

# WEIRD TALES



JULY

1940

Cover by  
Margaret Brundage

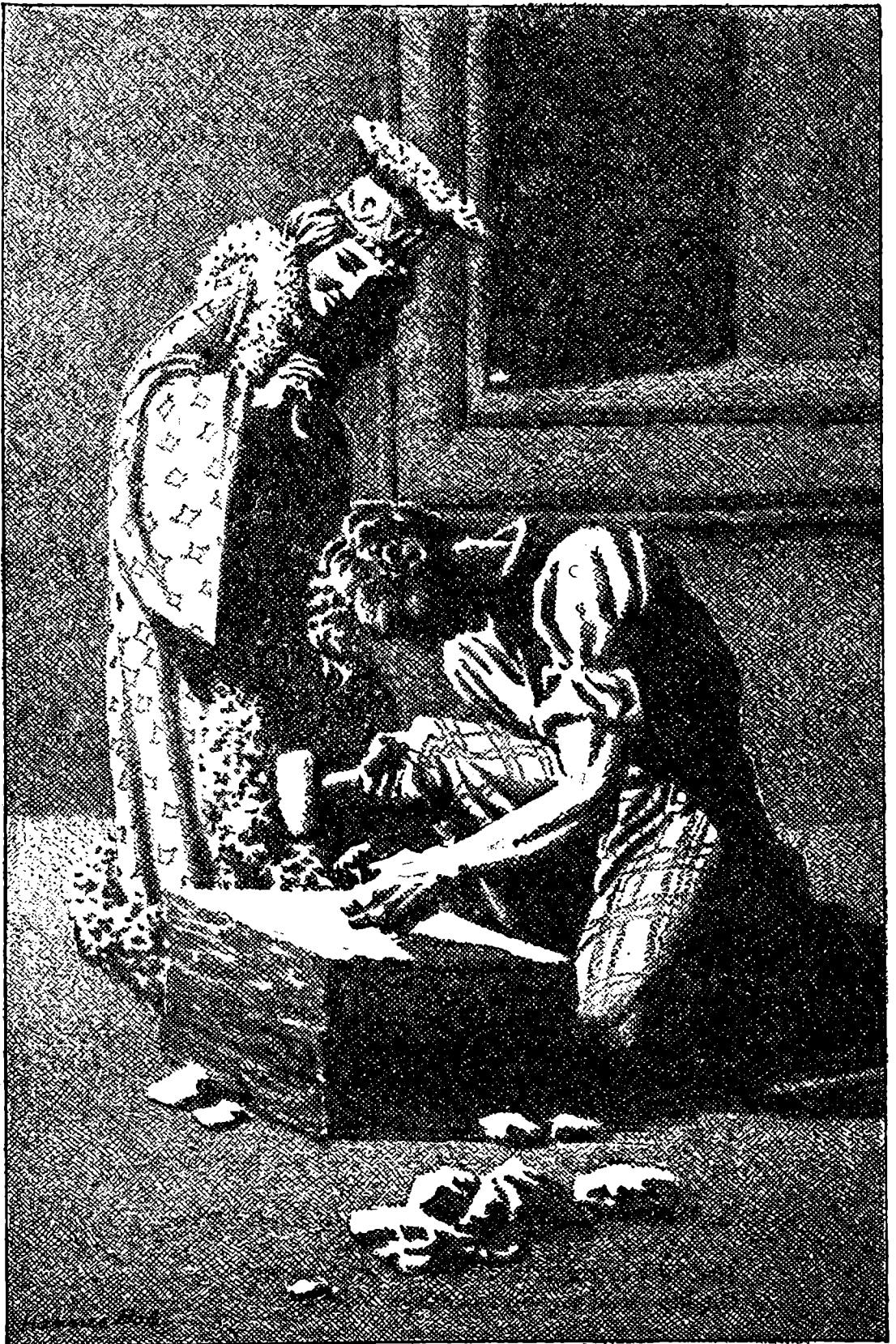
## AN ADVENTURE OF A PROFESSIONAL CORPSE

- (1) The Artificial Honeymoon . . . . . H. Bedford-Jones 4  
*A Certain Young Man Finds Dying a Profitable Business*
- THE GOLDEN CHALICE . . . . . Frank Gruber 15  
*Thousands Doubted. But One Thief Knew the Cup's Secret*
- THE FIDDLER'S FEE . . . . . Robert Bloch 23  
*He Called the Tune—And Had to Pay the Piper*
- THE DREADFUL RABBITS . . . . . Gans T. Field 36  
*Their Hunters Became the Hunted—and Died Horribly*
- A MILLION YEARS IN THE FUTURE (Conclusion) T. P. Kelley 44  
*—Planet Ships Are as Common as the Airplanes of This Age*
- ON PELL STREET . . . . . Frank Owen 70  
*Manhattan's Chinatown Shows Its Teeth*
- EARS OF THE DEAD . . . . . James Arthur 75  
*Verse*
- THE GENTLE WEREWOLF . . . . . Seabury Quinn 76  
*A Lovely Girl . . . In Wolf's Clothing*
- THE CRYSTAL HORDE . . . . . Harry Walton 96  
*The Crystal Juggernauts Had an Insatiable and Cannibal Appetite*
- INHERITANCE . . . . . Sudie Stuart Hager 111  
*Verse*
- BEYOND THE FRAME . . . . . Maria Moravsky 112  
*The Picture . . . Was a Gateway into a Century Time Had Forgotten*
- IT HAPPENED TO ME—F. T. Compton, Thomas Trafton, Jim Price 120
- THE EYRIE—and Weird Tales Club . . . . . 123

*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.*

Published bi-monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 15 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, 90c. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. Copyright, 1940, by Weird Tales. Copyrighted in Great Britain Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.





"He grasped his hammer and cut the outline of her foot."

# Beyond the Frame

By MARIA MORAVSKY

*Blazing office buildings struggled for a place in the frame with another, an older city of gilded spires and many-colored roofs. The past won.*

HELENA WOLNA, a young Polish librarian in the Slavonic Department, sat at her desk, looking wistfully at an old painting.

The picture hung opposite a window overlooking a downtown square. The lights of a distant skyscraper were reflected in the glass protecting the canvas, and the torches of an ancient procession mingled with the reflection of electric lamps.

Helena looked at the painting, vague behind the shining glass, and saw the interposed images of the candle-lighted Polish cathedral and the blazing office buildings struggling for the place in the frame.

Impatiently she pulled the window-shade lower. Freed from the competition of the intruding reflection, the painting was revealed in all its alien beauty. Winged Hussars galloped on both sides of a gilded carriage, escorting a frail, very young girl to the cathedral. Their faces, sharply lighted by torches, were full of animation which had survived centuries.

All Helena knew about that fragment of her old country was gleaned from historical books. But she had a romantic obsession to see it. Her racial memory seemed to know the half-forgotten scene. . . .

The painting now seemed blurred. Perhaps the glass was covered with the vapor of the misty evening. She looked closer and saw with astonishment that the glass was missing altogether.

The ancient scene seemed now distant. A thick curtain of fog hung between it and the girl. Helena stretched her hands toward the dimmed figures, signalling them

subconsciously to come nearer. . . . And then, the torches flickered.

The picture gradually became alive. The carriages moved farther and farther, then the galloping horses stopped suddenly. What had happened? Helena moved forward, peering through the fog.

Groping through the reddish darkness, she stumbled over something hard and thought without surprise that she was crossing the frame, the threshold behind which lay ancient life.

The dark frame broadened. Its inner edge stretched endlessly, expanding into a dark corridor with ashen walls, high ceiling and polished, slippery floor. Further and further she walked along this dark, subway-like tunnel with a misty opening at the end.

Further and further. . . . The opening broadened, the mist dispersed. At last she reached the end of the tunnel. A strong wind scented with strange memories blew into her face. The city of many colored tiled roofs and gilded spires shone in the distance, illuminated by the sun's afterglow triumphing over the fog. The evening was delayed, the torches looked pale.

Along the road leading to the glittering city hurried innumerable carriages, ox-carts, horsemen, and peasants in heavy-soled boots. Peacock feathers adorned their hats, bells jingled from their belts. Their women in ample billowing skirts sewn around with multicolored ribbons were like living rainbows.

They sang, laughed, gossiped.

"Is it true that King Jagiello has prom-

ised to baptize his people if our Krolewna marries him?"

"Oh, yes! They will be baptized in batches. They will step into the river, and the priests will pray over the water, to consecrate it. And then, after they have been sprinkled with holy water and given the names of our saints, each new Christian will be given a white shirt and a loaf of bread."

"Surely many of them would suffer baptism twice for that!"

It was the tipsy ox-cart driver who said the last words. A barefooted priest in dark brown habit belted with unbleached rope, who was being given a ride on the cart, shook his finger at the irreverent joker.

**H**ELENA listened to the chatter with excited attention. She felt that in some vital way it concerned her.

"Krolewna Jadviga is coming to Crakow. She has been to the White Sisters, to ask for advice. They say she has at last decided to marry this barbarian king."

"He is all covered with hair, like a bear," they gossiped again.

"Her second name is Helena," someone said.

And then Helena realized that she was the expected princess. She looked at her clothes: they were strangely cut and rich. Even under the layer of dust she could see how shiny was the silk of her voluminous skirt and fur-edged bodice, how thick was the plush of her amaranthine mantle.

A passing knight looked at her, astonished, and swept the dusty road with the plume of his hat.

"How did you happen to stray here, Krolewna? Dare I offer you my horse?"

"I—my carriage broke down on the way to Crakow. I hated to disappoint my people waiting for me in the cathedral. I left my escort behind," she answered assuredly as if repeating a sentence heard many times.

"Your courtiers will worry, Krolewna."

"Let them worry!" she laughed lightly. "I am tired of their pomp."

The knight lifted her gently and placed her behind him on the richly ornamented saddle. Jadviga followed with her finger the fantastic design of beaten gold and asked:

"Where did you get this saddle? It seems to be of foreign design."

"Yes, it's Turkish. A dead pasha parted with it on my behalf." He laughed unpleasantly. There was a hint of murder in his laughter.

Jadviga recalled that war was the only business of knights. The fearless Hussars! It sounded well in chronicles, but to meet one was repulsive. Why, he boasted of robbing a dead man!

"I will never marry a knight!" she thought.

And then—she remembered. She was coming to Crakow, to marry the knight of knights . . . the King of Lithuania had promised to unite his country with the Polish kingdom, and Jadviga, who had inherited the throne of her father, was the seal of that promise. How could she, even for a brief moment, forget that?

Yet it seemed to her that the event had been kept in oblivion for centuries. . . . She made an effort to remember why she had forgotten. But her mind was confused about the past. Or was it—future?"

She had a queer feeling of racing through the centuries. The epochs mingled so. . . . Were there any Hussars at the time of Jagiello? Certainly not. Nor had the Turks yet ventured to set their feet in Europe. Yet she heard the swish of the great cavalry wings designed to terrify the heathens from Asia; she saw the enormous pinions of eagle feathers hovering over Poland, casting their gigantic shadows over the country's future, while she rode backward, toward its past.

Her mind was in a whirl. Her head

ached under the heavy headgear. She lifted her hand to her burning forehead and saw on her finger a ring of darkened gold; it blazed with a crudely cut diamond. Yes, she was betrothed.

Her mind became mercilessly clear on that point. She was engaged to be married to that huge Lithuanian of whom people said that his body was all covered with hair like that of a bear. How disgusting! She wanted to weep.

But she remembered her dignity; people must not see her crying. The horse had already galloped through the gate leading to the cathedral.

SOMEONE recognized her in spite of the blurred light of the torches, again enveloped by the mist and the deepening dark. A voice shouted:

"Long live Jadviga!"

And the echo awakened among the solid stone walls of the cathedral mimicked faintly:

". . . live Jadviga! . . ."

Yet she did not feel the joy of living. She seemed to be going through a painful dream erroneously called life.

"Jagiello will be here before the evening mass, to welcome you, Jadviga."

She did not notice who said it; her attention was attracted by the sound of a hammer.

"Who is working here so late? Does not all work cease at sunset?"

The knight who had brought her answered, helping her to dismount from his restless horse:

"A few stone-cutters had to work at night, to complete repairs on the cathedral. It must be ready for your marriage ceremony."

She followed the sound of hammers. It seemed persistent and appealing like a signal sent out by someone very dear. . . . At the farthest end of the cathedral she saw a light-haired lad replacing a stone in the

wall broken by cannon. In the wavering torchlight his hair shone like pale gold.

His face was poignantly familiar to her. Somewhere, centuries ago, she had seen those dreamy gray eyes with their tinge of cobalt blue around the pupils. . . . She loved to see them, centuries ago . . . or was it centuries ahead?

"What a ridiculous thought!" she mused.

"Tell me your name," she asked the lad.

Before answering, he bent low and wiped his eyes with his sleeve. Only then she noticed that the boy was crying.

"Why do you cry?" she asked gently.

Her escort was shocked by her talking to a commoner. The surrounding crowd was gaping with astonishment at the unusual scene; a Krolewna conversing with a plain stone-cutter.

The boy hesitated. Then he looked up and their eyes met. As if compelled by a force stronger than his will, he blurted out:

"My father is ill. He upset a *tigel* in which he was melting metal, in search of the element of Truth. He is a great alchemist, you know. He scorched himself with molten metal. I am too poor to call in the king's healer. Others can't help him. So I am working at nights to earn enough. . . . But he may die before I am able. . . ."

He did not finish the sentence. Startled, with his mouth open, he watched Jadviga put her little foot on the stone which he was fixing. The light of many torches flashed on its diamond buckle. Krolewna forced the buckle off her slipper and handed it to the boy.

"Take this—for your father."

The boy looked at her with mute gratitude. When she stepped off the dusty stone, he grasped his hammer and cut in the outline of her foot, which had left its mark on the dust.

"Let the mark of your good deed live for centuries!" he exclaimed, pointing to the deep cut.

As their eyes met once more, these two realized that the most common of all miracles had happened; love blossomed out. And, with overwhelming joy, came instantly the withering realization that the flower would not be permitted to live; Jadviga-Helena had to marry the king.

The amaranthine flags of Poland, redder than blood and brighter than flame, fluttered in the breeze that smelled of burning pine. Their gilded tassels sparkled in the light of the gay bonfires started on the streets. Men in embroidered *sukmanas* and girls aflutter with ribbons crowded around them. The cymbalists of Lithuania and the pipers of Crakow tried to outdo one another making as loud as possible their simple melancholy music. Presently their tinkling was drowned in the roar of horns welcoming the king. It was a gay sound marking the beginning of the feasts and holiday-making, but for Jadviga it sounded like the trumpets of Judgment Day.

A GREAT crowd of strange-looking people with whitish hair, pale yellow skin, and powerful bodies standing knee-deep in the waters of the winding river. . . . Jadviga could hear the murky water swishing between their bare, hairy legs. The dignified priests in gold-embroidered *ornaty*, praying aloud under the cold gray skies. . . . The solemn ceremony of baptism. . . . The sun bursting suddenly through a heavy cloud, with its rays almost tangible, streaming down like the strings of a great harp reaching from sky to earth. . . . The murmurs:

"Miracle! Miracle!"

She saw and heard it all in the detached, lonely way of one peeping unseen at a stranger's feast. So a departed soul may look at the body it has deserted. She saw herself, as in a mirror, standing beside a stocky, broad-shouldered man in shining armor, with a great white eagle painted on his gilded shield.

"He puts on his armor even on holidays. He is suspicious, always ready for war," she reflected.

She looked at him long and hard like a tamer at a beast he has to break. But when he returned her gaze, she wavered. Was not the burden too great? Uniting kingdoms was not a woman's task.

Jagiello was bored with the too long ceremony. He yawned openly, disclosing his big, wolfish teeth.

Jadviga felt that she had a request to make. What was it? With an effort of one recalling an incident of remote childhood, she said:

"That stone-cutter . . . do you remember the stone-cutter from the cathedral?"

"The one to whom you gave your diamond buckle? Yes, people told me about your extravagance, my queen."

She looked up into his somber eyes. There was a flicker of amusement in them. No, he was not angry, just mocking. . . . Taking heart, she continued:

"His father died. It is a pity; the old man was a sage. Had he lived a little longer, mayhap he would have discovered the Philosopher's Stone."

"I and my people have but little need of philosophy," Jagiello said sourly. "These alchemists are often dangerous sorcerers. What about his son?"

"Waclaw wants to get work at the court."

"Not while I live! He knows how to cut figures for tombstones, yes? By Perun, none of our family needs one yet!"

"Please, do not swear by the pagan gods," Jadviga admonished him gently.

IN THE spacious roof garden of Jagiello's palace, shaded by great trees brought on enormous platforms all the way from a Lithuanian forest, Helena-Jadviga lay in her silken hammock, listening to the confused melodies of distant violins and accordions. There was a carnival crowd danc-

ing on the market place, celebrating the old pagan holiday disguised by Christianity as Easter.

She was infinitely sad and lonely, not because her king was away fighting the savagely religious Teutons, but because he was to return soon.

He would return and then—the services of the flaxen-haired falcon-keeper would prove dangerous. . . .

"What is troubling you, my *pani*?" she heard the caressing voice.

"Can't you guess what it is?" She gave him an eloquent look.

"To disperse this sadness, may I read you aloud from Slowacki?"

She rose from her hammock, startled beyond words. The boy mentioned the poems which were not yet born, the genius whose soul still wandered through the shadowy valleys of the future.

As if hearing her thoughts, her lover answered them:

"We are predestined to meet always . . . both in the past and the future. . . ."

**M**OONLIT mists scented with fading violets of late spring. . . . Distant shoutings of the celebrating crowds. . . . The clanging of bells and the roaring of horns. . . . And, dominating all the scents and sounds, the aroma of the boy's hair and the mocking sound of his indiscreet kisses. . . .

The king's return. . . . A hooded falcon handed to the falcon-keeper. And then—the terror! *That* terror!

"Do you know how to care for the birds? How long have you been here? I never saw you before!" Jagiello's hoarse voice was asking, his hairy fingers drumming over the gilded shield protecting his broad chest.

"I—I have been serving in the palace for two—no, for three years," he stammered.

"Ah! So you must know all my birds.

Undoubtedly, you know their ways. You know that they will attack a stranger. . . . Now, my faithful falcon-keeper, will you take the hood off this one?"

The fierce bird flying at the boy. . . . The swish of its wings, so loud, so unbearably loud, reminiscent of the great pinions of the Winged Hussars. . . . And then, a hank of blood-stained golden hair torn out of the beloved head.

"Ha! Ha! I remember you cutting stones in the churchyard at Crakow! I'll give you time to cut a stone for your grave!"

Darkness. . . . The bloody mists swimming under the trees of the artificial garden. . . . It seemed that the roof of the palace would break under the weight of the rich fat mold taken from the fertile fields of Sandomir, to grow the parasitic flowers in the king's paradise.

**Y**EARS later, lying in her chamber decorated only with the crucifix and the *obraz* of the virgin, the sick wife of King Jagiello remembered the stone-cutter whom she had tried to force out of her heart by fasting, prayers and good deeds. Her tired soul, stripped of its earthly cravings, longed now for but one look into his gray-blue eyes.

"Send for Waclaw," she whispered to her old servant who bent to straighten her pillows.

The old woman looked at her with compassion. Had the queen forgotten that the boy had died long ago?

"Waclaw does not live in your kingdom any longer," she said, making the sign of the cross.

But Jadviga-Helena would not believe it. "He promised to wait for me—he promised." Her bloodless lips murmured unconsciously the suddenly remembered words of a strange poem:

"We shall forget we ever died . . ."

She paused, trying to remember the

queer lines. They were in a foreign language, not in Polish.

"My love will meet me on the shore  
And he will lead me by the hand . . ."

She asked herself the meaning of the foreign sentences which sung themselves out of her inner self. But she could only repeat: "We shall forget we ever died . . ."

Oh, for one look into his eyes! She must, she would find him waiting beyond the walls of this stuffy chamber!

She thought that she could move. It seemed to her that she rose from her bed and was groping toward the door. But it was only her soul which moved away from the heavy and motionless body tied by mortal disease to the bearskin-covered bed.

She passed through the heavy oak door, between the brass-wrought bars which crossed its polished planks. She walked with unearthly light steps across the cobbled court of her castle, past the armor-clad sentinels, out of the iron gate, beyond the lowered bridge, farther and farther, toward the end of the city where the dusty road led from its suburbs to the ancient wall.

Dim light shone through the slit in the wall. She glanced through it. Strange how thick the wall became! The slit stretched endlessly, expanding into a corridor with ashen walls and polished slippery floor.

"An underground passage!" thought Queen Jadviga.

At the end of the tunnel there was an opening. It grew broader and broader, myriads of starry lights shone at the end of it. A strange steady light, unlike the torches and candles, a hundred times stronger. Yet it was not the light of the stars. It was lamps shining from hundreds of windows of a mammoth building. A skyscraper!

As if through a fog, she heard someone asking:

"Are you in charge of this library?"

SHE rubbed her eyes. A young man stood at her desk. The gentle foreign slurring of syllables gave his voice the quality of a caress. His Slavic high cheek-bones, softly outlined mouth, round chin, flaxen hair, seemed incongruous with his American clothes.

Dreamy gray eyes with a tinge of cobalt blue on the outer fringe of the iris looked deeply into hers, and she heard the bells of the ancient cathedral chiming with sad sweetness, proclaiming the unforgettable hour. They both knew, at first meeting, the thrilling sadness of things to come and things which had passed long ago.

"I am Jan Groholski," the visitor introduced himself. "I was directed here by an art dealer."

Unable to speak, Helena motioned him to a chair. For a while, they sat opposite each other, sharing the same strange tumult. . . . The young Pole said:

"I sat here for a long time watching you dream in front of that picture. Did you—do you ever have the feeling that you saw the same person and surroundings long, long ago?"

She nodded. He turned to the picture, with the unspoken implication.

"This painting was in our family for generations. I remember it as a boy. It hung in the music room, in our Warsaw home. But my grandfather was so poor, he had to sell it. A wealthy American connoisseur bought it. Now that I somewhat prospered here——"

She thought that she understood.

"You want to buy it back? But you can't, you know. It's public property—the library's administration won't sell."

"Yes, I know. Now that it belongs to the public library I don't mind. I'm perfectly satisfied to leave it here. But I'd like to copy it. Just a sketch. . . . May I?"

"Why, of course," the girl said unsteadily. The impact of this strangely familiar meeting left her shaken.



The young artist opened his portfolio and took out a kind of stylus.

"I'll do it in silver point," he explained.

"What is silver point?"

"A drawing made with the sharpened end of a silver stick. It leaves marks which oxidize. They are much finer than any pencil can make. The drawback is that it can't be erased. You have to draw it right the first time."

Even as he spoke, he drew rapidly, frowning. For a while Helena watched his slim hand move along the rough paper. Suddenly he tore the sheet in two.

She gave a little outcry of dismay.

"It did not look right to me," he explained. "I'll try it again."

This time it pleased him better. The girl in the bridal carriage and her convoy of winged hussars looked clearer. Yet again the artist shook his head and tore the sheet.

"I don't seem to get it." He looked about the emptying room. "Are you going to close?"

The librarian looked at the clock.

"I may close a little later," she decided. She had to see that drawing completed.

The last visitor left. It was long past closing time. But Helena still watched silently the quickly moving hand.

Now the artist raised his darkened, troubled eyes, and looked searchingly into her face.

"I abandoned the idea of copying the whole picture. I'm just sketching that furthest plane of it. . . . It seems somewhat obscure, but it may clarify. . . . Yes!" he cried so that he startled her. "It *is* clarifying!" In a low tone, almost in a whisper, he added: "Almost against my will. . . ."

She bent over the sketch and saw, not the girl in the bridal carriage, not the Winged Hussars on its sides, but that unforgettable scene by the cathedral, with the young stone-cutter chiseling the outline of Queen Jadviga's small foot.

Again centuries melted away. The pale gray lines of silver point seemed to scintillate, taking on some unearthly light. She looked closer into the queen's face, and it was almost like her own reflection in the mirror.

Slowly, with bated breath, she transferred her gaze to the other face, the suffering yet exalted features of the young stone-cutter, just outlined by the visitor. She looked at it for ages, as the library clock loudly ticked away mere seconds. It was the face of Jan Groholski.

Sudden lightning from the electric storm lit up the sky. And in that brief, dazzling light, she saw a glimpse of the future.

She could not see the details. But one indelible impression remained: Jan and herself bound forever together, by a link of timeless destiny.

