

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL



Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 24 CONTENTS FOR NOVEMBER, 1934 Number 5

Cover Design	M. Brundage	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "Queen of the Lilin"</i>		
Queen of the Lilin	E. Hoffmann Price	530
<i>The story of a gloriously lovely but evil woman from out of the mists of time</i>		
The Golden Glow	S. Gordon Gurwit	552
<i>An amazing story of a scientist who fought the world single-handed</i>		
Concert to Death	Paul Ernst	581
<i>A novel ghost story about a great musical genius</i>		
Mist on the Meadows	Marion Doyle	587
<i>Versa</i>		
The Trail of the Cloven Hoof (part 5)	Arlton Eadie	588
<i>An astounding weird mystery novel by a British master of thrilling fiction</i>		
Voodoo Vengeance	Kirk Mashburn	607
<i>A thrill-tale of ancient magic from the black island of Haiti</i>		
Anne Boleyn	Dorothy Quick	618
<i>Versa</i>		
The People of the Black Circle (end)	Robert E. Howard	619
<i>An eerie novel about Conan the barbarian adventurer and Yasmina of the golden throne</i>		
Feigman's Beard	August W. Derleth	636
<i>An uncanny tale of hexerei</i>		
Nude with a Dagger	John Flanders	641
<i>The old money-lender bumped into a weird problem that all his hardness could not penetrate</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Music of Erich Zann	H. P. Lovecraft	644
<i>A popular story from WEIRD TALES of nine years ago</i>		
The Eyrie		650
<i>A chat with the readers</i>		

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 E. Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. Subscription, \$3.00 a year in the United States, \$4.00 a year in Canada. English office: Charles Lavell, 13, Berjeants' Inn, Fleet Street, E. C. 4, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

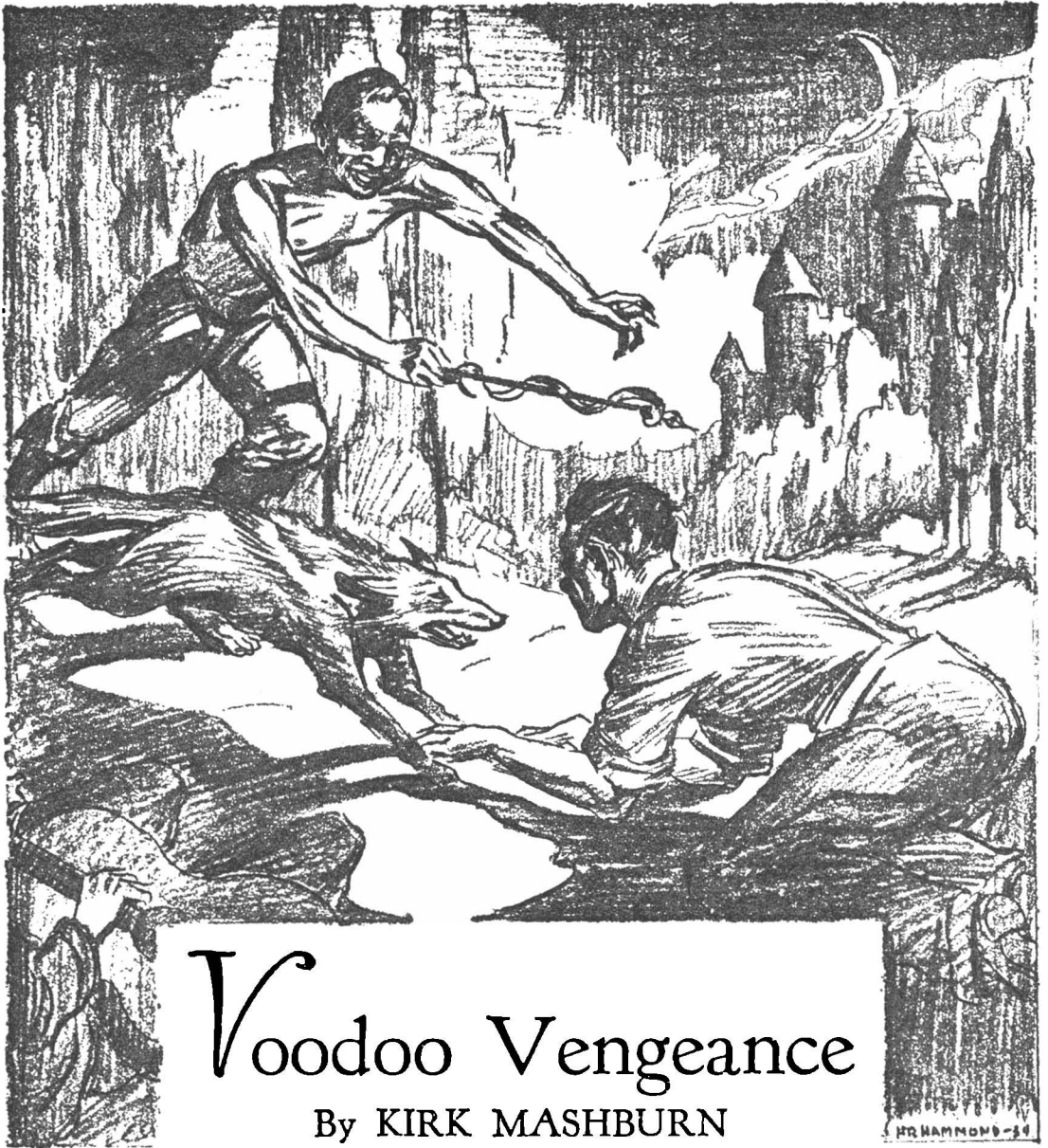
Copyright, 1934, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.

COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

"He bent above the pair—the man and beast, face and muscle almost touching."



Voodoo Vengeance

By KIRK MASHBURN

A thrill-tale of ancient magic, brought from the black island of Haiti to the United States—with shocking consequences

MY INTEREST in psychopathic research, as it affects crime or otherwise, does not extend to private practise," Doctor Forest Loring coldly informed his visitors. "There is nothing in this case to warrant an exception."

Captain Frane flushed angrily beneath the tan of his strong, lean face. The dark

eyes of the white-faced girl beside him grew deeper with somber hopelessness.

"Our mutual friend, the district attorney, advised me to see you——" Frane began, but was brusquely interrupted.

"So you have said before, I believe," Doctor Loring retorted. "I have helped him in one or two cases, because they involved factors of interest in my line of

psychological research. In your own case, there has not even been a crime. Your wife apparently entertains a form of persecution complex—which hardly justifies interruption of some very pressing experiments I am conducting.”

Controlling his anger as he turned toward his wife, Frane said, merely, “Come, my dear. Let us go.”

As he rose stiffly to his feet, a deep-throated growl sounded beneath the open window at Doctor Loring’s side. A shaggy head with a lean, pointed muzzle heaved into view; long, slavering fangs gleamed in a saturnine snarl. With its forepaws upon the low sill, a monstrous, wolfish thing glared through the window, its eyes hot with red ferocity.

Natalie Frane stifled a scream.

“There it is!” her husband exclaimed, his voice not quite steady. “Perhaps my wife’s fear of her stepbrother is a ‘persecution complex’, but his police dog—unless the thing’s really a wolf!—has followed us here!”

Without haste, Doctor Loring reached into a drawer of his desk. Taking out an object somewhat resembling a small automatic pistol, he pointed it toward the window, and a thin, needle-like stream of liquid spurted toward the dog.

With a roar that changed abruptly to choking gasps, the sinister muzzle dropped from view; the gasping coughs retreated rapidly. The smell of ammonia cleared quickly from the room.

“A very effective weapon, as I have found on other occasions,” Doctor Loring calmly announced. “You say the dog belongs to your wife’s unpleasant relative? I shall ring for Tou-Tou, and find out why it was permitted inside my yard.”

“The brute can jump walls higher than yours,” Frane answered him, with a mirthless laugh.

He picked up his hat and stick, as a

door opened and Tou-Tou, the doctor’s black and gaunt Haitian servant, slipped through. He handed his master a small, manila-wrapped box, with the laconic explanation—

“Bell rang; I looked and found this. No one was there.”

Captain Frane, ex-Marine with four years of Haitian service to his credit, understood the words of creole *patois*. As the black man departed, the captain un- easily regarded the mysterious parcel.

“I can’t help wondering,” he hesitantly offered, “whether Polynice Poynter’s hand mayn’t be in that. His ugly brute is seldom far from his side, and it is evident we were followed here. Poynter may have sent that as a warning for you not to take our case. If so—and it would tie in with his theatrical nature—it likely will be something unpleasant, even dangerous.”

Doctor Loring gently shook the package, which obviously was a wrapped cardboard box, holding it close to an ear. His expression non-committal, he decided—

“Well, we can see! Like to come along, Captain?”

After requesting Mrs. Frane to resume her chair and wait, he led her husband to a bathroom and turned on the faucets of the tub. When there was enough water to cover it completely, the doctor put in the box, wrapped as he had received it. The thing was light, and floated.

BORROWING the stick which Frane still had in his hand, Doctor Loring immersed the parcel. Carefully, he forced the cane’s ferrule through the wrapping and the cardboard underneath. As the water ran into the hole, a scuffling noise came faintly from inside the box. With a motion of his wrist, Doctor Loring enlarged the hole in the now soggy cardboard, and withdrew the cane.

"Now watch," he invited.

For a moment, nothing happened. Then, squeezing through the small hole he had made, came a dark, scale-sheathed wedge; two feet of sinuous, convulsed length swiftly followed the serpent's head. The reptile swam to and fro, its angry forked tongue flashing with increasing rapidity as it vainly sought to climb the smooth porcelain of the tub.

"Fer-de-lance, if I ever saw one!" Doctor Loring exclaimed.

Frane nodded, several shades paler beneath his tan.

"Poynter may have robbed the zoo, or he may have brought this one and others from Haiti—he's like that!" said the captain.

"So this Poynter has been in Haiti?" mused the doctor.

"He *is* Haitian," Frane corrected. He stiffly anticipated Doctor Loring's unspoken question. "He is an octoroon, yes. You recall that I said he is my wife's stepbrother."

"If he sent that snake, he's a damn' villain, one way or another!" the doctor heatedly announced. "Those things"—motioning toward the tub—"are an unusually nasty species."

"I know," Frane soberly agreed; "I've seen what they can do. But then," he ironically reminded, "Polynice Poynter runs to nasty things—such as causing 'persecution complexes', for instance!"

"Tell me the details before we rejoin your wife—those you must have omitted the other time," Doctor Loring abruptly demanded. He made a wry grimace: "I have conceived a dislike for your Polynice Poynter!"

"Come, come!" he prodded testily, as Frane hesitated. "Give me the really important facts: how an octoroon happens to be stepbrother to your wife, and his motive for wating to injure her."

"It's simple," Frane responded. "Natalie's—my wife's—father was a cane-grower in Haiti. Natalie's mother died, and her father remarried—a Haitian woman who had been his mistress for many years; for so many years, in fact, that Polynice, who is about thirty, is believed by everyone in Port au Prince to be old Poynter's natural son. At any rate, Poynter legally adopted him, after marrying his mother. The situation was unbearable for Natalie—I married her, immediately afterward resigning my commission in order to leave Haiti with her.

"As to the motive you spoke of," he rapidly went on, "unless it has been changed recently, Haitian law prohibits whites from outright ownership of land in Haiti. So old Poynter invested his income here in the States, with such shrewdness that Natalie inherited a sizable fortune at his death.

"It's as simple as this: If Natalie dies without issue, Polynice gets everything. Do you see?"

"The motive is plain," Doctor Loring admitted. "But what has this Polynice actually done? You have told me merely that your wife's mind and health were being destroyed by fear of him, the basis for which was not mentioned. Tell me what you have kept back."

Captain Frane hesitated. "You must realize," he said, at length, "that Natalie was born in Haiti. Some things that would seem absurd to the average American girl are seriously real to her. Haiti is a strange island, Doctor Loring, and Natalie *believes* in voodoo."

"Ah!" nodded the doctor; "I follow you. Indeed, I am well ahead of you! This Polynice has persuaded your wife of his control of dark powers, and used the fact to influence her. Do you know in what way?"

Frane made a baffled, embarrassed ges-

ture. "He has her believing that her—her soul—a part of it, at least—oh, hell! It's childish, but it's going to kill Natalie, if you can't stop it. She believes he's put part of her into a silly little block of mahogany, a piece of dry wood no bigger than a small book. And he tells her, daily by 'phone or in person, that he is going to destroy that block, and her with it, in the near future."

"And she will die if he does destroy it," Doctor Loring promptly confirmed. "The power of induced suggestion makes that a reasonable certainty. But," he deprecated, "any half-baked psychologist could remedy that for you. . . . However, I will do it myself. I have, I repeat, conceived a dislike for this Polynice who sends snakes to people."

After a moment of thought, he added, "The only difficulty is that block of wood. To have it is not absolutely necessary, fortunately; but it would simplify matters."

"Natalie herself keeps it," Frane eagerly returned. "It's in her handbag, now."

Doctor Loring pursed his lips in a soundless whistle. "The fellow *is* clever!" he conceded. "That was a master-stroke, to let her have it, the power of his suggestion strengthening as she continually regards it, strives constantly to keep it from harm. Suggestion is the most powerful force in the world, Captain Frane. In this case, it will be the fire with which we fight the devil.

"Come! We have nearly the whole afternoon, and we shall use it to confound this voodoo that was born in the African jungles."

BACK in the study, Frane quietly informed his wife that Doctor Loring had reconsidered, and was prepared to take her case. The doctor regarded her with searching scrutiny for the first time.

Natalie Frane was at least a dozen

years her husband's junior; about twenty-five, Doctor Loring judged. She would have been beautiful, except for the haunted look in her somber eyes. From instincts reaching back to the years when he had been a mere general practitioner, the doctor automatically disapproved of her pallor, which was the more noticeable by contrast with the dark hair that was drawn simply back into a heavy knot upon her neck. She looked like a pale, troubled madonna; quite the type, impressionable and hyper-sensitive, to respond to subtle influences.

"I came because John wished it, Doctor Loring," she said, a defensive note underlying the listless words. "I doubt that a physician can help me, or even understand the thing that saps my strength and will."

"My dear," Doctor Loring gently assured her, "it is true that I am a physician. But I am also a psychologist, which is more. Further, I am a psychopathist—and that is much, much more."

He leaned forward, confidentially:

"Beyond all that, I have lived and learned in Haiti. I have lived among the natives as one of them, in order to further my scientific investigations. I know as much of voodoo as Polynice, plus other things of which he has no knowledge whatever. I *can* help you. Will you let me?"

Natalie Frane looked up into his face; and what she found there brought a light of breathless, incredulous hope into her own. Impulsively she caught his hand.

"Yes!" she whispered, "oh, yes!"

There was a low couch in the study, from the doctor's habit of taking cat-naps at odd minutes; and to this he led the girl.

"Lie down," he persuaded. "Stretch out and relax."

When she had complied, he resumed:

"I take it for granted that when"—he motioned toward the bag still clutched tightly in her hand—"when *it* happened, you either were asleep or in a state of induced coma. The same condition is requisite to a reversal of matters. . . ."

Still talking, the doctor placed a curious contrivance upon his desk, a series of small mirrors arranged in a common frame. A cord plugged into a wall socket set the mirrors spinning. As they spun, they merged into a disk of shimmering, hypnotic light. Natalie Frane looked into the whirling, compelling radiance; and looking, she sighed and relaxed. The precious handbag dropped from her limp fingers.

"An effective mechanical adjunct to hypnosis," Doctor Loring explained, stilling the spinning mirrors. Removing the contrivance, he pressed the button beneath the desk.

"Bring me a hatchet, or a heavy knife—that machete you use to prune the hedges will do nicely," he directed, when Tou-Tou appeared.

"When I wake her," he resumed to Frane, "we will tell her that whatever part of her ego may have been in the block has been forced out and restored to her. When she has accepted that, we shall show her the splintered block as proof. Afterward, you have only to keep your Polynice from further contact with her. As time goes on, her Haitian impressions will dim and disappear."

Tou-Tou returned with the machete, a long, heavy-bladed implement. Frane got the mahogany block from his wife's bag; and Doctor Loring set it on a magazine upon the desk. The machete rose, descended smartly. The dry, aged wood split cleanly—but neither Frane nor Doctor Loring watched its halves fall apart.

At the moment the blade bit into the

block, Natalie Frane screamed. She screamed, and then seemed to stifle, to choke on other screams that her working throat would not emit. Her body stiffened convulsively, knees drawing up with a jerk.

"My God!" cried Doctor Loring; "this is no mummery—it's stark, terribly genuine voodoo!"

"What is it?—In the fiend's name, what have you done?"

"Never mind that!" snapped the doctor, whipping into action; "Get out of my way. . . ."

He dashed out a doorway. In scant minutes he was back, a hypodermic syringe in his hand.

"That devil's business can't succeed, not quite, while she is in a hypnotic condition," he muttered, more to himself than to Frane. "But the coma won't last long, of itself; and if she wakes now—she dies! So——"

He sent home the needle's plunger. Almost as Doctor Loring released her arm, Natalie relaxed under the influence of the opiate. Even then, there was a curious intensity underlying her quiescent pose. The doctor whirled on Frane:

"Do you know how to reach that devil?"

"Polynice? Yes, by 'phone. But for God's sake what is——"

"No time for that, now!" Doctor Loring jerked him short. "You 'phone Polynice: tell him exactly what has happened. Tell him that you agree to anything he demands, if he will come immediately and help me undo his voodoo. Tell him anything, but get him here—quickly. *Move!*"

FRANE searched feverishly through the directory, threw it aside with an oath. He dialed "Information," and Doctor Loring heard him ask for the wanted

number. Then Frane slowly replaced the receiver, a baffled look on his face.

"The 'phone's privately listed. She wouldn't give me the number. And," he added despairingly, "I've no idea where he lives."

"If we can't get him here shortly——" The significance of the doctor's unspoken words was plain.

"Look here!" blazed the ex-captain of Marines. "Do you mean to tell me that, now you've forced matters to a crisis, you can't mend your bungling? *Do something!* You boasted that you knew more than Polynice—can't you do whatever he could?"

"Polynice couldn't save your wife," Doctor Loring returned paradoxically. "I'll do that. But Polynice is a necessary factor."

"You talk in riddles," Frane grated. "I put Natalie blindly in your hands—and look! You've pushed matters beyond your control. And I don't even know what's happened to my wife, nor why. If *you* know, it's time you told me!"

"I bungled," Doctor Loring bitterly admitted. "That fer-de-lance did it. I thought it a piece of crude theatrics, but instead, it was as clever as I thought it stupid. It threw me off the trail, angered me into becoming a catspaw for Polynice. I thought he was working on your wife's fears until she would eventually have broken under his pretended voodooism. There are very few genuine adepts, even among the Haitian *papalois*—but Polynice evidently is one of the few."

"Do you mean to tell me there is such a thing as genuine voodoo sorcery?" Angry disbelief struggled with sick dread as Frane's tortured eyes flashed toward the couch.

"Sorcery, in the sense you mean—no," Doctor Loring promptly answered his question. "There is nothing that can not

be explained in scientific terms, though sometimes the explanation is obscure. Voodoo, as a black art, is nothing more than induced auto-suggestion. It is a fairly common phenomenon among savage or semi-civilized peoples, to find individuals with a high degree of natural psychic control. Polynice has it, from that part of his heritage rooted in the jungles.

"He has dominated your wife's mind with the belief that he has induced a part of her—something of what, for want of a better term, we may call her spiritual self—into that mahogany block. To all practical intents, because he made her believe it, *he actually did it!*"

"The matter was static, without seriously affecting her while it remained so. But when I destroyed the block by violence, a sympathetic psychic reaction affected your wife as you have seen. In her coma, the psychic shock was partly neutralized; but if she awakens now, what will happen is comparable to trying to start a motor with a nearly discharged battery. We must recharge her psychic battery before she returns to consciousness and exhausts what little force remains. Otherwise——"

Doctor Loring spread his hands in a gesture more eloquent than words.

"And you must have Polynice to save her?" Frane groaned. "Why?"

The girl on the couch stirred, and the question went unanswered as the doctor sprang quickly to her side. His thin, quizzing fingers held her wrist a moment; then he dropped it and wordlessly refilled the hypodermic syringe.

WHEN the drug had been administered, Doctor Loring visibly braced himself as he turned to Frane.

"That is all I dare give her," he slowly announced. "More would kill her. It should maintain her coma for three or four hours longer."

His eyes held Frane's for a bleak, ghastly minute. There was hell in Frane's face as he turned, finally, to look at the still, helpless figure of his wife. The doctor pressed his call button.

"Tou-Tou," he demanded of the Haitian, "do you understand what has happened here?"

The whites of Tou-Tou's eyes showed eerily, as his gaze swept around the room. He nodded, silently.

"Is there a way," Doctor Loring asked hesitantly, almost fearfully, "—a way out?"

"One," Tou-Tou answered softly. A significant look passed between them; it seemed they understood each other. Doctor Loring nodded slowly as Tou-Tou went out.

"One way," he murmured to himself, his face bleak. "One way—and no means of finding him."

Frane raised his head from his hands. Stark murder looked out of his eyes.

"Polynice——" he muttered, thickly; "if she dies, the law can't touch him"—his lean fingers crooked in promise—"but God help him!"

They sat silent, then, waiting. The tip of Frane's tongue drew haltingly across his dry lips. . . .

The telephone rang.

Doctor Loring placed the receiver to his ear with a startled jerk; then motioned to Frane. "Calling you," he said.

Watching him, the doctor saw Frane's dull eyes light with excitement.

"It's Polynice!" he cried, a trembling hand across the transmitter. "What shall I tell him?"

"Tell him—no, let me tell him!" Doctor Loring rapped out. Taking the 'phone, he spoke crisply.

"Hello! . . . Doctor Loring speaking. Mrs. Frane is here in a critical condition, following my destruction of a certain

mahogany block—your understand me, of course. I must have your assistance in restoring her to a normal condition, from the mesmeric control under which I barely hold her.

"In consideration of your help Captain Frane is ready to accept any terms you may name. I pledge my own word that there will be no subsequent reprisal from him or the police. . . . Oh, yes! I think my testimony would make criminal action *quite* possible!"

The doctor's lips twisted sardonically as he added, with visible calculation, "Captain Frane himself is in a pitiful state. You had better come at once."

After the receiver had clicked into place, he turned to Frane in grim triumph.

"That got him, that part about you being shot to pieces. He couldn't resist coming to gloat. Besides, he feels quite sure of himself."

"You promised him immunity!" Frane retorted bitterly.

"I did not!" Doctor Loring contradicted. "I told him that you were ready to make any terms for your wife's safety—as you are; and that there would be no criminal action. . . ."

He paused, his fingers feeling under the edge of his desk.

"There will be no need!" he quietly amended, with a significance that was lost on Frane.

DOCTOR LORING parted his lips to speak, as Tou-Tou slipped in, then hesitated. After an uncertain glance at Frane, he altered his original decision, motioning the Haitian back.

"I have some preparations to make for our visitor," he explained abruptly. The door closed after him.

Frane paced back and forth across the study, his haunted eyes turning always to

rest upon the pale, bloodless face of the still form upon the couch. He glanced up quickly as Doctor Loring re-entered.

"You look as if you were all set," he slowly observed, "waiting for something to break."

"All set," grimly nodded the doctor, "to fight the devil with his own fire!"

Any questions Frane might have asked were forestalled by the faint sound of a bell in the recesses of the house.

"And there," Doctor Loring softly exclaimed, his eyes snapping, "there comes the devil!"

Through the cracked door, Tou-Tou jabbered in his French *patois*:

"It is that one! He will not enter without the dog."

Doctor Loring snapped his fingers with an exclamation—"The dog, Tou-Tou! The dog you have agreed will do as well as any goat!"

The whites of the Haitian's eyes flashed as he turned away. He came back, ushering in a man beside whom walked a gaunt, wolfish dog, stiff-legged with suspicion. It was the same animal that had snarled through the doctor's window.

The man, who needed no introduction as the much-wanted Polynice, was of medium height, but broad. His skin, slightly jaundiced in appearance rather than swarthy, betrayed little of his hybrid origin; nor did his straight, black hair. His arresting feature was a pair of evil, hypnotic eyes, as black and opaque as jet.

"Ah!" he murmured, in faintly accented English, with a slight bow; "Doctor Loring, I presume—and the estimable Captain Frane!" With purring malice, he added, "And my poor stepsister!"

The muscles stood out on Frane's clamped jaws, but Doctor Loring's voice was mildly urgent as he admonished—

"Come in, please. We've no time to lose."

Shaking his head regretfully, the octo-room advanced into the room.

"In spite of Captain Frane's contrary belief, I have no designs against his wife's person or, er—possessions. Surely I am not to blame for her regrettable mental disorder, and I am not a man of science. Eager as I wish it, there is nothing I can do to help, Doctor Loring."

"So you think to stand by, gloating, while Mrs. Frane dies when her coma passes?" Doctor Loring's voice was deceptively gentle: "Well, you are a cheat all around. The shock she has sustained is too great for you to remedy, even if you would."

"Then why ask me here?" murmured Polynice.

"Because I can help her, *now!* But it is going to be hard on *you!*"

Doctor Loring gestured fiercely to Tou-Tou, who hovered like an eager shadow.

The gaunt black man jerked a hand from behind him, and the noose of a rope flipped over the octo-room's shoulders, pinning his arms. But they reckoned without the fierce, wolf-like thing that sprang as its master cried out in startled anger. The dog leaped in slavering fury at Tou-Tou, who dropped the rope to ward off slashing fangs.

Polynice, free of the noose in a twinkling, jerked a pistol from the breast of his coat. He leaped toward the open window, but Frane swiftly interposed. The edge of his hand struck Polynice's wrist, and a shot went wild; the pistol spun across the room. The ex-Marine's fist smashed out, rocking Polynice back against the desk—the desk upon which a heavy machete lay. Lean, sallow fingers darted forward; the murderous blade slashed out at Frane, who barely threw himself aside.

As Polynice leaped again for the win-

dow, to which the way was clear, Doctor Loring flung his slight form after him. Something glittered in the doctor's own fist, stabbed viciously down into the Haitian's left shoulder.

With a startled snarl of rage and pain, Polynice whirled the machete in an awkward cross sweep, which Doctor Loring evaded narrowly. Before he could turn toward the doctor, or slash out at Frane, rushing in on him again, Polynice staggered in his tracks. The machete dropped to the floor.

"Don't hit him!" Doctor Loring cried. But Frane already had stopped short, staring at Polynice's twitching face.

"Damn you!" choked the jaundiced-looking Haitian. He would have slumped to the floor, had not the doctor caught and held him. Frane helping, he lowered Polynice to a chair.

"Strong stuff in that hypodermic!" gasped the doctor; "but it won't last long. Tie him up."

They had been too busy to observe Tou-Tou's battle with the dog. Now, as Frane turned to get the rope, the black man was holding the dog's throat with one hand, seemingly well in control. Tou-Tou's coat was slashed, and his free hand dripped blood; but the dog looked dazed, subdued. Its eyes were unaccountably glassy.

"Wring the brute's neck!" Frane growled over his shoulder as, rope in hand, he crossed anxiously toward the neglected girl, who remained motionless upon the couch.

"No," contradicted the doctor; "we need it a while longer. Take it on to the garden, Tou-Tou."

While Doctor Loring bent over Natalie, Frane trussed Polynice to the chair. Satisfied that the girl's condition remained unchanged, the doctor transferred his own attentions to the captive.

POLYNICE already showed signs of returning consciousness. The doctor helped him along with a bottle of smelling-salts held beneath his nostrils. The octoroon moved his head aside, writhed in the chair with a groan. Tilting his chin, Doctor Loring forced him to swallow something he had mixed in a glass. Polynice's eyes opened dully; then cleared, became bright with venom.

"Now you're out of it," Doctor Loring observed. "That is good; because I want you to understand thoroughly what I am about to say."

Giving Polynice no chance to interrupt, he continued sharply: "You know all about Haitian voodoo—and so do I! For months, I studied it in the mountains near the Dominican border. My servant comes from the region, as you may have learned."

"You did not know enough to save Mrs. Frane!" Polynice snarled.

"Ah! There you are mistaken," softly corrected Doctor Loring. "Until your influence is *completely exterminated*, it is true that I can not cleanse her mind." He paused significantly, then added deliberately—"So I propose to remove you!"

His hearer's face drained, leaving it the hue of a dead fish's belly.

"You dare not!" Polynice hissed; "I took care that several people knew I came here."

"You credit me with very little subtlety," Doctor Loring chided dryly. "I intend nothing so crude and, in this case, ineffective as physical violence. . . . There is no way of holding you accountable to the law, if Mrs. Frane dies; nor could the police protect her for the future if I undid your work temporarily. But I propose to issue my own injunction"—his voice blazed up wrathfully—"and punish you everlastingly for the crime already committed!"

"You dare not harm me!" Polynice snarled in repetition, through dry lips.

"So?" hissed Doctor Loring. "Undoubtedly you have seen the things I have in mind, at *petro* ceremonies?—the girl and the goat? Well, my sender of snakes, Tou-Tou was a *papaloi* in the Haitian mountains; and he says that your dog will substitute for the goat. And while you surely are no virgin maid, still—I think we shall manage!"

Frane had listened with impatience and lack of understanding, but the doctor's meaning evidently was horribly clear to Polynice.

"Not that!" he screamed, straining frenziedly at his bonds. Panting, he strove helplessly, but suddenly ceased. A sly look crept across his face.

"Have you the drug they give the girl, before the ceremony?" he demanded triumphantly. "I don't believe it, and you can't do without it. Your narcotics will not substitute—the mind must be under control, not deadened. The only other way is to hypnotize me, and my mind will never yield to yours! You can't hypnotize me, and you dare not murder me!"

"I'd like to take your challenge—on both counts," Doctor Loring retorted, with a twisted smile. "But the time is too short to risk my patient's life for my own vanity. I have delayed this long only because it was necessary that your mind be fully aware of what is to happen. Already it grows dark; and tonight the moon comes up almost with the dusk. . . ."

Once more, the contraption with the mirrors was placed upon the desk. Almost apologetically, while he adjusted the mirrors Doctor Loring told Polynice, "Your psychic inheritance from African witch-doctors hasn't much chance against modern science."

Uncomprehending but uneasy, the Haitian watched while the mirrors began

their spinning. Too late, he realized that he was trapped. Desperately he tried to tear away his eyes; corded veins throbbed at his damp temples. For long minutes Polynice fought a silent, agonized battle with an impersonal thing that beat down his will. With a stifled sigh, he relaxed in the chair, eyes staring, unseeing.

TOU-TOU slipped in like a weird, silent shadow. Behind the impassivity of his black face, there was an unholy eagerness. A gaudy handkerchief was wound about his woolly head, and there was a curiously twined wand in his hand.

"I have made a staff with the bones of the serpent that one sent!" he half chanted, in his slurred *patois*. "The dog is ready, and the moon comes up."

"This one also is ready," grimly returned the doctor. Motioning toward Natalie, he directed Frane—"Bring her in your arms. I hope that enough of what is to happen will reach her subconscious mind to register the impression of her release. . . . Come!"

Gripping Polynice by one arm, while Tou-Tou took the other, Doctor Loring murmured commandingly: "Rise! Walk to your gods, walk to Damballa!"

Half shuffling, half carried, Polynice sagged between the two. Taking Natalie gently up in his arms, Frane followed behind them.

The moon, a thin crescent, looked over the high wall of the wide garden. Flowers that were a riot of color by day, looked up with faces ghostly white or falsely drab in the pale light. Toward a clump of silent, secretive shrubbery in the center of the garden, the group moved. The wolfish dog, tethered to the bushes, whimpered as they approached.

Frane lowered his wife into a canvas garden chair he found in place. Doctor Loring released his hold on Polynice, and

helped adjust the chair until the girl lay half reclining. He passed his fingers lightly across her forehead, with a low command—

"Rest, and observe Hell take back its evil."

Tou-Tou had forced Polynice to hands and knees, facing the now quiet dog. The pale blob of the man's face was scant inches from the dark muzzle of the beast.

"You will have to overlook the trappings," Doctor Loring muttered to Frane. "They are psychologically vital."

He moved away and took from out the shadows something that had been placed there in readiness; Frane saw with wonderment that it was a large guitar. Squatting with the incongruous thing upon the ground before him, the doctor commenced to drum measuredly upon its reverse.

Tou-Tou swayed upon his feet in response to the weird, throbbing cadence of the drumming fingers.

"Legba, open the road! Great Damballa-Ouédo, take this thing we offer!"

He stopped shuffling, and bent above the strangely assorted pair, that stared in their queer fixity—the man and the beast, face and muzzle almost touching. The wand, with its twining snake vertebræ, described immemorial, cabalistic strokes above them. The doctor maintained the steady, monotonous tempo of his fingers upon the improvised drum.

"The thing is done!" Tou-Tou announced, his voice a thin whisper. The doctor's beat increased to a staccato pitch, sharp, imperative. Moonlight glinted fleetingly upon the knife in Tou-Tou's fist. The beginning of a scream, unearthly but seemingly human, died in a choked gurgle. The dog dropped upon its side, twitched briefly.

"My God!" the cry burst from Frane. "Polynice——"

"Is it Polynice?" rasped Doctor Loring, his fingers stilled.

For Polynice, upon all fours, held back his head—and bayed wolfishly at the moon!

"Bring Mrs. Frane back into the house. Hurry! She may wake at any minute, and I do not want her to see any of this, not consciously."

NATALIE was already beginning to stir, as Frane laid her again on the couch, back in the study. Doctor Loring bent over her, held her wrist briefly.

"A few minutes more," he promised, "and she will awaken—and be normal. Her subconscious mind has registered its freedom from the threat of Polynice. That should counteract the shock she sustained when I split the block."

"Thank God for that!" Frane fervently exclaimed. "But Doctor Loring! Polynice? That dog screamed like a human, and Polynice howled on all fours like a dog. I've heard of voodoo priests making such exchanges, but I didn't believe it—damn it, I don't believe it now!"

"Of course not," agreed Doctor Loring; "but Polynice believed it! Every voluntary cell in his brain is sealed, for ever, with the impression he received and believed in, at the moment Tou-Tou cut the dog's throat. To all practical purposes, his personality was in the dog when it died, and the dog's in him.

"It is the same thing that happened to your wife, repeated in his case. I told you that we would fight the devil with his own fire! So we frustrated a heinous attempted crime, which the law was powerless to check; and the criminal has been punished."

He consulted his watch, adding—"I have 'phoned for the police; they should come for Polynice at any minute. Tomorrow I shall sign the papers commit-

ing him to the State insane asylum."

He broke off, to step swiftly toward the couch. Frane reached his wife first, as the girl stirred, opened her eyes. Her husband, his face tense with anxiety, helped her as she struggled to sit upright.

"I am so tired," she sighed. The wan, strained lines of her face accentuated its pallor. Then Doctor Loring moved aside, deliberately. Natalie Frane's eyes widened, and her fingers flew to her mouth to stifle a scream. Then a look of wonder dawned in her face; a suspicion of color flushed the pale cheeks.

"Oh, John!" she cried to her husband, with the ghost of a choked, happy little laugh that was close to tears of amazed relief. "You've cut the block in two!—there isn't anything to voodoo, after all!"

"Absolutely correct!" Doctor Loring crisply approved, as the door-bell rang. With his arms tightening around his wife, Captain John Frane stifled a startled impulse to contradict.

Faintly through the open window came the mournful, terrified howls of a dog—howls with a note that was oddly, disquietingly human.
