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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

"He did kill her! He did send her, living still, to be burned to ashes in a metal coffin!"



The Dead Moan Low

By PAUL ERNST

What was that faint, eery cry that sounded out as the body of the hypnotist's wife was consigned to the flames? The story of a circus and an avenging Nemesis

ME, I'M out of this. See? I bally-hoo these folks. "Ladies and gentlemen, step right up. Come one, come all. See Princess Hileah dance her native hula-hula. See Professor Bro-

kar hypnotize his bee-yu-tee-ful subject and be hypnotized yourselves. See the python twenty-six and a half feet long, and the eight-foot giant and all the other marvelous sights we have to show. All for

ten cents, ladies and gentlemen. One dime——”

That kind of stuff. You've heard it in front of the sideshow tent next to the big top many times. But that's all there is to my game. I don't take any more part in the freaks' lives than I can help, and even that's too much sometimes.

It was too much that dinnertime at Scranton on the start west of our spring tour. Professor Brokar, whose real name is Welch, came into the counter dump where I was saving a quarter on a real meal, and walked up to me.

Welch is a big guy with a loud voice and something funny about his dark eyes. He's kind of red-faced as a rule. But he wasn't red-faced that evening. His pan was dead-white and he had the shakes like a man who is getting over a ten-day drinking-bout.

I thought I had the dope. Welch has been playing around with a kind of good-looking girl acrobat lately, see? Her old man, who's been an acrobat himself and now is sort of night watchman and general pensioner around the circus, don't like that so much. Welch is a married man. His wife is the bee-yu-tee-ful jane he hypnotizes every day; a girl who is good-looking at that, except for a dull look around the eyes.

When Welch comes up to me looking like he'd seen a ghost, I told myself old Wallace, the lady acrobat's father, had been after him. The old man's got sand. There's been kidding around the lot: Does Welch hypnotize his wife off-stage as well as on so he can get out for an evening with Celia? And does he hypnotize Celia so she can't tell next morning what happened and for how much?

Welch tugs at my arm. "Come on outside a minute, Joe. I got to see you."

"You're seeing me," I said, freeing my arm. I don't like this Welch so good. His wife's an awful nice kid, even if she

is a little glazed around the eyes from too much hypnotizing. I think it's lousy, the way he goes after Celia Wallace with everybody in the circus knowing about it.

"I got to talk to you alone," he says.

"Is old Wallace after you?" I asked him. "Or is it Bu-Jo, the dog-faced man?"

That's another angle in this Welch-Wallace thing. See? Bu-Jo, whose real name is Jim Blaine and who comes from some place in Connecticut, has been nuts about Dorothy Welch for a long time. Quietly nuts. Naturally he knows no girl is going to go starry-eyed over a guy with a door-mat for a face. He's never said anything to anybody but me—and only about two words to me. But I know how he feels about Dor, and I know he's burned up at the way Welch is running out on her lately.

"Cut the funny stuff," Welch snarls, wiping sweat from his pale face. "This is serious as hell. Come on out."

Well, Professor Brokar is one of the main cards in the show. His hypnotizing act packs 'em in. I don't want to get part of my meal-ticket nervous and upset just before the evening show goes on, so I beat it out of the restaurant with him.

As soon as we're alone he wipes sweat from his sick-looking face again, and says: "I want you to help me cremate her."

I burned my hand instead of lighting my cigarette.

"Cremate who? What in blazes are you talking about?"

"I'm talking about Dor, my wife. She's dead."

I dropped the cigarette untouched to the sidewalk.

"She wasn't dead two hours ago. She was very much alive."

"She's dead now." Welch bites his

finger-nails in his impatience. "She keeled over just after you left the platform in front of the tent. Just fell over, and there you are."

"You're sure?"

"My God! Do you think mistakes can be made on a thing like that? Sure she's dead. Now I want to cremate her. It was always her wish."

"It might be six wishes, and she might be ten times dead. But you can't go off half-cocked like this. You can't go ahead and cremate a person that's only an hour or two dead. There has to be an investigation, a coroner's verdict——"

"I know that. And that's fixed. The doc I got is the coroner. He has made sure that the death was natural, and I can go ahead."

"But jumping cats, Welch——" I began, still too stunned by the news to start feeling sorry for Dor, who was a nice kid and whom I liked.

"Don't you understand?" he snapped. "The quicker I can get Dor cremated the less chance everybody has of being tied up in real trouble. There's been plenty of talk, all along the circuit, about how this constant hypnotizing is bad for people. There'll be busybodies to say that it was the strain of that that killed Dor."

"And did it?" I said bluntly.

"Of course not! She died of a heart attack. The Scranton coroner is ready to go on the stand and swear to that. Are you going to help me cremate her, or will you see the entire outfit maybe tied up in knots by some long-drawn investigation as to whether Dorothy died from being hypnotized too deeply and too often?"

I said something about meal-tickets before. If you work for a circus and the circus doesn't go along its regulation program, you don't eat.

"Okay," I said. "I'll be with you."

WE DID it pretty fast.

A few of Dor's best friends were at the hasty, short funeral services. Among them was Jim Blaine, alias Bu-Jo, with his dark eyes looking kind of like the eyes of a badly shot deer I had once seen on a hunting-trip. You couldn't find any expression on his face because of the mat of hair over it. But his eyes spoke. How he must have loved the girl Welch hadn't thought enough of to stay true to!

We filed past the coffin, and looked in at Dorothy Welch. She was rouged and lipsticked so that the gray pallor of death didn't show too much. She looked really lovely, lying there, and I came closer to wiping at my eyes than emotion had ever carried me before.

As it was, I blew my nose and went with Welch after the hearse to the crematory. They had the fires ready there. And the metal coffin, like a brazier. They put Dor in the metal casket, wood coffin and all.

It was pretty bad. I kept seeing Dor as she had looked in the chapel a few minutes ago, with red lips and rouged cheeks, as if she was only sleeping instead of dead. It was like putting a sleeping person into the flames instead of a dead one, I thought. And the fact that I kept thinking I heard faint screams as the first smell of burning flesh stole around, didn't help any.

"It's the draft," said the man in charge. "It takes a lot of air up the chimney to handle a fire as hot as we have to have here. You get those moans and things from it."

Maybe so. But I didn't like it. I got out of there fast, and Welch stumbled beside me. His face was green now, instead of white.

"Well, that's done," he said. "Let's get back to the show."

I could have socked him. Looking at

the words, you might think Welch was following the old tradition that the show must go on in spite of hell, and that he would hide his broken heart, come what may.

But that wasn't in his tone! His tone said that the whole thing had been a mess which he was glad to get out of so easily, and that now let's forget it.

"You going on tonight?" I gasped.

"Sure," he said. "I'm sorry and all that. But I don't see any reason to take a week's lay-off for it."

"Who'll you use for a subject?"

"I got it arranged already. Celia Wallace will let me use her temporarily."

"Cele! How about her father?"

Welch looked at me angrily. "You've been listening to all the slop the circus gossips have handed around, huh? Well, let me tell you her father will sing a different tune now that I'm no longer a married man."

"Who'll take her place on the bars?" I said, not looking at him.

"Ruth Harrison. The kid has been crazy to get into the act for months. This'll be her chance."

"It's raw, Welch," I said.

"Nuts. Let's get back to the lot," he replies, in almost his normal loud tone.

We get back almost on time, and the show goes on. It may have been oke to the audience that night, but it was a nightmare to me.

The canopy of death hung over us all, almost as plain as the canvas of the side-show tent. The heart was out of my barking. I kept seeing Bu-Jo's stricken eyes. I kept seeing the look on Celia Wallace's pan as Welch prepared to hypnotize her with those funny optics of his; she's as nuts about him as only a bird-brained lady acrobat could get about a slug like Welch.

Above all, I kept seeing Dor Welch, dull-eyed and slow-moving, in the place

Cele was temporarily taking. And I kept hearing the faint screams. Draft up the chimney, huh? I should work in a joint like that crematory!

But the show went on, that night and the rest of the nights.

WE GOT to Cleveland on our way west. And it was there that Welch picked up his tail.

We were eating dinner in a Cleveland hash-house. I was with Welch and Cele. I didn't eat with Welch by choice; he'd come by with Celia, glommed me through the window, and come in to join me.

Cele was a regular part of his act, now. And the talk was that she was going to marry Welch. Maybe she was tired reaching from one bar to another sixty feet up. Maybe being hypnotized is easier than acrobatting. Maybe she really was completely off her nut over Welch instead of mildly infatuated with him. Anyhow, that was the lay.

Celia saw the kid first.

"You've got an audience, honey," she giggled.

"Huh?" said Welch, taking a big bite of steak.

"At the window. Look. The little boy."

I turned with Welch. At the restaurant window a kid was leaning with his nose flattened against the glass, looking at Welch. He was in tattered pants with one leg up and one down.

"He's sure looking at you," I said to Welch.

And the kid was, no mistake. His half-moon eyes, kind of like empty china circles, were riveted to Welch's face.

"He probably saw my act this afternoon," said Welch complacently.

"He's your Cleveland public," I nodded.

Cele giggled. "Not much of a public. The kid's a half-wit."

He certainly didn't look bright. He must have been six years old, from his height, but his face was that of a baby. The only expression on it was a sort of silly grin, and his eyes were as empty of brain-signs as a new-born calf's.

We turned back, then, expecting the kid to move on, of course, when he had tired of flattening his nose against the glass. But he didn't move on. He was there when we left the restaurant half an hour later. And he followed after us when we walked toward the lot.

Always his eyes were fastened on Welch, in a kind of fascinated way.

"Beat it," snarled Welch, after a block or two of it.

He took a step after the kid. The boy retreated, but did not go away. A sort of animal sound came from his slack lips.

"You little dummy!" raged Welch. "Go home."

We started on again. And ten yards behind us came the idiot boy, eyes riveted on Welch, lips drooling and mouthing incoherent sounds.

Welch cursed, but under his breath this time. He turned again, but this time repressed his anger.

"Why are you following us?" he said persuasively.

The idiot kid shook his head, china-blue eyes vacant. He stared at Welch.

"Is it me you're following, or all of us?" said Welch, keeping his temper with an effort.

The kid nodded, with his silly grin, at Welch.

"Me, huh? Well, what do you want?"

"Wan' see you."

I won't try to give you the kid's tone. It was like that of a talking animal. There's no words for it. We could barely understand the syllables.

"All right. Here I am. You're seeing me," snapped Welch.

"Wan' see you make 'er sleep."

Welch looked at Cele and then back at the kid.

"All right. Come to the show tonight."

"Not in show!" The kid began to get so excited that we lost even the labored meaning we had gotten before. "Not . . . show. Sleep like dead . . . this lady . . . like you did other lady."

I looked at Cele, mystified. She shrugged.

"Like other," mouthed the idiot child. "Like . . . before burned her in . . . stone house."

"What the hell is he——" I began.

Then I stopped, and stared at Welch.

His face had gone green again, just the shade it had taken on that day a few weeks ago when Dorothy, his wife, was cremated. There was a telephone pole next to us. Welch leaned against that, trying to hide the fact that he had to lean on anything.

"You little half-wit," he blustered. "Get out of here or I'll——"

He started shakily after the boy. The kid ran back, looked at Welch with vacant eyes, mouthed with his drooling lips, and then ran around the next corner.

Welch came back to us.

"He ought to be in an institution," he said thickly.

"Yes," I said.

"I think I'll get in touch with the juvenile authorities here."

"Good idea," I said.

But I was looking at Welch, and behind a pan I tried to keep straight, thoughts were jumping around like scared rabbits.

"Wan' see you make this lady sleep dead like you did the other lady before you burned her in the stone house."

Make her sleep dead. . . . No, make her sleep *like* dead!

What in the name of the devil was the imbecile youngster mouthing about? And why was Welch as green as a melon and going through the shakes again?

I shrugged. Probably the half-witted kid had seen the show at Scranton or formerly, when Dorothy was Welch's subject, and had traveled on here with his parents on some prosaic errand of theirs, to hang around the circus again at Cleveland as he had a few weeks before.

"Shall we be lamming?" I said.

THE three of us went on. But at the show that night, Welch was rotten. The guy is no fake. He can really hypnotize, and I don't mean perhaps. But he couldn't do anything that night. Cele had to fake, and a couple in the crowd came damn close to spotting the phony stuff.

And that, as I say, was how Welch got his tail. But it didn't stop there. I wish to Heaven it had!

Next night I ate with Welch and Cele again, because Welch was so jittery he needed a nurse. And again we looked out to see an idiot face pressed to the restaurant; and again the half-witted little kid followed us to the lot, drooling, mouthing incoherent words, among which were: "Like dead . . . sleep . . . before burn. . ."

Welch didn't go on that night. His wife's death at Scranton hadn't kept him out of his act. This idiot child in Cleveland did. Welch stayed in his car compartment, with Celia giggling nervously and sympathetically beside him.

That night we went on west. Ann Arbor. One-night stand. In the morning Welch was almost his usual, loud-talking self again. He kidded Bu-Jo till I thought the dog-faced man, who is a big husky guy, would take him apart. He mushed around Cele till old man

Wallace had red spots in his thin cheeks. Wallace liked Welch's attention to his daughter less than ever, but he couldn't do anything about it. Welch hadn't a wife any more, and Cele was over twenty-one and presumably white.

But Welch wasn't the gay boy that afternoon.

He hauled me inside the side-show tent as I was about to swing into the afternoon spiel. His face had taken on that unripe, honeydew melon tint.

"You got to keep him out of here!" he chattered, running his tongue over his lips as though he hadn't tasted water for a week.

"Keep who out?" I said.

"That kid," he chatters back. "The dummy. The little brat with the empty blue eyes. He's in Ann Arbor."

"You're nuts," I cracked out. "How could he be? Where'd he get train fare? How could a kid that young and that dumb go anywhere anyway?"

"Maybe his folks are trailing the show for some reason, and taking him along. Anyway, you've got to keep him out of the tent. I won't answer for what happens if you don't!"

He was in such a state that I'd have felt sorry for him if I'd thought anything of him—which I didn't.

"All right," I said. "A kid without all his buttons is following you around. So what? Suppose he does?"

"I'm afraid of what he'll say," Welch blurts out. He looks unhappy over it right afterward.

"What will he say?" I asked him.

"Nothing," mumbled Welch, after a minute.

I went on out to the platform again.

"Ladies and gentlemen, step right up. Closer . . . closer yet. That's it. What I have to say is very important and must be heard distinctly. You have the chance, ladies and gentlemen, to see the

greatest assortment of marvels ever gathered together by man. See Princess Hileah dance her native hula-hula. See the giant, the dog-faced man. See Professor Brokar hypnotize the bee-yu-tee-ful——"

"Wan 'see him make lady sleep like dead. Like he did other lady before they burned her in the stone house."

Now where the heck had that voice come from? I got it all right. It was the voice of the idiot kid. But I couldn't see him in the crowd anywhere. I went on mechanically with my spiel.

"——one dime, ladies and gentlemen. Ten cents, the tenth part of a dollar——"

The crowd, some of them at least, began herding forward. I went into the tent. Welch's hands were clenching at each other. He braced them on the back of the chair used in his hypnotizing act. His fingernails rattled on the wood with his trembling.

"I'm going to kill that kid——"

The first of the crowd came in. The acts began.

WELCH fell down in his part again. He kept on falling down in it. Sometimes he couldn't go on at all. Sometimes he could only fake, not too well either, when he did go on. The circus would have fired him except that he was really good, and it isn't as easy to get first-rate, honest-to-God hypnotists as most people think. The boss kept thinking he'd get better.

But he didn't, because from then on that vacant-eyed little kid with one ragged pant-leg up and the other down kept trailing him. Wherever we played, there the idiot child was. Wherever Welch went in any town we stopped at, the kid followed after him, about ten yards behind, eyes empty and brainless, lips drooling.

And every once in a while he would

mouth that same thing. "Wan' see you make lady sleep like dead . . . like other lady before they burned her."

I was with Welch one time when he tried to catch the kid, but the little devil was too fast for him. Welch came panting back from a block chase, with his eyes wild.

"I'll kill that little devil! I'll kill him! Just let me catch him!"

"He must have been in Scranton that last afternoon," I said, looking sideways at Welch. Thin as a shadow, he was, by then. And loose flesh hung on his face. "He must have seen that last afternoon show before Dor died. She was in an especially deep trance, I remember. Maybe he sneaked in back and saw you and Dor just *after* the performance, too."

"What are you talking about?" Welch chattered.

"About the half-hour before Dor was pronounced dead," I said slowly. It was a shot in the dark; a little expression of those frightened rabbits of thought running around in my skull. "Before they took her to the . . . stone house . . . and burned her."

"Yeah, she was in a deep trance, all right," he chatters. "Funny business, you know. The longer a subject allows herself to be hypnotized, the deeper the trance can become——"

He stopped and looked away. Then his face convulsed.

"Get away from me—you——" He screamed oaths at the ragged little figure that had come up behind us again. Then he buried his face in his hands, and his shoulders shook as if he was being crucified. I felt cold touch my spine, and backed slowly away from the boy. Anybody'd have thought I was goofy if they could have seen me—a full-grown man backing away with a scared look from a six-year-old kid whose brains were hung in the wrong place.

I couldn't make it out. Stop by stop, clear across the country and back, that kid stuck with us. He never failed to sing out in the afternoon performance: "Make the lady sleep like dead. Like the other before she was burned. . . ." He never failed to be ten yards or so behind Welch every moment we were out of the cars, like his shadow made smaller and given an imbecilic look.

How was he traveling? On the rods of the train? I looked there night after night and never saw a trace of him. On following trains? He couldn't have had the fare. Six-year-old children can't buy fares all over the continent. And how did he eat? And where did he stay when Welch was in the circus car and, for a few blessed moments, without his tail? I gave up. But I wished the little imbecile would drop dead or something, because his effect on Welch was increasingly horrible. The man was going to crack to pieces any day. I could see that.

And then we got almost home, and stopped once more in Scranton because it had been a particularly hot town and we hoped to duplicate the box we'd had there at the start of the season.

SCRANTON! I saw the graveyard as the train pulled in. I spotted the crematory, near at hand, and remembered too vividly that smell of burning flesh and the wails which had been caused by the forced draft up the chimney.

Welch came over to my seat as the train stopped on its siding. He was literally gnawing at his knuckles; far gone on his way to a complete break-down.

"Do you suppose *she* knows we're in again?" he said, nodding toward the crematory.

Good Heavens! Far gone? I hadn't known he was *that* far! But I didn't

humor him much even though, remembering the meal-ticket, I should have.

"Sure she knows," I said. "She'll be on hand this afternoon during your act. Better tip Cele about it."

Welch gripped the back of the seat.

"Damn you, Joe! Damn her! Damn everything——"

He stumbled toward the door. And I followed him, biting my fool tongue. He stepped off the car—and the idiot kid straightened up and stood near him, with empty blue eyes, and stared at him. It was really the kid. Welch had gotten so he was seeing the boy whether he was there to be seen or not. But this time he was there. I saw him too—saw the shadow he cast in the morning sunlight.

"Goin' make . . . lady . . . sleep like dead . . . then take her there"—the kid's head moved toward the crematory—"an' burn her like . . . other lady?"

Welch screamed. There isn't any other word for it. He screamed like an animal gone mad. Blood ran down his chin from his bitten lips. He lunged for the kid with mania in his eyes, but the boy ducked under the long circus car and got away.

Welch tottered back into the car, and I went on to the town's core to get a late cup of coffee and kill time. And I kept glancing at the white stone of the crematory and remembering the thin shrieks of the draft up the chimney as Dor's body first began to burn in its metal container.

THE afternoon show opened with a thunderstorm in the distance. I told myself the electricity in the air was what made me so tense and nervous. But I knew I was kidding myself. I'd felt like this just once before; had kind of sensed a pall over things that was just like this one. That was the afternoon that Dor died.

Crowds began coming up to the tents. Some went right to the big top, more strayed toward the side-show. I got on the platform. Bu-Jo and the Princess Hileah—Mame Diller to you—ranged on my left. The "long and short of it" and several other freaks got on my right, and there was music for an opening come-on.

The crowd thickened. Bu-Jo said into my ear: "Seen Welch in the last few minutes? He acts as if he'd eaten something that didn't agree with him."

"I hope it don't keep him from doing a decent act today for a change," I whispered out of the corner of my mouth. "He's due to get the sack tomorrow if he doesn't take a brace."

Out of the other corner of my mouth I began the spiel. "Ladies and gentlemen. Step up closer, please. Closer. What I have to say is very important——"

I ballyhooed, with sweat running down my collar—because I was all screwed up by the near storm, I kept telling myself. The mob thinned, some going on to the main tent, some hauling out dimes for the side-show. The latter got into the tent, and went the rounds. They gawked at Slim, the eight-foot giant, and Tim, the three-and-a-half-foot midget; at Princess Hileah, and Professor Brokar and his bee-yu-tee-ful subject.

I gawked at Brokar, or, rather, Welch, myself.

If I'd thought I was sweating I had only to look at him and see a guy who was really sweating! It was running down his cheeks and neck in trickles. And his hands were shut so hard I saw purple lines around his knuckles.

He was glaring at Celia Wallace, who sat near him ready to do her stunt in a minute or two. It was frightful, the look in his eyes as he glared at her. I went toward them.

W. T.—3

"For God's sake, honey," I heard Cele's hysterical whisper, "Why're you looking at me like that? For God's sake——"

"Shut up," I whispered out of the corner of my mouth. "There 're paying customers around."

Cele nodded at me, white and frightened. Welch didn't move at all. He sat where he was, hands clenched, eyes boring into Cele's face like mad drills.

The crowd began to center around the two. There was good-natured shoving and talk.

"Snap into it," I whispered, as the two looked like they were going to miss the ripe minute to begin.

They got up. Cele giggled nervously, but her white face was not turned toward the crowd. She was looking at Welch, cowering back from him. And Welch was staring at her with his mad drills of eyes.

And then a voice sounded. A drooling, idiotic, empty voice, that mouthed words hardly understandable yet only too horribly coherent.

"Wan' see her sleep like dead. Like the other lady. . . ."

For the first time since Ann Arbor, Welch didn't start at the sound of the voice as though six inches of cold steel had been buried in him. What he did was worse.

Slowly his lips parted, to reveal his grinning jaws. They were almost fleshless, those jaws, so much weight had the man lost. The effect was horrible. It was as if a skull had suddenly grinned. I felt the cold sweat roll faster down my body.

He took a slow step toward Cele, with that awful, slow grin on his face. And now his eyes were not like the eyes of a human being at all.

"Honey . . . don't——" Cele bleated. But even as she spoke, her eyes were

dulling. You can't hypnotize a normal person against his will, but regular hypnotic subjects get so they aren't normal. They get so they slip into the trance almost at a look from the master.

"Honey——"

It was a dreamy, dopy whimper. And then Cele stood swaying, silent, under Welch's thumb as completely as if she hadn't a brain of her own.

"All right, Dorothy," Welch said softly. "I'll hypnotize you as I did before. Like you were dead."

He came still closer. His eyes made several people in the front row shift uneasily. But they thought of course it was all an act. So, for one more instant, did I. Then the meaning of his calling Cele "Dorothy" cracked home to me.

"You'll sleep, Dorothy," Welch crooned. "How you'll sleep! I can put you into a trance like catalepsy, now, if I want to. Now, after all these trances. . . . And I will. You hear? I will."

The watching crowd were beginning to mill a little. "Hey, what goes on?" I heard a big guy mutter near me. But I didn't have wit enough to stop the show. I was stopped myself, right in my tracks.

"Raise a fuss because I see Cele Wallace once in a while, will you?" Welch went on, still in that dreadful soft voice. "I'll show you, you dull little fool! I'll fix it so you'll never get under my feet again. Sleep, Dorothy. Sleep. Sound enough for the doctor to pronounce you dead."

My God! Oh, my God! my brain was whimpering. He did kill her! He did send her, living still, to be burned to ashes in a metal coffin! *And now he's going through the thing he did last spring here!*

"Suspended animation, the big shots call it," crooned Welch, chuckling horribly. "But we don't care what they call it, do we, darling? Not as long as I

can put you in a trance deep enough to fool a coroner. Deep enough to fool them at the crematory. Sleep. Deep enough not to feel the first fire. . . ."

Somewhere a woman screamed. I think the crowd had known for ten seconds, then, that this thing was not a show any more. The woman's scream expressed it. And after it came men's shouts and a horrified confusion that couldn't have been deeper had the tent burst into flames.

"He's mad—*mad*——" I heard a man shriek.

"He's a murderer," I heard a deeper, hoarser voice. And with that I saw a detective, detailed to watch the crowd for dips this time as he had been last, plow through the milling crowd toward the platform.

Welch turned toward the mob. He put his emaciated finger to his blanched lips.

"Ssh," he said, with his jaws still set in that skull-grin and with the light of permanent madness in his eyes. "Ssh. You'll wake her. You'll wake Dorothy. And she must sleep sound. Sleep like death. Till the draft screams and moans up the chimney with the thick, black smoke. . . ."

I SAW the pay-off later. I was walking around the tent, not seeing where I was going, thinking of the thing that had been in the metal coffin when the fires began to burn, when I saw it.

Bu-Jo was giving Tim, the midget, a roll of bills.

I turned without a word, and wandered into the dressing tent where Celia Wallace lay.

Two doctors and a nurse were still trying, without having much luck at it, to get her out of the last trance Welch had put her in before the dick led him away.