

A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

REGISTERED IN U.S. PATENT OFFICE

Volume 29

CONTENTS FOR MAY, 1937

Number 5

Cover Design	M. Brundage	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "The Mark of the Monster"</i>		
The Last Pharaoh	Thomas P. Kelley	514
<i>A strange story of the weird doom that befell two lovers in a castle of gloom on the African coast</i>		
Ultimate	Edgar Daniel Kramer	540
<i>Verse</i>		
Duar the Accursed	Clifford Ball	541
<i>A surprizing tale about an eery Black Tower and the love of a queen for her enemy</i>		
The Mark of the Monster	Jack Williamson	554
<i>What strange evil enmeshed the beautiful Valyne Kirk? A novelette of brooding horror</i>		
Unsought Advice	Dorothy Quick	573
<i>Verse</i>		
The Salem Horror	Henry Kuttner	574
<i>A ghastly form reared its grisly bulk in an old house in Derby Street</i>		
The Wind from the River	August W. Derleth	586
<i>The mystery of Arthur Grandison's violent death was solved by a second tragedy one eery night</i>		
The Horror in the Burying-Ground	Hazel Heald	596
<i>A macabre story of a gruesome double burial in the old town of Stillwater</i>		
Edgar Allan Poe	Adolphe de Castro	606
<i>An acrostic sonnet</i>		
Anton's Last Dream	Edwin Baird	607
<i>A brief tale of the dismal success of a scientist's experiment</i>		
Vallisneria Madness	Ralph Milne Farley	612
<i>A strange and curious story about the moonlight mating of flowers</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Horror on the Links	Seabury Quinn	617
<i>The first of the Jules de Grandin stories, reprinted by popular request</i>		
The Eyrie		634
<i>The readers express their opinions</i>		

Published monthly by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company, 2457 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Ind. Entered as second-class matter March 20, 1923, at the post office at Indianapolis, Ind., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 25 cents. *Subscription rates:* One year in the United States and possessions, Cuba, Mexico, South America, Spain, \$2.50; Canada, \$2.75; elsewhere, \$3.00. English office: Otis A. Kline, c/o John Paradise, 86 Strand, W. C. 2, London. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts, although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. The contents of this magazine are fully protected by copyright and must not be reproduced either wholly or in part without permission from the publishers.

NOTE—All manuscripts and communications should be addressed to the publishers' Chicago office at 840 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, Ill. FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

Copyright 1937, by the Popular Fiction Publishing Company.
 COPYRIGHTED IN GREAT BRITAIN



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

Anton's Last Dream

By EDWIN BAIRD

A brief tale of the dismal success of a scientist's experiment

ANYTHING that man can dream, man can do. So believed Anton Slezak, the chemist.

Man had dreamed of flying, Anton would argue, and now he flies across the seven seas. He had dreamed of annihilating distance, and today he sends his voice round the world with the speed of light. He had dreamed of penetrating the mysteries of the universe, and now he sees trillions of miles into space.

So argued Anton, the chemist.

Anton had dreamed many dreams, and some had vanished mistily and some had become reality. But none was too fantastic for Anton's laboratory tests.

Upon the chemist in his laboratory, Anton often said, rested the future development of mankind. And the future, Anton promised, would outshine the present as the present outshines the past.

No poor dreamer was Anton. His dreams had brought him great riches. For he had turned his genius to practical matters, and, working miracles in his laboratory, had discovered ways of converting waste into things of commercial value—cornstalks into cloth, weeds into paper, coal soot into lacquer—and from these and other such discoveries Anton had derived much wealth.

He had bought a magnificent home. He had married a young and lovely woman. He had a nephew who idolized him; and he had many friends and admirers and loyal assistants, and a truly beautiful wife, who, as anybody could plainly see, loved him devotedly. He had, indeed,

one might have said, everything worth living for.

And now, at the age of fifty-two, he seemed on the threshold of still greater achievements.

At the moment, however, Anton was employed in developing a dream, the fulfilment of which could have no practical value whatever.

He knew that others had dreamed the same thing. They had put it in motion pictures, in pseudo-scientific writing, in extravagant fiction. But it remained, as yet, merely a dream that nobody would believe.

Anton was determined to make this dream come true.

He brought to bear upon the task all the resources of his scientific mind, all his knowledge of physics and chemistry. He concentrated upon it day and night, experimenting, testing, trying first this, then that, and then discarding everything and starting all over again. He worked in secrecy, in his private laboratory. He told none of his corps of assistants about it; nor his wife; nor his nephew. He wanted nobody to know of this dream—until he was through with it. Then, if he succeeded, the whole world should know about it.

And at last the day came when he knew he *had* succeeded.

He was in his laboratory, that day, when his young and beautiful wife entered. She was an exquisite creature, vibrant with youth, aglow with health, athrob with the joy and zest of life.

"Anton," she said, "you ought to get

outdoors for a change of air. You've locked yourself in here for weeks, and you're looking ghastly." She anxiously regarded his scholarly face. Against his black Vandyke beard, his skin was startlingly pale. Yet his eyes glowed with intellectual fire.

"I know, my dear," he said, patting her shoulder; "but I've nearly finished now, and presently we shall celebrate—you and Robin and I—the triumph of my greatest experiment."

Her long blue eyes surveyed the litter of test-tubes and retorts.

"What is this experiment, Anton?"

"You will soon know, my dear. And it will astonish you. I promise you that. Now run along, like a good little girl, and enjoy yourself." His tone was paternal, and as they stood together they might well have been mistaken for father and daughter—he, tall and dark and somehow elderly; she, small and blond and gloriously youthful.

"I wish, Anton," she protested, "you wouldn't always treat me like a child. After all, you know, I *am* your wife. . . . And I am proud of you, Anton. I like to be seen with you, and watch people point you out as a great celebrity, and let them know that you're my husband. So suppose you drop everything for this afternoon and go places with me. We could drive through the park, stop somewhere for a cocktail, go somewhere else for dinner, and then to a theater if you like, or to a night club . . ."

"No, my dear. But you and Robin go."

She moved a disdainful shoulder. "Robin! It's only a bore, going places with Robin. He's such a——"

She bit her lips, for at this moment Robin entered—an athletic young chap of sparkling eye, of sun-tanned skin and exuberant spirits.

"Lo, Uncle Anton! How comes the Great Experiment?"

"Most satisfactorily, my boy. It will soon be finished, and it will amaze you and Zora—and all the world."

"Well, Anton," said Zora, "if I can't coax you outdoors, I'll be running along. I've some letters to write."

"Wait, my dear."

She paused at the door, her hand on the knob, and looked back at him. She ignored the younger man as she might have ignored a small boy.

"Since you and Robin are to share in the success of my experiment"—Anton beamed upon them—"it is only fitting that you should also share in its consummation."

He walked to a cabinet, from which he took two pairs of white gauntlets.

"First," he said, "you must put these on. . . . And now," he added, when their hands were gloved, "take this material and dip it in here."

From a shelf of the cabinet he had taken a large roll of white cloth, wrapped in cellophane, and from a white-enameled vat he removed the lid, disclosing a milky fluid.

He stood between them at the round vessel, giving instructions, while they immersed the cloth in the chalky liquid—"Be careful," he warned, "not to let it touch your clothing"—and, with his pointed black beard and in his long white apron, he might have been some high priest standing beside a cauldron, instructing novices in a pagan ceremony.

"That will do," he said, and covered the vat. "Now, your gloves."

He removed their gauntlets and cast them into a metal container.

"And is that all there is to it?" asked Zora.

"That is all, my dear—until the three of us meet again. Then we shall commemorate what I am sure you will agree is the most astounding discovery in the history of chemistry."

"Meanwhile," she said, "I'll get at my letter-writing."

She kissed him fondly, spoke to the young man—in the condescending tone of one addressing a small child—and left the laboratory.

AS THE door closed behind her, Anton turned to his nephew. A sudden change had come over him.

"My boy," he said gravely, "there is something I must speak to you about." He paused, passing his long fingers across his wide brow, as if uncertain how to continue. "I wish, Robin," he said finally, in a hesitant voice, "you would try to be a little more considerate of Zora. You scarcely speak to her."

The young man flushed beneath his tan. "But, Uncle Anton! I *do* try to be considerate of her. And you see how she treats me. As if I were a school kid! . . . But she adores *you*, Uncle Anton. She thinks you're the greatest man in the world."

"Does she, indeed?" murmured Anton, and a soft light shone in his deep-set eyes. "Well, it's pleasant to hear that."

"And now, Uncle Anton—if you don't mind—I think I'll run out to the Broadmoor Club and play a set or two of tennis."

"Run right along, my boy—and play a set or two for me."

Anton closed the door behind him, and locked and bolted it. Then he walked to the vat and lifted the cover.

The entire contents of the vat had vanished!

W. T.—7

He gazed into the empty vessel, his fingers caressing his pointed beard, his eyes glowing with satisfaction.

And now he did a number of strange things. First, he went to an alcove and wheeled out a full-length, triple mirror, which he adjusted in the center of the room. Then he removed all his clothing. And then he walked to the vat and began a weird pantomime. He reached inside as if drawing forth various garments, and, standing before the triple mirror, he went through the motions of putting them on. And as he made these motions he gradually disappeared: first, his legs; then his feet; then the upper part of his body, and finally, as he seemed to pull an elastic cap over his head and ears, only his hands and face were visible; and these had the eerie appearance of floating in space.

Presently these, too, vanished as he brought forth a bowl of the milky fluid and bathed his face and hands in it, and soaked his eye-glasses and put them on.

With that, *Anton Slezak became completely invisible!*

His experiment was a success. His dream had come true. He had proved his belief that there are certain colors, or combinations of colors, that are invisible to human eyes; and he had also proved that by juggling and interchanging the molecules of certain dyes he could produce this invisible coloring.

Careful to make no sound, he unlatched the door and walked through the outer laboratory, where his assistants were employed. He tested his invisibility on them—though he knew it needed no testing—and passed on to the street and started briskly downtown.

Anton might have called upon his friends and, like a disembodied spirit, joined in their conversation and created who knows what havoc among them. But

he did not visit the haunts of his friends. He visited the city's largest hotel.

Here, again, he might have been an unseen spectator of loves and hates, and intrigues and jealousies and exotic adventures—rich human drama on a cosmopolitan stage—had he so desired. But Anton had no such desire.

He threaded his way through the hotel lobby, weaving in and out through the crowd, and went to one of the tower elevators and thence to the forty-ninth floor. The elevator boy, answering a signal, opened the door, and Anton slipped ghostly out.

DOWN the hall he went, straight to Room 4901. He knocked on the door. A peculiar knock: two taps, a pause, then three taps.

And almost instantly the door was opened.

It was opened by his nephew, Robin.

As Robin opened the door, his young face was alight with an eager expression—an expression that quickly changed to one of blank surprize. Puzzled, he stepped outside the door and looked up and down the corridor. And, since he left the door standing open, Anton crossed the threshold and walked inside the room. He moved to a corner near a deep-cushioned couch and stood there watching Robin.

He watched him step back inside and close the door and look nervously about the room, his handsome features half comical with perplexity.

Then he heard another knock at the door. It was the same knock that he had given: two taps, pause, three taps.

He saw Robin open the door again and heard his low joyous cry: "*Sweetheart!*"

And then Anton saw his young and beautiful wife.

He saw her in Robin's arms. He saw her arms around Robin. And he saw their lips and bodies meet and cling in rapturous embrace.

Robin had closed and locked the door when she entered, and they stood there, now, for a long minute, kissing each other passionately.

"Well, *darling!*" she breathed.

"A queer thing just happened, sweetheart—just before you came. Rather uncanny, too. I heard somebody knock, and when I opened the door nobody was there."

She removed her hat and fluffed her pale-gold hair. "Somebody had the wrong door, of course. Kiss me again, darling."

He kissed her again. "But it was *your* knock, dearest."

"Pure coincidence, my lamb." She tossed the hat on a table.

"And not only that," said Robin, "but while I stood there, with the door open, I thought I heard, or felt, somebody move past me. It was like a ghost."

She laughed throatily. "You *are* getting jittery, aren't you, darling?"

"Just the same," he persisted, "I still have the feeling that somebody came inside this room."

She looked about her happily, her long blue eyes humid with love. "Well, there's nobody here now, my precious—nobody except you and me. And that's all that matters—ever!"

She slipped his arm around her supple young body, and together they moved toward the couch.

And as Anton watched them sink down upon it—and also sink, in mad abandon, into the purple abyss of passion—there visited his deep-set eyes the same soft expression they had known a while ago,

when Robin had said to him: "But she adores *you*, Uncle Anton."

He heard her say now, a disturbing note in her throaty voice:

"Oh, Robin, I love you so! So much, my darling, it almost frightens me!"

"It frightens me, too, sometimes," said Robin, "when I think what might happen if Uncle Anton — d'you know, Zora, I sometimes wonder if he doesn't suspect . . ."

She smiled dreamily into his eyes and kissed him lingeringly on the lips. "You funny boy! Why, he even thinks we hate each other!"

Robin also smiled, somewhat quizzically. "Only this afternoon he told me to be more considerate of you! . . . But seriously, Zora, we can't go on this way indefinitely. He'll *have* to know, sometime. We—you'll have to get a divorce, or—or something."

She closed his mouth with her kisses. For a space he was silent.

Then: "I wonder what this new experiment of his is."

"I don't care what it is," breathed Zora, her arms around his neck. "All I care about, darling, is you."

"This afternoon," Robin went on, "he seemed to imply——"

"That all three of us," smiled Zora, "might celebrate tonight."

And now Anton stood before them. He spoke purringly.

"And so we shall, my dear," he said.

Had the hotel walls caved in, the two lovers could have suffered no greater consternation. They sprang to their feet. They looked wildly about. They stared at each other in bewilderment.

And all the while, Anton's voice purred softly on from his invisibility:

"It is no use, my dear. You cannot see me. Nor will you ever see me again. Nor you, either, Robin, my boy. The experiment was a perfect success. Did I not say it would astound you?"

FRANTIC with fear—fear of they knew not what—both rushed for the door. But Anton got there first.

And now they saw, suspended in mid-air, a revolver menacing them.

Robin lunged for it desperately—but too late. The revolver spoke, once, and he sank to the floor. Zora screamed, her eyes widening with horror upon his twitching body. She clutched at her throat. She screamed again, insanely, and reached out for the door. Then the revolver spoke a second time, and she collapsed beside her lover.

Anton knelt beside them and watched them die. They were an unconscionably long time about it, he thought.

The telephone began ringing. That would be the management. Somebody, of course, had heard the shots and Zora's piercing screams.

Anton, still kneeling beside their bodies, watched their blood flow together and stain the rug with a grotesque pattern.

The telephone continued to ring. Suddenly there came a sharp knock at the door. That would be the house detective.

Anton made sure they were both quite dead; and then he rose and crossed the room and sat down upon the couch.

He had one shot left in his revolver. And—just as the door burst violently open—he sent it neatly through his heart.

