

## FLIGHT

By ROBERT E. HOWARD

A jarkal laughed from a thicket still, the stars were haggard pale;  
Cain wiped the sweat from his pallid brow and hurried down the trail.  
The shadows closed behind, before; vines hidden tripped his feet.  
The trees rose stark in the pitiless dark and he heard his own pulse beat.  
No footfall hurried the forest ways, no sound save his own length, beat,  
But he clutched his spear and his own red fear rose in his soul like death.  
Till at last he came to an unknown way his foot had never trod,  
But now he fled from the silent dead and the wrathful face of God.

Red mountains loomed on every hand, silent as Time's first dawn,  
Red ashes shifted about his feet as the slayer hastened on.  
He passed through a valley strange and dim, like a nightmare place of sin  
Littered with bones of ghastly things who ruled ere the time of men.  
He heard the rustle of ghostly wings, but never halted he  
Till he stood, by a haunted wood, on the shore of a nameless sea.  
He halted, listened; naught was there save the Silence at his back  
And a grey sea and a red moon and the shadows rising black.

Till out of the ocean rose a Shape, a monstrous thing of gloom;  
And his knees were loosed and the naked Cain covered before his doom.  
"Come not to my red corpse, Cain; there's blood upon your hand!  
"The foremost killer of the earth comes not into my land!  
"Down all the drifting years to come your fate mankind shall tell,  
"That ye roam the world for the rest of time, disowned by Earth and Hell!  
And the Shape was gone and the moon was red and leaves stirred on the bough  
Cain stood alone by the unknown sea and the mark was on his brow.



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GERALD W. PAGE  
editor

JERRY BURGE  
art director

SUSAN PATRICK  
assistant editor

STEVE FRITZ  
staff artist

ARTHUR H. LANDIS  
HANK REINHARDT  
consultants

WM. L. CRAWFORD  
publisher

Editorial Address:  
P. O. Box 1331,  
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### art

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