

TERROR TALES



VOLUME ELEVEN JANUARY-FEBRUARY, 1940 NUMBER FOUR

TWO BLOOD-CHILLING TERROR NOVELS

- Girls Who Lust for Death**.....Russell Gray 4
 Crazy old Georgie said that the lake god had taught him how to make the girls come to him with uncashed passion in their hearts. Of course we laughed at him—until the lake god came for his revenge and turned our peaceful camp into a shambles of blood and horror!
- Brides for the Frankensteins**.....Wayne Rogers 86
 Why Graham Haskell trembled at the thought of flying lovely young Dora Moore to Moosehead Lake, he could not have told—for no man could have foreseen the incredible horror that awaited them there . . . where a maniac doctor sought, with drug-induced lust, to create a race of mad giants!

TWO NOVELETTES OF WEIRD MYSTERY

- Their Flesh Is Soft and Tender**.....Wayne Robbins 30
 Rayme Hubbard sat there, waiting for the call of the Monster of the Cairn—the call that would send him to join the pack of half-human beasts whose ghastly hunger could only be sated by the tender flesh of those they loved!
- Pray That She Stays With the Dead!**.....Donald Dale 56
 When Dennis Avery lay bound and helpless on the floor of that hellish den and watched the incredibly horrible beast man bend lustfully over his beloved Maria's unconscious body, he prayed only for strength enough to release the poisonous vapors that would kill them all!

TWO SHORT STORIES OF EERIE MENACE

- The Dictator and the Zombie**.....Ralston Shields 44
 General Ortiz betrayed the most sacred pact a man can make—and doomed himself to a fate more horrible than even his own diabolical imagination could have contrived!
- I Am the Madman!**.....Wyndham Brooks 72
 Because I killed Lauren, my wife's own brother, my marriage is the mockery of the damned—for his dead, staring face is driving me on to that ultimate pit of horror where he will have his revenge.

TRUE FEATURE OF ROYAL TERROR

- Monsters of Monarchy**.....Charles Boswell 81
 Tsar Ivan, "The Terrible," had only one hobby—death!
- AND—
- Murder on Ice**.....The Editor 3
 The thin veil of civilization. . . .
- Black Chapel**.....A Department 112

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Brides for the Frankensteins

A Full-Length Terror Novel by

WAYNE ROGERS



Helplessly Graham Haskell stood on a balcony in that hellish hospital and watched the three huge, grotesque imbeciles fight over the torn and bloody body of Helen Canby. Soon it would be his own lovely Dora's turn and his own distorted, lust-maddened body would destroy her!

PROLOGUE

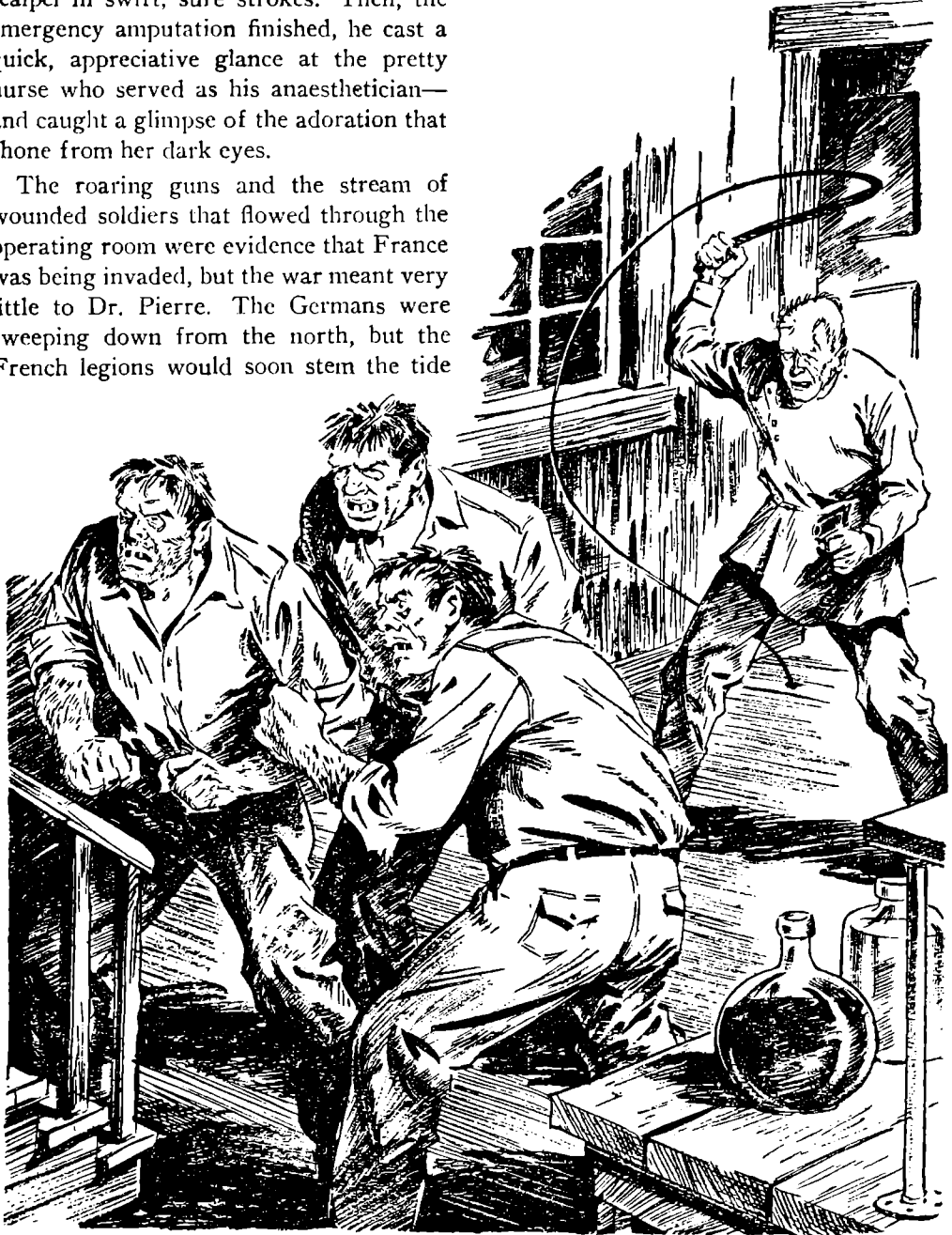
The Beginnings of Horror

THE THUNDER of the guns to the north was continuous, but the ground-shaking detonations held no terror for Pierre Bourgat. He hardly heard them as his deft fingers plied the scalpel in swift, sure strokes. Then, the emergency amputation finished, he cast a quick, appreciative glance at the pretty nurse who served as his anaesthetician—and caught a glimpse of the adoration that shone from her dark eyes.

The roaring guns and the stream of wounded soldiers that flowed through the operating room were evidence that France was being invaded, but the war meant very little to Dr. Pierre. The Germans were sweeping down from the north, but the French legions would soon stem the tide

and drive it back. It would be but a matter of days. Only a matter of days—

Pierre's glance turned to his assistant once more, and a tender half-smile flitted over his lips as he waited for the next groaning patient to be brought to his operating table. August 15th, 1914, was going to be the red-letter day of his life, the day when he and Andrea Docheais became



man and wife—and now the fifteenth was only a matter of a few days.

He was indeed a lucky man, he congratulated himself as he turned without hesitation to undertake an operation that would have given pause to almost any other surgeon in Europe. Andrea was sufficient good fortune for any man, Pierre reflected, but, besides, he had wealth and prestige; had the satisfaction of knowing that this private hospital which he and his older brother, Dr. Rene, maintained on the edge of Peronne had earned a reputation that was rapidly spreading throughout Europe.

Yes, he was fortunate—very, very fortunate. . . .

The delicate task before him occupied him so completely that he hardly heard the uproar in the street. Subconsciously he noted that the sound of firing was much closer, that the clatter of heavy shoes on the stone-paved street had increased to a pounding—the frantic pounding of swiftly running men. Shouts and yells impinged detachedly on his consciousness, the thudding of heavy blows and the shattering tinkle of glass—and then the quiet hospital became a bedlam.

Shots rang through the corridors, were echoed by screams and groans. The pounding footsteps came nearer, surged up to the operating room door. Through the doorway burst Rene, his face blanched, his eyes aflame with indignation—and after him came unleashed hell!

For a moment half a dozen desperate poilus barred the way. Steel grated harshly against steel, and then the gleaming bayonets were dyed red as the defenders went down before a rush of blond giants. Prussians, Pierre noted; picked troops of splendid stature. Into the operating room after them strode a glowering, red-faced officer.

"*You—you are responsible!*" he roared at Dr. Rene. "*You gave shelter to the snipers who fired on my men!*"

"They were no snipers," Rene denied. "They were harmless—"

But the roar of the officer's pistol cut him short. Rene staggered backward and clutched at his chest. Blood trickled between his fingers and he dropped to his knees—and another bullet smashed into his chest and hurled him against the wall. Blood welled from his lips as he struggled to rise.

PIERRE watched that brutal murder like a man in a trance, transfixed by horror; but as the deadly Luger roared the third time something snapped in his brain and he leaped forward. Hardly knowing what he did, he hurled himself straight at the officer, stabbed at him with the scalpel his fingers still clutched.

"No—oh, no, Pierre!" Andrea screamed, as she sprang between them and tried to stay his hand.

She was too late. The keen scalpel sliced through the Prussian's coat and sank deep into his left shoulder before Pierre was overwhelmed and beaten to the floor by those blond giants who towered over his diminutive five-feet-six. Down he went under a rain of savage blows, pounded mercilessly—until the officer's rasping voice saved him. Dazed and bloody-faced, he was dragged to his feet—to stare into the triumphantly gloating, demoniacal eyes of an inhuman devil!

With hell-spawned understanding those eyes flashed from Pierre to Andrea—and monstrous purpose dawned in them.

"So—you are handy with your knives, are you, doctor?" he muttered softly, as his men staunched the blood flowing from his wound. "Then you will be interested to watch our own accomplishments."

Swift orders snapped at his men; orders that were obeyed with alacrity. One of them seized Andrea and held her arms pinned behind her, while others ripped off her uniform and tore the silken underthings from her body, stripped her until

she was stark naked before them. Helpless, his arms gripped by two burly soldiers and the point of a bayonet jabbing into his back, Pierre struggled futilely while he watched them paw her obscenely. Wild curses babbled from his lips as he saw her turned loose among them, saw her dart frantically from corner to corner, a helpless rabbit surrounded by slaving wolves—until one of them caught her by the hair and pinned his struggling prize beneath him on the floor. . . .

Time became an endless, searing agony for Pierre Bourgat as he witnessed the ghastly ordeal of her profanation—a coma of horror that snapped abruptly when he suddenly realized the full extent of that snarling devil's bestial intention. They had stretched Andrea on the operating table, had spread-eagled her so that she could barely move—and they were cutting into her lovely white body with the scalpel!

Like huge monsters they hovered over her, stabbing into her soft flesh, slicing beneath the swelling mound of her breast—

Pierre Bourgat went completely mad at that moment. Like a savage jungle creature suddenly released from a trap, he wrenched himself free of his captors and leaped toward the table. With berserk fury he flung himself at those barbarous devils, beat at them with his fists, tore at them with his clawing fingers—but they only laughed at him!

A ponderous fist sent him reeling across the room. Giant Prussians a foot taller than he surrounded him on every side, met his frenzied rushes with a shower of blows that buffeted him helplessly. They were too big for him! Too big! Too strong!

Mon Dieu! Why had he not grown! Why had he not been given size, been given strength, for this moment of his Calvary?

His soul-searing agony broke from his drooling lips in a mad howl as he cata-

pulted himself at the officer—but before he could reach his mark a rifle-butt smashed down on his skull with bone-shattering force. . . .

CHAPTER ONE

Land of Lost Men

MOOSEHEAD LAKE! A curious tremor coursed through young Graham Haskell the moment he heard that name. Alarm not for himself but for one of those girls—for *the* girl—who wanted to be flown there. This was doubly curious; for, around the Haverhill airport, it was accepted as fact that Haskell did not know the meaning of fear—and that his heart interests were tied up completely in the cabin plane that was his constant companion.

Not that Graham Haskell did not have more than his share of female adulation. He did—plenty more. Many a feminine heart had skipped a beat when the sandy-haired young giant, who looked even taller than his six-feet-four in his flying togs, strode across the field. But the only time that Haskell was interested in skipped beats was when they were in his motor.

That was before he had met Dora Moore; but when he looked into the dark eyes that turned to him from her anxious, trusting face a strange necromancy was worked within him. In those dark depths he saw again the wild, bleak regions of northern Maine; saw the jagged wilderness winter-locked, a harsh, cruel region that had swallowed up five men and a plane and consumed them so utterly that not a trace of them ever was found.

This was not winter. Now it was early Fall—but he visualized that far-reaching wilderness in the settling dusk, and it was like a crouching beast waiting to snatch its prey; waiting to snatch this helpless girl who had come to him out of nowhere. . . .

Two hours before he met Dora Moore, Graham Haskell had taken off in his plane with a single passenger, his uncle Willis, who looked upon all flying contraptions with decided misgivings. It had required considerable urging to induce Willis Haskell to make that flight, but it was of paramount importance that Graham get him up in the air—for Willis Haskell was a hard-headed business man as well as administrator of his nephew's estate. In order to sell him a bill of goods, he had to be shown—and Graham intended to show him.

For two hours the plane soared and dived, streaked away for miles on the straight-away and then idled and hung inert when the motor went dead. A score of times the elder Haskell had his heart in his mouth, but the confident grin never left his nephew's face.

"Don't worry," he chuckled whenever the old man seemed on the verge of apoplexy. "Nothing will happen to us. My invention is foolproof. It makes flying a plane safer than driving an automobile. It will save hundreds of lives. Fred Nelson says it will become standard equipment on every plane that is built a year after we start manufacturing. It's absolutely revolutionary."

"And so you want me to release a hundred thousand dollars of your estate so that you can build a factory and start manufacturing these contraptions?" Willis Haskell mopped his brow as the plane began to descend and straightened out for the airport. "That ought to keep you on the ground, anyway. Running a factory won't give you much time for risking your neck in the sky—and that's enough reason for letting you go ahead. Okay, Graham, get me back onto the good old earth and I'll start getting your money together for you tomorrow."

That was easier than he had thought it would be, Graham chuckled, as he levelled off and glided to a perfect landing. His

brain was seething with ambitious plans for his new enterprise—and then he met Dora Moore.

She was waiting for him outside the airport manager's office as he and Willis Haskell started to leave the field. Not only Dora Moore—there were others. Another girl and a middle-aged man and Fred Nelson, the airport manager; but Graham saw only Dora Moore. She was pretty, he recognized immediately. Perhaps experts would not call her beautiful, but there was a quality about her well-featured face that spoke his own language. A sincerity, a cleanness, that was like the open sky which had become his chosen element. That was it—she was fresh and clean, her perfectly formed body lithe and supple, aglow with health.

"THESE people just arrived," Nelson was explaining to the Haskells. "They drove up from Boston, but they have been having trouble with their car and now it has quit altogether. They want to reach Maine tonight—going to a place about twenty-five miles east of Moosehead Lake—and they want a plane to take them there. I told them that you would not be interested in taking such a job, Graham."

"Moosehead Lake?" Willis Haskell seized upon the name immediately. "Isn't that where Wallace Taylor was lost last winter? He was headed in that direction. The papers said that country is a wilderness—"

But it was then that Dora Moore's dark eyes met Graham Haskell's.

"Mr. Nelson has explained that you are not a commercial flyer, Mr. Haskell, but this is more than an ordinary commercial trip," she appealed. "We are nurses, Miss Canby and I. We are hurrying to a private sanitarium near Moosehead Lake, day and night nurses for an emergency case. It is a life and death matter—"

A life and death matter. . . . Her words rang in his ears and stirred an echoing

memory. Last winter it had been a death matter.

Graham had known Wally Taylor very well. He remembered the day when Wally's plane took off from that field with four sportsmen bound for a Maine hunting lodge—and had vanished from the face of the earth. Graham had been one of more than a score of flyers who had combed that northern wilderness for days, searching for the lost plane—but never so much as a trace of it had been found. The final verdict had been that the plane must have blown out to sea and been lost. But Graham knew that Wally Taylor was far too good a pilot to have been blown more than two hundred miles off his course. . . .

"It is almost dark now," Fred Nelson's objection cut through his thoughts. "It will be pitch-black before you could reach the Moosehead Lake country, and there are no landing facilities in that wilderness."

"There is a field and lights at Amasquam," the driver of the disabled car volunteered—and at that moment Fred Nelson's assistant called from the door of the field office to announce that he had contacted the Amasquam Sanitarium by short-wave radio.

Nelson took his place before the instrument panel.

"Wait until morning?" a protesting voice from the air came in quick response to his suggestion of delay. "By morning my patient will be dead! I need help now—immediately. If you can't provide a plane for my nurses have them drive to the nearest neighboring airport. Death does not wait for daylight!"

The driver turned toward the door with a shrug as soon as the strident voice clipped off, and the two girls started to follow—and Graham Haskell went with them. Old Willis protested strenuously, and Fred Nelson added pessimistic warnings—but their voices were not as com-

elling as the picture of Dora Moore flying through the night into the Maine wilderness with a pilot who might not know his business. If she was going there, Graham decided flatly, he was going with her.

Five minutes later the plane was ready and they took off. Only the nurses went with him. The driver stayed behind to look after the car. Only Graham and Dora Moore and Helen Canby—but so far as he was concerned the Canby girl hardly existed. She seemed to be pleasant enough, he admitted. A large, buxom, red-cheeked young woman who had all the earmarks of her profession. She became silent as soon as the plane left the ground.

It was from Dora Moore that he learned that they had been hurriedly recruited in Boston; from Dora that he heard bits of her life—of the recent death of her mother that had left her alone in the world, of her struggle to pay off her debts, and her gratification at having secured this case. But even as he listened to the pleasant sound of her voice he was visualizing the terrain beneath them as he had seen it last; visualizing the barren, winter-locked wilderness that had opened its frozen maw to swallow up five men. And again the strange premonition that had fastened upon him the moment he heard that Dora Moore was bound for the Moosehead Lake district stole over him chillingly. . . .

RESOLUTELY he shrugged that off. The night was dark but clear. His navigating instruments would take him unerringly to Amasquam, where the lighted field would be awaiting him. There was no danger, nothing to fear. Now the valley in which the sanitarium was located was no more than ten minutes away; five minutes—and then he caught the brilliance of the field's floodlights. Carefully he circled above the long field and then coasted down for what should be an easy landing.

A quarter way down the field his wheels touched the ground, bounced lightly—and

then the plane suddenly was halted so abruptly that the girls were pitched out of their seats. The field had seemed perfectly clear—but his alert ears caught the resounding *zing* of a snapping wire. A snapping metal cable that had been stretched across his path!

Half-way over on its nose, the plane pitched forward as he fought the controls—and another cable caught and gripped the under-carriage, shocked the ship to a stop that somersaulted it over on its back!

Graham was hurled forward against the instrument board, was dumped over on his head. Blinding light burst before his eyes and blinked out into engulfing darkness, but as his senses faded a shrill scream knifed through his dimming consciousness—a scream that he recognized as Dora Moore's even though he never had heard it before. That piercing summons rallied him, snapped him out of the stupor that gripped him.

Dazedly he got to his hands and knees and peered around the dark interior of the overturned plane. Helen Canby had managed to force the door open and was climbing out, but Dora Moore was not with her. Anxiously his eyes sought the girl, until her low moan showed him where she huddled against the crushed side wall. Quickly he hurried to her—and at that instant the bright field lights went out and impenetrable blackness wrapped about them.

Graham's arm slipped under the girl and lifted her, held her close to him. She was breathing spasmodically, was stirring back to consciousness—but the soft burden in his arms sent a twinge of terror through him.

Something was wrong—hellishly wrong! The plane had been decoyed down onto that field and deliberately wrecked, and now, instead of coming to his assistance, the wreckers had extinguished the lights to contribute to his helplessness!

Slowly he edged his way to the door, carrying the girl with him, while his probing eyes strove to pierce the darkness. Gradually they became acclimated in some measure to the darkness; sufficient so that he could see to lift Dora out onto the ground and step back into the cabin to take a heavy wrench from the tool cabinet.

Barely had his hand touched it when he froze and his blood seemed to turn to ice. Through the black stillness rang a terrified scream, and suddenly the night palpitated with running footsteps!

Out of the plane he dived—in time to see the Canby girl go down; to make out two strange, goblin-like figures that seized her and faded with her into the darkness. That much he glimpsed in a flash, and then he was at Dora's side; was battling with more of those misshapen shadows. Like a flail the wrench swung around his head until it found a mark and brought a yelp of pain. Then it rose and fell, thudded against flesh and bone, rang hollowly against an unlucky skull. Cries of agony rewarded him, and then the swift diminuendo of retreating steps.

QUICKLY Graham stooped and lifted the girl. She was conscious but now half-petrified by fear. Half-carrying her, he urged her away from the ship, across the dark field and to the edge of the deeper blackness that was the surrounding forest. Among the trees they might find refuge, might find a hiding place until morning.

They reached the side of the clearing without interference, started into the Stygian thicket, when he dimly descried what looked like low buildings in the shelter of the overhanging trees. Old log cabins that seemed to be empty as he crept closer.

"This looks like an old, abandoned logging camp," he whispered to the girl who clung to his arm. "If we can get into one of these—"

The hope died on his lips as he reached

the first of the cabins. Its windows were solidly boarded up and the door was fastened by a heavy padlock. Two more were like the first, but the one beyond them had an unboarded window at one end—a window that was heavily barred like a cell. That barred window intrigued him, inspired him to turn the narrow beam of his pocket-flash upon it—and in the next moment stupefying horror swooped down upon them!

Graham felt the girl's fingers dig into his flesh as they closed like a vise on his arm; *felt* rather than heard her appalled gasp.

Beyond those bars was a face—a man's face—the most immense face he had ever seen. The great head, half again as large as that of any normal man's, seemed to fill the whole window—the head of a giant, with great round eyes peering from beneath shaggy brows. At first those eyes were vacuous, blankly staring—until the creature saw Dora.

Then mad passion kindled in them and the huge face became transformed, the twitching, slaving face of a lusting animal! Enormous hands came up and gripped the bars, tugged at them with savage frenzy. The cavernous mouth opened, and from the black throat belled a howl that might have come from a jungle beast!

Haskell instinctively staggered away from that savage blast. Through it he heard Dora Moore's startled scream, heard her frightened call of "Graham!" as her fingers were torn from his arm and she faded into the darkness. At the same instant the thicket became alive with scurrying movement. He whirled, but before he could raise his wrench, his arm was seized and twisted behind him. Hands grabbed his shoulders, clutched at his legs, tripped him and bore him backward.

In desperation he swung wildly with the fist that clutched the flashlight. It was gripped in mid-arc, but for a fraction of

a second the light's beam played full on the face of a back-twisted cripple—full on the tense face of Wally Taylor, the lost aviator!

Only for an instant. Then the club which Taylor wielded came down and a burst of excruciating agony seemed to split Graham Haskell's skull wide open.

CHAPTER TWO

Spawn of the Monster

A SHARP sting near the elbow of his right arm and a dull pain that became sharper as it crept up to his shoulder brought Haskell back to consciousness, but instinctive caution warned him to delay opening his eyes. He seemed to be lying on a bed, evidently in a lighted room, and someone was bending over him. Fingers were probing the muscles of his arms, were gently passing over his naked chest with a touch that was almost caressing.

"An excellent physique!" he heard a voice that throbbed with satisfaction murmur just above him. "Fortunately he was not seriously injured. It would have been an unforgivable sacrilege to cripple such a perfect body! A perfect body and a clever brain—with that we can accomplish wonders; world-revolutionizing wonders!

"If only we can retain the brain," the voice faded until it was little more than a whisper. "If only he does not go mad or become an imbecile—but this time I am sure that we can preserve his sanity. With his physique we cannot fail."

If only he does not go mad or become an imbecile! The softly spoken words drove into Graham's brain and brought out a cold sweat on his limbs. Had his skull been broken by Taylor's downswinging club? Had his brain been injured? Was he hovering on the verge of insanity—or was this nothing more than

a fearsome nightmare that would vanish when he opened his eyes?

Cold terror seemed to freeze his muscles, to hold him immobile; but he fought free of it. Resolutely he batted open his eyes—and then he was certain that what he saw must be the creatures of nothing but a fantastic nightmare-world!

Standing at the side of the hospital bed on which he lay was a white-uniformed man who appeared to be a doctor—a man whose nearly bald head and face were hideously disfigured. The top of his skull and the entire right side of his forehead down to his eye had been crushed in. Skillful surgery had reconstructed it but had been unable to restore the shattered bones and the skull's original contour. As a result the face was lopsided, the bald skull a horrible mass of livid scars and queasy-looking depressions.

At the end of the bed sat a broken-backed cripple who regarded him with chill, unblinking eyes; eyes that gave no slightest sign of recognition, although now Graham identified Wally Taylor without question. Taylor's face, also, was scarred, but there was no mistaking his long, hawk-featured countenance. Without a word he rose and shuffled out of the room when he saw that Graham was conscious.

"Ah, you are awake," the physician noted quickly. "Just relax yourself. Just be at ease and you will be all right. Your injuries are not serious. All you need is rest."

The little chamber in which he lay seemed to be a hospital room, Graham took quick inventory. He wore nothing but pajama trousers, but he could see his clothing hanging in a closet. His head was bandaged and felt queer, felt dull and swollen, but otherwise he seemed to be all right. This hospital room must be in the Amasquam sanitarium—where his plane had been deliberately wrecked, he reconstructed quickly.

"I'm all right," he cut short the doc-

tor's warnings, as he propped himself upright, "but how about my passengers? How about Miss Moore and Miss Canby?"

"They are quite unharmed," the gargoyle-headed physician assured him soothingly. "They were shaken up and slightly unnerved by their experience, that is all."

Graham sat bolt upright. He made as if to get out of bed until the doctor raised protesting hands and pressed him back onto the pillow.

"No—not yet. It is dangerous," he warned.

Graham had felt weak, but now his senses were clearing and his strength was beginning to return. With normalcy his suspicions flared and his anger mounted.

"There's a whole lot I don't understand—and don't like—about this place, doctor—if that's what you are," he snapped. "My plane was deliberately wrecked—"

"**Y**OU may call me Dr. Pierre. Just remain quiet, and I will tell you anything you wish to know," the physician urged. "About your plane—that was an accident—an unfortunate accident." He shook his head regretfully. "Some workmen from the village were using electric power from our main building. They had it wired across the field and left the wires hanging there instead of taking them down in the evening. You ran into them."

"And the men who attacked us and seized first Miss Canby and then Miss Moore—I suppose they were accidents, too?" Graham flung at him.

"We have some unfortunate patients here at Amasquam, Mr. Haskell," Dr. Pierre answered after a moment's hesitation. "Mental cases which ordinarily might be confined behind bars. We try to treat them more humanely, allow them more freedom. In the excitement of your smash-up they got out of hand; they

thought they were rescuing you and your passengers."

Rescue—with a club that had almost brained him! This Dr. Pierre was a liar and Graham meant to tell him so—but before the denouncing words could leave his lips they were checked by a terrified scream. Dora Moore's scream! And it seemed to be just beyond the door through which Wally Taylor had passed!

The physician tried to stop him, tried to hold him back on the bed—but Graham threw him to one side as he leaped up and ran to the door. The girl was still screaming, her cries coming half-strangled, when he yanked the door open and sprang out into what proved to be a short corridor. For a moment it seemed to be empty—and then he spied a white-clad foot and leg projecting around a turn at the farther end of the hallway; a leg that beat futilely against the floor struggling for a purchase.

Dora!

Graham Haskell reached the turn in a dozen running strides and almost stumbled over the amazing set-to that confronted him. Dora was lying on the floor, helpless in the hands of a great, hulking brute who knelt on the floor beside her. With one hand he clutched her hair and held her head back against the floor. The other hand tore at the white uniform she wore and was stripping it from her body, while uncanny gurgles of obscene delight drooled from his lips!

Crimson rage surged into Graham's brain as he swung a pile-driving punch at that devil's head—but midway to its mark he almost stopped it. The ponderous attacker turned toward him—and he saw that it was a child! A child who must have weighed all of three hundred pounds—but a child nevertheless; an unmistakable youngster with the gangling build of an eight-year-old and the body of a giant!

Fear leaped into the creature's eyes and

he started to cry even before Graham's fist landed against his jaw and knocked him off his captive. But that blow, solid enough to have dropped a full-grown man, did not end the struggle. The incredible creature was on his feet in a moment, came charging back, his big hands flailing blindly while his bellows of childish rage rang through the hall.

An eight-year-old bigger than an ordinary man! Horror tugged at Graham as he tried to beat the creature off; as he set himself and drove in a solid one-two, again and then again, before at last the bawling monstrosity gasped and dropped in a heap.

"Oh, Graham—thank God you came!" the girl sobbed half-hysterically as she clung to him and cowered against his bare chest.

"Hold it, Dora!" he snapped, trying hard to edge his words with commanding severity. "Tell me quickly—what is wrong? Isn't the job what you expected? What is this creature that attacked you?"

He succeeded. His calm, commanding voice sobered her and restored some of her self-control.

"I don't know what is wrong—but I am terrified," she admitted. "The attendants here are all cripples. The patients are even worse—awful creatures like that one; all half-wits or raving maniacs. All children who must be suffering from some terrible glandular disorder. Tending them is like—like being a nurse in some fantastic giant fairyland! There is even a baby—a six-months-old baby that weighs more than fifty pounds. Yesterday morning I had to feed it—"

"Yesterday morning?" Graham repeated blankly. "We only cracked up here last night."

Her eyes turned to his anxiously, and the concern he saw mirrored on her face set his pulses throbbing, but she shook her head.

"Not last night—that was two nights ago," she told him. "If you don't know

that, they must have kept you asleep—must have kept you drugged. They would not let me see you—”

HER words clipped off abruptly when she felt him swaying and saw that he reached out a hand to the wall for support. Weakness was creeping over him, overpowering him—and not until then did they see that Dr. Pierre was standing in a shadowy corner of the corridor, watching them; for how long they had no idea. Now he came forward solicitously and took Graham by the arm, helped her to lead him back to his room and put him to bed.

“That was foolish, dangerous; it has weakened you—but I do not blame you,” he reproved. “You care a great deal for each other, do you not?”

His dark eyes flashed from one to the other, studied them shrewdly, and was quick to note the heightening of Dora’s color. Graham noted that, too—and wished she had not given that telltale indication. Suddenly he knew that the love which had been miraculously born to them must be hidden and denied. The gleam of crafty understanding, of evil satisfaction, in Dr. Pierre’s eyes had betrayed him—had betrayed that he intended to pervert that sacred love to some hellish purpose of his own!

“Yes—your silence is more eloquent than any possible words.” Dr. Pierre nodded complacently, while a smile that was meant to be sympathetic flitted over his lips. “That is good—very good. We are always glad to encourage love here at Amasquam—”

Graham tried to speak, but he could hardly move his lips. A great weariness weighted him down and seemed to numb every muscle of his body. Dr. Pierre saw his condition and stepped to a wall closet at one side of the room, unlocked it and took out a hypodermic needle which he loaded from a shallow bowl.

Dora watched him with round, terror-filled eyes. Vainly she tried to stop him when he stepped toward the bed, but he brushed her aside roughly—and the needle point jabbed deep into Graham’s arm near the elbow.

Again a dull pain spread out from the needle wound, but this time a numbness followed it. His eyes grew heavy, started to close. The lights in the room began to dim, and the figures at his bedside receded farther and farther into the distance. Desperately he fought to retain consciousness, but his struggle was unavailing. Darkness closed in upon him and his senses faded—with Dr. Pierre’s exultant eyes boring into him like gimlets and with Dora Moore’s horrified scream ringing in his ears. . . .

CHAPTER THREE

Mate for Gargantua

THAT despairing scream was still keening in Graham Haskell’s brain when he opened his eyes and found the room in darkness. Dora’s scream and another that must be Helen Canby’s—and almost drowning them out came a mighty roar that was like the bedlam of a zoo when the animals pace their cages and fill the air with their enraged cries.

Listening to that howling pandemonium, he could fairly see the helpless girls tossed to a pack of savage beasts!

That scream might be Dora’s death-cry—and he was lying there impotently listening to it! Cold sweat beaded his forehead and the backs of his hands—until sudden inspiration brought release. Desperately he heaved himself upright—and he could move! The overpowering inertia had left him; had left only a strange stiffness in every muscle, a painful rheumatic ache in every joint of his body.

He paid little attention to that as he

leaped out of bed and ran to the door, but when he grasped the knob it would not turn. The door was locked! A strong door that did not give in the slightest degree when he gripped the knob with both hands and pulled with all his strength.

That door had been built to withstand just such an assault; to keep a prisoner securely locked inside the room. But there must be another way out. The windows! He ran to one of them and raised the lower sash. There were no bars, nothing to keep him inside—until he looked down.

It was dark outside, but the stars shed sufficient light to reveal what awaited him. His room was on the third floor of the building, and below was a sheer drop to the ground. A sheer drop to a bed of jagged rocks that extended for nearly twenty feet beyond the wall. He was perfectly free to leap from that window—to certain death on those unescapable rock teeth!

That way also was closed—and as he stared down at the grim rock trap the uproar from outside increased until it seemed to fill the night. Wild animal cries, howls of bestial rage, a great pounding and thudding rose from the surrounding darkness. From those cabins he and Dora had started to investigate? That was the answer! The inmates of those heavily padlocked shacks were roused to a frenzy—and now the girls' screams had stopped entirely. . . .

Dank horror-fingers inched down Graham's bare back as he speculated on what that silence, in the midst of this bestial clamor, might mean. He *must* get down there somehow, *must* reach Dora no matter how he did it. The window was the only way—but he could ease his drop to the deadly rocks somewhat by making a rope that would lower him from the window!

Swiftly he set to work, tearing the sheets into widths as narrow as he dared,

ripping up his shirt and coat to gain a few more feet. Only his trousers he spared. They might help to shield his legs when he made the desperate drop—but he had no more than stepped into them and tightened his belt around his waist when there was a sound at the door.

The key turned almost noiselessly in the lock!

Like a crouching animal he tensed, ready to hurl himself at the doctor or whoever came through the portal—but the door did not open. For what seemed ages he poised on bent legs. Then he catfooted across the room, turned the knob quickly and yanked the door open. The corridor was dimly lighted, but he was just in time to catch a glimpse of a figure that scurried to the staircase and dived into the darkness below.

The crooked-backed figure of Wally Taylor!

Graham did not stop to consider why the pilot had unlocked the door—and then run away. Springing into the corridor, he ran to the head of the stairs, but by the time he reached the steps Taylor had vanished. Cautiously he descended to the second floor. That corridor also was empty—but now the howling clamor was louder; seemed to come from somewhere within the building—somewhere close at hand.

THE horrific symphony had changed somewhat. From outside came the same howling tumult, but close at hand he caught the rattle of heavy bars, the throaty rumbling and plaintive whining of an animal impatiently awaiting the food it knows will soon be forthcoming.

A bestial sound—and yet one that was uncannily human!

His hair stood on end as that unholy noise became louder. There were more than a dozen doors on that second floor, but when Graham reached the one at the end of the left wing he knew that he was

close to his goal. Cautiously he grasped the knob and turned it. The door opened! Opened on a crack, to reveal a duplex room beyond—a room that echoed with the whimpering and panting of a creature maddened with lust!

Beyond that door was a balcony that was in darkness, a balcony that ran along one end of the deep room. Graham carefully drew the door wider and crept through the opening; crept to the edge of the balcony—and stared down at a scene that threatened to pop the eyes out of his head!

The room into which he looked had once been a comfortable living room, a large, trophy-hung living room with a stone fireplace at one end where hunters had been wont to gather after a day in the wilderness. Now it was stripped of almost all its furniture, and its windows were heavily shuttered. At one side was a small anteroom that looked as if it might once have been a pantry, but now it was transformed into a cell—a cell with a heavy, iron-barred door shutting it off from the main room.

Beyond that door crouched the gigantic monster Graham had glimpsed momentarily behind the bars of the log cabin window!

Now he was able to get a more complete view of the creature—and what he saw appalled him. The fellow was on his knees—and yet he filled the doorway completely; even bent forward to peer through the bars! Standing erect he would be at least ten feet tall and fully three feet wide across the shoulders! A gargantuan creature whose hairy, muscular body was covered only by a ragged pair of knee-length trousers.

Pressed close to the bars, his eyes were great, round wells of frenzied desire as he stared at a performance well calculated to set any normal male afire with passionate desire.

Standing on a thick bear rug in front

of the crackling log fire that cast a ruddy radiance around the room was Helen Canby. She had stripped off her clothing and tossed it to one side. Now, stark naked, her full-breasted, wide-hipped body was alluringly limned in the glow of the flames as she stretched her elbows behind her shoulders and writhed and twisted in utter sensual abandon!

Like a pagan goddess she postured there, her shapely limbs swaying, the muscles rippling smoothly beneath her skin—while the leaping flames seemed to be encouraging her as they painted her every line, her every intimate curve, with daring highlights and seductive shadows.

Graham Haskell stared—and the lure of her statuesque nudity reached out and gripped him; held him motionless, while his pulses pounded and wild desire-fabrications surged into his brain.

As she revolved so that she faced the cage, Helen Canby smiled, the age-old smile of the enchantress—and the half-mad creature behind the bars shook them until it seemed that he must bend and snap them in his great fists. Not until then did Graham throw off the spell she had cast upon him—not until he saw the raging desire that blazed in that huge creature's eyes.

The girl was mad to tempt the creature so brazenly; utterly mad to place reliance in mere steel bars to keep that monster away from her. But no, she was not mad—not in that way; a glimpse of her leering, tantalizing face told him what had happened. Helen Canby did not know what she was doing. She was drugged, was completely under the influence of aphrodisiacs that had numbed her brain and unleashed within her body all the unholy fires of seething lust!

GRAHAM'S hands balled into hard fists and his jaws clenched as he started to rise, started toward the balcony stairway—but he was too late. Before he

had taken two steps he heard a metallic click—and saw the barred door swiftly rising, disappearing into its top casing. The huge monster was free!

With a howl that sent shivers down Graham's spine he stalked toward her, his great arms outspread—and the girl went straight into them! Hungrily he seized her and lifted her off her feet, cradled her in his arms like a doll and laved her nakedness with his eager, slobbering caresses.

Horrified by that exhibition of insensate passion, Graham crouched at the edge of the balcony steps. That carnal orgy could only result in Helen Canby's death—yet how could he hope to save her? In the hands of that ravenous monster he would be helpless, a child to be smashed into unconsciousness with one blow of those huge fists. To try to interfere would be to invite certain death—but . . .

The decision was not left in his hands. Suddenly the uproar outside increased, the howling trumpeted louder, a sonorous accompaniment for a terrific pounding and the crashing of rending timbers. In from somewhere beneath the balcony on which Graham stood, lumbered two more incredible behemoths, one of them even larger than the fellow who held Helen Canby. Like him, they wore only the tatters of trousers, incongruous apparel for barbaric creatures who looked as if they had stepped out of the pages of prehistoric ages.

Straight across the long room they arrowed, their blazing eyes fixed on the nude body of the woman. With a roar of savage rage her captor turned to meet them, tried to pin her beneath his left arm while he met their onslaught with his right.

That ill-advised covetousness defeated him. From two sides they closed in on him, their fists smashing into his face, beating him back, while they snatched the coveted prize from him. Dazed by

their blows, he reeled back until he was almost in the fire—but the sight of that delectable nakedness in their hands fanned his rage to a frenzy.

Head-down, he charged into them—and the next moment all three were locked in a primeval battle. All four; for Helen Canby was in the center of that mad struggle. Punching, butting, rending, tearing, gouging and biting, they tore into one another with unreasoning ferocity; and now their snarls were punctuated by the girl's agonized shrieks.

They fought one another like wild beasts—but, like starving animals, each tried to snatch the prize for himself. In a few moments Helen's body was torn and bleeding, her flesh ripped from her bones, her limbs torn from her sockets, as those giants tugged and pulled at her. Her piercing death-cry shrilled into Graham's ears as he stared down in utter horror at that ghastly dismembering of a living woman!

Not until they were bathed from head to foot in her blood, not until her mangled corpse was a broken, twisted abomination in the middle of the floor, did they realize that the prize for which they had fought had escaped them. Blankly they stared at the grisly remains and eyed one another with dawning comprehension.

The woman was gone. . . . Vacuously they gazed around the room as if to find her hiding somewhere from them—and suddenly Graham was aware that one of them was staring up at the balcony, straight up at him.

For a moment the giant gaped incredulously. Then his eyes kindled and his face lit up. Telepathically his mates seemed to catch his excitement. Their eyes followed his—and with one accord they started forward, headed toward the balcony stairs.

That was the moment when enervating terror stabbed through Graham Haskell

and almost knocked his knees from under him. Not terror for himself. In that moment he heard a horrified gasp at his back—and turned to stare open-mouthed at the frightened face of Dora Moore!

“Oh, God in heaven—what did they do to her?” she half-whispered. “She knew—Helen knew what to expect. She wouldn’t tell me. She didn’t want to frighten me—but she knew. She fought Dr. Pierre when he came to take her away. We both fought him—but he dragged her away and locked me in my room. And this is what he did to her! Oh, Graham—”

BUT Graham hardly heard the hysterical sobs that convulsed her. His whirling brain was working at top speed, desperately casting about for a way to save her from the same unthinkable fate that had been Helen Canby’s. The hulking monsters were at the foot of the steps, were starting up; it was too late to attempt to flee by the door at the rear of the balcony. Hopeless to try to meet them with bare fists.

Frantically he looked around for a weapon. There were a few pieces of furniture on the balcony; a small table and some chairs, several jardinières. They would have to do. Swiftly he grabbed a heavy jardinière, filled with dirt and the dried stalk of a dead plant, and hurled it down the steps, straight at the head of the foremost giant.

The fellow let out a howl of agony and toppled backward. Before his mates could recover the ground he had lost the table came hurtling down upon them, to sweep them back to the lower floor. But now they charged up with their arms held over their heads. A second jardinière bounced off a huge shoulder harmlessly and crashed to pieces on the floor. They were almost up to the top step when Graham grabbed a stout wooden chair by its back.

No use to throw this weapon; it would

not stop them. Holding the legs in front of him like four lances, he raced to the steps and catapulted himself downward, full-tilt into them.

“Run, Dora—run!” he shouted a plea to the girl who had refused to take advantage of the momentary respite his battle had gained for her.

If only she would run! But she was standing there at the head of the stairs as if she were petrified, staring down at him with horror-brimming eyes—and the hulking monsters were closing in on him, reaching out to seize him and tear him into bloody fragments!

CHAPTER FOUR

Master of Monsters

HOPE died in Graham Haskell as those great paws closed on his shoulder and he was yanked off his feet. Desperately he flung his fists at the monsters, but he could scarcely reach their faces and his blows were puny things against such hulking targets. Cruelly they buffeted him, and then a huge fist drove against his head, to send him staggering backward like a drunken man—into a streak of fire that cut across his bare back from his neck to his hip!

A streak of fire that exploded with the crack of a pistol!

Knocked to the floor by that searing agony, he groveled on his hands and knees as the pistol report cracked above him again—and was echoed by a howl of agony from one of the giants. Could that mean a rescuer? Incredulously he lifted his head—and saw grim, tight-lipped Dr. Pierre nearly twenty feet away. In his hands the physician gripped a long, thick blacksnake whip that leaped out and wrapped itself around those giants like a living thing.

In abject terror they backed away from it, cowering and whimpering, while he

pursued them relentlessly, flogging them unmercifully. Back toward a door under the balcony they dashed, and the bleak-faced physician pressed close after them. He paid no attention to Graham, seemed not to know that he was in the room—which gave Haskell his opportunity.

The moment he was out of Dr. Pierre's range of vision he sprang to his feet and leaped up the balcony steps three at a time. With one arm around Dora's waist, he swept her to the door at the rear and through it to the corridor beyond. The hallway was still silent; ominously silent, as if hidden watchers were waiting to leap out upon them. For a moment Graham hesitated.

"How can we get out of this place?" he turned to the girl. "Where is the nearest door?"

"At the back of the house—down those stairs," Dora whispered. "But it's no use, Graham. They are too many for us. The doors are all watched. We'll never be able to get past them."

"Watched by whom?"

"The cripples—Dr. Pierre's attendants."

"How about them—can't we raise them against him?" Graham seized upon any hope of escape. "One of them—Wally Taylor—unlocked my door and released me—"

"Someone unlocked my door, too!" Dora turned startled eyes to his. "But it's no use," the hope that had suddenly flared in them faded. "Those poor cripples are in mortal fear of him. They are his abject slaves. This afternoon I learned why. They all suffer from some frightful malady—some terrible disease he must have given them. He keeps them doped, and while they are under the influence of the drugs they are all right—but as soon as it wears off they foam at the mouth and go into convulsions. That's the way he punishes them—by withholding their injections for hours. They must hate

him—but they won't dare help us; they can't—

"What is it, Graham?" she suddenly turned to him in quick alarm. "You are so pale. Oh, I know!" A horrified gasp escaped from her lips before she could check it. "You are weakening!"

Her arms went around him, tried to support him—but Graham knew that it would take more than her strength to keep him on his feet much longer. Exhaustion was stealing through him. His limbs were growing heavy and his senses were dulling—but he *couldn't* succumb now! He *must* stay on his feet—must cling to consciousness until he got her out of this hell-house and on the road to safety.

The road to safety. . . . But where was that? Even if they succeeded in getting out of the building, how could they hope to escape through miles of almost uninhabited wilderness? The plane was a hopeless wreck—

The plane! That gave him his inspiration. His own plane was useless—but others should be able to find this house of horror. There was a short-wave radio transmitting set in this sanitarium of lust. If he could locate it and contact Haverhill, Fred Nelson would speed rescue to them!

WITH Dora close behind him, he hurried downstairs to the main floor. Dr. Pierre's office was located at the rear of the building—and next to it was a little cubicle in which the radio equipment was housed. Miraculously they reached it without interference. Graham's nerves were tingling as he pressed the button and switched the set on. While Dora stood with her back against the closed door he announced the station's identity and called for Haverhill.

Again and again. Endlessly he repeated the call number of Fred Nelson's station, while his straining ears expected at

any moment to hear the pounding of footsteps that would herald the coming of Dr. Pierre and his cripples. What was the matter? Nelson always kept an assistant at or near the radio set. Someone ought to hear that persistent call. Someone—

Graham's heart sank as another possibility occurred to him. Perhaps the Haverhill airport was stripped of its personnel. Perhaps Nelson had gone out with the other pilots to look for the Haskell plane as he had done when Wally Taylor was lost. Perhaps they were scouring the wilderness from the air, searching for a hideaway that Dr. Pierre had cleverly camouflaged into invisibility. . . .

But at that moment a voice answered out of the ether—the voice of Fred Nelson himself.

"This is Haskell—at Amasquam," Graham staccatoed his message. "We fell into a trap up here, Fred—a horrible murder trap. One of the girls is dead, but I have the other with me. We have managed to get away from the devilish doctor who runs the place, and as soon as I sign off we are escaping—out into the wilderness somewhere. Come and get us. We won't go far. We'll stay nearby so that—"

The crash of shattering glass and the roar of a shot put an end to that call. Transfixed, Graham sat with the mouthpiece in his hand while his eyes flashed to the window at the side of the cubbyhole. The pane had been smashed into fragments, and the bullet that had come through it had wrecked the radio's panel, had put the set out of commission. Now, framed in the jagged shards of glass, the scarred, faintly sneering face of Wally Taylor stared in at them—while the muzzle of his gun held them both in its threatening arc.

"Sit right where you are," he warned Graham. "Don't try to make a play—unless you want me to let the girl have it."

"You dirty rat!" Graham spat—and at the same instant he swept up several tools from a shelf beside the radio and hurled them at the window.

With the same motion he leaped to his feet and flung himself to the door to protect Dora. Taylor's gun roared and a bullet sank into the wall several feet from the girl's head, but as he backed away from the broken window the pilot clapped his hand to his lips.

Now the shrill note of a high-pitched whistle cut through the night, and almost at once it was echoed by shouts and the sound of running feet. Graham yanked open the door—but one glance told him that it was too late; Taylor had effectively circumvented their escape. Cripples were closing in and blocking their way on every side, half a dozen of them—and behind them came Dr. Pierre, his blacksnake whip in one hand and a leveled automatic in the other.

The realization of his helplessness seemed to rob Graham of the last of his ebbing strength. Overpowering weakness rushed over him, and he felt himself falling—felt Dora trying to hold him up as he slumped against her. But he had put the call through! He had reached Fred Nelson, and now rescue would be speeding on its way to them!

Elation rioted through him even as the cripples seized him and took him out of Dora's arms. Helpless to raise a hand in her behalf, he saw them grab her and drag her away. Then they lifted him and carried him upstairs to the bedroom he had left a little while before, put him back in bed and left him alone with Dr. Pierre.

A GAIN the physician unlocked the wall closet and took out the hypodermic syringe. Again he filled it from the shallow container and jabbed the point into Graham's arm. This time, when the injection was completed, he sat down beside

the bed and regarded his captive-patient with eyes that blazed with an unholy zeal.

"I must thank you for your timely interference, Haskell," he spoke softly, but his tense voice quivered with suppressed excitement. "If you had not been there, those brainless fools would have seized her and destroyed her. The other girl was all right for them; I did not have much hope, but I was willing to risk her in one more trial—but Miss Moore is different. She must not be wasted. You love her, and I am reserving her for you."

"You are reserving her for me!" Graham managed to flare. "Who in hell do you think you are? You may be master of the destinies of the poor cripples and half-wits in this hell-house, but what happened here tonight was murder—"

"What happened here tonight was an unavoidable accident," the physician's bland, untroubled voice stopped him. "I *am* master of the destinies of the unfortunates in this building. The cripples I brought back to life when they were nearly killed in accidents—Taylor's smashed-up plane, automobiles that were wrecked, hunting camps that were devastated by explosions. The broken victims from those unfortunate episodes owe their new lease on life to my skillful care."

"You trapped them—you lured them into devilishly planned 'accidents' and crippled them," Graham gritted bitterly, as he began to understand something of the man's cold-blooded fiendishness.

"They were sent to me to aid me in my work," Dr. Pierre answered imperturbably. "The others—the big men and the moronic children—I *created* them. They were a failure, all of them," he admitted, "but not altogether a failure. Each contributed something to the final success that will be mine. Now I am ready—now I will not fail! I am master of the destinies of everyone in this building,

Haskell—and I will be master of the destinies of the entire world!"

Unable to keep his seat, he got up from the chair and paced the room like a caged animal, while his face glowed with the fanatical light of a crack-brained zealot.

"Too long the world has been at the mercy of the rapacious Prussians!" he proclaimed. "Their big men have trodden their smaller neighbors underfoot—have beaten them down and crushed them mercilessly. But that will be changed. We must fight fire with fire—big men with bigger men! I am going to create a race of conquerors, Haskell; a race of giants who will grind the Prussians into the dust—and you will help me. You will be the father of that super-race who will inherit the earth!"

The man was mad—utterly mad. Graham watched him and saw his face become transformed, saw his mania take complete possession of him. His brain had been terribly warped by his obsession—but it still was a clever brain, a frightfully dangerous brain to rule unchecked in this place where he was absolute master.

"FOR years I have worked on this problem," he confided. "I needed big men—only big men could hope to overcome the Prussians; and I discovered how to develop them. Those giants you saw downstairs—a few months ago they were ordinary men, not so large as you; but I inoculated them and fed them. I speeded up their growth and made them what they are today—wonderful physical specimens. But their brains eluded me. They are simpletons, brainless animals who have no reason, nothing but instincts. They can beget children, but their offspring are as brainless as themselves."

"And the women—what become of the women who bore those monstrosities?" Graham gasped, as shocking comprehension began to dawn upon him.

"They died—but that is of no consequence," the mad doctor dismissed. "As soon as I am able to produce normal-brained offspring, the problem of procreation will solve itself and the race will become self-perpetuating. Brain preservation has been my most difficult problem, Haskell—but now I have mastered it. My last experiment was almost a success. The subject remained normal until he died; but I know what caused his death. That shall not happen again. With you there will be no slip-up."

Like an inspired artist proudly regarding a masterpiece that was taking form under his skillful fingers, Dr. Pierre stood beside the bed and looked down at Haskell.

"With your physique I know that I cannot fail!" he exulted. "I will make you the biggest man the world has ever known, a fit progenitor for the mighty race that will spring from you! You have not realized it—but already you are much larger than when you came to me—and I have given you only the preliminary injections. Tonight we will switch to the primary formula."

Unbelievably Graham's eyes turned to the foot of the bed—and what he saw filled his reeling brain with shuddering horror. His soles were within an inch of the bottom of the bed—a bed that was more than seven feet long! Now he understood that curious stiffness, that feeling of being stretched, that gripped his muscles. Now he understood why his joints ached so intolerably. He was suffering from growing pains!

"In three or four days you will be ready," the mad-eyed physician assured him. "Three or four days—and my success will be complete!"

Cold sweat bathed Graham from head to foot as he heard that fiendish dictum. Three or four days and he would be a giant! And in three or four more days Dora Moore would be delivered to him

like Helen Canby, her brain drugged by hellish aphrodisiacs, her glorious body an irresistible invitation to spawn the breed of monsters this madman demanded!

In three or four days he would condemn the sweet girl he loved to a death so horrible that the very thought of it made his tortured soul writhe in agony.

CHAPTER FIVE

Day of Decision

THE next three days were aeons of excruciating torment for Graham Haskell. Hourly he battled with his problem—and was no nearer to the solution than when he began. A score of times he was on the verge of hurling himself out onto the jagged rocks three stories below—but that was no solution to the ghastly enigma that confronted him. That would be a way out for him—but it would leave Dora at the mercy of Dr. Pierre; would leave her to be handed over to another of his diabolical man-made giants.

If only he could prevent the doctor from giving him those inoculations, perhaps he could check his unnatural growth, could postpone the hour of Dora's doom. . . . Grimly he determined to resist—but Dr. Pierre was prepared for that. Each time he came into the room his leveled automatic was held ready, his eyes alert for the first overt move.

"I do not want to kill you, Haskell," he warned in a voice that was no more animated than if he were discussing the extermination of an experimental guinea pig, "but I will shoot you through the heart if you force me to fire. You will succeed only in inconveniencing me—and in providing a less worthy mate for Miss Moore."

That cold-blooded threat bound Graham more securely than if he were weighed down with chains. Helplessly he submitted and watched barrel after bar-

rel of Dr. Pierre's hellish serum drain through the hypodermic needle and into his veins—to play mad havoc with every cell of his body.

He could not avoid those inoculations—but he *could* refuse to eat. The fiendish master of Amasquam could not force food down his unwilling throat—and without food his body must cease its dismaying expansion. Resolutely he pledged himself to a hunger strike—but the first tray of food which he refused kindled a new torment within him.

Before then he had not realized that he was hungry. Now his appetite became prodigious. No matter how he struggled for self-control, his eyes swiveled back to that loaded tray, and the sight of the food drove him nearly frantic. His lips worked convulsively, his fingers itched to seize it, his legs almost carried him to it despite himself. For more than an hour he held out against the craving that made his whole body twitch and tremble. At last, in desperation, he seized the tray and ran to a window to throw it out.

But at the window-ledge he stopped and caught himself. A twinge of chilling horror at what he had almost done crept through him—and he seized the concentrated food with both hands, wolfed it down as if he had not eaten for months!

“That is wiser,” Dr. Pierre approved, as he replenished the supply. “The injections I am giving you whet your appetite to the point where you would starve to death if you had sufficient strength to refuse food for an appreciable length of time.”

Just that—but the calmly spoken words echoed in Graham's brain and told him how complete was the doctor's hold over him; how cunningly the madman had blocked every hope of escape. He had no choice but to consume the food with which the fiend gorged him; no choice but to grow bigger and stronger, to turn himself into a veritable monster—for his own destruction and the horrible doom of the girl he loved!

Daily—hourly—he grew; and hourly the dread fear that he would lose his mind

hung over him like a Damoclean sword. Once his mentality slipped he would be like those inhuman beasts who had dismembered Helen Canby. Dora's one slim hope lay in his retaining his sanity—his sanity and his strength. . . . Yes, his increasing strength was the one possible weakness in Dr. Pierre's diabolical scheming.

After that Graham abandoned all attempts at resistance. Instead, he submitted docilely to the inoculations and greedily consumed everything that was given him. With mounting horror he watched his body grow—and concentrated more frantically on desperate plans to circumvent the madman.

WHERE were the rescue planes Fred Nelson must have sped north to find him? Hourly he stared out of the windows and strained his ears for the sound of approaching flyers. But the sky was empty and the wilderness was silent. Something must have gone wrong. In some incomprehensible way Dr. Pierre must have been able to thwart attempts to locate his hideaway.

Finally, on the third afternoon, Graham's hopes rose to fever-pitch—and then plummeted to the depths of despair.

Suddenly he leaped up from his bed and ran to the window. That was the sound of an airplane somewhere overhead! He could not see the ship, but the steady drone was coming nearer and nearer—until it faded and died away! For hours he waited tensely, but nothing happened—and at last he knew that the high hope had dissipated; the flyer had passed Amasquam without stopping, probably without even seeing it. . . .

Night fell, and Graham still slumped in dejection, when the door of his room was unlocked and Dr. Pierre entered. This time the physician brought Wally Taylor with him. While he remained at a wary distance and kept the automatic

leveled, Taylor went to the wall cabinet and prepared the hypodermic injection. Taylor, his eyes avoiding Graham's, it was who jabbed the needle home and administered the inoculation.

The moment they had gone Graham knew that the fiery concoction racing through his veins was not the usual serum. It made his nerves tingle, accelerated the beat of his heart; it made him warm and stirred strange sensual desires within him—carnal desires that heightened his senses and inflamed his mind.

That inoculation had been a sex stimulant—and the time of his supreme ordeal was close at hand!

Desperately he fought to remain calm, to still his pounding blood and drive out of his mind the erotic envisionings that surged into it. Like a man on the brink of a crumbling precipice, he struggled to retain his self-control—while his ears strained for the summons he knew must come at any moment.

And then a stream of living fire geysered through him!

Dora's scream—that was it! A scream of pain that rang in his brain and stabbed into his heart. Before he reached the door he knew that it would be unlocked. Before he reached the hallway he knew that the tortured cries were coming from that duplex room on the building's main floor. The stage was set for his supreme test, and he strode to it with white-knuckled fists and tightly clenched lips—frantically striving to close his ears to the whispers of anticipation that set his imagination on fire!

The moment he yanked open the balcony door he saw Dora—and his heart leaped into his mouth. She was in front of the blazing fireplace, but not like Helen Canby. Instead of standing on the bearskin rug, she was hanging from the ceiling, suspended by her thumbs, her toes nearly a foot above the floor!

She was dressed in some sort of black

BRIDES FOR THE FRANKENSTEINS

gown; a daringly low-cut creation of flimsy, semi-transparent material that accentuated and displayed every line of her lovely figure—and added to the lure of her pink flesh the subtle, pulse-quickenning thrill produced by partial covering. That much he glimpsed as he sprang down the steps and ran to her.

Wide, tormented eyes turned toward him, and a low moan greeted him—and then Dora was in his arms, held up so that the strain was taken off her cruelly stretched thumbs while he fumbled with the knots that held her. She was in his arms—and the delirious fragrance of her body was in his nostrils, was stealing up into his brain! Her face was close against his naked chest, her warm lips pressed to his shoulder, while her hot, panting breath beat upon his tingling skin!

ONE of her hands he managed to free—and instantly her arm slipped around him, her fingers gripped him so avidly that her nails dug deep into his flesh. A glance into her upturned eyes told him that she was completely out of her mind, a sex-maddened animal who had no control over what she was doing.

“Dora, darling—please help me fight!” he panted a desperate plea. “Help me—”

But her glowing, tempting eyes hushed his protest, her amorous lips sought his with hungry abandon. She was drugged, a victim of some hellish aphrodisiac, he told himself again and again—but that did not matter. She was warm and soft in his arms, throbbing with life, quivering with desire. Pressed close against him, her exquisite body was a glorious, overpowering temptation that swept everything else from his mind.

He wanted her—wanted her with every fiber of his being, every cell of his trembling body! He wanted her—and he could have her!

(Continued on page 108)

(Continued from page 107)

Unhindered his hands gripped the soft dress and pushed it down from her shoulders, tore at it with feverish eagerness as the sight of her naked flesh unleashed a fresh torrent of passion within him. The flimsy material tore apart as he tugged at it. In shreds he ripped it from her—until she was stark naked in his arms, naked and palpitating with frenzied passion as she pressed herself upon him, snuggled close and lay back in his arms until he swept her up and showered her from head to foot with mad kisses. . . .

Everything was forgotten in that feverish moment except the soft loveliness he cradled in his arms. Every scruple, every fear was swept away in the surging flood of white-hot desire—until suddenly Graham's gaze, turning from a couch near the fireplace, fastened momentarily upon a pair of eyes that watched him from a narrow, cleverly concealed slit in the wall.

Only for a fraction of a second. Then he turned away as if he had not seen—but an electric charge had galvanized him, had shocked him back to realization of what he was doing. Dr. Pierre was behind that wall; was watching with eager eyes to see the consummation of his hellish plans!

Suddenly he tensed and stared down at the nude body in his arms. His lips curled back from his teeth and his eyes glared with wild frenzy. Slowly, slyly, his hand slipped up over Dora's breast to her shoulder, her neck—and his fingers tightened around her throat; tightened like a vise as he broke the grip of her clutching hands and forced her to the floor and cut off her wind.

That was the only way he could hope to cope with her untrammelled passion, the only way he could save her from herself. For an instant, as she stared up into his face, sanity seemed to flash back into her eyes. She screamed in terror and went limp beneath him—just as Dr. Pierre

came charging through the doorway beneath the balcony.

The physician's horribly scarred face was crimson with rage, and the long black-snake whip licked out when he was half-way across the room. It cut a red slash across Graham's back—but even as it landed he leaped from his crouch and hurled himself at the doctor in a diving tackle that took him completely by surprise. And then he was swept off his feet; was held up, kicking and struggling, with one huge fist while the other smashed into his face.

Dr. Pierre screamed and his features became a bloody ruin when that vengeful fist landed. It drew back again for the knockout blow—but before it could land a second time a gun barked from the doorway beneath the balcony. A bullet scored a livid gash on Graham's ribs as it passed—and imbedded itself in the doctor's breast!

MOMENTARILY stunned, Graham stood there still holding the inert body. Then his brain clicked; and he sped across the room, through the door and into the smaller room beneath the balcony—to discover Wally Taylor backed against the wall with an automatic in his hand.

Graham reached him in one mighty stride, to knock the gun from his hand and hurl him to the floor. The moment the cripple scrambled to his feet, those big hands were ready, waiting for him—but Taylor's eyes were wide with alarm.

Behind him a gun roared again. The bullet barely missed his head, drilled into the wall beside him. But now he was moving with split-second timing. Whirling around as he dived low, he leaped forward and hurled himself upon—Fred Nelson, the Haverhill airport manager!

"The bloody murderer! I'd have had him if you hadn't done that. They kept me locked up so that I couldn't get to you—"

BRIDES FOR THE FRANKENSTEINS

"That's a lie, Nelson!" Wally Taylor gritted. "You had no intention of rescuing Haskell. You sent him up here to get rid of him, so that your pal, Dr. Pierre, would take care of him—and pay you for delivering another victim into this hell-hole!"

"He's insane, like all the rest in this madhouse," Nelson scoffed.

"No, that crash broke my back; it did not affect my mind," Taylor's bitter voice lashed out at him. "If I had gone mad the way you hoped I would, you might have gotten away with this—but unfortunately for you I knew all about your contemptible deal with Pierre. I know that you stumbled onto this place when you were searching for me last winter. You took the doctor by surprise, when he was all agog about the new prisoners he had captured when my plane was lured down here and wrecked. You got the drop on him and kept it; you made him pay you heavy extortion money—but that wasn't enough. You made a devil's bargain with him to send other victims here—to deliver them at so much a head!" Wally Taylor went on inexorably. "You sent Haskell up here with the girls to sell him to Dr. Pierre like a guinea pig or a white mouse. But, unless I miss my guess, there was more to it than that. You never would have come here otherwise. You wanted to get rid of Haskell for some reason of your own—some reason of supreme importance to your miserable, money-grubbing soul—"

Those swift charges and counter-charges had taken Graham Haskell completely by surprise, but now they began to strike spark in his brain.

Money. . . . What was that Taylor had said about money?

Suddenly it dawned upon him that Fred Nelson knew every detail of the invention he intended to start manufacturing. . . . Nelson had known that Willis Haskell was

(Continued on page 110)

TERROR TALES

(Continued from page 109)

to give his decision after the demonstration flight—and had been fairly certain that Graham would be able to induce the old man to furnish the necessary backing. . . . But if Graham had disappeared, if he was killed or vanished from the face of the earth, then Nelson would have been free to announce the invention as his own and start manufacturing it.

NELSON tried to shrug his shoulders contemptuously—but suddenly he threw himself to one side and snatched up the pistol that had been knocked from his hand.

It roared almost the moment his fingers touched it. The first bullet caught Graham in the shoulder; the second smashed into his chest—and then he reached the man who had sent him flying to his doom. His big hand closed on the gun and crushed it out of Nelson's fingers, dropped it unheeded to the floor.

Panic-stricken, Fred Nelson struggled desperately to break loose, but he was held in a vise of steel—held by an enraged giant who gave no thought to his own strength. Graham Haskell seized him and twisted him in his great hands, bent him until the sharp snapping of his spine put an end to his terrified howls. . . .

Not until then did Graham's berserk rage cool, and with its fading came swift reaction. Suddenly the powerful limbs were tired, the big head too heavy to hold up. Overpowering weakness stole through him and he felt himself reeling, felt himself falling—until Wally Taylor caught him and held him upright.

"I did the best I could, Haskell," the crippled flyer apologized, as he drew a vial from his pocket and held it to Graham's lips. "I let those giants loose the other night, but—I only wanted them to start a riot so that you would have a chance to get into action. That was why I unlocked your room—so that you would have a

BRIDES FOR THE FRANKENSTEINS

chance to reach the radio and call for help.

"A plane was our only hope of getting out of this wilderness. Yours was hopelessly wrecked—but I counted on Nelson flying here to see that you were finished off if he heard that you were loose and trying to escape.

"Tonight I gave you only a half-strength dose in that hypodermic injection—and once the docs get to work on you you'll be as good as ever!"

That seemed a far-fetched promise as the plane gained altitude and left the horrors of Amasquam behind, but Dr. Pierre was not the only medical genius who could perform near-miracles. The scientists were not able to shrink Graham Haskell all the way back to his former size. Today the president of the Haskell-Taylor Aeroplane Corporation is still a giant—a genial, laughing-eyed giant with an adoring wife and a normal-size youngster who fervently hopes that some day he will be as big as his dad!

THE END