

# Weird Tales

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**S**INCE the Black Republic won its freedom from the French it has been ruled by a line of tyrants and monsters, until the timely intervention of Uncle Sam.

History and legends bring down to us tales of Toussaint L'Ouverture, a man with the courage of his convictions, who banded the black slaves together and instilled into their hearts the will to overthrow their masters. The tale of Toussaint is a tale of beastly lust, brute aggrandizement, freedom from restraint for men with the passions of wild animals, the strength of the savage, and the blood-lust of followers of the green serpent. The story has it that the French masters paid for their cruelty to their slaves with their own blood, which ran down the rock-walled gutters of Cap Haitien in crimson streams which had their origin in the public square where the French were slaughtered by those whom they had ruled.

Following L'Ouverture came Christophe, self-named Henri I, Emperor of the North, whose black consort became his Empress and whose children—those of whom Christophe admitted fatherhood—were known as Princes of the Blood. He created a royal family of color that made him the most ridiculous figure in the history of his time. He was a monster who killed for the love of killing. He marched a whole company of soldiers over a high cliff to prove to a visiting minister that his discipline was iron-bound. He caused to be slain those

who dared to look upon his face without permission. There is no word in the English language by which this great black brute may be properly classified. A slave who ruled his fellow-slaves as no one since his time has been able to rule them, who scarcely knew how to read and write, yet who created monuments to himself that puzzle the best engineers of today—his Citadel a few miles from Cap Haitien, and his castle of Sans Souci.

He was filled with despair at last because he could not overthrow President Petion, at Port au Prince, and so make himself emperor of all Haiti. He killed himself with a silver bullet because he felt that no lesser metal might come in contact with that divine brain of his.

There were other monsters who came after him, some to rule for a day, some to rule for a year, each one dying violently when his time came, all too suddenly. Not until a few years ago did an ex-president peacefully look on at the inauguration of his successor. L'Ouverture, Christophe, Petion, Dessalines—a line of ruling monsters such as may not be found in the history of any other country.

Then came Guillaume San, beside whose evil deeds the combined brutalities of all these others grow pale and insignificant.

He was a mulatto, yellow-skinned, pimply-faced, suffering from some inherited organic disease that pinched his features into a mask of perpetual

pain. His brow was forever covered with the dew of internal suffering, which he bore with what fortitude he could muster. When the pain became too great for him to bear all Haiti knew it, for he seemed to believe that the blame for his suffering lay with his black subjects. He sent his ragged soldiers through the highways and by-ways, with orders to slay without mercy, and the soldiers gloried in carrying out those orders.

Guillaume had spies in every place in Haiti where there were more than half a dozen persons banded together. These spies kept him informed of every word and act of his subjects. Did a man, woman, or child speak an evil word concerning his royal person, Guillaume knew it as soon as a swift messenger could reach Port au Prince with the tidings, which meant short shrift for the guilty one, and an unburied body bloating in the sun. Up through the sunny air of Haiti went the stench of uncovered bodies of those who had been slain, directly or indirectly, by the evil hand of Guillaume San.

Innocent perished with the guilty, for if a spy had a grudge against a neighbor he had but to go to Guillaume San and bear false witness—and that person's corpse lay shortly alongside the road, to be passed by natives with averted heads.

Guillaume San became president under auspicious circumstances. He led the rioters who entered the palace and bore his predecessor forth to be slaughtered in the street outside the palace courtyard. It was his genius which led to the hewing in pieces of the dead president, and he caused those pieces to be impaled upon the iron points of the fence which circled the palace. A tactful warning to the populace!

Thus began his career of bloodshed which was to continue and end in a trail of crimson.

Now to his story and the words of the prophetess.

GUILLAUME SAN lay ill in his bed in the palace. The head doctor had given him but a few hours to live. Guillaume cursed the doctor and commanded that he be beheaded at once and his head brought to the sick room as a warning to the other doctors who were in attendance.

Once Guillaume raised his head and looked forth from a window which gave on to the Champs de Mars. He saw that the heat-blighted plaza was black with milling multitudes. Murderous shouts went up in the afternoon air and came, subdued by distance, in through the president's window. He shuddered as he recalled the fate of his predecessor. Then he saw that every yard of the iron-fenced palace grounds was patrolled by double sentries, the black soldiers who were the pride of Guillaume's heart. Not even that great multitude would dare the gleaming points of the sentries' bayonets! He knew that they, the multitude, but waited for word from the palace to the effect that Guillaume had fallen into a coma which would give him into their hands. Even those soldiers could not hold them then. They might even join the black birds of prey who clamored for Guillaume's death!

"Look at them! Waiting like vultures for the corpse to cool!"

He shook a feeble fist at the window.

"I'll fool them all!" he cried, "I'll die in my bed as a president should!"

He sank back and wiped the cold dew from his forehead.

An orderly entered and salaamed in the royal presence.

"What is it, Adan Tebo?" demanded the president.

"Chal Yac, one of his Excellency's agents, waits without, sir!"

"Tell him to send in his report."

The orderly withdrew, and re-entered a moment later.

"He says, your Excellency, that Divue Sal is spreading the story that the great Guillaume is dying. He has gathered together many followers, and is trying to persuade them to rush the palace and be revenged upon you before death cheats them of their rights!"

"Give orders that Divue Sal be hewn in pieces and the pieces scattered to the mongrel dogs in the streets!"

The orderly withdrew.

A few minutes later a terrible cry arose from the Champs de Mars. The orderly re-entered the sick room.

"His Excellency's orders have been obeyed," reported Adan. "You can hear the cries of the mob in the plaza, sir. They cry aloud for vengeance!"

"Give orders for the soldiers to fire upon the mob!"

The orderly withdrew.

Sounds of intermittent rifle fire. Shrieks, moans of the dying, shouts of black beasts who lust for blood. There was a clatter of footsteps on the stairs outside the palace.

The orderly rushed in once more.

"The mob has rushed the courtyard, your Excellency, and the soldiers have fallen back to the doors of the palace. Many of them have fallen!"

The orderly wiped the fine dew from his own forehead. The explosion of rifles was deafening now, and the odor of powder smoke invaded the sick room.

"Take courage, Excellency," said one of the doctors. "You shall cheat them yet!"

He did not mean what Guillaume thought that he meant. The doctor saw the approach of the grim reaper. Guillaume, with the doctor's words, saw the white-robed figure of hope, and began to plan the revenge he would take when he was once more well of his sickness.

Sounds of a scuffle at the door of the palace. Shouts and curses of the

soldiers. The crash of rifle butts upon the flagstones.

The ragged, leprous, filthy form of an aged black crone stood for a moment in the door of the sick room. Over her bent shoulders Guillaume San saw the figures of two soldiers who were coming to take her. She saw them as she turned her head for an instant. She stepped inside the room, whither she knew they dared not follow. Her scraggly, rope-like hair hung in filthy wisps about her unspeakably wrinkled old face. A red bandanna, greasy and foul, was wrapped about her head, to fall in two red tails down her back.

"Know you, Guillaume San," she shrieked, "that I am the mother of Divue Sal, whose body you caused to be thrown to the dogs in the street? His soul cries aloud to its God for vengeance. I come to tell you that vengeance shall be satisfied. Know you, monster of all the evils, that before the rising of tomorrow's sun, your own blood will stain the very flagstones of the palace! You are dying, but the soul of Divue Sal may not be cheated."

The wrinkled old hag turned to leave.

"Wait, old woman!" cried Guillaume San. "I wish to prove to you that you lie. I tell you that I am dying, that I shall be dead before the mob can win through my faithful soldiers. I know your meaning now, doctor, when you told me that I would cheat them all. I see the grim reaper at the bedside. Make haste and prepare the casket. When I have gone, cause my body to be placed in state just inside the door of the main salon, so that the mob may see—and know that I have fooled them at the very last."

They left him then. Only the hag remained and looked on. Several times she broke out in cackling laughter.

"He! he!—he! he! he!—he! he!"

She turned away at last, calling back over her shoulder to Guillaume San:

"Remember what I tell you, that your evil blood will yet stain the flagstones of the palace!"

Guillaume San was left alone to face his Maker.

Once he started up, terrible strength in his muscles for a single moment.

"Who calls?" he cried. "Who whispers the name of Guillaume San?"

Only the silence of the sick room gave answer. Guillaume smiled to himself—a terrible smile—and wiped the dew from his forehead.

The orderly entered, with the doctors behind him.

"Is everything ready?" whispered Guillaume San.

They nodded and looked fearfully behind them, where darkness was falling over the city, and only the lights before the door of the palace showed the black and yellow faces of the mob.

"Everything is ready, Excellency, but the mob is rushing the palace!"

"Even so, I have cheated the vultures!"

Guillaume San fell back and died.

The orderly and the doctors started and looked at one another as a weird noise came in to them from the darkened salon:

"He! he!—he! he! he!—he! he!"

The vaulted dome of the palace gave back the sound in weird and terrible echoes:

"He! he!—he! he! he!—he! he!"

Even as they placed the body in state in the casket in the main salon, the roar which had been continuous outside for many hours increased in volume. The soldiers gave back a few paces into the palace, looking fearfully behind them at the strange shape on the raised dais in the center of the main salon—a shape that was even more strange because of the flickering light cast upon it from the torches

held high above the heads of the leaders of the mob, whose faces were crowding the doorway as they fought for entry.

"Flee! Flee for your very lives!"

The orderly ran, with the doctors at his heels. The soldiers heard the order, but knew not whence it came. It seemed to come from that long, black shape outlined in the flickering glow of the torches. They obeyed, as they had always obeyed, what they took to be the last command of Guillaume San. They fled, giving over the palace to the ghouls.

Instantly there was roar upon roar of musketry as the mob emptied its rifles into that long, black shape in the main salon. A kind of sigh came out to them through the holes in the coffin which the bullets had made. Torches were dashed to the floor as the superstitious blacks, eager before to enter the palace, were now many times as eager to win free from some nameless and terrible presence. Once more the palace was in darkness as the mob fled, scattering to its dives and runways in the capital city of the Black Republic.

**A**FTER a time a weird shadow moved in the gloom of the silent palace. Two small lights glistened as the old hag, mother of Divue Sal, placed a candle at either end of the casket which contained all that was mortal of Guillaume San. She stood back in the gloom, rubbing her hands together as if washing them. Her wrinkled face came into view and receded again as the candles flared up and died down.

"He! he!—he! he! he!—he! he!"

The old crone cackled and washed her hands.

Her greedy old eyes were alight with evil fires. For she listened to the soft drip! drip! drip! which was slowly widening the dark pool on the flagstones beneath the casket.

The prophetess had spoken.