

# Strange STORIES

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The Ancient God,  
Zu-che-quon, Enemy  
of the Sun, Bringer  
of Darkness, Is  
Awakened!



I heard a sickening crunch  
and saw one of the bells  
smash down on Sarto

# Bells of Horror

By KEITH HAMMOND

Author of "The Hand of Ahrimana," "The Invaders," etc.

Then star nor sun shall waken,  
Nor any change of light;  
Nor sound of waters shaken,  
Nor any sound or sight;  
Nor wintry leaves nor vernal,  
Nor days nor things diurnal:  
Only the sleep eternal  
In an eternal night.

—Swinburne.

A GREAT deal of curiosity has been aroused by the strange affair of the lost bells of Mission San Xavier. Many have wondered

why, when the bells were discovered after remaining hidden for over a hundred and fifty years, they were almost immediately smashed and the fragments buried secretly. In view of the legends of the remarkable tone and quality of the bells, a number of musicians have written angry letters asking why, at least, they were not rung before their destruction and a permanent record made of their music.

As a matter of fact, the bells were rung, and the cataclysmic thing that

happened at that time was the direct reason for their destruction. And when those evil bells were shrieking out their mad summons in the unprecedented blackness that shrouded San Xavier, it was only the quick action of one man that saved the world—yes, I do not hesitate to say it—from chaos and doom.

As secretary of the California Historical Society, I was in a position to witness the entire affair almost from its inception. I was not present, of course, when the bells were unearthed, but Arthur Todd, the president of the society, telephoned me at my home in Los Angeles soon after that ill-fated discovery.

He was almost too excited to speak coherently. "We've found them!" he kept shouting. "The bells, Ross! Found them last night, back in the Pinos Range. It's the most remarkable discovery since—since the Rosetta Stone!"

"What are you talking about?" I asked, groping in a fog of drowsiness. The call had brought me from my warm bed.

"The San Xavier bells, of course," he explained jubilantly. "I've seen them myself. Just where Junipero Serra buried them in 1775. A hiker found a cave in the Pinos, and explored it—and there was a rotting wooden cross at the end, with carving on it. I brought—"

"What did the carving say?" I broke in.

"Eh? Oh—just a minute, I have it here. Listen: 'Let no man hang the evil bells of the Mutsunes which lie buried here, lest the terror of the night rise again in Nueva California.' The Mutsunes, you know, were supposed to have had a hand in casting the bells."

"I know," I said into the transmitter. "Their shamans were supposed to have put a magic spell on them."

"I'm—I'm wondering about that," Todd said. "There have been some very unusual things happening up here. I've only got two of the bells out of the cave. There's another, you know, but the Mexicans won't go in the cave any more. They say—well, they're afraid of something. But I'll

get that bell if I have to dig it up myself."

"Want me to come up there?"

"If you will," Todd said eagerly. "I'm phoning from a cabin in Coyote Canyon. I left Denton—my assistant—in charge. Suppose I send a boy down to San Xavier to guide you to the cave?"

"All right," I assented. "Send him to the Xavier Hotel. I'll be there in a few hours."

**SAN XAVIER** is perhaps a hundred miles from Los Angeles. I raced along the coast and within two hours I had reached the little mission town, hemmed in by the Pinos Range, drowsing sleepily on the edge of the Pacific. I found my guide at the hotel, but he was oddly reluctant to return to Todd's camp.

"I can tell you how to go, Señor. You will not get lost." The boy's dark face was unnaturally pale beneath its heavy tan, and there was a lurking disquiet in his brown eyes. "I don't want to go back—"

I jingled some coins. "It's not as bad as all that, is it?" I asked. "Afraid of the dark?"

He flinched. "Sí, the—the dark—it's very dark in that cave, Señor."

The upshot was that I had to go alone, trusting to his directions and my own ability in the open.

Dawn was breaking as I started up the canyon trail, but it was a strangely dark dawn. The sky was not overcast, but it held a curious gloom. I have seen such oppressively dark days during dust storms, but the air seemed clear enough. And it was very cold, although even from my height I could see no fog on the Pacific.

I kept on climbing. Presently I found myself threading the gloomy, chill recesses of Coyote Canyon. I shivered with cold. The sky was a dull, leaden color, and I found myself breathing heavily. In good physical condition, the climb had tired me unduly.

Yet I was not physically tired—it was rather an aching, oppressive lethargy of mind. My eyes were watering, and I found myself shutting them occasionally to relieve the strain. I

wished the sun would come over the top of the mountain.

Then I saw something extraordinary—and horrible. It was a toad—gray, fat, ugly. It was squatting beside a rock at the side of the trail, rubbing itself against the rough stone. One eye was turned toward me—or, rather, the place where the eye should have been. There was no eye—there was only a slimy little hollow.

The toad moved its ungainly body back and forth, sawing its head against the rock. It kept uttering harsh little croaks of pain—and in a moment it had withdrawn from the stone and was dragging itself across the trail at my feet.

I stood looking at the stone, nauseated. The gray surface of rock was bedaubed with whitish streaks of fetor, and the shredded bits of the toad's eye. Apparently the toad had deliberately ground out its protruding eyes against the rock.

It crept out of sight beneath a bush, leaving a track of slime in the dust of the trail. I involuntarily shut my eyes and rubbed them—and suddenly jerked down my hands, startled at the roughness with which my fists had been digging into my eye-sockets. Lancing pain shot through my temples. Remembering the itching, burning sensation in my eyes, I shuddered a little. Had the same sort of torture caused the toad deliberately to blind itself? My God!

**I** RAN on up the trail. Presently I passed a cabin—probably the one from which Todd had telephoned, for I saw wires running from the roof to a tall pine. I knocked at the door. No answer. I continued my ascent.

Suddenly there came an agonized scream, knife-edged and shrill, and the rapid thudding of footsteps. I stopped, listening. Someone was running down the trail toward me—and behind him I could hear others racing, shouting as they ran. Around a bend in the trail a man came plunging.

He was a Mexican, and his black-stubbed face was set in lines of terror and agony. His mouth was open in a square of agony, and insane screams burst horribly from his throat.

But it wasn't that that sent me staggering back out of his path, cold sweat bursting out on my body.

His eyes had been gouged out, and twin trickles of blood dripped down his face from black, gaping hollows.

As it happened, there was no need for me to halt the blinded man's frantic rush. At the curve of the trail he smashed into a tree with frightful force, and momentarily stood upright against the trunk. Then very slowly he sagged down and collapsed in a limp huddle. There was a great splotch of blood on the rough bark. I went over to him quickly.

Four men came running toward me. I recognized Arthur Todd and Denton, his assistant. The other two were obviously laborers. Todd jerked to a halt.

"Ross! Good God—is he dead?"

Swiftly he bent over to examine the unconscious man. Denton and I stared at each other. Denton was a tall, strongly-built man, with a shock of black hair and a broad mouth that was generally expanded in a grin. Now his face bore a look of horrified disbelief.

"God, Ross—he did it right before our eyes," Denton said through pale lips. "He just let out a scream, threw up his hands and tore his eyes out of their sockets." He shut his own eyes at the memory.

Todd got up slowly. Unlike Denton, he was small, wiry, nervously energetic, with a lean, brown face and amazingly alert eyes. "Dead," he said.

"What's happened?" I asked, trying to keep my voice steady. "What's wrong, Todd? Was the man insane?"

And all the while I had a picture of that fat toad tearing out its eyes against a rock.

Todd shook his head, his brows drawn together in a frown. "I don't know. Ross, do your eyes feel—odd?"

A shiver ran through me. "Damned odd. Burning and itching. I've been rubbing them continually on the way up."

"So have the men," Denton told me. "So have we. See?" He pointed to his eyes, and I saw that they were red-rimmed and inflamed.

The two laborers—Mexicans—came over to us. One of them said some-

thing in Spanish. Todd barked a sharp order, and they fell back, hesitating.

Then, without further parley, they took to their heels down the trail. Denton started forward with an angry shout, but Todd caught his arm. "No use," he said quickly. "We'll have to get the bells out ourselves."

"You found the last one?" I asked, as he turned back up the trail.

"We found them—all three," Todd said somberly. "Denton and I dug up the last one ourselves. And we found this, too."

**H**E drew a dirt-encrusted, greenish metal tube from his pocket and gave it to me. Within the cylinder was a sheet of parchment in a remarkably good state of preservation. I puzzled over the archaic Spanish script.

"Let me," Todd said, taking it carefully. He translated expertly.

"On the twenty-first of June, by the favor of God, the attack by the pagan Mutsunes having been repulsed, the three bells cast a month ago were buried in this secret cave and the entrance sealed—but a landslide obviously opened it up again recently," Todd broke off to explain.

"Inasmuch as evil witchcraft was practiced by the Indians, when we suspended and rang the bells, the evil demon whom the Mutsunes call *Zuche-quon* was called from his dwelling beneath the mountains and brought the black night and the cold death among us. The large cross was overthrown, and many of the people were possessed of the evil demon, so that the few of us who retained our senses were hard put to it to overcome their fiend-inspired attack and remove the bells.

"Afterward we gave thanks to God for our preservation, and gave aid to those who were injured in the fray. The souls of those who perished were commended to God, and we prayed that the *San Antonio* would soon arrive to relieve us from this cruel solitude. I charge whomever may find these bells, should it not please God to allow me to fulfill this duty, to send them to Rome, in the name of our master the king. May God guard him."

Todd paused, and carefully returned

the parchment to its case. "Junipero Serra signed it," he said quietly.

"Lord, what a find!" I exclaimed. "But—surely you don't think there's anything—"

"Who said I did?" Todd snapped in a voice that betrayed his nervous tension. "There's some logical explanation—superstition and auto-suggestion are a bad combination. I—"

"Where's Sarto?" Denton asked with a note of apprehension in his voice. We were standing at the edge of a little clearing, bare and rocky.

"Sarto?" I asked.

"He has the cabin down the trail," Todd said. "You must have passed it. I left him here with the bells when Jose had his seizure."

"Hadn't we better get Jose's body to town?" I asked.

Todd frowned. "Don't think me brutal," he said. "But these bells—I can't leave them here. The man's dead. We can't help him, and it'll take all three of us to get the bells to town. It's too bad the poor chap didn't have Denton's sense of direction," he finished with a grim smile. "He wouldn't have run into the tree then."

He was right. I believe that Denton could have traversed the entire trail blindfolded after having once ascended it. He had a remarkable memory and sense of direction, like those Indians who could unerringly find their way to their wigwams across hundreds of miles of wilderness. Later this trait of Denton's was to be of vital importance, but no premonition of this came to us at the time.

We had climbed the rocky mountain slope above the clearing and had come out in a little glade among the pines. Nearby was a gaping hollow in the ground—around it evidence of a recent landslide.

"Where the devil!" Todd said, staring around. "How—"

"He's gone," Denton said in amazement. "And the bells with him—"

Then we heard it—a faint, hollow musical note, the sound of a bell hitting wood. It came from above us, and glancing up the slope we saw an odd sight. A man, gaunt, bearded, with a blazing thatch of red hair, was tugging at a rope he had stretched over the

branch of a pine. At the other end of the rope—

Slowly they rose, silhouetted against the sky, the lost bells of San Xavier. Gracefully curved, they glowed bronze even beneath their stains and verdigris—and they were silent, for they had no clappers. Once or twice they swung against the trunk of the pine and sent out a hollow, mournful note. How the man could lift that great weight was inexplicable; I could see the muscles cord and knot on his bare arms as he strained. His eyes were bulging, and his teeth clenched in a grinning mouth.

"Sarto!" Denton cried, starting to clamber up the slope. "What are you doing?"

**S**TARTLED, the man jerked his head around and stared at us. The rope slipped through his fingers, and we saw the bells plunge down. With a frightful effort he clutched the rope and halted their descent momentarily, but the strain threw him off balance. He tottered, overbalanced, and came crashing down the slope—and behind him, overtaking him, rolled and bounded the bells, throbbing and booming as they clashed against rocks. "God!" I heard Todd whisper. "The mad fool!"

There was a maelstrom of dust and flying shale on the slope above. I heard a sickening crunch and Denton threw himself desperately aside. Through the dust I saw one of the bells smash down on the sliding body of Sarto, and then I was stumbling away, scrubbing furiously at my eyes, blinded by the flying particles of dirt. The rattle and roar subsided slowly as I clung to a tree. I blinked, glanced around.

Almost at my feet was one of the bells. There was a great crimson stain upon it. The body of Sarto was visible, jammed into a bush on the slope above.

And a few feet below it, propped upright against a jagged rock, was Sarto's battered, gory head!

Thus ended the first act of the drama I was to witness.

The bells were to be hung two weeks later. There was some stir in the newspapers, and considerable more among historians. Pilgrimages of various his-

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torical societies to San Xavier from all over the world were planned.

In the cold daylight of logic, outside the eerie atmosphere of the Pinos Mountains, the unusual occurrences during the unearthing of the bells were easily explained. A virulent kind of poisoning, perhaps similar to poison oak—or some fungus hidden in the cave with the relics—had been responsible for our optical irritation and the madness of Sarto and the Mexican. Neither Denton, Todd, nor I denied this explanation, but we discussed the matter at length among ourselves.

Denton went so far as to drive down to the Huntington Library to view the forbidden Johann Negus translation of the *Book of Iod*, that abhorrent and monstrous volume of ancient esoteric formulae about which curious legends still cling. Only a single copy of the original volume, written in the pre-human Ancient Tongue, is said to exist. Certainly few even know of the expurgated Johann Negus translation, but Denton had heard vague rumors about a passage in the book which he declared might be connected with the legends of the San Xavier bells.

When he returned from Los Angeles he brought a sheet of foolscap paper covered with his execrable penmanship. The passage he had copied from the *Book of Iod* was this:

The Dark Silent One dwelleth deep beneath the earth on the shore of the Western Ocean. Not one of those potent Old Ones from hidden worlds and other stars is He, for in earth's hidden blackness He hath always dwelt. No name hath He, for He is the ultimate doom and the undying emptiness and silence of Old Night.

When earth is dead and lifeless and the stars pass into the blackness, He will rise again and spread His dominion over all. For He hath naught to do with life and sunlight, but loveth the blackness and the eternal silence of the abysses. Yet can He be called to earth's surface before His time, and the brown ones who dwell on the shore of the Western Ocean have power to do this by ancient spells and certain deep-toned sounds which reach His dwelling-place far below.

But there is great danger in such a summoning, lest He spread death and night before His time. For He bringeth darkness within the day, and blackness within the light; all life, all sound, all movement passeth away at His coming. He cometh

sometimes within the eclipse, and although He hath no name, the brown ones know Him as Zushakon.

"There was a deletion at that point," Denton said, as I glanced up from the excerpt. "The book's expurgated, you know."

"It's very odd," Todd said, picking up the paper and running his eyes over it. "But of course it's merely a coincidence. Certainly, since folklore is based on natural phenomena, one can generally find modern parallels. The thunderbolts of Jove and Apollo's arrows are merely lightning and sunstroke."

"Never on them does the shining sun look down with his beams," Denton quoted softly. "'But deadly night is spread abroad over these hapless men.' Remember Odysseus' visit to the Land of the Dead?"

**T**ODD'S mouth twisted wryly. "Well, what of it? I don't expect Pluto to come up from Tartarus when the bells are hung. Do you! This is the twentieth century, such things don't happen—in fact, never did happen."

"Are you sure?" Denton asked. "Surely you don't pretend to believe this cold weather we're having is normal."

I glanced up quickly. I had been wondering when someone would mention the abnormal chill in the air.

"It's been cold before," Todd said with a sort of desperate assurance. "And overcast, too. Just because we're having some muggy weather is no reason for you to let your imagination get the upper hand. It's—good God!"

We went staggering across the room. "Earthquake!" Denton gasped, and we headed for the door. We didn't race for the stairs, but remained just beneath the lintel of the doorway. During an earthquake it's the safest place in any building, on account of the nature and strength of its construction.

But there were no more shocks. Denton moved back into the room and hurried to the window.

"Look," he said breathlessly, beckoning. "They're hanging the bells."

We followed him to the window. From it we could see the Mission San

Xavier two blocks away, and in the arches in the bell tower figures were toiling over the three bells.

"They say when the bells were cast the Indians threw the body of a living girl into the boiling metal," Denton said, apropos of nothing.

"I know it," Todd answered snappishly. "And the shamans enchanted the bell with their magic. Don't be a fool!"

"Why shouldn't some peculiar vibration—like the sound of a bell—create certain unusual conditions?" Denton asked hotly, and I thought I detected a note of fear in his voice. "We don't know all there is to know about life, Todd. It may take strange forms—or even—"

*Clang-g-g!*

The booming, ominous note of a bell rang out. It was strangely deep, thrilling through my ear-drums and sending its eerie vibration along my nerves. Denton caught his breath in a gasp.

*Clang-g-g!*

A deeper note—throbbing, sending a curious pain through my head. Somehow urgent, summoning!

*Clang-g-g—clang-g-g . . .* thundering, fantastic music, such as might issue from the throat of a god, or from the heart-strings of the dark angel Israfel. . . .

Was it growing darker? Was a shadow creeping over San Xavier? Was the Pacific darkening from sparkling blue to leaden gray, to cold blackness?

*Clang-g-g!*

Then I felt it—a premonitory tremble of the floor beneath my feet. The window rattled in its casing. I felt the room sway sickeningly, tilt and drop while the horizon see-sawed slowly, madly, back and forth. I heard a crashing from below, and a picture dropped from the wall to smash against the floor.

Denton, Todd and I were swaying and tottering drunkenly toward the door. Somehow I felt that the building wouldn't stand much more. It seemed to be growing darker. The room was filled with a hazy, tenebrous gloom. Someone screamed shrilly. Glass smashed and shattered. I saw a

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spurt of dust spray out from the wall, and a bit of plaster dropped away.

*And suddenly I went blind!*

At my side Denton cried out abruptly, and I felt a hand grip my arm. "That you, Ross?" I heard Todd ask in his calm voice, precise as ever. "Is it dark?"

"That's it," Denton said from somewhere in the blackness. "I'm not blind, then! Where are you? Where's the door?"

A violent lurch of the building broke Todd's clutch on my arm and I was flung against the wall. "Over here," I shouted above the crashing and roaring. "Follow my voice."

In a moment I felt someone fumbling against my shoulder. It was Denton, and soon Todd joined him.

"God! What's happening?" I jerked out.

"Those damned bells." Denton shouted in my ear. "The *Book of Iod* was right. He bringeth darkness—within the day—"

"You're mad!" Todd cried sharply. But punctuating his words came the furious, ear-splitting dinning of the bells, clanging madly through the blackness. "Why do they keep ringing them?" Denton asked, and answered his own question, "The earthquake's doing it—the quake's ringing the bells!"

*Clang-g-g! Clang-g-g!*

Something struck my cheek, and putting up my hand I felt the warm stickiness of blood. Plaster smashed somewhere. Still the earthquake shocks kept up. Denton shouted something which I did not catch.

"What?" Todd and I cried simultaneously.

"Bells—we've got to stop them! They're causing this darkness—perhaps the earthquake, too. It's vibration—can't you feel it? Something in the vibration of those bells is blanketting the sun's light-waves. For light's a vibration, you know. If we can stop them—"

"It would be a fool's errand," Todd cried. "You're talking nonsense—"

"Then stay here. I can find my way—will you come, Ross?"

For a second I did not answer. All

the monstrous references gleaned from our study of the lost bells were flooding back into my mind: the ancient god *Zu-che-quon* whom the Mutsunes were supposed to have the power of summoning "by certain deep-toned sounds"—"He cometh sometimes within the eclipse," "All life passeth away at his coming," "Yet can He be called to earth's surface before His time—"

"I'm with you, Denton," I said.

"Then, damn it, so am I!" Todd snapped. "I'll see the end of this. If there *is* anything—"

**H**E DID not finish, but I felt hands groping for mine. "I'll lead," Denton told us. "Take it easy, now."

I wondered how Denton could find his way in that enveloping shroud of jet blackness. Then I remembered his uncanny memory and sense of direction. No homing pigeon could make a straighter way to its destination than he.

It was a mad Odyssey through a black hell of shrieking ruin! Flying objects screamed past us, unseen walls and chimneys toppled and smashed nearby. Frightened, hysterical men and women blundered into us in the dark and went shouting away, vainly searching for escape from this stygian death-trap.

And it was cold—cold! A frigid and icy chill pervaded the air, and my fingers and ears were already numbed and aching. The icy air sent knife-edged pains slashing through my throat and lungs as I breathed. I heard Denton and Todd wheezing and gasping curses as they stumbled along beside me.

How Denton ever found his way through that chaotic maelstrom I shall never understand.

"Here!" Denton shouted. "The Mission!"

Somehow we mounted the steps. How the Mission managed to stand through the grinding shocks I do not know. What probably saved it was the curious regularity of the temblors—the quakes were more of a rhythmic, slow swaying of the earth than the usual abrupt, wrenching shocks.

From nearby came a low chanting, incongruous in the madness around us.

*"Gloria Patri Filio Spiritui Sancto. . ."*

The Franciscans were praying. But what availed their prayers while in the tower the bells were sending out their blasphemous summons? Luckily we had often visited the mission, and Denton knew his way to the tower.

On that incredible climb up the stairs to the bell tower I shall not dwell, although every moment we were in danger of being dashed down to instant death. But at last we won to the loft, where the bells were shrieking their thunder through the blackness almost in our ears. Denton released my hand and shouted something I could not distinguish. There was an agony of pain in my head, and my flesh ached with the cold. I felt an overpowering impulse to sink down into black oblivion and leave this hellish chaos. My eyes were hot, burning, aching. . . .

For a moment I thought I had lifted my hands unconsciously to rub my eyes. Then I felt two arms constrict about my neck and vicious thumbs dug cruelly into my eye-sockets. I shrieked with the blinding agony of it.

*Clang-g-g—clang-g-g!*

I battled desperately in the darkness, battling not only my unknown assailant, but fighting back a mad, perverse impulse to allow him to gouge out my eyes! Within my brain a voice seemed to whisper: "Why do you need eyes? Blackness is better—light brings pain! Blackness is best. . . ."

But I fought, fiercely, silently, rolling across the swaying floor of the bell-tower, smashing against the walls, tearing those grinding thumbs away from my eyes only to feel them come fumbling back. And still within my brain that horrible, urgent whisper grew stronger: "You need no eyes! Eternal blackness is best. . . ."

I was conscious of a different note in the clamor of the bells. What was it? There were only two notes now—one of the bells had been silenced. Somehow the cold was not so oppressive. And—was a grayish radiance beginning to pervade the blackness?

Certainly the temblors were less violent, and as I strained to break away

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from my shadowy opponent I felt the racking shocks subside, grow gentler, die away altogether. The harsh clangor of the two bells stopped.

My opponent suddenly shuddered and stiffened. I rolled away, sprang up in the grayness, alert for a renewal of the attack. It did not come.

Very slowly, very gradually, the darkness lifted from San Xavier.

Grayness first, like a pearly, opalescent dawn; then yellowish fingers of sunlight, and finally the hot blaze of a summer afternoon! From the bell-tower I could see the street below, where men and women stared up unbelievably at the blue sky. At my feet was the clapper from one of the bells.

Denton was swaying drunkenly, his white face splotched with blood, his clothing torn and smeared with dust. "That did it," he whispered. "Only one combination of sounds could summon—the Thing. When I silenced one bell—"

He was silent, staring down. At our feet lay Todd, his clothing dishevelled, his face scratched and bleeding. As we watched, he got weakly to his feet, a look of monstrous horror growing in his eyes. Involuntarily I shrank back, my hands going up protectingly.

**H**E flinched. "Ross," he whispered through white lips. "My God, Ross—I—I couldn't help it! I couldn't help it, I tell you! Something kept telling me to put out your eyes—and Denton's too—and then to gouge out my own! A voice—in my head—"

And abruptly I understood, remembering that horrible whisper within my brain while I struggled with poor Todd. That malignant horror—he whom the *Book of Iod* called Zushakon and whom the Mutsunes knew as *Zu-che-quon*—had sent his evil, potent command into our brains—commanding us to blind ourselves. And we had nearly obeyed that voiceless, dreadful command!

But all was well now. Or was it?

I had hoped to close the doors of my memory forever on the entire horrible affair, for it is best not to dwell too closely upon such things. And, despite the storm of adverse criticism

and curiosity that was aroused by the smashing of the bells the next day, with the full permission of Father Bernard of the Mission, I had fully determined never to reveal the truth of the matter.

It was my hope that only three men—Denton, Todd, and myself—might hold the key to the horror, and that it would die with us. Yet something has occurred which forces me to break my silence and place before the world the facts of the case. Denton agrees with me that perhaps thus mystics and occultists, who have knowledge of such things, may be enabled to utilize their knowledge more effectually if what we fear ever comes to pass.

Two months after the affair at San Xavier an eclipse of the sun occurred. At that time I was at my home in Los Angeles, Denton was at the headquarters of the Historical Society in San Francisco, and Arthur Todd was occupying his apartment in Hollywood.

The eclipse began at 2:17 p. m., and within a few moments of the beginning of the obscuration I felt a strange sensation creeping over me. A dreadfully familiar itching manifested itself in my eyes, and I began to rub them fiercely. Then, remembering, I jerked down my hands and thrust them hastily into my pockets. But the burning sensation persisted.

The telephone rang. Grateful for the distraction, I went to it hurriedly. It was Todd.

He gave me no chance to speak. "Ross! Ross—it's back!" he cried into the transmitter. "Ever since the eclipse began I've been fighting. Its power was stronger over me, you know. It wants me to— help me, Ross! I can't keep—" Then silence!

"Todd!" I cried. "Wait—hold on, just for a few moments! I'll be there!"

No answer. I hesitated, then hung up and raced out to my car. It was a normal twenty-minute drive to Todd's apartment, but I covered it in seven, with my lights glowing through the gloom of the eclipse and mad thoughts crawling horribly in my brain. A motorcycle officer overtook me at my destination, but a few hurried words brought him into the apartment house

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at my side. Todd's door was locked. After a few fruitless shouts, we burst it open. The electric lights were blazing.

What cosmic abominations may be summoned to dreadful life by age-old spells—and sounds—is a question I dare not contemplate, for I have a horrible feeling that when the lost bells of San Xavier were rung, an unearthly and terrible chain of consequences was set in motion; and I believe, too, that the summoning of those evil bells was more effective than we then realized.

Ancient evils when roused to life may not easily return to their brooding sleep, and I have a curious horror of what may happen at the next eclipse of the sun. Somehow the words of the hellish *Book of Iod* keep recurring to me—"Yet can He be called to earth's surface before His time," "He bringeth darkness," "All life, all sound, all movement passeth away at His coming"—and, worst of all, that horribly significant phrase, "He cometh sometimes within the eclipse."

Just what had happened in Todd's apartment I do not know. The telephone receiver was dangling from the wall, and a gun was lying beside my friend's prostrate form. But it was not the scarlet stain on the left breast of his dressing-gown that riveted my horror-blasted stare—it was the hollow, empty eye-sockets that glared up sightlessly from the contorted face—that, and the crimson-stained thumbs of Arthur Todd!