

STRANGE TALES OF STARTLING SUSPENSE!

# STRANGE TALES

10¢

JUNE

ALSO IN  
THIS ISSUE

"THE STRANGE  
MEN!"



"A CALL IN THE  
NIGHT!"



"THE BEAST!"



KEEP WALKING, RESTON!  
THAT'S IT... JUST A  
LITTLE FURTHER! ONE  
MORE STEP AND ALL  
YOUR WORRIES WILL  
BE OVER!

NO...NO!  
YOU CAN'T  
MAKE ME GO  
IN THERE!

NO LIVING  
CREATURE  
KNEW THE  
TERRIFYING  
SECRET OF  
"THE  
ROOM!"





# the ROOM that DIDN'T EXIST

... THAT'S WHAT THEY ALL TOLD ME... BUT THEY DON'T KNOW! I WAS THERE... I SAW IT... I TALKED TO THE FANTASTIC CREATURES WHO LIVE THERE! TO PROVE IT... I'M GOING BACK THERE... TONIGHT!



I WROTE THIS STRANGE TALE EXACTLY AS IT HAPPENED TO ME... EVERY HORRIBLE, UNBELIEVABLE SECOND OF IT IS HERE... THE LAST STORY I SHALL EVER WRITE!

AN  
ADVENTURE  
INTO TERROR  
THAT WILL  
SHOCK  
YOU!

"I ENTERED THE BLACK FOREST IN MAY 1949! MY CAR CROSSED THE TURBULENT RHINE AND I DROVE ON TO THE WATERING PLACE JUST BEYOND WILDBAD, WHERE THE HOTEL GRIMWALD WAS RECOMMENDED TO ME..."

I AM SURE YOU WILL FIND THE HOTEL AND LOCALE PERFECT FOR YOUR WRITINGS, MR. RESTON! IF YOU ARE IN SEARCH OF THE GROTESQUE, THE BIZARRE-- YOU HAVE ARRIVED!

I WANT A SOMBER BACKGROUND FOR MY NEW NOVEL OF HORROR! UP TO NOW I'VE BEEN ABLE TO FIND IT ON PARK AVENUE! THIS TRIP IS JUST A LARK-- I DON'T EXPECT MUCH INSPIRATION HERE!

THIS IS THE LAND OF DRACULA! HERE THE VAMPIRES HAVE LEFT THEIR TEETH MARKS ON THE NECKS OF THE INNOCENT! THE GHOSTS OF THE MURDERED AND UNAVENGED HAUNT OUR WOODS! I WARN YOU--THERE IS A CONTAGION OF FEAR THAT THOSE WHO STAY HERE CANNOT AVOID!

NOTHING SCARES ME --FOR I DON'T BELIEVE IN THE UNREAL WORLD OF DEMONS AND WITCHES! I MERELY USE THEM IN MY BOOKS!





"ALREADY AT NOON, THE HIGH MOUNTAINS MASKED THE SUN AND THREW LONG, DARK SHADOWS ON THE VALLEY BELOW! A CHILL FILLED THE AIR AND ONLY THE MELANCHOLY CALLS OF AN OCCASIONAL BIRD INTERRUPTED THE ALMOST DEATH-LIKE SILENCE OF THAT FOREST AS I STARTED OUT..."

"I'LL LOOK INTO THE LOCAL LEGENDS AND FEARS TONIGHT! RIGHT NOW I'LL WALK IN THE WOODS WHILE THERE'S STILL SOME LIGHT!"



MR. RESTON!  
MR. RESTON!  
WAIT A  
MOMENT!  
DON'T GO  
ON!

OH, WOULD  
YOU LIKE TO  
JOIN ME IN MY  
WALK? I'D LIKE  
COMPANY!



IF YOU WALK INTO  
THOSE WOODS AHEAD,  
IT WILL BE WITHOUT  
MY COMPANY! THE  
FORBIDDEN FOREST  
LIES AHEAD--A  
MILE SQUARE  
OF HAUNTED AND  
DREADED WOOD-  
LANDS! BUT IF  
YOU WISH TO  
HEAD BACK...

CERTAINLY  
NOT! WHY,  
YOU COULD  
NOT HAVE  
FOUND A  
BETTER WAY  
TO CONVINCE  
ME TO GO ON  
THAN TELLING  
ME THE WOODS  
AHEAD ARE  
FORBIDDEN!  
COMING?



DO NOT LAUGH AT ME,  
SIR, BUT I WILL NOT  
GO INTO THAT FOREST  
AND I ADVISE YOU  
NOT TO! THOSE WHO  
HAVE WANDERED IN  
HAVE NOT RETURNED!

WELL, DON'T RE-RENT  
MY ROOM TILL MID-  
NIGHT--I'M GOING  
IN AND COMING  
BACK!



"I FOLLOWED THE GOLDEN SPLITCHES OF SUNLIGHT  
THAT FELL ON THAT SILENT FOREST FLOOR, MOUNTING  
ON INTO THE HEART OF THAT STILL LAND, TILL SUD-  
DENLY MUSIC REACHED MY EARS--GAY, WILD MUSIC!"

AN INN! WELL, THAT PROVES SOMEONE MUST  
TRAVEL THRU THIS REGION! PROBABLY THE  
HOTEL MANAGER IS TRYING TO SCARE OFF  
COMPETITION--IT LOOKS HARMLESS  
TO ME!



"I ADVANCED QUICKLY, KEEPING TIME WITH THAT  
HAUNTING MUSIC! THE INN DOOR CREAKED AS I  
OPENED IT AND INSIDE, THE SINGLE, HUGE ROOM  
WAS FILLED WITH ODDLY DRESSED DRINKERS..."

HELLO! I CAME UP FROM THE VALLEY! HAVE  
YOU SOMETHING TO QUENCH A HIKER'S  
THIRST?



COME IN, MR. RESTON! COME!  
IN, JAMES, I'VE BEEN  
WAITING FOR YOU!

YOU KNOW  
MY NAME!  
BUT HOW--WHO  
ARE YOU?





I AM LUREN, BUT DO NOT ASK HOW I KNEW YOU WOULD VISIT US--BE WELCOME!

LUREN? THAT'S PRETTY, AND I CAN ONLY ASSUME THE MANAGER OF THE HOTEL WAS JEALOUS AND THAT'S WHY HE WARNED ME ABOUT COMING HERE!



"LUREN TOOK MY HAND, HER HAND WAS COLD... LIFELESS BUT HER GRIP WAS POSSESSIVELY TIGHT, AND SHE LEAD ME TO A TABLE! AS WE CROSSED THAT STRANGE ROOM I COULD SEE THE OTHERS STARING AND POINTING AT ME AND COULD ALMOST FEEL A DOOMING HATE IN THEIR SINISTER EYES..."

WHY DO THEY STARE AT ME? WHY ARE THEY DRESSED SO DIFFERENTLY?

DO NOT BOTHER WITH THEM! THEY ARE ONLY WORKERS AND PEASANTS FROM THE FOREST--NOT WORTHY OF A MOMENT'S THOUGHT!



LUREN, SOMETHING'S WRONG! I CAN ALMOST SENSE PITY IN THEIR EYES--AS IF THEY WERE LOOKING AT A DOOMED MAN!

THEY ARE ONLY JEALOUS THAT YOU WHO HAVE JUST COME UP FROM THE VALLEY BELOW HAVE SO QUICKLY WON LUREN!

"AS THE OTHERS FILED OUT, I FELT A STRANGE APPREHENSION IN THAT ANCIENT ROOM! TRUE, THE PEOPLE WERE ALL LIVING AND REAL, BUT STILL THEY WALKED AS THE DEAD AND THE DEADLY PALLOF OF LUREN'S HAND SEEMED TO REACH FOR MINE FROM ACROSS THE GRAVE! THEN MY EYES FELL ON A PAPER..."

GREAT HEAVENS! LOOK AT THE DATE ON THIS PAPER--1616!

TIME DOES NOT EXIST FOR US HERE! THREE HUNDRED YEARS AGO SEEMS LIKE TODAY, FOR THAT IS ALL WE HAVE--TODAY!



"SUDDENLY, THE SHADOW OF A MAN FELL ACROSS THE PAPER, I LOOKED UP AS A TALL EVIL LOOKING MAN WRENCHED LUREN FROM THE BOOTH..."

KARL! LET ME GO! I AM WITH HIM! LET ME GO!

HOW MANY TIMES MUST YOU REPEAT YOUR CRUEL CRIME ON VISITORS? HOW MANY TIMES MUST YOU PLAY THIS FOUL PART?



LET GO OF HER! I DON'T KNOW WHAT YOU'RE ACCUSING HER OF, BUT I DON'T LIKE IT!

LISTEN TO ME, STRANGER, FOR YOUR OWN GOOD--LEAVE! DON'T YOU KNOW THAT SHE...

**SILENCE!**

WE HAVE A CODE REGARDING VISITORS HERE--HE IS **MINE!**



"THERE SEEMED SOMETHING CRUEL AND EVIL IN HER CLAIM UPON ME, BUT I SAW IT ONLY AS FLATTERING AND EXCITING AND FOLLOWED AS SHE LEAD ME TO THE DOOR..."

KARL IS PETTY AND JEALOUS! HE THINKS I AM HIS, POOR FOOL! I'LL GET RID OF HIM QUICKLY AND WHEN I WAVE A LANTERN IN THE WINDOW--RETURN!

I WILL! HURRY!





"I STARTED DOWN THE ROAD AND WAITED! NIGHT CAME SWIFTLY TO THAT WORLD OF SEMIDARKNESS! IF THE WOODS WERE SILENT BY DAY, AT NIGHT THEY WERE FILLED WITH STRANGE MOVEMENTS AND WOEFUL CALLS OF BIRDS. TWICE THE MOON WAS ECLIPSED AND I WAS IN THE SHADOW OF GIANT BATS..."

BATS! FROM THEIR SIZE ONE WOULD ALMOST IMAGINE THAT VAMPIRES DID EXIST IN THESE WOODS! IT'S BEEN AN HOUR NOW AND STILL SHE HADN'T SIGNALLED! THIS ALMOST SEEMS MAD--WAITING FOR A RENDEZVOUS WITH AN UNKNOWN WOMAN IN A FORBIDDEN FOREST!



"THEN, AS I ALMOST TURNED TO GO BACK TO MY HOTEL, THE TORCH WAVED IN THE WINDOW..."

THE SIGNAL! I CAN RETURN TO LUREN!



"I OPENED THE INN DOOR, CANDLES WERE ON THE DESERTED TABLES AND TORCHES BURNED ON THE WALLS, CASTING FLICKERING SHADOWS ABOUT THE HUGE ROOM..."

I WAS AFRAID YOU WERE GONE AND I HAD LOST YOU!

I CAME HERE SEEKING ADVENTURE, I'D HARDLY FLEE FROM THE FIRST HINT OF IT! WHERE ARE ALL THE OTHERS? WHY IS THE INN EMPTY?



DO THE OTHERS MATTER? YOUR DESTINY LIES WITH ME! YOU WILL TAKE MY RING AS A LOVE TOKEN!

THEN LET'S GO DOWN TO MY HOTEL IN THE VALLEY-- IT'S SAYER AND MORE CHEERFUL THERE!



"I TOOK THE RING FROM HER HAND, CHILLING AGAIN AT HER SPECTRAL TOUCH AND GRABBED HER IN MY ARMS..."

I CAN'T GO DOWN FROM THIS FOREST WITH YOU!

MAYBE A KISS WILL CHANGE YOUR MIND!



"BUT SHE FOUGHT OFF MY ADVANCES, TRYING TO KEEP ME FROM TOUCHING HER LIPS WITH MINE! BUT UNDERNEATH HER FEIGNED STRUGGLE, I FELT A BURNING DESIRE AND PULLED HER CLOSE TO ME..."

NO! NEVER KISS ME! THERE'S DOOM AND DEATH TO THOSE WHO KISS ME! A CURSE LIES UPON MY LIPS -- DO NOT KISS ME!

I DIDN'T FEAR TO ENTER THE FORBIDDEN FOREST AND I WILL NOT FEAR TO TASTE ITS FORBIDDEN FRUIT--YOUR LIPS!



"OUR LIPS MET! BUT IN HER KISS I FELT MORE THAN PASSION, A DEMONIC FURY OF ICY MOCKERY AS HER WHOLE BEING TREMBLED IN THE ECSTASY OF SOME SECRET AND DARK TRIUMPH..."

SO, YOU HAVE PLAYED YOUR SINISTER PART AGAIN, LUREN! ONCE MORE YOU'VE TEMPTED THE UNGUPECTING VISITOR TO YOUR DOOMING LIPS!





"AS KARL SPOKE, I BACKED AWAY FROM LUREN'S EMBRACE! BEFORE I COULD GATHER MY WITS, HE WAS UPON HER AND HIS HAND, CLUTCHING A DAGGER, STRUCK DOWNWARD INTO HER BACK..."

**KARL!** DO NOT CRY OUT! YOU KNOW YOU CAN FEEL NO PAIN!  
**STOP! MURDERER! STOP!**



"AS LUREN FELL LIFELESSLY TO THE INN FLOOR, I STRUCK OUT FOR KARL WITH THE FURY OF A MAD-MAN..."

**OWW!** MURDERER! YOU'LL PAY FOR THIS! I'LL BE BACK!



"DOWN THE DARK NIGHT PATH I RACED AND BACK INTO THE HOTEL, HOPING AGAINST HOPE THAT A DOCTOR MIGHT BY SOME MIRACLE REVIVE THE FALLEN LUREN!"

MANAGER! MANAGER! GET A DOCTOR AND FOLLOW ME QUICKLY! THERE'S BEEN A HORRIBLE KNIFING IN THE INN ABOVE IN THE FORBIDDEN FOREST!  
GREAT HEAVENS, MR. RESTON, DON'T YOU KNOW THERE IS NO INN UP THERE?



"WITH THE INSISTANCE OF A MAN POSSESSED, I FORCED THE MANAGER AND THE LOCAL DOCTOR INTO THE WOODS ABOVE WITH ME! I KNEW THAT THERE WAS AN INN THERE AND THAT LUREN LAY THERE STABBED -- BUT WHEN WE ARRIVED AT THE SPOT..."

NOW DO YOU BELIEVE US? THERE HASN'T BEEN AN INN HERE SINCE 1616!

IT CAN'T BE! YOU'RE LYING TO ME! I WAS IN IT! I KNEW THAT ROOM! IT WAS HERE -- HERE WHERE THE ROAD ENDS!



"I SWUNG MY LIGHT ABOUT THE WOODS-- NOTHING! BEFORE ME LAY ONLY THE LEVELED WALLS OF AN ANCIENT INN, NOTHING MORE!"

BUT I TELL YOU! I SAW THE ROOM! IT MUST EXIST!

THERE WAS AN INN HERE HUNDREDS OF YEARS AGO, AND A MURDERESS WHO LURED MEN TO THEIR DEATH! HER NAME WAS LUREN-- BUT THAT WAS THREE CENTURIES AGO! I WARNED YOU NOT TO COME HERE! STRANGE THINGS STILL EXIST UP HERE!



**NO!** STRANGE THINGS DON'T EXIST IN THE BLACK FOREST! DRACULA AND ALL YOUR VAMPIRES AND WEREWOLF KILLERS ARE OFFSPRINGS OF IMAGINATION-- JUST AS THIS INN WAS! I DREAMT IT! I IMAGINED IT-- IT WAS NOT REAL!



"I RETURNED TO THE HOTEL, LAUGHING AT MYSELF, THE POOR DELUDED VICTIM OF THE REGION'S ATMOSPHERE, AT WHICH I HAD SCOFFED! ONCE BACK IN MY ROOM I JOTTED DOWN THE DREAM--ADVENTURE WHICH HAPPENED ONLY IN AN AUTHOR'S MIND! I REACHED INTO MY POCKET FOR MY CIGARETTES--I FELT SOME--THING COLD..."

LUREN'S RING! THEN IT DID HAPPEN!



AND LUREN'S WORDS--WHOEVER KISSED ME KISSES DEATH! I KISSED HER! DEATH'S SIREN LURED ME TO A TRAP...



SWIFTLY MY PEN RACED TO TRACE OUT THESE NOTES, FOR NOW I AM WAITING TO ONCE MORE JOIN DEAD SPECTRAL LUREN, WHO HAUNTS THAT FATAL MEETING PLACE--THAT ROOM THAT DIDN'T EXIST...

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**THE END**