breathed no easier when finally they left. He couldn't—he simply couldn't—stand their presence in this house another night.

* * *

Heinrich and Freda stood alone in the kitchen. Heinrich looked at the floor, diffidently, like a little boy who had been punished. Freda looked at him. Heinrich said finally:

"It makes queer, the mister."

He was thinking of the three milch cows, the two work horses, the riding horses, the chickens, the ducks, the pigs; not in his relationship as newly established owner, but of the more practical side. He was making out he would have to feed them hours early; that perhaps it would not be good in the morning to truck them without feeding first. He was thinking of Jason's milch cows at Buttercup.

"It makes queer," he repeated, without lifting his head.

Freda, in the rôle of good hausfrau suddenly discovering her kitchen world collapsing in disorder about her, shook her head slowly. Her eyes were moist.

"I feel it evil," she whispered. "Evil it goes near this creek by." Her voice shook with fear. "It makes good maybe we go." And, as Heinrich lifted his head, she made the fearsome sign of the horned finger.

For a long moment husband and wife looked into each other's eyes. Then, as if by mutual silent consent, each went about his tasks.

A WEEK passed, dismal and drear. The sky was overcast and light snow fell. insensibly, in the village and in the valley, tension relaxed. But Pierre would not know that. For not once had he left Fountain Head.

He was not a good housekeeper. He had never cooked. Once, in passing, he considered bringing out a cook from town. But the idea, he felt, was too dangerous.

So he kept house.

He muddled along, using twice as many pots and pans as were necessary for his cooking. Faithfully he prepared three meals a day. Religiously he appeared at Sara's door with a tray and left it there. She hardly touched a thing he served.

He stood that for the first three days. On the fourth he began to worry. The fifth day he spent an hour in her room. She sat in a chair by her window and stared out at the falling snow. She stared with a longing in her eyes.

The hollows of her eyes had deepened. The skin had tightened over the bones of her face. Pierre said:

"But, Sara, you *must* eat something."

Sara only shook her head.

On the sixth day, when Pierre visited her, she was noticeably weaker. She lay on her bed, eyes wide, face stony. On the night of the seventh day, Sunday, Dr. Hardt drove up.

Pierre's welcome was genuine. It was not that he was lonely, for each night Manning Trent—as much to get away from Julia and his own troubles as anything—had called. He would bring books: books on the occult, books on lycanthropy, books on magic, on witchcraft, on anthropology. He bought them in the city daily; he borrowed them from libraries. And each, Pierre and Trent—and, as it developed, Dr. Hardt—carried on his own research in what, lacking sound theological instruction, could be at best a blind and stumbling fashion.

Hardt himself brought the bulky Roman Ritual. Pierre thumbed the tenth section, devoted to mechanics of exorcism.

"What's frightening," he said, "is that we lose our technique from want of practice. The ancients made bronze we can't dream of duplicating. The Egyptians preserved bodies in a way to make us shake our heads. Now we've gotten away from Satan as well as away from God, and we know no more how to repel the former than to summon the Latter."

They sat around a log fire in the library. Gloomily, and with as gloomy an explanation, Trent passed the negative and positive of Red Crane's nocturnal work to the psychiatrist.

"You look at the negative first," he said.

Hardt studied them.

"What's this? What's this?" he demanded, with rising irritation. How do I know this print was taken from this wolf negative? Your man lied."

Trent shook his head slowly.

"He didn't lie. I made another print from it with my own hands. And if you want to try it. . . ."

Hardt fingered the ribbon of his glasses and glared at Trent. All that he saw was complete sincerity. He clucked his tongue. He glanced back at negative and positive. He roared:

"Bah!"

But there was no assurance in his "bah." It was simply an automatic "bah" which permitted him time to digest the fact and save his face. Finally:

"Can't figure it, sir. Doesn't make sense."

He tapped his fingers nervously on the arm of the chair. "Unless. . . ."

He did not complete his thought. Pierre and Trent waited a moment. At length Pierre said:

"Doctor, I want you to look at Sara. She won't eat."

Hardt moved his large frame in a gesture of protest.

"You simply have to, Doctor," Pierre persisted. "I can't call in anyone else. You understand that. And I can't let her go on like this. She's simply fading away."

Hardt frowned. He lumbered to his feet.

"Where is she?" he snapped.

"In her room." Pierre nodded toward the ceiling.

"Locked in her room," amended Trent.

"Locked?" Dr. Hardt's black brows clouded stormily. "That's inhuman."

"You refused to commit her," Pierre reminded.

Hardt chewed perplexedly at his cigar.

"I'll see her," he said. Trent picked up a book, settled into his chair. Pierre led the psychiatrist into the hallway. They climbed the stairs in silence. A faint light burned in the upper passage. A brighter bar of light lay beneath the door to Sara's room. Pierre produced a key, inserted it in the lock, turned, and opened the door.

Sara was not in her room. She was not in her bathroom. She was not in her dressing room. Pierre stood in the center of the bedroom, stupefied.

Hardt stomped about the room, his annoyance rising.

"What's this?" he kept asking sharply. "What's this?"

Pierre said dully, "She isn't here."

Hardt asked, "She had a key of her own?"

"Do you think I'm an utter ass?"

"Well, where do these windows lead? Porch roof?"

"No. It's a straight drop to the flag walk."

Hardt strode to the windows. One, and only one, was open; and it was open but the breadth of his hand. He tugged at it.

"You can't open it farther," Pierre warned. "I installed stops."

Nevertheless, the doctor tried. When he gave up, he resumed stomping about the room.

"Nonsense," he muttered. "Nonsense, sir."

He poked into this closet and that; even looked under the bed. His eyes fell on Sara's dressing table. A crimson salve jar, half filled with a black unguent, caught his attention. He picked it up, sniffed at it:

"What's this?" he demanded.

Pierre shook his head wonderingly.

The doctor took a match from his pocket and daubed the stick with a minute quantity of the grease. Gingerly he touched it to his tongue.

"What the devil," he demanded, "is she doing with aconite?"

Dr. Hardt pretended, when they descended, that he didn't know what it was all about; he swore he wished he hadn't come out. It was still snowing. He washed his hands of the whole affair. He reiterated that he washed his hands.

But when Pierre told Trent, "Sara isn't there," Trent stared at him.

"Not there?"

"No."

Trent laid down his book. He repeated:

"Sara isn't there?" He passed the back of his hand across his forehead. "Why. . . . Then, "My God!"

He reached for the telephone. Something in that movement recalled a similar occasion. . . . How long ago? It seemed centuries. His hand shook. His voice trembled.

"You, Julia? Julia! Where's David?"

Julia's voice, brittle and distant, answered, "He went out a few minutes ago. I think he thought he heard something. He said he might go for a walk."

Three men, each with his own foreboding thoughts, sat down to wait.

It was, perhaps, his wider knowledge of such hellish matters that made Dr. Hardt, as he waited, even more restless than the others. Because of those earlier studies, he could

trace certain symptoms to their black origin. And he felt, though he felt it rebelliously because he could not rationalize it, that he knew what had happened to Sara.

She had, simply and logically, refused to starve to death.

Long since, he believed, she had moved beyond the desire for mortal food; she had reached that unholy ground where from others she must appropriate their life forces or die.

Now, to appease this fiendish appetite, she had called upon a loathesome force outside herself to free her from the bondage of her room.

A train of unhappy legends returned to Hardt:

The Herzegovinian *voukodlaks*, quaffing the hot blood of young girls. . . .

The Wallachian *pricolitsch*, leeching nightly upon the bodies of domestic stock, appearing by day as a man in perpetual health and vigor. . . .

The vampiric *vrykolaka*. . . .

The dead *liougat* of the Albanians, striding abroad in his winding sheet to devour whatever fell in his path. . . .

The psychiatrist arose from his chair, from which he had been moodily staring at the dancing flames in the fireplace, and moved tremendously about the room. Why, he wondered, could he not have stayed away? It was no business of his. Ruinous as it might be to his professional standing, once it were known, it might prove more perilous still to his very existence. And yet, he knew that, man of strong will as he was, some triumphant compulsion had drawn him on this visit.

"Curiosity," he mumbled belligerently.

Pierre and Trent cast him sidelong looks.

A handsome clock stood on a far table, turning up the days as well as the hours and minutes. Hardt's glance at its face wheeled his thoughts into other channels. It was Sunday, December 18th. He said:

"Christmas is only a week away."

Pierre and Trent were silent. Hardt exploded.

"No, sir, it makes the least impression on you. But the Twelve Nights between Christmas and Epiphany. . . ."

Again he broke a sentence in mid-voice.

Pierre knew what he meant. For as much as there are hallowed grounds in certain areas of earth, where spiritual peaks rise to touch planes of existence beyond most human comprehension, so are there periods of the year which stir to unnatural life.

"We *must* do something!" he exclaimed. "We *must!*"

The others sat silent.

He slumped even farther into the depths of his chair. He implored:

"We *can't* just sit. We *can't* simply talk. There must be *some* way out! Why, if there is a merciful God in heaven, can such things be?"

A long silence attended. Finally Hardt said in a voice that for him was restrained:

"Some things are permitted because of the sin of man."

Trent said:

"Difficult to believe. Difficult."

They were three rational men, of a rationalistic age; faith and belief were not strong in their hearts. They were aware of this, for they were also honest men. Dr. Hardt, still quietly, said:

"There is exorcism, sir—and there is nothing else."

The word held horror for Pierre; it was a word for a dark barbaric age.

Grasping at straws, he exclaimed, "We could get a priest. Somewhere we could get a priest!"

Hardt said, "Yes?"

The inflection rose sardonically. He continued:

"And he would take the matter to his bishop. The bishop would weigh the facts, and he might approve. And then he might not."

He paused again. Finally:

"Well, there's another point the ritual makes. You have to distinguish genuine possession from disease. So, besides priest and bishop, enter the physicians."

Pierre protested:

"But you, Doctor, would make the distinction."

"I?" Dr. Hardt looked aghast. "I would not, sir; I am a selfish man."

"But," faltered Pierre, "but you believe—in this?"

Dr. Hardt glared at Pierre. He would not answer.

And he did not answer. He said, instead:

"There are rules to be observed. The priest must be vested in surplice and violet stole. And the victim must pray, and fast, and confess." Hardt questioned, "I presume, Pierre, you could force Sara to pray and fast?"

Pierre said simply:

"No." He moved uneasily. "I can't see why I can't do the exorcism by myself."

"Without faith?" snapped Hardt.

"With love," Pierre replied. "With love for Sara. And perhaps faith that the ancient method will work."

Gloomily, they returned to the silence of their burning vigil.

MR. BOGARD, the sexton, who had a wooden leg, stumped about the First Methodist Church. He replaced the hymn books in their racks, a tiny enough task since the storm had kept many away from the Sunday-evening service.

He clomped down to the basement and shook the ashes in the big hard-coal furnace. He shoveled the ashes from the pit into a metal basket. He bedded the fire for the night.

"Got to be warm tomorrow," he thought. "Monday Circle meets."

He peered into the church kitchen in the other end of the basement. He clomped back upstairs, switching off lights as he progressed.

Mr. Bogard was an old man. His sparse hair was white and his face held many wrinkles. He worked slowly. He thought, "Got to sweep. I'll sweep tomorrow."

He switched out another light, and moved to a narrow, arched, stained-glass window. The window was slightly open and thin wisps of snow drifted in, melting on the sill.

The window swung on side hinges like a door. The sexton opened it wider a moment to look out. The cold air refreshed him. He was tired. Only that noon, just after the morning service, he had helped Slade dig the grave for the little Burke girl. And only an hour later old Mr. Pruett, the minister, had said the service over the grave.

Standing by the window, Mr. Bogard could see through the swirling snow toward that part of the graveyard. It was an old graveyard; older than the present stone church, which itself dated from the Revolution. Cement and stone slabs, weathered by the years, their epitaphs and dates and names blurred and obliterated, stood in drunken, crazy attitudes.

"Too bad about the little Burke girl," Mr. Bogard mumbled to himself. "Taken so quick like, and so young. Pneumonia, I guess it does that."

His old eyes squinted toward the graveyard. Something moving out there? Shadows, probably; the shadows of the trees.

Nothing worth noticing.

He closed the window and walked to the vestry door, tried it to see if old Mr. Pruett had locked it. Mr. Pruett was so absent-minded sometimes. He found it locked.

He walked to the rear pews, recovered his overcoat and single overshoe and pulled himself into them. Then he went into the vestibule, switched off the last light and went out through the great double door onto the porch. He locked the doors and, facing the slanting snow, turned up his coat collar.

The church stood at the east end of the

village, the most easterly building. It faced north. On its west side was the sprawling parsonage. On its east, the graveyard which extended back to a row of old gnarled pines.

The sexton lived on Pinchnuff Lane, back of the church by half a mile and not far—perhaps another half mile—below the confluence of the Neshaminy and the Bowling. That is, it was half a mile if he took the path through the graveyard, the pines, and across unfenced Leland's pasture. It was a good mile around by Wheeler Road.

Mr. Bogard, standing on the porch steps, considered. Maybe the snow hadn't drifted badly. He'd try it. Wheeler Road was a long way for a tired old man with only one good leg. He clomped down the stone steps.

"Have to get in early tomorrow," he mumbled. "Get these steps swept off for the ladies."

He limped and clomped along the path. The gravestones, modest and discreet, poked up at him. He peered ahead through the snow.

Again he thought he saw something move. Must be the shadows from that big maple. He could see the stark spreading limbs of the maple ahead. It had been a big tree even when he was a chit, sixty years ago. He remembered that. He clomped along.

He approached the Burke plot, right beside the path. His good foot struck something hard in the path; something that was hard and yet gave. He balanced himself so as not to slip and fall. A man of seventy, with one leg, must not fall.

Wonderingly, he peered toward the grave. That mound of fresh earth should not be there. Hadn't he and Slade themselves filled in the grave over that tiny box? And the earth was fresh. It was barely sheathed with snow.

Later he was not certain which he had seen first. . . . But when he stooped to examine the thing that his foot touched, and his hand felt it, he recoiled in cold horror.

* * *

It was Tom Summers' voice over the telephone that broke up the vigil of Pierre, Trent and Dr. Hardt. Trent's face was pale when he turned from the instrument.

Briefly he related the facts. Then he jammed on his coat and hat and announced:

"I'm going home. Dave," and his voice broke, "needs me."

Pierre moved toward Trent. He put out a detaining hand.

"He won't be home," Pierre said. "First he brings Sara home."

Manning Trent angrily brushed Pierre's hand away.

"Damn you!" he cried.

He slammed the door after him. And a dazed Pierre, standing half in the hallway and half in the library, stared at the door. When he returned to the room, his arms hung limply; Dr. Hardt detected moisture in his eyes.

Dr. Hardt said, after a moment, "He didn't mean, that, sir. He is simply upset."

Pierre said tonelessly, "I know. It's only—that everything comes at once."

He sat down, his short legs wide apart and his hands hanging lifelessly between them. He stared without seeing at the carpet. He said, at length, slowly, as if talking to himself:

"It's a time like this when you need—well, something to hold on to. Faith? I suppose that's it. What's a rational man to do?"

He said, wearily, "I'm going upstairs."

He ascended slowly, with heavy tread. He knew it was not necessary to knock. She would not be there. Yet—he tapped lightly on her door. He said:

"Sara?"

"Yes, Father."

The unexpected reply unnerved him. But he managed:

"May I come in, Sara?"

"Yes, Father."

He pushed open the door. Sara, a revolting picture of health, sat in a negligee at her dressing table, brushing her long black glistening hair.

* * *

The blind anger of the farmers and villagers, reaching new intensity with each outrage, assumed panic proportions when Sexton Bogard's story spread from cottage to house and from house to mansion.

"The valley," wrote Painter in the *Times*, "is in a state of mass catalepsy. It is obsessed with fear. It is a panic of the mind. These Pennsylvania Dutch farmers, ever suspicious of strangers, now eye them with open hostility."

Words half lost to the language from want of use returned. Where they had talked in and around forbidden matters, men now whispered of ghouls, of the hellborn, of the bewitched undead. Murder, the death and mutilation of living bodies, they understood. But the diabolical gluttony which impelled the desecration of the grave was a thing to harrow up the soul.

"The sun came out at noon," wrote Summers. "It lay cold on the fields of snow. You would have thought the valley was at peace.

Yet every door and every window of every house was barred."

Even the most callous reporters were affected. Lynn wrote in the *News*:

"I saw the corpse of Gertrude Burke, a body ruttled from its last resting place. It was an appalling thing. But more appalling was the lack of explanation."

And Doyle, returned to the scene by the *Mirror*, filed:

"Women were warned to walk abroad only in the company of men. And men were warned to carry arms. As for children, parents were asked to keep them at home. These are not hysterical rumors. They are the advice of the township's commissioners, and they carry the weight of the State Motor Police."

Colonel Winston Thorndike, commissioner of the State Police, arrived from his Olympian swivel chair in Harrisburg. He parried reporters with airy assurance:

"Haven't we solved every hex case that's ever come our way?"

But that night, after hearing the reports from his lieutenants, at the sub-barracks in Melton Crossing, his face grew set and grim.

Again—but only by daylight and only in greater numbers—posses scoured the woods. They beat up and down the watercourses. They stalked their unseen prey in silence.

BY NIGHT, the white patrol cars of the State Police prowled the back roads, the beams of their spotlights brushing each farmyard, wood and clearing. There was a concentration of these cars from many counties, each with its own cargo of smartly uniformed troopers in Sam Browne belts and an arsenal of machine guns and automatic pistols.

Men, bundled in overcoats and mackinaws, passed the cold nights standing guard over the graveyards. But at the Well, Klonsterman, narrowing his eyes and speaking from the side of his mouth, mumbled to Mandel:

"That is a fool thing. They only want the blood, not the 'balming stuff. The little Ger-tie wasn't 'balmed. They oughter watch jus' the graves of kids."

And, such was the hold of suspicion on the valley, Mandel wondered how Klonsterman knew.

Red Crane, after a week on other assignments, returned to the valley and joined Summers. Almost the first question Summers asked when they met at the Well was:

"What happened to that picture, Red?"

Crane lapped at his whiskey and soda. He said vaguely:

"It wasn't much good."

"Nuts!" snorted Summers. "You got a perfect shot."

Crane frowned. He shook his head.

"Underexposed. I was afraid the flash didn't have penetration for that distance."

Summers fell silent. He was not satisfied. Photographers of Crane's caliber seldom misjudged in a pinch.

* * *

Farson, the foreman at Trent Farms, said to Matlock, the stableman, as Matlock curried a horse:

"Can't figger young Mr. Trent out. Seems to of lost his holt on things."

Wallace, the butler, said to the maid, "The master seems in a perfect dither today."

And mentally and physically Manning Trent was. He spent Monday pottering about, traveling a hesitant circuit between his study, the library, the decanter on the dining-room sideboard and the broad windows of the library's southern exposure.

He was bewildered. He was afraid. Unlike Pierre, he possessed no reservoir of inner strength from which to draw. He blamed Pierre for his trouble; and in the same breath knew that he was wrong.

He realized the viciousness of his departure from Fountain Head the previous night; but he hadn't the slightest idea of offering an apology. The more he considered, the more he was convinced that his son was an unwilling tool—for David, unlike Pierre's description of Sara, still made some pretense of enjoying his meals.

Yet the very realization that David was held in the closing coils of something quite beyond himself made it that much more difficult for Trent to discuss the problem with him. Had it been otherwise, had David been a volunteer to these abominations, there might have been room for open argument.

Trent got up. He walked from his study into the library, through the drawing room and through the music room into the dining room. As he stood at the sideboard, he saw in the wide strip of mirror that girdled the walls the pantry doors open and Julia appear. He saw her stop and glance toward his back.

"I do wish," she said primly, "that you wouldn't be so nervous, Manning."

And she disappeared through the other doorway.

Manning, with a deep breath that might have been a formless curse, poured himself a stiff drink of whiskey, gulped it; poured another, mixed it, carried it back to the library. He placed the drink on the smoking stand beside his chair and sat down. But he was too nervous to remain seated long.

He got up and moved to one of the wide

high windows. Across the wide terraces of the lawn, now blanketed with snow, he could see the state highway. As he watched, a white patrol car rolled slowly past. Its glass heliographed dumb messages.

He watched it grow smaller and finally disappear over the crest of the hill. Then, along the brick walk that led from the peach orchard, he saw David, shod in galoshes, slosh toward the house.

David walked slowly. His broad shoulders sagged. Trent recalled how tired he had appeared when he had seen him the preceding night. The sight of him now, the renewed and hammering realization of that terrifying lack drove Trent from the window. But there was no stemming the sense of urgency to do something, anything, that pressed upon him.

He drank. He thought: Go to the police? Explain everything?

Ye-ss? He could hear their coarse jeers.

His fingers closed as he considered.

If it could be bruited about that Sara, far from being on an ocean voyage, actually was hiding in her home. . . .

If it could be rumored among these superstitious farmers and villagers that she might bear a close inspection. . . .

If it could be somehow suggested—suggested with the greatest subtlety—that there were age-old ways of dealing with instruments of evil, then:

Might there not be some release for David?

"Good God!" he exclaimed aloud. "What devil has gotten into me?"

PIERRE missed the visits of Manning Trent. In a roundabout way, through the grocer's garrulous boy, he learned that Trent had been seen drunk in the village.

Once he walked to the Trent house; thought, as he approached the door, he saw Manning within. But the maid told him that both Manning and Julia were out. Nor did he see David about.

Nights, in his study, he considered many things. He considered a journey to a distant priest he had met many years before. Yet—how leave Sara?

He remembered old Hans Ehlers, whom the Derhammers had visited on occasion. Yet he felt, without quite knowing why, that old Hans was an impostor.

He read deeply, and in the accounts of old French and English trials he learned of horrendous yet logical matters:

Of the common lust among warlocks for human flesh and blood. . . .

Of their passions for the lower animals. . . .

Of how, since they were the bond slaves of Satan, they were permitted to use his hell-

ish craft to transform themselves into beasts, the better to satisfy their craven hungers. . . .

Always, Pierre learned, these beasts retained their human eyes, for the eyes were the windows of the soul, and the soul—the forfeit to Satan—could not change.

Was that the reason, Pierre wondered, that young Mrs. Heath at Melton Crossing saw not a wolf's eyes but eyes that were human in their agony? Was it the bartered soul writhing in anguish at the judgment that lay upon it?

And so Pierre read, seeking the spring that, once pressed, would release all in life that he held dear.

He learned the many methods which, the folklore claimed, were used in dispossessions: of the necessity of wounding a werebeast while still in its state of metamorphosis—difficult, since few saw it and fewer recognized it. But hadn't Heinrich Derhammer seen and fired? And what had happened? Nothing. But that, Pierre learned, was because Heinrich's bullet was neither blessed nor silver.

Hmm. If he could obtain a blessing for a bullet. . . .

But always, when he approached this question, Pierre found himself faced with the same dilemma: the necessity of submitting the problem to the clergy, of answering their incisive questions. And he kept saying, "But there *must* be some other way. Surely God could not have given the only key to a privileged few."

He studied Saint Ambrose, Bodin, Sprenger, Vincent of Beauvais. He studied the sacramentals: learned of their curious power to fend off evil; found that the chalice and the font were blessed. . . .

With slow labor he wove his threads of knowledge together until they made a fabric.

Wednesday. And Wednesday night.

Thursday. And Thursday night.

Pierre himself was not conscious of the evolution of his thought; of the slow and certain march of mood and understanding carrying him to decisions he would not have considered a fortnight earlier.

In the vacuum created by the desertion of Trent, Pierre found himself saying and repeating:

"A man has to fight his own battles."

At first the thought was born in bitterness. But as the days passed, his natural sense of justice told him that a man, too, might choose his own weapons; and, that being so, no blame could be attached to Manning for his withdrawal. And yet. . . .

Had he known the weapon with which Trent toyed, could he have surmised the monstrous intent which the half-crazed Man-

ning entertained upon his drunken visit to the village, doubtless the charity in Pierre's nature would have withered.

Pierre asked, Was not the conclusion just that, since the powers of Satan existed only through the acquiescence of God for God's own purposes, any contract with Satan could be dispelled by God's interference?

* * *

Friday. And Friday afternoon.

There were occasions when Pierre wondered if his sanity would hold. There were other occasions when he was racked with fear at the mere thought of human interference in matters of such black moment.

Yes, despite such mental by-passes, the signal objective remained with him: he must save Sara. Nor, until today, did he consider any salvation but to make her whole, to remove the disease, to return her to her former self.

So it was that he carried this thought this afternoon when, with the early sun lowering beyond the western woods, he ascended to her room with a tray of hot tea.

He had seen the many changes that came with the weeks: he had seen her body alter; he had seen her skin dry up and her cheeks grow thin with apparent hunger; and again, he had seen her vitality restored by those nocturnal excursions.

But always, no matter what her condition, Pierre saw Sara as blood of his blood. There was that remaining in her movement, in her eyes, that revealed and proved the validity of herself. But today. . . .

As he walked into the room and set the tray upon a bedside stand, Pierre found—outstretched on the bed—only a caricature of the original. The white cheeks were tinted with sulphurous yellow; the body movements were more gross, more animal than human; and when she raised her head to see him, she had a cunning look—out of eyes no longer her own and in which the lights of perdition burned.

Pierre did not lock her door when he left. When he descended the stairs, it was with the final knowledge that he was alone.

Chapter Seven

CHRISTMAS EVE fell like a cloud upon the valley. In the churches the parties for the children were held by day instead of by evening. And they were grim events. The children were whisked from their homes by armed men, and they were guarded in the churches and they were whisked back to their homes.

At Trent Farms Manning drank the afternoon away; an afternoon which found Julia absent on one of her numberless "charities" and David keeping restlessly to his rooms.

Manning finally went for a walk.

He walked stiffly, trying to hold himself together until he reached the screen of the peach orchard. He relaxed then, and his progress was more slow and more unsteady.

The cold air refreshed him, but it did not sober him. Still, in the open, a thought retained greater cohesion. What was the thought? Pierre? But if he had the germ of an idea of visiting Pierre, it was lost when he reached the other side of the orchard. There, he could look down the slope toward a small wooded vale; and above the vale he could see the bare slope of Mt. Neshaminy, and to the left he could see a figure—Pierre, firing a rifle at a target.

When he returned home, Julia had already arrived. He knew that any effort to take hold of himself had failed, when she confronted him.

"I don't know why, Manning," she said crisply, "you think you always have to get drunk for a holiday."

* * *

There were four churches in the village: the First Methodist, the Episcopalian, the little Roman Catholic Chapel of St. Hubert, and the Friends Meeting House.

No one quite remembered how the Catholic Chapel came to be dedicated to Hubert, the patron of the huntsman. It must have been a long while back, for the small ivy-covered stone edifice was very old.

And no one was more disturbed by the events of recent weeks than Father O'Burgh, the kindly, complacent, ineffectual shepherd of the parish.

A thin and ancient little man, his was a depth of devotion supported by small inclination to action. He felt that, above any priest in the diocese, it was his special province—since the Lord (to say nothing of his bishop) had assigned him to the Chapel of St. Hubert—to protect those who sought to track down the marauding beasts.

Yet, what could a poor man do? He prayed—and he fended his ears from the irrational tales which came to him from the more superstitious of his flock. No one, not even a priest, expected the Devil to make a personal appearance in enlightened Pennsylvania in this twentieth century of Our Lord.

No, he was more concerned with form. And he was, therefore, no little disturbed when, preparing on Christmas Eve for the midnight

mass, he entered the sacristy through the door which led from the altar—to discover the sacrificial chalice missing.

There was no doubt of theft. The other door, which opened into the night, stood ajar, Through it blew the cold wind. And by the light that spilled out of the church, Father O'Burgh saw on the snow a line of footprints leading to the church and another leading away.

"God ha' mercy," he breathed, and he would have been the most surprised person in the world had he had any idea at all that those three brief words would be answered. Trite as they were, they yet mysteriously compelled (or, at least, so one might read into the consequences) a restraint upon that automatic loss of consecration of the sacred vessel which, the legislators of Church solemnly averred, would occur if it fell into profane hands.

The priest telephoned to the sub-barracks at Melton Crossing.

"About five inches high, I should say," he said. "Oh, yes; silver. Gilded within by gold."

The lieutenant in charge was polite. He said he would "see what can be done, Father." Yes, polite was the word. But he was not, Father O'Burgh considered afterwards, sufficiently impressed.

Father O'Burgh could not know that the chief concern at that moment at the sub-barracks was the failure, after two hours, of the white patrol car carrying Corporal Moberly and Private Aalborg to respond to radioed instructions.

FOR twenty-three years Private Aalborg's hair had been auburn. It was white when, at two o'clock Christmas morning, searchers found him stumbling out of Lacey's Lane into Fishing Mill Road near the Galehouse Caldwell place.

His uniform was tattered, blood-soaked; his face was bruised and cut; his sleeveless right arm was grooved with long parallel clawlike tears, and his twisted left arm hung disjointed from its shoulder socket. He stared with the vacancy of the idiotic; and he gabbled incoherencies.

They found the car in a clearing off Lacey's Lane, not far from the mill where Nellie Sage had first seen the "white thing." Along a snow-covered path a little way down Bowling Creek, they found the body of Corporal Moberly—his uniform shredded to threads and great ugly rips in his frozen thighs.

The searchers, lamps in hand, stood in shocked silence.

The snow was pocked with bootprints. There were deep animal tracks.

"Must've seen something," Private Black said moodily.

"Must've," said Private Reid. He flicked his flashlight over the terrain.

"Saw something?" asked another.

"Maybe. Or maybe they parked to wait."

"And saw it and got out to shoot," suggested Black. And Reid said:

"Here's where they got out. Both on the right side. And walked up that way—ahead of the car."

"Easy, there! Don't blur those tracks."

"Look! Looks like just one set of tracks. It was there, in front of the car, and they were walking toward it. But. . ."

The men were puzzled. It made no sense. Two men and one beast. Why couldn't they kill it? Two men with guns.

Quickly enough they learned the truth. For behind and to the left of the car they found an impression in the snow where a second larger animal had crouched; crouched, and leaped upon the unsuspecting troopers as they advanced to attack the first.

Slowly they digested the significance of this awful cunning. And Klonsterman, stopping some hours later at Mandel's house, said darkly:

"If'n the police can't protect us—"

In the parish house Father O'Burgh wonderingly unwrapped the brown paper from a weighty package. The paper was stamped, "Special Delivery." Within the wrapping was a cardboard box.

Within the box was cotton packing. And when Father O'Burgh removed the packing, he stared, mouth open, at a golden chalice. There was no explanation; only the firm name of Bond & Starr, Jewels, Chestnut Street east of Broad Street, Philadelphia.

* * *

At Trent Farms, Manning Trent began to tremble when David entered the library. He trembled so violently that the whiskey and soda spilled from the glass he held.

Julia appeared. Her eyes were cold and her lips compressed when she glanced at Manning and saw the glass. And then, turning to her son, Julia said:

"Why, David. You aren't looking very well for Christmas."

Manning got up and left the room. Thought was blurred. But there lay, within the blur, a focused space that made him wonder at the miracle of Julia's blindness.

Stay out of Julia's way, he warned himself. He finished his drink. He poured and drank another in the dining room. He rang for Wallace, who helped him into his overcoat and overshoes. He put on his hat and left the house.

It was late. It was on toward dusk. Down on the highway a car passed, two spotlights arcing from the road. At least. . . At least. . . They'd gotten men last night, not children. . . What was that about the priest? Father O'Burgh? Did they do that, too?

He walked away from the house. He walked aimlessly. It was dusk, and he made no effort to control himself when his legs faltered.

The valley was of ghastly beauty in the dusk. The snow took on a faint blueness. The black trees stood sharply against the lowering gray of the sky. Lights flickered from the houses in the valley. And in some of the far-off windows the faint red and green lights of the yuletide shone timidly.

HE FOLLOWED his own winding drive through the trees to the State Highway. At his gates he stood uncertainly.

Why not? he asked. If he could save David. She was damned, any way you looked at it. He, publisher of a lurid newspaper, well knew the insidious quality of innuendo.

He leaned against the tall gatepost. Well—but there were two beasts. If they dragged Sara from her home and found the lack, wouldn't their observations quicken? Wouldn't they seek the same lack in another? In those close to Sara? In Pierre? And then—in David?

And so he did not turn toward the village. He walked, instead, south along the highway, not quite knowing what impelled him in that direction. The darkness gathered about him. And the stars appeared.

Here it is, the junction with the Old Post Road, leading to Fountain Head. Of course. Stop and call on Pierre. Christmas night. See old friends. He turned into the road. And he walked under the oaks.

Fountain Head, on the old Post Road, appeared suddenly beyond a wooden bend. Its suddenness dismayed Trent.

But he approached the house, and glanced through a library window. There was a blaze in the fireplace, but he did not see Pierre.

He hesitated again at the porch. Fondness for Pierre and bitterness renewed their battle. And bitterness won. He kept on, hugging the south wall of the house, until he reached the first of the study windows.

He thought, in a moment of sanity. Good God! This is a crazy thing. . .

Then, cautiously, he peered through the window.

Pierre was seated at a table. On the table was spread a newspaper. On the newspaper were the parts of a rifle—the 30.30, Trent thought. Pierre was cleaning the parts.

With difficulty Trent tried to remember something—about that gun—about Pierre. Yes, that was it—target practice yesterday. The pores of Trent's forehead released sweat. Good God! Did Pierre think *himself* in danger?

Pierre got up, half turning toward the window. Trent ducked. When, in a moment, he again looked into the room, Pierre had replaced the parts of the rifle, and was standing in a corner at a cabinet on which rested an object of fascinating silvery brilliance. The object was across the room and Trent's vision was blurred. He could not identify the object.

But now he saw something else—bullets on the table; a Bunsen burner, and on a stand above the burner a small iron cup. Solidified drippings of bright white metal hung from the lip of the cup.

Trent's puzzled eyes narrowed—and he must have made some sound. For Pierre turned suddenly toward the window.

When Pierre appeared, flashlight in hand, he found only tracks leading from and returning to the Old Post Road. When he went back into the house, he thought about those tracks for a long time. But he was not afraid.

* * *

The stars that came out on Christmas night at dusk were brushed away by clouds. The air grew still. And snow fell.

The snow fell almost without a sound. And then a breeze was born in the northeast. And the snow that had fallen quietly now fell in dancing whorls.

The breeze became a wind. It blew in cold, sharp gasps, and the snow began to beat slantwise against the earth.

The wind became a gale. The snow drummed the earth. Yet Pierre, shod in the same old leather boots that had carried him after caribou in the Northern Woods, still tramped up and down the Neshaminy. The snow stung his cheeks.

For four hours Pierre marched, gun slung under his right arm. At midnight, he returned to Fountain Head. Sara was in her room. Immediately, Pierre went outdoors. He circled the house. But such was the drifting of the snow that he could not tell from which direction she had approached.

He re-entered the house. On his way to his room he paused at her door. He opened it, and looked in. She sat at the long mirror of her dressing table. In the mirror he saw her face. And she saw his.

"Don't look at me like that!" she cried.

He went to his room.

It was noon when Pierre awoke. His mind was still of one determined piece. But there came to his thought a sense of new urgency. For this was the first of the Twelve Nights. And he must hurry, hurry.

He ate sparingly in the kitchen. He did not trouble to prepare a tray for Sara. Not since that night when his own eyes told him that he had lost her had he troubled. He returned to the library, switched on the radio. He heard the news announcer's voice tell of a happening more awful in its suggestiveness than some of the actual crimes: of how Wendell Mawson, mortician at Melton Crossing, heard the night before the hard breathing of beasts sniffing about the rear door of his mortuary.

Pierre switched off the radio.

The day dragged. Once, peering out the window, Pierre saw the snow-veiled figures of a group of hunters in a far field. They walked slowly and they kept close together, their guns slung under their arms. Pierre thought: If they could only know their hunting was in waste. . . .

BY EVENING the snow had stopped falling. But the sky was still coated with heavy clouds and when Pierre went out, he found the woods—despite the dull reflection from the snow—dark and difficult of passage.

Again, for four hours, he tramped the course of the Neshaminy. And again he returned. And now a sense of panic gripped him. He slept fitfully. He dreamt dreams of paralytic helplessness. And in the morning he was not rested. It was Tuesday. But it was more than Tuesday. It was the second of the Twelve Nights, and God in His Heaven alone knew the power for evil that burned in these passing hours.

When Pierre saw Sara, he saw the hungry look. And he did not know whether to be glad that she, too, had failed in her mission or to fear that her hunger forecast a desperation.

Horror to come. . . .

Again, that day, the hunt continued in the countryside. But at dusk the hunters trooped wearily to their homes. And only the State Police were left to carry on. And even they patrolled only the lanes and roads.

The waiting pressed on Pierre. It was more with nervousness than chill that he trembled when he left the house. If he failed. . . .

The second of the Twelve Nights was clear and sharp and cold. It was a night of crystal. The stark trees were etched against the glittering snow by the light of the stars. In the north smouldered the aurora borealis.

He walked farther than on the previous nights. He followed the path northward and westward along the Neshaminy. A lacelike fringe of ice clung to the sides of the banks. He found tracks, animal tracks. But whether they had been laid there only hours ago or whether on the preceding night, he could not tell.

Grimly he went on.

He reached the canyon on Trent's land; the narrow canyon where Crane and Summers had lain in wait; where, a little beyond, Heinrich had raised his gun and fired. And he passed through the canyon and came to the clearing. And he came out so suddenly that at first he could not believe his eyes. For, from the other side, their huge paws crunching the snow, emerged the forms of two shadowy animals.

A merciful memory fled that moment. In the after time Pierre seemed to recall that from some far distance two reports sounded in quick succession. But when again memory served, he was bending over Sara, holding her head in his arms, holding her close—watching by the light of the stars a miraculous transfiguration return to him his daughter. His daughter—his child—her long black hair warm against his hands, her eyes shining and wet with tears of gratitude.

He felt her body tremble only once. It was a little wave, rippling down from her head, coursing along the muscles to her legs. The light went out of her eyes. Pierre laid her head upon the ground.

Still crouching beside her, he glanced up—and saw David towering over him; David, his eyes on Sara but his right arm clutching his wounded left and his face contorted with pain.

Yet there was amazement in the look of pain. He glanced, bewildered, about him: at the rifle in the snow, at Pierre, and again at Sara.

"You . . . Did you . . ."

Pierre straightened, and stood up.

"I did it," he said simply.

David's voice was a whisper.

"She's . . . Is she dead?"

"Yes. She's dead."

"B-but—" David's bewilderment grew. The impediment of his speech returned. "B-but why? Why did you?" His voice rose. "Why?"

Pierre was never more composed.

"To save her," he said. "To save her soul. To save you."

The pain in David's arm sharpened. But wonder still covered the pain.

"S-save?" He turned the word over. "Kill—to save? D-don't talk nonsense!"

"It's not nonsense," Pierre said evenly. "To

save you from the form—the wolf's form; from the very devil himself, David."

Suddenly horrified, Pierre stepped forward. He touched David.

"David! Don't you remember, David?" The frantic quality of his voice increased. "Don't you remember?"

Angrily, suspiciously, David shook him off, his voice rasping.

"I don't know what you're talking about. Are you mad?"

Still clutching his arm, David bent over Sara. "Darling, darling. You can't die! Speak to me, darling." His tormented words faded. "But darling," he sobbed, "you can't leave me!"

Pierre turned away. He walked toward the canyon. He walked blindly. David stood up, watching Pierre's stumbling retreat. And in that moment he understood. He turned, looked down again at the still form.

"He had to do it, Sara. He had to do it."

Pierre kept on walking, stumbling through the snow. And about him the curtain of the irrationality of the past weeks fell away and he saw the vista of the future revealed for what it was. With each step that he placed upon the snow he knew that the footprint would be followed and would support whatever story David chose. But had he not already known that in his heart?

He emerged from the southern mouth of the canyon. There was still Manning, he thought. There was still Dr. Hardt. And then he knew there weren't. The lamp of cold reason was lighted, and he knew of no human bond that could stand the test he might apply.

David's words echoed and re-echoed. They became a damning refrain:

"We were just out walking—walking along the path."

One foot, then the other; one footprint, then another. They'd have ballistics experts. They'd match the bullets with the gun. They'd find his fingerprints on the trigger. They would make casts of the bootprints. They would match them with his boots. . . .

And there would be the chalice, with part of its lip missing—the part he had melted down for bullets.

But the attacks would cease! Yes, yes. The attacks would cease. Pierre thought of that excitedly. Still—a clever district attorney could show there were never any beasts at all. The beasts were Pierre, roaming the country at night. And there would be David:

"We were just out walking. . . ."

Pierre's body sagged. He walked more slowly. And then, again, he saw the gratitude in Sara's eyes. ■ ■ ■