

# Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

SEPTEMBER, 1946

Cover by Pete Kuhlhoff

## NOVELETTE

LOTTE . . . . . Seabury Quinn 6

*When a mystery presents itself it gnaws like a maggot at the brain,  
nor can it be dislodged till the solution is found*

## SHORT STORIES

DAY OF JUDGMENT . . . . . Edmond Hamilton 20

*Some day, some eternity away, there will be a last man and a last  
woman. And who will be their judges?*

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*Have you ever felt the tread of little feet walking  
across the top of your skull?*

ALICE AND THE ALLERGY . . . . . Fritz Leiber 36

*It's only common sense to be scared of a killer—sometimes  
even after he has been apprehended and executed!*

NOT HUMAN . . . . . Bert David Ross 41

*A tulka does not really live—therefore a tulka is  
indestructible. It cannot die*

THE HORN . . . . . Charles King 50

*A goat's horn, marvelously endowed with strange virtues  
and an unforgivable future*

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*A machine, so sensitive as to be human, was the scientist's goal.  
What he got was as utterly unexpected as it was horrific!*

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*The building's bizarre architecture was as though it had been lifted bodily and  
transported here from some haunted place deep in a mysterious Europe*

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*All alone on the night side of the world time moves at a snail's pace*

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*Except for personal experiences, the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use  
of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.*

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# Threshold of Endurance

BY BETSY EMMONS

**T**HIS morning she struggled awake slowly, with the feeling that her dreams had been unpleasant, though she could not remember what they were.

She looked at the clock, raised herself on her elbow, and called sharply "Time to get up!" But her husband's rumpled bed was empty.

She went to the head of the stairs and called him in a voice that sounded hollow in the quiet house. There was no reply. He must have wakened early, dressed, and gone to the office. She felt annoyed, as she was always annoyed at a break in the rou-

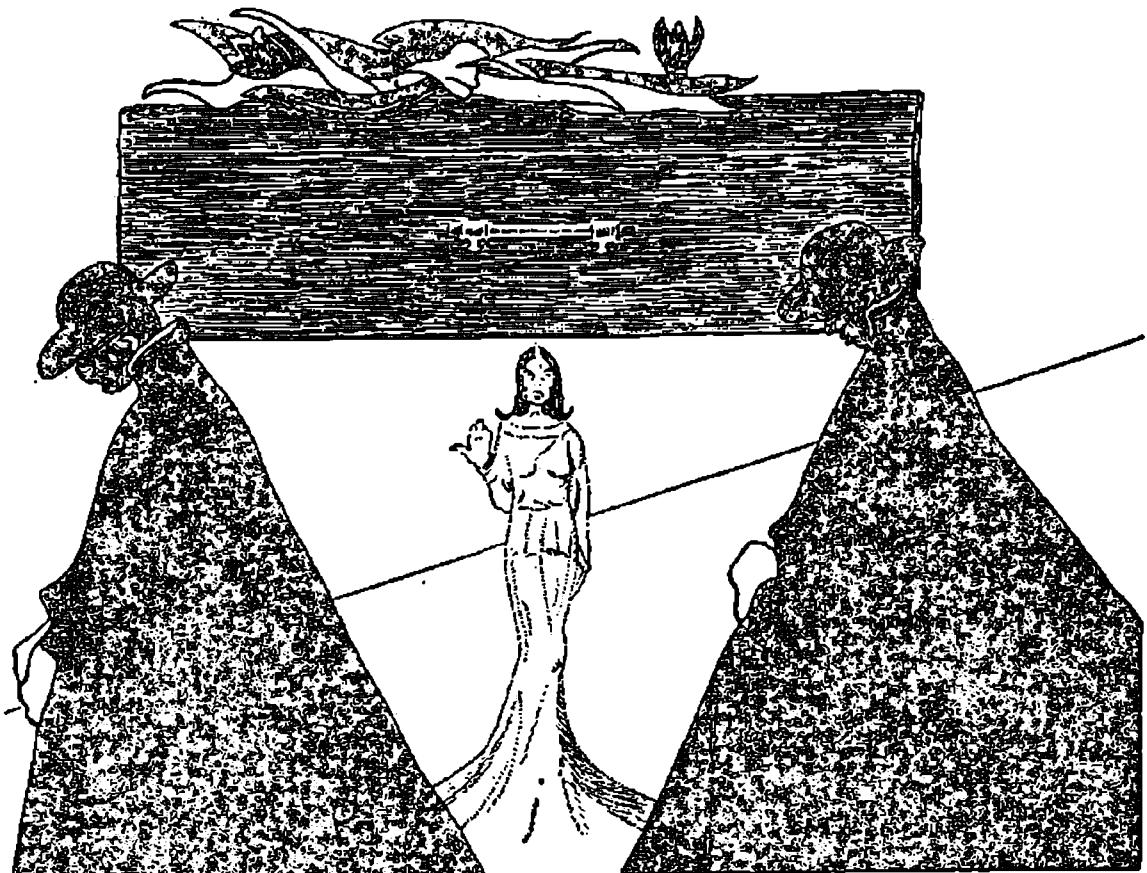
tine she had established for her husband and herself.

Now she set to work. It was impossible for her to leave a room until she had tidied it; though she felt unlike herself this morning. Her movements seemed to have the strange lightness of fever, and she could not shake off the oppression of the forgotten dream.

First she made her husband's bed, for the sight of an unmade bed was not endurable, and there was something particularly unpleasant about an unmade bed where her husband had been sleeping. Next she went to his closet, conscientiously overcoming the

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*"One who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason."*



Heading by A. R. TILBURNE

repulsion she always felt at the faint male smell which somehow could not be banished, though he no longer smoked tobacco even at the office. His pajamas were on the floor, not placed neatly on a hook as she had taught him.

A book lay on the night-table beside his bed, one of the odd old things he liked to read. It opened at a bookmarked page, where an underscored paragraph caught her eye. "There is a Threshold of Endurance with the Soul as well as with the Body, and one who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason, hurling himself 'gainst the oppressor with a Vigor the greater for his Long Control."

She removed the bookmark. Her husband, she decided, ought to stop reading at night. She took the book with her when she went downstairs, wondering as she descended why the house seemed queer this morning. She was not an imaginative or nervous woman. Surely she must be sick.

Downstairs the living-room was cool and orderly, with the window shades drawn as she left them the evening before. She raised each shade and went into the kitchen. On the sink stood an empty glass filmed with milk and a plate with sandwich-crumbs. Her husband had come downstairs last night to find something to eat and had left his dishes unwashed. There was nothing she disliked so much as dirty dishes. She washed and dried them before she made her coffee.

She was drinking the coffee when the back doorbell rang. Looking through the kitchen window, she saw an old tramp.

"I'm sorry," she called, "but I have nothing for you." He stood as if he had not heard, and she impatiently turned away. She washed her breakfast dishes; brought the morning paper in from the front porch, and was dusting the living-room when she heard a noise in the kitchen. She went to see. The kitchen window was open and the old tramp was rummaging in the icebox. "I am going to call the police," she said.

He did not seem to hear. As if unaware of her presence, he closed the icebox, tucked the stolen food under his arm, unlatched the back door, and walked out. She watched with helpless anger, for he had not even seemed frightened. She moved to the tele-

phone to call the police, then stopped, putting a hand to her forehead as memory nagged vaguely.

LAST night at midnight she had awakened and heard her husband in the kitchen. She had put on her neat wrapper, gone downstairs, stood in the kitchen doorway, and said, "This is a bad habit. It is unnecessary and wasteful, and bad for your stomach." She had gone upstairs without waiting for his answer, and he had followed without washing his dishes. And then something else had happened. What was it? Or was she merely haunted by that dream?

Glancing toward the sink, she saw that his milk-filmed glass and plate with sandwich crumbs stood there unwashed, just as they had stood when she first came into the kitchen that morning. But she had washed them. Surely she had washed them. She frowned, not understanding, trying to remember what had happened after her husband followed her upstairs.

She went into the living-room. The shades were down, drawn for the night, as if she had never touched them. Through the window she saw the morning paper lying on the porch, exactly as it had lain there earlier.

But it was impossible. Frightened now, she ran upstairs to the bedroom. On the night-table, was the book her husband had been reading, with the bookmark still in place, though she knew she had taken the book downstairs. The words she had read thrummed in her brain: "One who has Long Endur'd may of a sudden break the Bounds of Reason, hurling himself 'gainst the oppressor. . . ."

Her husband's bed was unmade, exactly as it had been when she awoke. Everything was as it had been. And remembering suddenly what had happened when her husband followed her upstairs the night before, she understood why she felt strange and bodiless, why the house remained untouched by her hands. She looked toward her own bed for the first time that morning, knowing already what she would find there. Knowing that her own body, which would never again control the external world, lay sprawled and lifeless, with a red gash across its throat.