

Vol. II, No. 9

HOME BREW

AMERICA'S ZIPPIEST POCKET MAGAZINE

Peppy Stories
Wingent Jests
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Edited
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Missus & Mister
George Julian Howain



MUTUAL
RESOLUTIONS

DAS'S

Begins In This Number

"The Lurking Fear"

By Howard P. Lovecraft

Illustrated by CLARK MORTON SMITH, the artist
who illustrated Edgar Allan Poe

Man's Revolt Against Marriage, By Winifred Huger Cooley

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Edited by
GEORGE JULIAN HOUTAIN and E. DOROTHY HOUTAIN

Volume II

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Number 6

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NEXT MONTH

Everybody does not like poetry—but if the letters of commendation we have received about the

"FABLES FOR FLAPPERS" are any indication, then the splendid work of **RHEINHART KLEINER** is an exception to the rule.



RHEINHART KLEINER.

In response to insistent demands we have arranged with this popular poet for a new series of poems, which will start in the February number under the title of

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The LURKING

I—The Shadow on the Chimney

in Four Episodes

By

Howard P. Lovecraft

Author of

"Herbert West, Reanimator"
and other stories

THERE was thunder in the air on the night I went to the deserted mansion atop Tempest Mountain to find the lurking fear. I was not alone, for foothardiness was not then mixed with that love of the grotesque and the terrible which has made my career a series of quests for strange horrors in literature and in life. With me were two faithful and muscular men for whom I had sent when the time came, men long associated with me in my ghostly explorations because of their peculiar fitness.

We had started quietly from the village because of the reporters who still lingered about after the eldritch picnic of a month before—the nightmare creeping death. Later, I thought, they might ask me; but I did not want them then. Would to God I had let them share the search, that I might not have to bear the secret alone so long; to bear it alone for fear the world would call me mad or go mad itself at the demon implications of the thing. Now that I am telling it anyway, lest the brooding make me a manne, I wish I had never concealed it. For I, and I only, know what manner of fear lurked on that spectral and desolate mountain.

In a small motor-car we covered the miles of primeval forest and hill until the wooded ascent checked it. The coun-

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*takes exceptional pride in
this achievement enhanced,
as it is, by the noted artist,*

CLARK ASHTON SMITH,
*who has illustrated some of
Poe's tales, and whose vivid,
grotesque sketches have been
especially made for this
series.*

FEAR

with Drawings

by

Clark Ashton Smith

the artist

who illustrated some of
Poe's Tales.

wholesome landscape after dark, and I believe I could have noticed its morbidity even had I been ignorant of the terror that stalked there. Of wild creatures there were none—they are none when death veers close. The nearest lightning-scoured trees seemed monstrously large and twisted, and the other vegetation monstrously thick and feverish, while curious sounds and hum-mocks in the woody, fulgurite-pitted earth reminded me of snakes and dead men's skulls swelled to gigantic proportions.

Fear had lurked on Tompest Mountain for more than a century. Thus I learned at once from newspaper accounts of the catastrophe which first brought the region to the world's notice. The place is a remote, lonely elevation in that part of the Catskills where Dutch civilization once feebly and transiently penetrated, leaving behind as it receded only a few ruined mansions and a degenerate squatter population inhabiting pitiful huts on isolated slopes. Normal

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try here an aspect more than usually sinister as we viewed it by night and without the accustomed crowds of investigators, so that we were often tempted to use the acetylene headlight despite the attention it might attract. It was not



"The Shadow on the Chimney."



The Marlesse Mansion.

being seldom visited the locality till the state police were formed, and even now only infrequent troopers patrol it. The fear, however, is an old tradition throughout the neighboring villages since it is a prime topic in the simple discourse of the poor mountaineers who sometimes leave their valleys to trade hand-woven baskets for such primitive necessities as they cannot shoot, raise, or make.

The lurking bear dwelt in the shunned and deserted Marlesse mansion, which crowned the high but gradual eminence whose liability to frequent thunderstorms gave it the name of Tempest Mountain. For over a hundred years the antique, grove-circled stone house had been the subject of stories incredibly wild and monstrously hideous; stories of a silent colossal creeping death which stalked abroad in summer. With

On *Tempest Mountain*.

whispering insistence the squatters told tales of a demon which seized lone wayfarers after dark, either carrying them off or leaving them in a frightful state of gnawed dismemberment; while sometimes they whispered of blood-trails toward the distant mansion. Some said the thunder called the lurking fear out of its habitation, while others said the thunder was its voice.

No one outside the backwoods had believed these varying and conflicting stories, with their incoherent, extravagant descriptions of the half-glimpsed fiend; yet not a farmer or villager doubted that the Martense mansion was ghostly haunted. Local history forbade such a doubt, although no ghostly evidence was ever found by such investigators as had visited the building after some especially vivid tale of the squatters. Grandmothers told strange myths of the Martense spectre;

myths concerning the Martens family itself, its queer hereditary dissimilarity of eyes, its long, unnatural annals, and the murder which had cursed it.

THE terror which brought me to the scene was a sudden and portentous condemnation of the mountaineers' wildest legends. One summer night, after a thunderstorm of unprecedented violence, the countryside was assailed by a squatter stampede which no mere delusion could create. The pitiful throngs of natives shrieked and whined of the unnameable horror which had descended upon them, and they were not doubted. They had not seen it, but had heard such cries from one of their hamlets that they knew a creeping death had come.

In the morning citizens and state troopers followed, the shuddering mountaineers to the place where they said the death had come. Death was indeed there. The ground under one of the squatters' villages had caved in after a lightning stroke, destroying several of the rickety shanties; but upon this property damage was superimposed an organic devastation which paled it to insignificance. Of a possible seventy-five natives who had inhabited this spot, not one living specimen was visible. The disordered earth was covered with blood and human debris bespeaking too vividly the ravages of demon tooth and talon, yet no visible trail led away from the carnage. That some hideous animal must be the cause, everyone quickly agreed; nor did any tongue now revive the charge that such cryptic deaths formed merely the sordid murders common in decadent communities. That charge was revived only when about twenty five of the estimated population were found missing from the dead; and even then it was hard to explain the murder of fifty by half that number. But the fact remained that on a summer night a hell had come out of the heavens and left a dead village whose corpses were horribly mangled, chewed, and clawed.

The excited countryside immediately connected the horror with the haunted Martens mansion, though the localities were over three miles apart. The troopers were more sceptical; including the mansion only casually in their investigations, and dropping it altogether when they found it thoroughly deserted. Country and village people, however, canvassed the place with infinite care; overturning everything in the house, sounding ponds and brooks, beating down bushes, and ransacking the nearby forests. All was in vain; the death that had come had left no trace save destruction itself.

By the second day of the search the affair was fully treated by the newspapers, whose reporters overran Tempest Mountain. They described it in much detail, and with many interviews to elucidate the horror's history as told by local grandmas. I followed the accounts languidly at first, for I am a connoisseur in horrors; but after a week I detected an atmosphere which stirred me oddly, so that on August 5th, 1931, I registered among the reporters who crowded the hotel at Lefferts Corners, nearest village to Tempest Mountain and acknowledged headquarters of the searchers. Three weeks more, and the dispersal of the reporters left me free to begin a terrible exploration based on the minute inquiries and surveying with which I had meanwhile busied myself.

SO on this summer night, while distant thunder rumbled, I left a silent motor-car and tramped with two armed companions up the last mound-covered reaches of Tempest Mountain, casting the beams of an electric torch on the spectral grey walls that began to appear through the giant oaks ahead. In this morbid night solitude and feeble shifting illumination, the vast box-like pile displayed obscure hints of terror which day could not uncover; yet I did not hesitate, since I had come with fierce resolution to test an idea. I believed that the thunder called the death-demon out of some fearsome secret place; and be that demon solid entity or vaporous pestilence, I meant to see.

I had thoroughly searched the ruin before, hence knew my plan well, choosing as the seat of my vigil the old room of Jan Martens, whose murder looms so great in the rural legends. I felt subtly that the apartment of this ancient victim was best for my purposes. The chamber, measuring about twenty feet square, contained like the other rooms some rubbish which had once been furniture. It lay on the second story, on the south-east corner of the house, and had an immense east window and narrow south window, both devoid of panes or shutters. Opposite the large window was an enormous Dutch fireplace with scriptural tiles representing the prodigal son, and opposite the narrow window was a spacious bed built into the wall.

As the tree-muffled thunder grew louder, I arranged my plan's details. First I fastened side by side to the ledge of the large window three rope ladders which I had brought with me. I knew they reached a suitable spot on the grass outside, for I had tested them. Then the three of us dragged from another room a wide four-poster bedstead, crowding it laterally against the window. Having strewn it with fir boughs, all now rested on it with drawn automatics, two relaxing while the third watched.

THE LURKING FEAR

From whatever direction the demon might come, our potential escape was provided. If it came from within the house, we had the window ladders; if from outside, the door and the stairs. We did not think, judging from precedent, that it would pursue us far even at worst.

I WATCHED from midnight to one o'clock, when in spite of the sinister house, the unprotected window, and the approaching thunder and lightning, I felt singularly drowsy. I was between my two companions, George Bennett being toward the window and William Tobey toward the fireplace. Bennett was asleep, having apparently felt the same anomalous drowsiness which affected me, so I designated Tobey for the next watch although even he was nodding. It is curious how intently I had been watching that fireplace.

The increasing thunder must have affected by dreams, for in the brief time I slept there came to me apocalyptic visions. Once I partly awaked, probably because the sleeper toward the window had restlessly flung an arm across my chest. I was not sufficiently awake to see whether Tobey was attending to his duties as sentinel, but felt a distinct anxiety on that score. Never before had the presence of evil so poignantly oppressed me. Later I must have dropped asleep again, for it was out of hideous with shrieks beyond anything in my former experience or imagination.

In that shrieking the inmost soul of human fear and agony clawed hopelessly and insanely at the ebony gates of oblivion. I awoke to red madness and the mockery of diabolism, as farther and farther down inconceivable vistas that phobic and crystalline anguish retreated and reverberated. There was no light, but I God alone knew whither. Across my chest still lay the heavy arm of the sleeper at my left.

Then came the devastating stroke of lightning which shook the whole mountain, lit the darkest crypts of the hoary grove, and splintered the patriarch of up suddenly while the glare from beyond the window threw the sleeper started upon the chimney above the fireplace from which my eyes had never strayed. That I am still alive and sane, is a marvel I cannot fathom. I cannot fathom it, other human creature, but a blasphemous abnormality from hell's nethermost or a nameless, shapeless abomination which no mind could fully grasp and manifest, shivering and gibbering. George Bennett and William Tobey had left no trace, not even of a struggle. They were never heard of again.

The Next Episode "The Passer in the Storm"
Will Leave the Reader Gasping at its Diabolical Realism