

# Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

MARCH, 1943

Cover by E. Franklin Wittmack

## NOVELETTES

- FLIGHT INTO DESTINY . . . . . Verne Chute 6  
*After all, he had a right to go where he pleased—even if he was trying to run down a lost Viking*
- UNDER YOUR SPELL . . . . . Henry Kuttner 72  
*Other mortals have tried to get the best of the gods, usually with disastrous results*

## SHORT STORIES

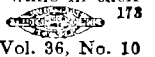
- A BARGAIN WITH THE DEAD . . . . . Seabury Quinn 22  
*Would the watching dead enforce a vow made so long ago?*
- NO LIGHT FOR UNCLE HENRY . . . . . August Derleth 37  
*Is it possible for a dream to make a man do things alien to his nature—like killing?*
- THE BOOK AND THE BEAST . . . . . Robert Arthur 44  
*If there is no natural explanation to a crime the authorities will invent one, rather than admit the supernatural solution*
- THE WHISPERING WINE . . . . . Thorne Lee 51  
*Was there a connection between the ghostly babble of voices and those dead things in the forest?*
- LIL . . . . . Mindret Lord 64  
*It was more than superstition that made her strike him when he tried to open the old make-up box*
- A BOTTLE OF GIN . . . . . Robert Bloch 94  
*The doctor said there was gin in the bottle—or did he say djinn?*
- THE WIND . . . . . Ray Bradbury 106  
*He was tracked across the world by the damnedest, biggest prehistoric killer that ever hunted prey*
- COREY'S CAT . . . . . Harry Raymond 114  
*It was an ideal vacation spot; nothing to worry about. That's what he thought!*

## VERSE

- A VASE FROM ARABY . . . . . Leah Bodine Drake 69
- FROST DEMONS . . . . . Joseph C. Kempe 93
- NECROMANCY . . . . . Clark Ashton Smith 105
- SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS . . . . . Irwin J. Weill 70
- THE EYRIE AND WEIRD TALES CLUB . . . . . 121

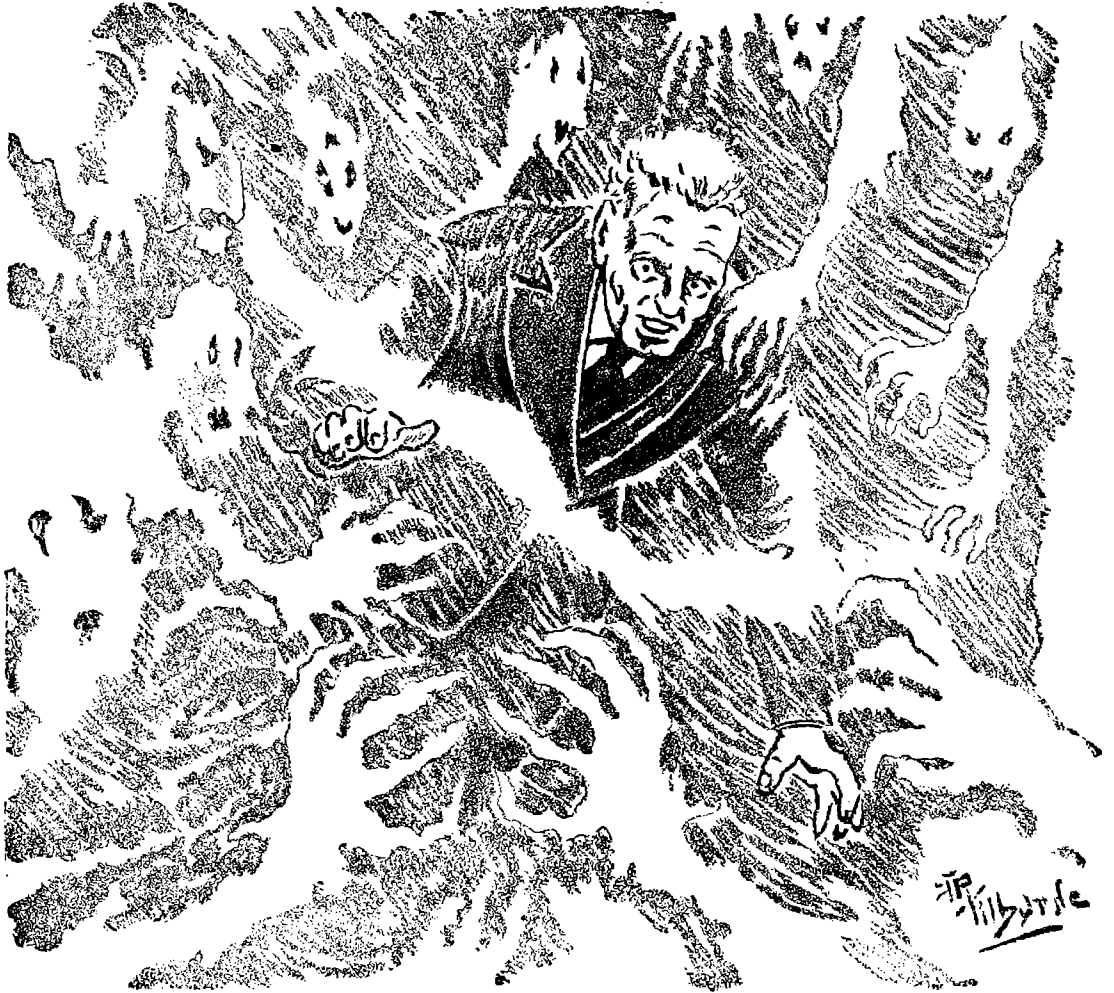
*Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.*

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, 90¢. 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, 1943, by Weird Tales. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.



# The Wind

By RAY BRADBURY



*This is dedicated to those who have lost the game of the elements,  
by one who has always escaped . . . until tonight.*

**J**OHN COLT was awake and listening. . . .

Moonlight sluiced into his room by the huge triple window fronting the upstairs of the house, fell across his sharp, questioning features.

The wind moved far away in the night, and Colt's lips worked as he listened to it; moving stealthily and mournfully from the sea, approaching the house as surely as mighty horses hooves.

Colt's body shivered, hairs stood erect upon his neck, and goose-pimples clustered on his limbs. He knew why he felt this way. After ten years he could believe nothing else.

He knew the wind was coming toward him—and he slipped from bed, thrust himself tremblingly into a robe, found carpet slippers and ventured downstairs to await its arrival.

He went to the phone, thinking, "This

is what I've waited for, calmly at first. Curious. Alert. Sure of most factors. But I don't know how much I can stand. I keep losing my grip, gaining it, and losing it again."

His hand shook as he dialed the call through. "Hello, Herb? This is Colt."

"John—how are you?"

"Not so good. And, like a fool, I dismissed my servants today. I'm alone. . . ."

All the while he talked, Colt listened. The weird music of the wind was muted by distance. It waxed louder.

"My writing routine for the last week's been shot to hell, Herb. Been trying to get some rest early tonight, but—"

What was that? Colt winced. A tiny breeze, preamble to the wind now on its way, rattled a shutter. Colt thought, did I lock every door, check everything?

"Sorry to hear that, John—" Herb Thompson was talking. Colt gave ear, then:

"Herb, I'd like to have you come for the night. Can you arrange—"

"I'll have to ask the little woman, John. Hold on."

A pause. Thompson was conferring with his wife. And far off the wind rose steadily, rapidly. "Sorry, Colt, Alice says we've got company coming."

"Oh." Colt swallowed. "Look, Herb, it's important. I've got theories about—well." He stopped, groping for words.

"Sounds like a case of nerves," said Thompson. "Why don't *you* come over here?"

"That wouldn't help." Colt shook his head. "I don't know *what* would. I—well—I'll call back in half an hour."

He hung up. What could Herb do? Nothing. It wouldn't be fair to drag an innocent into this set-up. And, anyway, how explain to Herb about the wind? Police help? They'd send a soft-pad squad.

Colt deliberately opened the front door. A lopsided frame of moonlight stroked

across the gleaming floor, picked out his wine-colored robe and slippers. He stood, shivering, waiting.

THE great wind could be only a mile away now, souging through a long high, dim corridor of swaying elms, plunging down the arboreal path toward Colt's lonely country manor.

Colt lit a cigarette, but his dark eyes fastened on the tree lane; eyes that had seen Rangoon, Stockholm, swept from Nairobi to the Amazon.

It was a dark, meaningful wind. Others might have been amused by Colt's wild thoughts. Thompson, for instance, would laugh uproariously.

But Colt was not amused. Alone out here, the nine o'clock countryside steeped in a vast tide of shadowed, eerie silence, this fortress of a house his final refuge, the last roll of dice forced on him, Colt could only wait.

The last stand. Decks cleared for action. Colt dragged on his cigarette, flicked it away, thinking, if I scream no one will hear me. No one. I'm far from town. Too damned far.

He'd phone Herb in twenty minutes. What to say? Something like this: "Herb, it began ten years ago when I was investigating phenomena. I'd been around, seen hurricanes, typhoons and whirlwinds. I knew what wind could do.

"Well, I was in Tibet. I heard of a mountain called the mountain of Winds; the space where the dark winds from all over the earth congregate at one time or other. It's a vast evil mountain, gray and jutting; hard, bony rock without a hand or foothold. Blasphemy to touch it.

"I touched it, Herb. More, I scaled it. Up thousands of sickening, dizzy feet, climbing where only madmen climb to probe into what's better left undissected. I gained its crest raw and wounded.

Of all the high, wild places I've seen

this was the most terrifying. On its very peak cleft a scar of valley through which a tide of wind rushed shrieking; not one wind but millions, small and large, light and smoke-hued.

Snow, rain, sleet and hail rang all about on the rocks. The blunt flesh of the mount sustained it all, and I perceived this from a niche, protected.

"Oh, how the clouds shot by there, high up, like creamy shreds torn from some huge and belabored wool-skin.

"What a noise. What a view. What force and violence.

"How I snailed up or down, or escaped, I don't know. Call it luck, fate, the will of an intervening God. But I cleaved like a lichen, hung, dropped, picked myself up, dropped again, scrambled and ran, afraid of what I'd seen.

"I got to Bombay. From time to time, after that, there were suggestions of what would follow. Nothing definitely singling me out for action, but general disturbances that occurred with ungodly precision wherever I traveled. Then, they ceased. I thought I had it licked. Until this week, six nights ago.

"I lay sleepless and listening. I heard a wind that night, Herb. Chuckling and laughing about the house, just for an hour or so, not very long and not very loud. Then it went away.

"But I will never forget the sounds it made.

"The second night, the same thing happened. Only, this time, Herb," thought Colt, "the wind slammed shutters, spilled down my chimney throwing soot, whisking out the fire in a flood of sparks.

"The first two nights weren't bad. I cocked my head, listened, amused to think I heard faint voices singing on the wind. But the third and fourth nights I changed my mind. It grew worse. The fifth night the wind returned and stayed on and on, blowing and blowing until dawn. I re-

member what happened when I dared to open the door a moment. . . .

"The wind came *eagerly* in. . . ."

Colt stanced himself resolutely. He was not old. Thirty, moonlight mantelling his lean, intent face, his thick black hair and dark eyes. For the present he did not recognize fear, he rubbed shoulders with curiosity, but tired resignation was its bed-companion.

Eventually it would have snared him no matter what he did. He'd had plenty of warning to flee. But, he shrugged, why bother? He'd make his stand here.

The wind was almost tangible, rushing from tree to tree, faster, faster and yet faster. Rising, roaring, rising like a great translucent fist, ready to crush down upon the house, ready to sweep it all away.

But that was not its purpose. It didn't want the house. It didn't want the house at all.

*It wanted Colt.*

THE wind went up. It elevated, freeing itself like an invisible prehistoric bird from the elms. Great tidal waves of atmosphere punched trunks and worried branches aside.

It screamed earthward, down to the open door. Straight for the door, straight for Colt!

Instantly, Colt's arm flicked up, snatched the door, slammed it. Locks *thungged* sharp into niches. Bolts rapped home!

A second late, the wind fell in a lethal avalanche, titanic and bone-shaking. The house heaved, groaned, as the air flung hard shoulders against it!

Colt staggered, the laugh from his lips crippled at birth. "Damn you, *damn* you! I fooled you. I fooled you again!"

He limped against the door, gasping. His brain was a steaming riot; what would have happened if the locks had failed, if he had not moved with a snap? . . .

Eyes distended, he pinioned the door unnecessarily with spread-eagled body, laughter not his own dropping from his mouth.

"You thought I'd let you in tonight, didn't you?" he choked. "Thought I was through. But I had everything ready, waiting. You won't get me, by the gods. You can't—you *won't!*"

The fury flanked the house with resounding echoes. A great vacuum machine nuzzled at the gables. Shutters leaped open, clattered; tiny breaking wings—clipped off. Trees doubled up as if attacked, struck in the vitals.

Colt abandoned the door, hurried to a window. The wind followed. It was all about the house, but its volcanic head looked after Colt, pressed a hard shifting face against the panes.

The window glass whined a crystal song of strain and stress.

"You can't break it!" jeered Colt. "You can't. It's new, unbreakable! I made sure of that yesterday."

The intangible thing outside followed him from window to window and then from room to room, pressing and mourning.

Colt stopped, struck by a strange thought. He gave it to the wind:

"You're a big hound run amuck," he cried. "You're the damndest, biggest prehistoric killer that ever hunted prey. A big sniffing hound, trying to smell me out, find me. You push your big cold nose up to the house, taking air, and when you find me in the parlor you drive your pressure there, and when I'm in the kitchen you fling your power there. A big invisible beast with the muscles of the mad winds, damn you!"

In reply, the night shrieked with all the agony of death. The wind seemed to razor the very gown of night, ripping it to shreds, shaking stars, trembling the shaded earth.

It tore at the roof with quick, hard fin-

gers, quested under the house to hiss through floor-chinks. A whip of cold flicked Colt's legs.

"Get back, curse you!" He blundered away from a side door.

HE RAN from room to room, upstairs and down, switching on lights; and the wind watched him, moved with him. The house flamed with light, brilliantly garish amidst a whirlpooling night.

Colt stopped long enough, coming down the hall stair, to light his pipe. He made a rigid ceremony of it, trying to steady his fingers. The flame fluttered. A cold draft snuffed it out.

Colt tried again, succeeding. The pipe glowed. He blew smoke and the draft whisked it away in a quick billow.

The wind smote the house again and again. It fell, it leaned, it thrust. It whined through the screen door, but Colt made no move to satisfy it, so it jerked a screen off in a frenzy of strength, shattered it across the dark lawn.

A strong house, thought Colt, and he was glad he had ordered reinforcements for certain portions of it; new wood, new steel, new locks.

The harried trees were flung one way and another, riding whips cracked by a Jovian fist.

BACK in the living room, before the warming electric fire-log, Colt picked up a book. One of the books he had written on hurricanes, typhoons and other colossal forces. He thumbed through it, stopping at the dedication:

*"This book is written by one who has seen, but who has always escaped. It is dedicated to those who lost the game of elements. . . ."*

Always escaped? No—not always. Tonight . . .

The printed page misted, flowed, garbled. Colt's pipe went out. When he tried

to light it again he could not. He set the book on his lap and began reading.

And then a draft of wind, small, almost imperceptible, fingered the pages. It turned them idly, thoughtfully, one by one. Over and over and over. Colt watched it work its will with the pages, stiffened and hypnotized. His fingers jerked. He seized the book and dashed it to the hearth, cursing.

The wind mocked him, tenderly stroking his brow with a slim finger.

Colt flung himself into the hall, tore down a huge drapery, jammed it against the door, under which the draft came hissing and laughing.

"I'll throttle you—I'll stop your tongue!"

And then, tired: "Go away, damn you." Weakly. "Go away. Let a mortal live."

A grinding noise. Something cracked like thick dry bones. A pause. A rustling, thumping terrific crash. The lights went out—the room plunged into a howling dark-pit. The power poles lay slaughtered by the wind. The electric grate, glowing faintly, died, too, in the black room. The words Colt babbled were meaningless, like an hysterical child.

**F**UMBLING, Colt struck a match; light played over a face aged twenty years. The lonely flame threw light over something that gleamed dully. The phone! Maybe—The phone wires had been connected to other poles. If the line was still intact . . .

"Operator!" Colt waited. Response, "Yes, sir?"

"Thank God, thank God, thank God—operator, give me Trinity 9929."

"Trinity 9929?"

"Yes. And hurry, for Lord's—"

A pause. The phone on the other end was ringing. It was ringing. It was ringing! *Click.*

"Herb Thompson speaking."

"Herb? Herb!" Insane with relief.

"Yes. Who's this?"

"Herb—Herb, this is Colt—"

"John? Your voice, I didn't recognize—"

"I haven't time! Listen. I want you to do something for me—"

"Anything. What's wrong? You sound—"

**CLICK!**

"Herb, there's a localized storm outside. A great wind. It wants me. It wants *me!* Alive! Are you listening?" A rapid rattle of the hook. "Herb." A rattle. "Herb?" Pause. Shouting, "*Herb!*"

Silence.

The wind moved outside. It had won again. Won again. First the lights—now the phone.

"Operator, I've been cut off! Operator, oper—it's no use. **NO DAMNED USE!** God curse you, damn you, kill you—take this!" He ripped the phone from its wiring, heaved it at a window. He realized his error too late to stop it. The phone struck only partially, splintering glass into a crystal web, breaking a small hole.

The wind tongued in, taking advantage of the small egress. Colt damned the hole with a plug of wadded drapery. He stood raging, frightened, bitter. Alone. Alone. Eyes wide and every fiber in him aquiver.

"You want me alive, don't you? Alive. You don't dare knock the house down in one fell blow. No, that would kill me, and you want me alive—so you can rip me apart finger by finger and muscle by muscle. Or do you want what's inside me—my mind—my brain—my mind—"

**H**E FALTERED to a stop, shocked by truth. He put a hand to his brow. "My *mind.* That's it. You want it, don't you?"

"You don't care for the husk that cradles the mind, but you want the intellect. You covet my thought, my life power, my ego. The psychic force, the power of thought

and existence—you want all those because that is what you are, aren't you?"

He drew in a long, aching breath. His eyes coursed tears and his cheeks were wet. And he cursed the wind.

"That's what you are, a big cloud of vapors, atoms, winds from every corner of the earth—the same wind that ripped the Celebes ten years ago, the same pampero that killed in Argentina, the typhoon that fed well in Hawaii, and the hurricane that devastated the coast of Africa last year! You're all of them, part of each, part of those tempests I escaped.

"Only, something happened to give you a start in the direction of alien life. Or maybe the Winds have always been this way; more than hot and cold currents. You want power, like mine. You want intellect. I could do you more good or harm than others, for I know your feeding ground, I know where you are born and where you expire. You don't want death, like other winds. You want life, to get me out of the way because I *know*.

"I can tell the world of your cruelty, tell them how to parry and defeat you, as I have done in books! But you don't want my preaching any more. You can use me for your *own* purposes! Incorporate me into your huge cold carcass, give you knowledge, purpose, direction! You want me on *your* side!"

COLT laughed again, lungs tired and broken from laughing and shouting against the dinning. The house shook like a slipper in a puppy's mouth.

"You'll have to tear the house down bit by bit! And I'll duel you tooth and nail all the way—like I fought you in Ceylon. When I started a forest fire, the one thing that survives and feeds on wind, combatting it. I licked you then, and I'll do it again!"

The house shook once more and the crumbling started.

The front wall bulged in. Glass splintered but did not break. Colt, face swollen from emotion, turned, scrambling for the kitchen.

He dared look once as the kitchen door sealed behind—saw the parlor wall buckle, spew in as if rammed by an artillery shell. The wind stabbed through, howling in triumph.

The kitchen door barely shut before the wind's shoulder was against it. The frail lock could not hold. Colt fought against straining hinges. Giving up, he jerked the cellar door agape, leaped down, bolted it.

Bomber fragments of kitchen door shrapneled everywhere. Gas mains tore loose, spurted gas that blazed into fire.

The upper floor of the house tore away like the simultaneous ripping of ten million yards of muslin.

Colt gritted his teeth, held to the door. Blood ran from his nostrils. He fought idiocy, fought the wind with his mind.

"You can't get me—you can't! I'd hide until you rip the floor up, board by board—then I'll burrow in the ground like an animal and escape! Like I did in Alexandria years ago, like I did in Nairobi! I'll burrow!"

The wind paid no heed. There were voices in it. Voices of the gale, bora and bayamo. Wretched callings, pleadings of the siroccos and tempests. They pleaded with Colt, commanding, telling, urging, ordering him to give himself up.

These were the tongues of ten thousand killed in a typhoon, seven thousand slaughtered by a hurricane, three thousand engulfed by a cyclone. Twisted and tortured and flung from continent to continent on the backs and in the bellies of monsoons and whirlwinds. Wandering in rains and showers, in snows and hails, racked by thunder, pelted by water, fettered and bodiless.

Moulded. Moulded from one million disenthroned spirits into one voice. And

that voice, one of darkness and power, now demanded but yet another sacrifice.

In respite, the wind slowed. It quelled over the conquered rubble of wood, plaster and sharded glass. It roved through the crippled ruin, biding time. It languished outside the cellar, singing a blank versed melody in a score of keys.

And the singing was only broken by the sobbing from the cellar. There was a great silence after the maelstrom. A silence punctuated by weeping and the anxious hiss of the wind.

Colt would not come out.

The cellar floor was dirt. He lay on it, looking up, face streaked with dirt, sweaty, lined and haggard. "Come and get me," he husked.

**S**CRABBLING at the soil, raking a shallow trench for his body, he attempted to burrow to crouch in. His fingernails tore and bled. He ached. He longed to rest.

Finally, he could stand it no longer. A coil of rope lay in a corner. He clutched it, threw a snake of it up over one quivering rafter. The kitchen flooring gave, creaking, bit by bit. In five minutes . . .

As the rope came raveling down, Colt tied a quick noose in it, hard and sure. Just far enough off the floor to . . .

Next, a keg of nails, rolled and rocked into place. Colt stepped up. This was escape. He reached for the noose.

The wind flicked the noose away from his fingers. A small hand of wind somehow had crept into the cellar from above, and now it flung the rope wildly in circles.

"Give it to me! The rope, you fool, the rope!" Colt tried to catch the madly dancing hemp-line. But the wind threw it out of reach, zig-zagging it from side to side and back and forth. A lurch from Colt—the rope flew away, came back to rap his face, then out again.

Desperation. Colt snatched, cursed,

snatched again. Time grew short. So little time to escape. A snatch — a miss. And —

He caught the rope. The wind died. Died as if only playing a game. It waited. Colt wondered why. But taking advantage of the cessation, he thrust his head into the noose.

"You can't have me alive, you can't have my life-force!" he cried. "I'm getting away—I'm getting away—NOW!"

Colt leaped, kicking the nail-keg with frantic feet. The rope sang, wiring his throat in strangulation.

"I have won," his misting brain exalted, "I have won!"

But immediately, the rafters upon which the rope depended, sagged inward, shrieking, slowly, slowly, certainly.

With cracking thunder the rafters, pulled by Colt's weight, gave way, opening, opening an entrance for the wind.

The rafters collapsed, the floor caved and flew apart. Colt fell, sprawled, choking in the dirt.

"All right, God damn you!" He stiffened up, raging. "Here I am—*take me!*"

The wind howled. . . .

**"THE LINES ARE DOWN, SIR."**

"Are you sure, operator? I was cut off in the middle of my call."

Herb Thompson laid the phone back in its cradle and leaned against the writing desk, shaking his head. "I can't figure it out. No storm. A little wind, maybe, but—" He took his coat off an armchair and shrugged into it. "Think I'll drive out Colt's way, have a look-see. He sounded strange. But, that's his way. May be on his way here now, with another of his cracked theories. Liable to pop up any time."

Herb Thompson was undecided. He stood, wavering, considering, hat in hand. Faintly, a rapping came, on the front door. "Eh?" Herb started, listening. The knock



was repeated. "Who's knocking at this time of—"

Thompson hurried across his den, out into the hall, where he stopped again, alert. "Huh." Faintly, he heard laughter. "Of course." Herb grinned hugely. "I'd know his laughter anywhere. It's Colt. He came when he was cut off, couldn't wait till morning to tell me his confounded tall-tales." Thompson chuckled as he marched to the front door. "Glad he's here. Probably brought some friends with him. Sounds like a lot of other people laughing."

Thompson opened the front door.

"Come on in, Colt!"

The porch was vacant.

Thompson showed no surprise, his face grew amusedly sly. He laughed. "Colt?"

Now, none of your tricks! Come on." He switched on the porch-light and peered out and around. "Where are you, Colt?"

No answer.

Thompson waited a moment, suddenly chilled to the marrow. He stepped out on the porch and looked uneasily about, very carefully.

A sudden wind caught, whipped his coat, disheveled his hair. He thought he heard laughter again.

The wind died down, sad, mourning, passing away, away, going back far out to the sea, to the Celebes, to Nairobi, to Sumatra and Cape Horn. Fading, fading, fading. Laughing.

Thompson shrugged. He went in and closed the door, shivering.

"That's funny . . ." he said.