

# *The Howard Collector*

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LETTER:                    ROBERT E. HOWARD to  
                              FARNSWORTH WRIGHT,  
                              dated May 6, 1935

Dear Mr. Wright:

I always hate to write a letter like this, but dire necessity forces me. It is, in short, an urgent plea for money. It is nothing new for me to need money, but the present circumstances are different from those in which I generally found myself in the past.

My expenses for the past months have been great. My mother was forced to have her gall bladder removed, a very serious operation, especially for a woman of her age and state of health. She has been almost an invalid for years. She was in a hospital at Temple for a month, during which time I stayed with her, and was not able to do any writing at all during that time. But for the professional discount on the operation, my father being a physician, I do not know how we would have been able to meet the expenses. As it was they were great, considering the hospital expenses, special nurses, etc., and my own expenses, though I cut these as closely as I could by staying in the cheapest rooming house I could find and skipping meals with such regularity that I lost fifteen pounds during that month. We have been at home for over a month, but my mother is far from recovered. An abscess developed in the operation wound, which necessitated her staying for several days in a hospital at Coleman, and it is still necessary to take her there, a distance of some thirty miles, every few days in

order to have her wound dressed and cleansed, as my father does not have the proper facilities for this. Meanwhile, the expenses go on, naturally, for we are forced to hire a woman to do the cooking and such of the house-work as I am unable to do. Whether my mother ever recovers or not possibly depends on the kind of care and attention I am able to give her, and that in turn depends on the money I am able to earn.

And that brings me to the matter at hand. For some time now I have been receiving a check regularly each month from Weird Tales - half checks, it is true, but by practicing the most rigid economy I have managed to keep my head above the water; that I was able to do so was largely because of, not the size but the regularity of the checks. I came to depend upon them and to expect them, as I felt justified in so doing. But this month, at a very time when I need money so desperately bad, I did not receive a check. Somehow, some way, my family and I have struggled along this far, but if you cut off my monthly checks now, I don't know what in God's name we'll do.

Costs of living have gone up; this part of the country has suffered bitterly through drouth and dust-storms. My father is an old man and most of his patients are poverty-stricken hill people who seldom have anything but farm produce to pay him. This year they may not even have that. Poverty is no new tale to me. I've gnawed crusts all my life. But the hardships I've suffered in the past may be picnics to what confronts me if Weird Tales discontinues my monthly checks.

I do not feel that my request is unreasonable. As you know, it has been six months since "The People of the Black Circle" ( the story the check for which is now due me ) appeared in Weird Tales. Weird Tales owes me over eight hundred dollars for stories already published and supposed to be paid for on publication - enough to pay all my debts and get me back on my feet again if I could

receive it all at once. Perhaps this is impossible. I have no wish to be unreasonable; I know times are hard for everybody. But I don't believe I am being unreasonable in asking you to pay me a check each month until the accounts are squared. Honestly, at the rate we're going now, I'll be an old man before I get paid up! And my need for money now is urgent.

Of course, I sell to other magazines from time to time, but these sales are uncertain; to make markets regularly requires much time and effort, and for years most of my time and effort has been devoted to the stories I have written for *Weird Tales*. I may not - may never be a great writer, but no writer ever worked with more earnest sincerity than I have worked on the tales that have appeared in *Weird Tales*. I have grown up in the magazine, so to speak, and it is as much a part of my life as are my hands and arms. But to a poor man the money he makes is his life's blood, and of late when I write of Conan's adventures I have to struggle against the disheartening reflection that if the story is accepted, it may be years before I get paid for it.

This is a statement of my case, spoken in the only way I know how to speak, that is to say frankly. I trust that my bluntness has given no offense. Necessity drives me. A monthly check from *Weird Tales* may well mean for me the difference between a life that is at least endurable - and God alone knows what.

Cordially,

Robert E. Howard