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The Ravening Monster

By HAROLD WARD

A shuddery story about an electrocuted murderer who was raised from the dead and revived

THE condemned man raised his bloodshot eyes and glared at the newcomer angrily.

"You another lousy preacher?" he snarled. "Get the hell out of here!"

"Better come outside, sir, and talk to him through the bars," the guard whispered. "He's bad."

The fat man silenced him with a gesture.

"I've something for Mr. Fisher's ear alone," he answered calmly. Then, as the guard closed the cell door and stepped back out of hearing: "No, Fisher, I'm not a preacher. I care not a tinker's damn about the condition of your soul. It is your body that I want." His voice dropped to a husky whisper. "They are going to burn you in the morning. They'll fry you until your insides shrivel up like bacon in a pan. They'll——"

The murderer's fingers, stubby, gnarled, twisted and untwisted like a den of snakes.

"I could choke hell out of you before the screws could get to you," he said speculatively. "I've a notion to try it. Fat men are easy to kill. They haven't any wind and——"

The newcomer shrugged his shoulders.

"We haven't time to argue the matter," he smiled, stroking his long, white beard. He spoke with just a trace of German accent. "We will assume that you are correct in your statement," he went on. "Now give me five minutes to tell you my story."

He leaned forward so that his voice would not carry outside the cell.

"I can save you, man! There is one chance in a million for you to cheat death. One chance in a million to keep that soul of yours out of hell's fire. Do you want to take that chance or do you intend letting the law take its course?"

Fisher raised his matted head.

"Say, bo, are you tryin' to kid me?" he growled. He pounded his thick chest like a gorilla. "I'm bad, I am. I—but what's the proposition?"

The fat man chuckled. He leaned forward again and tapped the other's knee with his pudgy forefinger.

"Just this," he whispered. "As I told you a moment ago, they will shoot three jolts of electricity into you in the morning. Everything that's inside of you will be burned to a crisp—heart, liver, lungs, intestines—everything. I'm a doctor; I know. I'm an experimenter—a scientist. My colleagues at the university where I once taught claimed that I was crazy—crazy because I dared think in advance of the times. Many's the time I have seen them tap their brows when they thought my head was turned. Now here's the proposition in a nutshell: I want your body. You can sign a paper that I've prepared instructing the authorities to give it to me after they have wreaked their vengeance on you. You have no relatives to put in a prior claim. If I can get you before *rigor mortis* sets in I believe—believe, I say, for I do not want to deceive you—that I can, by grafting within your body the viscera of one of the lower animals—a dog, for instance—bring you

back to life again. The chance is, as I told you, one in a million that I will succeed. But you can afford to take that chance, for you will be dead in any event—so dead that the maggots will be crawling between your ribs within a month."

He chuckled huskily to himself. The murderer shrank back against the wall.

"Shut up, damn you!" he growled. "I'm human, I am, even if I am a damned killer."

The fat man chuckled again.

"I thought that remark about the maggots would put some life into you," he answered. "That's what they call psychology, my friend. As for you being a human being, I doubt it. The papers refer to you as 'The Beast' because of your brutality. You've wallowed in blood—innocent blood. You've killed because you like to see people suffer—just as a bad boy tortures a butterfly by sticking pins into it. You like to see people twist and squirm and writhe under your cruel grasp. You love the smell of rich, fresh blood. You are an atavism—a reversion to some prehistoric type. All in all, you

are the most brutal killer in the history of crime——"

The condemned man squared his shoulders proudly.

"That's me," he chortled. "I've made a name for myself—a name that people won't forget for a while. Did you see what the papers wrote about me? They said that I——"

The fat man stopped him with a gesture.

"My name is Kritz," he interrupted. "I've got a dog that I've been working with. He's ready for the experiment. He is the same sort of dog that you are a man. He, too, is a throwback—a wolf-dog—a wild animal with slavering jaws and greenish-yellow, bloodshot eyes. He's an outcast among dogs, feared and hated by all of his kind. Even his ancestors, the wolves, would have nothing to do with him in the days when he ran wild. He's a killer, too—the sort of killer that sneaks up from behind and strikes without warning. It's his viscera that I intend to graft into your body. If I succeed, I——"



"He threw up his arm, and his finger involuntarily pressed the trigger."

He stopped suddenly and, leaning forward, dropped his voice even lower than before.

"If I succeed, you can kill again," he whispered. "You can satiate yourself with blood—wallow in it—wade in it up to your ankles. No one will be the wiser. For Fisher, the murderer, will be dead. See? In his place will be a new man. But come, the guard grows uneasy. What do you say?"

The killer's eyes were gleaming balefully. They were the eyes of a man who has been drugged. His face twisted and writhed. His teeth gnashed together like those of a wild animal. His voice trembled as he stretched forth his hand.

"Blood! Blood!" he whispered, half to himself. "The chance to kill again. The chance to feel warm flesh beneath my fingers once more and hear the gurgle of the dying. Give me the paper, man! Call in a couple of screws to witness it when I sign. And then—then get out. Get out before I choke you. I—God! God, how I love blood!"

2

DAWN. A small, whitewashed room, bare save for the curiously constructed chair with innumerable straps and wires attached which stood on a slightly raised platform in the center of the floor and the dozen rude benches surrounding it. On them sat men conversing in low whispers.

"The poor devil don't even know his own name," one of the newspaper men whispered to the man at his side. "They say that he was conked by a bit of shrapnel over in France. Been balmy ever since. But nobody knows for certain. Somebody called him John Fisher and the name stuck."

"He sure as thunder is a bloodthirsty wretch," the other answered. "I covered

that story of his capture. He cleaned up on two coppers when the posse cornered him in the cornfield after he'd killed old man Dickinson and his wife with a hatchet. He's a mental case. Government ought to take care of him."

"Can't prove service connection. Nobody to front for him at the Veterans' Bureau. Cheaper a damn sight for the state to fry him than stick him into the nut-house. He——"

The entrance of the warden brought conversation to a sudden stop.

The official held up his hand protestingly.

"Please stop smoking, gentlemen. Remember, you are here to witness an execution, not a theatrical performance. A man is about to meet his Maker."

Somebody tittered. He stopped suddenly as the door opened again and the condemned man was brought in. There was a dazed look on his wolfish face. On either side walked a guard. A black-robed priest walked ahead of him chanting a paternoster from a black-bound book.

He snarled like a caged animal as they shoved him into the chair and commenced adjusting the straps. Leaning forward, he sank his teeth into the hand of one of the guards. The man jerked away with a muttered oath. A newspaper man giggled. The warden frowned.

The guards stepped back with a slight nod to the warden. He held up his hand. The witnesses leaned forward. The man in the chair strained jerkily at his bonds, then dropped back. There was a slight smell of burning flesh. . . .

3

DAWN again. In a huge room in a great, ramshackle house set in the midst of a dark forest a white-aproned, pot-bellied man with long, white whis-

kers worked feverishly over an operating-table. The odor of carbolic acid and disinfectants filled the air.

The old man straightened his tired back and, laying a brightly polished instrument upon the porcelain-topped table beside him, turned to the girl who was acting as his assistant.

"We win, Greta, my daughter!" he cried exultingly, removing his rubber gloves and throwing them atop the table. "He will live!"

The girl dropped into a chair, her face white and drawn.

"God, Father, but I'm tired!" she exclaimed. "Eighteen hours without food or water. And, even if we have won, what does it all amount to?"

The old man's eyes burned with a fanatical light.

"My colleagues at the university—they called me crazy!" he snarled. "Crazy—me, Alexander Kritz—because I dared to think in advance of them. This man will prove to them whether or not I am insane. But, no—I can not proclaim my story to the world because he is a criminal. In bringing him back to life we have helped cheat the law. Therefore we might be forced to pay the penalty. But, my girl, we have the satisfaction of knowing that we have done that which no other human has ever done before. The organism of the dog still palpitates with life—throbs within the body of the man. Absolute quiet for weeks until every union has grown together. Think of it! Soon the rich, warm blood will be pulsating through the veins again—the veins that the law destroyed. Think of it, girl! Think of it! *The dead will walk again!*"

He dropped into a chair beside the one occupied by his daughter and closed his weary eyes.

4

THE rain was coming down in torrents. Ted Tucker, attorney at law, glanced down at his gas gage and turned the car in to a filling-station at the outskirts of the village. The attendant, clad in slicker and high rubber boots, gave him such attention as he required.

"Hell of a night," the native remarked as he rubbed a chamois skin over the windshield. "Goin' far?"

The lawyer shrugged his shoulders.

"I'll tell you when you've told me something," he answered. "Where does Professor Alexander Kritz live? I understand that it's somewhere close by."

The attendant looked at him queerly. For an instant he made no reply as he slowly counted out the change for a two-dollar bill and passed it back to the other.

"You a friend of his?" he demanded, a peculiar expression creeping over his weather-beaten face.

"Hardly that," the lawyer answered. "I'm his attorney."

"Oh," the attendant grunted, leaning his arm atop the open window. "Peculiar old cuss, ain't he?"

Tucker shook his head.

"I've never met him," he answered. "What sort of man is he?"

The native hesitated.

"Folks hereabouts don't like him," he said finally. "No one ever goes there. When he first arrived he made it known that he didn't want company. Comes in to town occasionally to buy his grub, pays cash for it and goes on about his business. The girl's just as bad. She's a pretty little thing and she's got a nice car—buys gas here occasionally—but when some of the boys tried to shine up to her she cut 'em cold. They say that they've got a half-wit livin' there, too. Maybe he's a relative and they're sort of 'shamed of him. They live in the old

Priestly house a couple of miles back in the woods. Foller the pavement straight ahead till you hit a road leadin' in through the woods—graveled. Take it till you come to a road to the right. 'Taint much of a road, but you can get through it with the power you've got. It leads right up to the house. It's a big, tumbledown affair."

The lawyer nodded and pressed his foot against the starter. The attendant stepped back as if to close the conversation. Then, as if struck by a thought, he stepped forward again.

"There's been a lot of peculiar carryings-on hereabouts," he said soberly. "You're a stranger, so I'd best warn you. Jim Peasley was killed a while back—throat ripped all to the devil like a wild beast had done it. Few nights later Lizzie Mumsley, ol' Miss Dixon's hired girl, she got it the same way. Throat chawed and torn. Sheriff had a posse searchin' around, but they haven't found nothing. Lot of stock killed, too. Better watch your step, mister."

He stuck his head in through the open window of the car and lowered his voice.

"A lot of folks blame Kritz, although I don't see what he's got to do with it. But people will talk, you know."

Tucker displayed the handle of a revolver stuck in the side pocket of his raincoat.

"I'm from Chicago," he bragged. "In there we have guns to cut our teeth on when we are babies. Even the nursing-bottles are made to look like machine-guns. I can take care of myself, but thanks just the same."

The station attendant shrugged his shoulders and turned back into the warmth and security of his little station.

THE lights of the machine brought out a side road leading off from the pavement. Tucker slowed down. Grav-

eled though it was, it looked little better than a track rambling through the foliage of two hills. He turned onto it. The headlights showed up every hole in the gravel, every tiny pond of water, every shadowy stone, making them look more dangerous than they really were. The lightning flashed incessantly, intermingled with the steady rumble of thunder. In spite of the windshield-wiper, he was forced to travel at a snail's pace.

Ahead of him was the wood. The jagged flashes of lightning which constantly split the sky brought out every tree and bush in bold relief. The headlights showed the side road turning off from the gravelled thoroughfare. He cautiously turned his machine onto it. It was muddy and rough, but, as the oil station attendant had said, he negotiated it with little trouble, although he little more than crept along.

The storm was increasing in fury every minute. The rattle of the rain upon the top of the car and the steady rumble of the thunder made a medley of sound in which the exhaust of his engine took no small part. The temperature was dropping steadily. He recollected too late that the heater was disconnected. He was benumbed—half frozen.

The lane—it was little more than a tunnel through the trees, so heavy was the foliage—twisted sharply to the left. Ahead of him loomed a huge pile of masonry. The headlights played over the wet, vine-covered stone; it looked like an Old World castle. One window only showed a light; it was dim and blurred as if the shade had been pulled tightly against the flash.

He turned his spotlight against the door. Finally he located it—a huge affair of dark wood at the end of a flag-stone path edged with bushes and weeds. The whole place, seen through the darkness and rain, had a distinct air of bleak-

ness and inhospitality. He put it down to the storm and, climbing stiffly out of the car, faced the fury of the elements. Outside the car he found the tumult was worse than he had expected. The force of the wind fairly lifted him off his feet. The night was filled with the constant rumble of the thunder, and the roar of the breeze through the trees combined with the ceaseless downpour of the rain. The sky was torn by incessant flashes of lightning. In spite of the raincoat he was soaked by the time he negotiated the narrow path to the door.

A man leaped out of the shadow of the bushes and cautiously approached. He was almost upon the lawyer. The latter caught a glimpse of him as an unusually bright stroke of lightning split the heavens—a glimpse of a hairy face, of gleaming, bloodshot eyes, of lips drawn back over gleaming teeth in a wolfish snarl.

"Are you——"

The man leaped back. An instant later he was swallowed up by the blackness of the forest.

5

TUCKER shuddered. Turning, he brought his knuckles against the panel. There was no answer. Cursing under his breath, he beat his fist against the wood again and again. From inside came a peculiar clomp-clomp-clomp. Suddenly it ceased. He could feel—actually feel—that some one was standing on the other side of the door listening. Angrily, he brought his knuckles against the door again.

"Who is it?" a quavering voice demanded. It was not the palsied quaver of an old person, but, rather, the trembling voice of some one in mortal terror.

"Tucker!" he answered above the crash and tumult of the storm. "Is this

the residence of Professor Alexander Kritz?"

For a moment there was no reply. Then a chain rattled and a bolt was drawn from its hasp. The door was pulled back a tiny crack and an eye peered through the opening.

"Who did you say it was?" the fear-laden voice demanded again.

"Tucker!" the lawyer roared, thoroughly angry by this time. "If you are Professor Kritz, then I am the lawyer you telegraphed for this morning. I am a member of the firm of Tucker and Wakeman. My partner, Mr. Wakeman, was unable to come. If you are not Professor Kritz, then I will be on my way and to hell with you. I don't intend to stand out here in this storm all night debating the question."

The man on the other side muttered something. Then the door was slowly drawn back far enough for the visitor to squeeze through the opening, only to be slammed shut again with force enough to jar the house. The bolt was slipped back into its hasp and the chain snapped into place. The lawyer brushed the water from his eyes and stood staring at a fat man dressed in an ancient dressing-gown—a man slightly past middle age, with long, white whiskers, and beady eyes that blinked at him through thick-lensed glasses. He was walking on crutches, which accounted for the clomping sound. In his right hand he held a huge revolver with which he covered his visitor threateningly, balancing himself on the crutches, one foot held several inches above the floor.

"Do you always receive your visitors this way?" Tucker demanded.

The fat man stuck the weapon into the folds of his gown and extended a hand for him to shake—a flabby, fish-like hand covered with red hair and stained with chemicals.

"I must beg your pardon, sir," he said finally, gazing at the newcomer from under his shaggy brows. "I—well, to be honest, I had expected to see Wakeman and I—I am in danger here. Mortal danger. God alone knows what danger I am in."

He hesitated. Then:

"That is why I did not let you in immediately," he went on. "I am forced to maintain a veritable fortress here."

The lawyer nodded comprehendingly. "*Come to me at once,*" the message had said. "*Please do not delay. It is a matter of life and death.*"

"Mr. Wakeman was taken suddenly ill," he answered soberly. "Otherwise he would have responded in person to your wire. In view of the fact that you seemed in extreme haste, he believed it better to send me than to wait until he was recovered."

Kritz shrugged his fat shoulders. Turning, he led the way down a narrow, bare hall lighted by a single kerosene bracket lamp. Suddenly he stopped and, turning to the other, dropped his voice to a husky whisper.

"Did you see anything when you came in?" he questioned. "Or hear anything—unusual?"

The lawyer nodded briefly.

"A man. He dodged out of the bushes at my approach. For an instant I thought that he meant to attack me, or speak to me. Then, as I turned, he dodged back into the forest. Why? I had heard that you had a—well, a man with you who was slightly off and——"

Kritz halted him with that peculiar gesture of his.

"Never mind," he said brusksly. "I will explain later."

He led his visitor to a door and, turning the knob, ushered him inside. Tucker rightly surmised that it was through the window of this room that the light had

filtered, for a huge desk lamp illuminated all of the vast interior. A partition wall had been torn out between two large rooms, the result being a vast space filled almost to overflowing with books and laboratory apparatus. The walls were lined with heavy tomes. In a distant corner was a sink in front of which stood a porcelain-topped table. Several shelves were laden with bottles and retorts and other chemical paraphernalia.

Tucker removed his sodden coat and that at a sign from Kritz and threw them across a chair. Indicating another, the fat man motioned his visitor to be seated. He was about to seat himself on the other side of the desk, when he suddenly recollected himself.

"In my excitement I forget my duties as host," he apologized. "You have not yet dined?"

The lawyer shook his head.

"I did not stop because of the storm," he answered.

Kritz picked up his crutches and started toward the door.

"Your pardon, sir," he exclaimed. "I will summon Greta, my daughter, and ask her to prepare a lunch and some hot coffee. You will need it after your soaking. We live alone, Greta and I, because of the confidential nature of my experiments. She is my assistant."

He hobbled another step toward the door, then stopped again.

"One question," he said suddenly. "It is a question which may require some thought on your part before it is answered—and it is necessary that it be answered immediately. I know little or nothing of the laws of your country. What is the penalty for bringing a man back from the grave—a man who has been killed by the law—executed?"

Tucker stared at him blankly.

"I—I don't believe that I quite understand you," he said finally.

"Suppose that I create a man—suppose that I take a dead body after the law has wreaked its vengeance upon it and into that bit of cold clay I again place life? Suppose that I find that I have created a Frankenstein monster—a menace to society? Have I the right, as its creator, to kill it? Or must I turn it over to the law once more? And if I do turn it over to the law, what is the penalty I must pay for thwarting the law's vengeance?"

The lawyer scratched his head dumbly. Was the man insane? No sane man would ask such a question.

"Your question is more for a priest than for a lawyer," he answered to gain time. "On the other hand——"

He stopped suddenly. From outside the window came a peculiar scratching sound. It was like that of a cat clawing against the side of the house or sharpening its claws on the soft, pine sash.

Kritz jerked the revolver from his pocket and cocked it, his hand trembling like a leaf in the wind.

"There it is!" he whispered huskily. "That is Fisher—the beast—the thing that I am talking about."

Then came a howl—a long, shrieking, quivering howl. It was the howl of a wolf that has scented fresh blood. Kritz cowered against the wall, his fat body shaking like that of a man with the palsy.

It ceased suddenly. Above the noise and crash and tumult of the storm could be heard the sound of running feet—of unshod feet. Pad-pad-pad, it rounded the house.

A hand was laid softly on the door at the end of the hall and the knob was turned gently. Then came a puppyish whine—the begging whine of a young

dog that has been locked out of its accustomed sleeping-place.

Then all was silent again.

6

FOR a moment neither man spoke. The old man had imparted some of his terror to his visitor. Finally, however, he straightened himself and shrugged his shoulders, although his teeth were still chattering like castanets.

"You—you understand—now," he said finally, wiping the sweat from his forehead. "You have seen him and now you—you have heard him. It's not like seeing an ordinary person. There's—there's a *feeling* about him—an undead feeling, if you understand what I mean. It is just lately that I've noticed him. I've never seen a ghost, Mr. Tucker. As a scientist, I've always scouted the idea of people coming back from the grave. But you get the same feeling from him that I imagine one would get from meeting a ghost—an unnatural feeling—a feeling of terror.

"And now," he went on, "I will get my daughter. She will come down and prepare something to eat. I dared not let her come downstairs before, crippled as I am and unable to defend her against this awful thing. I had a fall a few days ago and strained the ligaments of my leg."

The lawyer turned a white, strained face toward him.

"Sit down, man!" he exclaimed. "Sit down and tell me about it. What is this terror—this thing that is holding you in its grasp? True, I felt it, but yet I do not understand."

Kritz dropped his trembling form into a near-by chair.

"That's the hell of it, Tucker," he exclaimed. "I don't know. When the idea came to me, I imagined that I was doing

something wonderful for humanity—for science. Think of it, I said to myself—if I succeed there will be no need for death. One can keep going on and on and on. We worked, Greta and I, until we were ready to drop from exhaustion. You have heard of Fisher, the arch-murderer? Yes? Well, it was his body that I obtained from the prison authorities. He willed it to me. I promised to make him live again and I kept my word. Into his empty shell I grafted the viscera of a dog—the meanest, lowest, most vicious animal that I could find—a canine Fisher."

He stopped suddenly and, leaning forward, tapped the other's knee with his forefinger. His voice dropped to a hoarse whisper.

"Kish, the wolf-dog, accursed of his kind, now lives within the body of John Fisher, the murderer!"

"Impossible!" Tucker exclaimed.

"Is it?" Kritz demanded. "You have seen him. You have heard him sniffing at the window, seeking to gain an entrance. No, Tucker, it is not impossible. I am a creator—as great as God himself. Only, just as God created in the Devil a thing that he was unable to control, so have I created this monster and he has gotten beyond me.

"For weeks after the operation of joining the two bodies I kept him under the influence of a powerful anesthetic of my own compounding until every nerve and muscle and tissue knit together into a homogeneous whole. Heart, lungs—everything burned out by the powerful electric current—were removed. In their place I grafted the organs of Kish. Just as Burbank created his wonders of the plant world, so I created the wonder of the animal kingdom—a living being, half man, half dog.

"My great problem was to keep him quiet so that everything would knit together and, at the same time, keep dis-

solution from setting in. That is why I first compounded the anesthetic of which I spoke. And, too, I was obliged to use artificial respiration. It was not until two months had passed that I dared allow him to sit up and move of his own volition.

"Not until it was too late did I realize what I had done. He proved, at the end of the initial period, to be nothing but a mass of flesh and blood with apparently no brain. Of course, the electric current destroyed his brain cells. I attempted to graft a bit of gray matter from the skull of the dog onto his brain pan, but apparently without result. Yet there must have been a few cells that lived, since he talks after a fashion and, up to a certain point, is able to reason. I proved one thing conclusively; his skull had at one time been caved in. There must have been a pressure against his brain. That was probably what caused him to run amuck."

Again he filled and lighted his long, German pipe. Tucker felt in his pocket for a box of matches and a package of cigarettes. Lighting one, he leaned back in his chair and waited for the old man to continue.

Suddenly the pipe clattered to the floor as Kritz leaped to his feet and groped once more among the folds of his gown for the revolver.

"Listen!" he whispered hoarsely. "Hear him?"

Above the clamor and tumult of the storm came that peculiar puppyish whine again. Then the scratching at the window.

Kritz automatically jerked the trigger of his revolver. The leaden slug embedded itself harmlessly in the wall a foot to one side of the window.

A bestial growl! Then the sound of feet padding away in the distance.

A woman screamed.

"Father! Father! My God, what is it?"

The old man hobbled to the door.

"He—he was at the window again, Greta," he called up the stairway. "Have no fear. Mr. Tucker is with me."

TURNING back into the room, he re-seated himself and picked up the pipe with trembling fingers.

"This—this sluggish mass of meat that I have stolen from the grave, Mr. Tucker, is—I hardly know how to describe him to you. He is neither man nor dog. God, what ugly beasts they both were! Fisher, a bloodthirsty butcher, a killer of the worst criminal type. A man devoid of fear, living only to shed blood. Even in the death cell he cursed and raved like a maniac when they went to lead him to the chair. He bit the hand of one of the guards and shrieked with pleasure, they say, at sight of the red blood. Once in his cell he struck a priest who attempted to console him. He went to his death with a vile oath on his lips. And Kish, the most vicious animal of the northland, hated by man and beast, half wolf, half dog—a slinking killer. . . .

"The union of the two of them is nothing but an inert gob of fat and muscle seemingly content to bask in the sun and blink his heavy eyes when any one comes near. But you have heard, my friend. He is not so dumb as he appears. But I digress."

He sucked meditatively at his pipe for a moment before continuing.

"Two months ago," he went on, "while I was in the village buying supplies I learned that one of the villagers had lost a valuable calf. He believed that a wild dog was running amuck. I paid little attention to his tale.

"Then a dozen sheep were killed in a near-by field. Next morning I noticed blood on Fisher's hands. And, too, there was a peculiar muttoney odor on his clothes. I questioned him, but he only grinned

back at me idiotically. Exasperated, I seized a whip and beat him. He merely cowered in a corner and howled like a little child. I threw down the whip, disgusted at myself. It was asinine to think that this brainless monstrosity had killed those animals! He was as dumb and harmless as a sheep himself. Yet the blood—it made me think.

"Next, a man was killed. His body was torn to bits and his throat cut and slashed. The farmers searched the countryside for traces of a wild animal—some ferocious beast that was doing the killing. They found nothing.

"But listen, my friend. Next morning when I went to the bowi to wash I found traces of blood on the sides. Fisher had learned his lesson. He was crafty. The beating I had given him when I found blood on his hands had taught him the lesson of cunning.

"I beat him again. I whipped him until the gore dripped in streams from the cuts across his back. He made no effort to fight back. I was still his master, see? He had not yet learned that I was weaker than he. That is true with all of the lower animals. In his half-witted way he tried to tell me that he had done nothing wrong. Again I was almost tempted to believe him—to believe that he was the victim of some strange chain of circumstances. For it is difficult, my friend, to conceive such a thing—an inert, sluggish mass of flesh and blood—a thing apparently contented to sit and stare aimlessly into vacancy—to believe that such a thing can be so clever—so diabolically cunning.

"Had I forgotten his record? you ask. No. But remember, Tucker, that Fisher, the arch-murderer, was dead—electrocuted. Out of his body and that of Kish, the wolf-dog, I had created this monstrosity. I had expected something different. And like all experimenters, when

an experiment turns out to be a failure, I threw the result aside. Fisher was a different sort of man from this thing—a wild animal, ferocious, a devil incarnate. Kish was of the same type, only there was a subtle streak in him. This thing of my creation had none of the characteristics of either. No, I could not believe that this stupid mass, even though a combination of the two, could be the soft-footed, quick-striking thing that was terrorizing the countryside."

Again he smoked a moment in silence. Then:

"It was the calendar that revealed the truth to me. One day I glanced at it idly. The thought flashed across my brain that the night the man was killed the moon had been dark. The night the sheep were killed there was no moon. The same thing was true the night the calf was slashed and torn and mangled.

"Some atavistic streak in Fisher—some throwback in Kish, the wolf-dog—when combined causes this thing I have created to run, to kill, to destroy only when there is no moon. Now do you understand?"

Tucker leaned forward, his face betraying the interest he felt.

"I think that I do," he answered. "It is your opinion, then, that——"

His cuff caught on the window-shade. The spring, released, shot the shade to the roller.

Pressed against the glass was a face—the face of a monster. Dark, hairy, with little eyes, bloodshot and glaring, the thick lips drawn back over yellowish teeth of enormous size, it was the face of a fiend out of hell. The rain-soaked hair was dripping and matted. The nose was flat, the nostrils of extraordinary size.

The lawyer leaped to his feet with a shriek. He jerked at the gun in his pocket and brought it to play on the window. But too late. The thing had disappeared.

Again he heard the pad-pad-pad of feet in the distance. Then the dismal, wailing, wolf-like howl.

7

KRITZ, shaking like a wind-blown leaf, was still sitting in his chair as Tucker, stretching forth his arm, drew the shade down again.

"God! What a face!" he exclaimed. "It was the face of a devil, a gargoyle, a—a——"

He hesitated, at a loss for words. The old man took the sentence out of his mouth.

"The face of a thing made by human hands and not by the Creator," he said solemnly, stilling his chattering teeth for an instant. "I am glad, Mr. Tucker, that you have seen him again. The glimpse you had of him when you entered gave you no conception of what he is. You will understand my problem better now. Remember, too, that there is no moon tonight. That and the darkness and the storm is why he is—why he is as he is. Tomorrow, should the sun come out, he may be altogether different—a listless thing of almost inanimate flesh."

He picked up his pipe again and, filling it, stuffed the tobacco into the bowl with his fat forefinger, his eyes wearing a strained, far-away look. Finally, lighting it, he turned to the lawyer again.

"Since you have thus seen him, I will make the remainder of my story short. Suffice to say that his next victim was an innocent country girl. They found her mutilated body along the roadside. I will not go into the harrowing details. Again it was in the dark of the moon. Resolved to take no chances, I had locked him up. But he broke down the door and made his escape. Since then he has remained outside. The bit of brain inside his head tells him that he has done wrong. Time after time I have caught him prowling

about. But the streak of diabolical cunning in his makeup warns him that the revolver with which I have armed myself is dangerous and he takes no chances.

"Where does he hide? I do not know. It is seldom that he shows himself in the daytime. I have been living in a torment of fear, not only for myself, but also for Greta. Hurrying from one part of the house to another, I sprained my leg by falling. The injury made me more helpless than ever.

"I have had it in my mind to flee—to take my daughter and hasten to a place of safety, for I am certain that he intends to kill us both. Instinct tells him that I have done him an injury in bringing him back from the grave. How do I know this? That I can not tell, only I do know it. But is it right that I should go away and leave the devilish thing free to prey upon the unsuspecting country people? And I dare not tell them what and who he is for fear of the punishment they will mete out to me for bringing such a monster into their midst."

He stretched forth his hand appealingly.

"I know so little of the law, Mr. Tucker. My entire life has been devoted to scientific pursuits. What can they do to me for bringing this arch-fiend—this man killed by the law of the land—back to life?"

Tucker hesitated. Kritz waited an instant, then went on.

"That is why I sent the wire to Wakeman. He has always transacted my business for me. It was he who purchased this tumbledown house for me in order that I might carry on my experiments in seclusion.

"This morning a hunter passed through the woods. He had several dogs with him. Fisher kept out of sight. I took a chance and, opening the door, hailed the

fellow. I gave him a dollar and asked him to send a message to Wakeman. He looked at me queerly when he read what I had written and acted as if he doubted my sanity. I forced a laugh and told him that the message was in code—that the words had no meaning to any one who did not have the key. He went on his way, apparently satisfied.

"Fisher came out of the bushes where he had been hiding and started stalking the man. His teeth were bared and his lips were flecked with foam. I thought for a moment that he was about to leap upon the poor devil. I was on the verge of shouting a warning. I had never seen him—the beast—act that way in the daytime before. It was the blood lust, I imagine—or he was hungry. I should have told the hunter—called his attention to the thing that was sneaking up behind him. He would have shot in self-defense and my problem would have been solved. But something held me back. Then it was too late, for the sight of the dogs drove the devilish thing back to cover and the hunter went on his way without knowing the dreadful peril that had threatened him."

He stopped again, licking his parched lips with his moist tongue.

"I forget my duties as host," he apologized. "I will call Greta at once. She will make some coffee and arrange a lunch for you. It will do you good after the soaking you have been through. I will be gone but a short time, but I must remain with her in the kitchen. I—I dare not leave her there alone."

He stopped suddenly. From outside came a shrieking laugh—a wild, maniacal howl of glee. It rose above the noise and tumult of the storm, ending in a wild, animal-like screech—the call of a wolf that scents its kill.

Then again silence. Ominous, portentous silence broken only by the steady

downpour of the rain and the rumble of the thunder.

8

TUCKER heard the girl come running down the stairs in response to her father's call. That she had been waiting for the summons was apparent. Then he heard the kitchen stove being stirred into life and the clatter of dishes.

There was a sudden crash. The tinkle of broken glass. A scream of mortal agony. The dull roar of a revolver. A woman's shrill scream again; it was cut off in the middle.

Again that shrieking, maniacal laugh, then the wolfish howl. This time it was the howl of the wolf that has made its kill and is sating itself in fresh, warm blood.

Tucker leaped to his feet, his hair rising like the quills of a porcupine. He jerked his automatic from his pocket. A single bound took him to the door. Opening it, he stepped out into the hall.

Silence. Silence save for the howling of the storm and the machine-gun patter of the rain as it beat against the roof. A draft swept through the narrow passageway; the bracket lamp guttered and smoked. Its flickering caused fantastic shadows to leap and dance upon the plastered walls.

For an instant he stopped and listened, his heart beating like a trip-hammer. Far in the rear was an open door. He approached it on tiptoe. Through it came a feeble, flickering light. He stopped just outside. Again that sinister silence. Then a dull, throaty, bestial growl—the growl of a wild animal that is worrying its prey and defies interference.

He leaped through the opening. The scene etched itself upon his brain with photographic clearness. The window broken; the glass scattered upon the

floor. Through the opening the wind howled and roared and the rain splattered. A table covered with partly filled dishes. Upon it a glass, kerosene lamp, its chimney knocked off and broken, the pieces scattered over the oilcloth-covered table-top and upon the rough board floor. A huge cook stove in which a wood fire spit and crackled in emulation of the storm outside. The stove door was open; the dancing flames cast a mellow glow over the whole interior.

Just inside the door lay Kritz. His crutches were by his side. His fat, chemical-stained fingers grasped the handle of his revolver. His throat was torn. From his jugular vein spurted a stream of blood; his massive body lay in a great, ever-widening pool of it; his long, white whiskers were smeared with it. His eyes, wide open, stared up through the thick lenses of his spectacles like bits of dull agate.

On the other side of the room lay a girl. In life she must have been beautiful. Now her clothes were torn. The white, smooth flesh of her body was bruised and mangled.

Over her crouched a monster—a sodden man-beast with long, black, matted hair and tangled beard. He was clad only in undershirt and overalls; from them the water dripped in a glistening flood to mingle with the crimson on the floor. He was barefooted, bareheaded. His sharp fangs were buried in the rounded throat of the girl, while from his lips came the dull, bestial growl that Tucker had heard before.

The monster raised his shaggy head and glared at the newcomer. Tucker involuntarily noted the wound in the other's shoulder where Kritz's bullet had found its mark. From it the blood was oozing down over the front of his wet, dirty shirt.

For an instant neither of them made a move. Tucker was benumbed with fear. On all fours the beast backed away from his prey. His blood-stained lips were drawn back over his yellowed fangs. From the corners of his mouth drooled a slaver. His long fingers worked spasmodically. He gathered himself for a spring.

The lawyer tried to raise his gun. His arms were leaden, he was hypnotized. The thing crept toward him. From his throat came a queer, whining noise, half yelp, half growl. Suddenly he launched himself.

The lawyer threw up his arm to protect his face. At the same time his finger involuntarily pressed the trigger. He saw the flame spurt from the muzzle of his gun. Then the huge body landed. He felt fingers feeling for his throat. They closed over his windpipe in a throttling grasp. He went down in a heap. . . .

Then came oblivion.

WHEN Tucker opened his eyes the storm was still howling and raging. There was a weight upon his legs. By the light of the dancing fire he saw that it was the body of the monster. He dragged himself from beneath it. The shaggy, ill-shaped head was twisted to

one side. Between the eyes was a small, round, blue-black hole edged with crimson.

The body of Kritz lay where it had fallen, only now the jaw had dropped and the features had relaxed into a sardonic grin as if the whole terrible affair were a great joke. Across the room the girl stared glassily ceilingward.

He leaped to his feet and ran shrieking from the accursed place.

His car was where he had left it. Bare-headed, coatless, the rain smashing down on him in a veritable cloudburst, he jerked open the door and, leaping inside, jammed his foot upon the starter. He was still screaming hysterically as he twisted the wheel to the right with all his strength and threw in the clutch. The machine leaped ahead as if it, too, shared the terror of the night.

The heavens were torn with the fury of the elements. Close behind him something crashed. The odor of sulfur was wafted to his nostrils. Upon his windshield was reflected a great light. He turned his head. The lightning had struck the old house and the flames were mounting toward the sky.

He turned the corner onto the graveled road and fled through the darkness and the storm like a man accursed.

