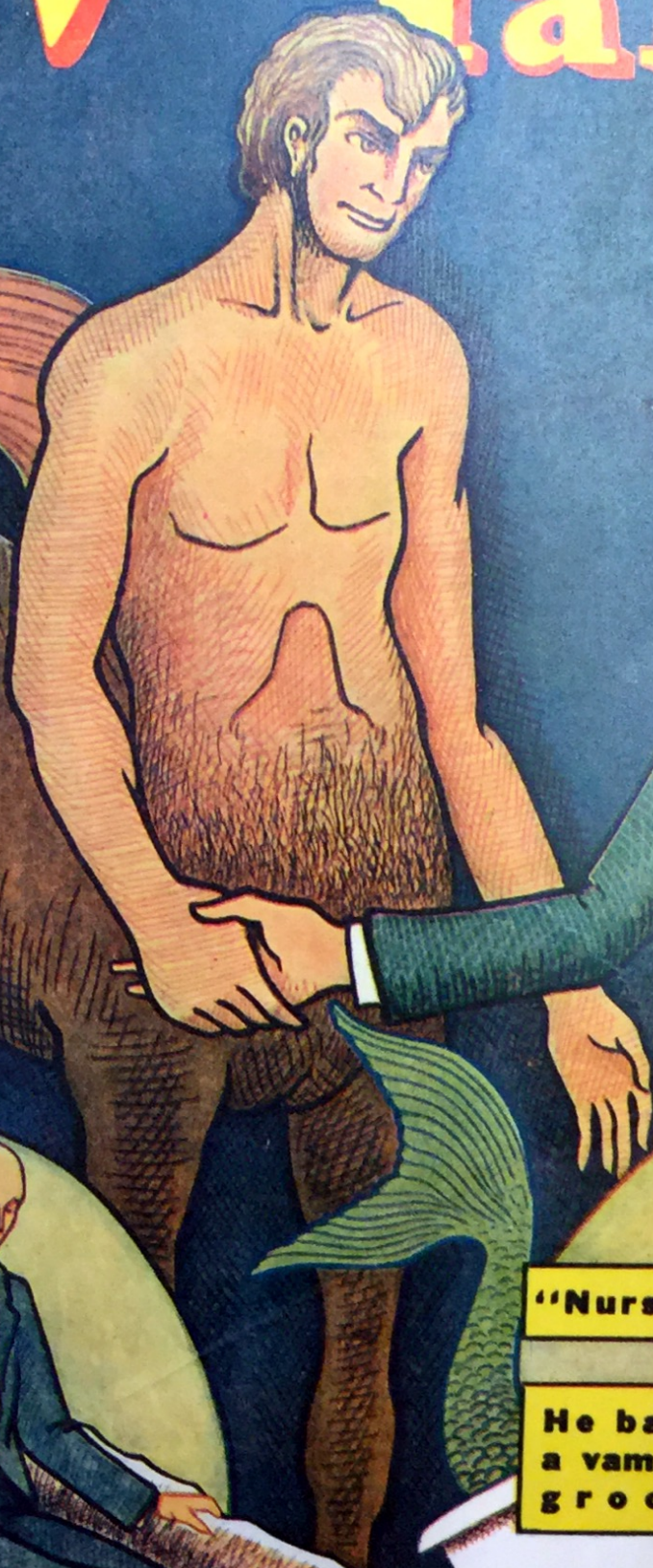


NOVEMBER

Weird Tales

15¢

**THE
HOUND**
 Fritz
 Leiber
 —
**FRANK
OWEN**
 —
**D. H.
KELLER**



"Nursemaid to Nightmares"

He bathed a werewolf, fed a vampire, amused a mermaid, groomed a centaur.

ROBERT BLOCH



TELL-TALE FLAKES?
ITCHY SCALP?
UGLY SCALES?

LOOK OUT FOR
**INFECTIOUS
DANDRUFF!**

Start NOW with LISTERINE!



Take these signs seriously. They may be a warning of the infectious type of dandruff, so common and frequently so stubborn! Don't delay. Neglect may aggravate the condition. And don't rely on one application of some makeshift, "over-night" remedy to treat a stubborn infection.

Medical—Not Magical Treatment

Your common sense tells you that it's wise to treat an infection with an antiseptic which attacks large numbers of the germs accompanying the infection.

So, be wise . . . start right in with Listerine Antiseptic and massage. It's a simple, delightfully easy, *medical* treatment.

Listerine gives hair and scalp an antiseptic bath, kills millions of germs associated with infectious dandruff, including *Pityrosporum ovale*—the stubborn "bottle bacillus" which many authorities recognize as a causative agent of infectious dandruff.

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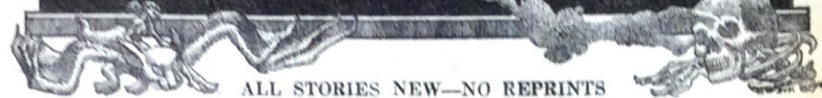
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J. E. SMITH, President
Dept. 2KM, National Radio Institute
Washington, D. C.



Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

NOVEMBER, 1942

Cover by Richard Bennett

NOVELETTE

- NURSEMAID TO NIGHTMARES Robert Bloch 6
Julius Margate collects horrors the way some people collect stamps

SHORT STORIES

- THE HOUND Fritz Leiber 34
These monsters feed on our fears, they haunt us, terrorize us
- THE CROOKED HOUSE Thorne Lee 45
A hunchbacked, brooding monster, this house with the twisted soul
- THE VICTORY OF THE VITA-RAY Stanton A. Coblentz 60
Twenty bloodstained bigshots of history are recalled from eternity
- THE GOLDEN BOUGH David H. Keller 67
*In the moonlight the laughing man would come, playing his Pan-like music
 —and she knew she must dance or die*
- THE GHOST OF THE MODEL T Betsy Emmons 78
This man was stalked by a phantom, the specter of his first car
- THE CANDLE Ray Bradbury 83
The proprietor pronounced the candle an implement of destruction
- THE LIPS OF CAYA WU Frank Owen 90
*There was no escape, for octopus-like, the Chinaman's schemes
 spread out everywhere*
- HERBERT WEST: REANIMATOR H. P. Lovecraft 96
*The scientist finds that the quest for the secret of life leads
 surely through the grave*
- THE POSSESSED Alice-Mary Schnirring 100
*Some macabre horror was here, changing this town and the people
 in it in appearance as night drew near*
- THE EVIL DOLL Hannes Bok 107
*Was it hypnotism or witchcraft—she must know for her sanity;
 her very life depended on the answer*

VERSE

- THE DEAD WORLD Clarence Edwin Flynn 77
- INTO FANTASY Maria Moravsky 82
- SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS Irwin J. Weill 58
- THE EYRIE AND WEIRD TALES CLUB 120

Except for personal experiences the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental

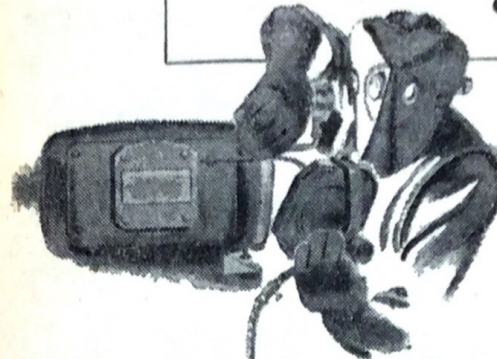
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D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

LAMONT BUCHANAN, Associate Editor.

The Memory of an Atom



Can The Past Be Awakened--

--and THE PURPOSE OF OUR LIVES KNOWN?

WERE THE ANCIENTS RIGHT? Does the whirling heart of an atom contain the secret of the universe? If everything from a grain of sand to the mighty stars—including man—is composed of atoms, do these particles contain the infinite intelligence which ordained and directs all things? Shall man at last find within them his true purpose in the scheme of things?

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The Candle

By RAY BRADBURY



*On the bronze candle base was inscribed: "The man who will in trouble be,
soon surely sees the light in me."*

UNDER other circumstances it might have been idle curiosity that caused Jules Marcott to pause before the little hardware store

window; but tonight it was a cold lump of hopelessness and anger knotted in his heart.

Now there was nothing to be done but

proprietor of this untidy hardware shop should place such an inconspicuously ethereal figure in the tangled whirlpool of penny-nails and pistols.

The candle held center stage, misting the weapons into the background. It pervaded all, seemed, rather, to be already aflame and spilling a steady, pure glow over all the window; and out, touching Jules' face with a soft finger of pastel light.

But it was not lighted. And yet it emanated light, it was luminescent.

In the shop window a clutter of bric-a-brac, knick-knacks, metal ornaments and artillery had been heaped haphazardly, catching the uneasy, snow-white glare of the street lamp.

Grimly Jules thought of the display as a symbol of his own life; heaped, jumbled, rusted, forgotten, useless. No point.

He stared into the jumble of metal; antique guns, matchlocks, blunderbusses, Luger, sawed-off shotguns, miniature garter-pistols and a million and one other rusted weapons idling there.

"A good gun," mused Marcott, squinting dark eyes, hunching Jean shoulders in his overcoat. "A good aim—a good shot."

But he shook his head. "And the rest of my life in prison. That wouldn't do. That's not solving it, but working myself deeper—"

He cursed, was about to turn away, when something oddly out of place caught his eye. His black brows arched up on his slender pale face.

In the very center of the window, in the midst of the cluttered metal, rose a blue-pastel candle, slim and tall and worked in naked and fine-limbed.

It was such a strange candle and it occupied such a unique position that Jules Marcott momentarily forgot his marital problem to center his nervous attentions upon it.

Jules admitted it for a number of seconds, casting about for the reasons why the

proprietor of this untidy hardware shop should place such an inconspicuously ethereal figure in the tangled whirlpool of penny-nails and pistols.

The candle held center stage, misting the weapons into the background. It pervaded all, seemed, rather, to be already aflame and spilling a steady, pure glow over all the window; and out, touching Jules' face with a soft finger of pastel light.

But it was not lighted. And yet it emanated light, it was luminescent.

Like contour of the Lotus Buddha. It promised many things with its serenity. It offered surcease from worry and—something else. Something ominously fleeting. Other lights flickered within the candle torso, things uninterpretable. Jules considered the guns again, and then the candle, and, once more, the guns.

And even in these hours of many emotions, predominant in Jules was curiosity. So it was that Jules' thin hand was upon the knob of the shop-door before he realized it. The door sagged in on hinges, shut behind him, complaining.

Momentarily, Marcott had forgotten his wife, Helen. Now he had seen something intangible and wished to touch it, perhaps even buy it.

A candle so unusual that it offered to fill the vacant portions of his soul. A candle that offered—what?—better things than guns to solve his problem.

Out of the cool cavern of the shop, from a gloomy alcove behind a counter, appeared the proprietor. He was a contrast to Jules. Where Marcott was tall, pale, jet-haired and thin, this proprietor was short, round, apple-checked. A toothless, big-nosed

ancient with a shock of winter-snow hair

tangling about full cars.

The proprietor moved quietly, smacking his lips, wiping hands on a dirty smock amidst the dust and rusted metal and shadow.

"What, sir?" he said, cheerfully. "There's no doubt but you'll have either a pistol or the candle!"

He sized Marcott up with two quick thrusts of his eyes, which, though blue, did not offer the friendliness displayed by the body. They were strangely alert and not warm.

Jules felt a distinct dislike for the man, for the man's abrupt attitude. It was a little too sudden and strange.

Marcott did not speak immediately. He could give no reason for entering the shop; action. He was bewildered.

"No. No," he said suddenly, awkwardly. "I—I don't want a pistol!"

"Of course you don't," The proprietor blinked rapidly, shaking a finger. "Of course you don't. Pistols are much too messy." The fat body waddled between cluttered counters thick with nails, knobs and other glittering objects.

Reaching the window he bent, breathing asthmatically, and with gentle, chubby hands picked up a pale-blue candle. His face creased into a toothless grin as he returned to Marcott.

"And if you do not wish a pistol, then you want the candle. Everyone who comes to my shop buys either a gun or this taper." He shook his head. "The fools use the guns in their desperation."

He offered the unlighted taper to Jules. "And the wise man lights a taper. Here." The candle was bedded in a small heavy circlet of bronze, exquisitely carved with puckish elfin heads and an inscription in some ancient scrawl.

As Jules clasped it he felt a quick warm snake of confidence strike him and crawl twining up his arms into his being. It was like dawn after a thunderstorm.

The proprietor gestured to the window. "I do a great business," he declared, heartily. "Not in hardware, and not to the ordinary person. I sell to fools and wise men. Mostly fools." The red lips smacked moistly. "The world is full of them. Now—this candle—"

He paused, and his eyes became slits, his voice dropped. "This candle, when lighted of an evening, will perform many tasks in many ways. Both pleasant and unpleasant." He tapped the bronze candle base.

"The inscription—" Marcott could not readily translate it. His foreign scabbie gave no message to his tall, his fingers tight upon the base.

Marcott stared unblinkingly at the blue he asked. "How do you know I am in trouble?"

A streak of white moved across the dim shop floor. A milk-furred kitten ceased running and stopped to play tag with Marcott's overcoat. Jules ignored it as the proprietor gave answer.

"All who come here bear one form of trouble or other. None enter here for nails and hammers. I have seen to that. And you, like the others, are tormented. I know not what shape or form this torment may assume, but now it darkens your existence and you wish to forget it. And forgetting can only be accomplished, at times, by destroying something. What do you wish to destroy?"

Marcott did not trust the proprietor. He did not speak aloud. But in his brain six words materialized instantly, vividly: "I wish to kill a man!"

THE shadows in the hardware shop waved a fraction closer. The blue candle, though flameless, glowed, and the milk-white kitten who gambled at Marcot's feet, paused and cocked its head up, staring at him with large green eyes, as if it knew his every thought.

Marcot wet his lips thoughtfully, feeling that he should say something. So, he said, "This candle isn't a weapon," rather matter-of-factly.

"The kiss of a woman," replied the proprietor, "is the most lethal of all weapons. Yet, who looks on it as such? Judge Jules thought angrily of Eldridge, the man he hated, the man he wished to kill. And he thought of Helen.

The proprietor answered. His voice was cheerless.

"You light the candle in the evening hours. You wait until it has flamed steadily for a number of minutes. Then, three times, you breathe the name of the person you wish to destroy."

"This done, the designated individual will conclude his existence immediately." Marcot was wary. "The passing minutes had given him opportunity to collect his wits. It sounded too utterly simple to be accepted in the sunlight of reason, to stand the probing of the scalpel of intellect.

But Marcot's problem demanded a solution. This trouble with Helen, his wife, and Eldridge, her lawyer friend, was not an easy one.

Marcot held the candle close, forming words.

"How do I know that this candle works?" he said. "What sort of witchcraft is this?"

"No, I do not." "You do not believe?"

"Then—I will show you."

The proprietor struck a match. The flame glittered in his deep blue eyes, and on the snowy hair and ruddy face.

He lit the candle. He waited a few moments.

Previously, without flame, the candle had filled the room with soft, wondrous light from its phosphorescent body. Now, flamed, it shot out torrents of soul-filling brilliance that was like the illumination of a great full moon.

Marcot sensed something moving softly against his legs. He looked down. It was the furry white cat with the huge green eyes still staring up at him, mewing, clawing at his coat-tail, exposing a red tongue.

Marcot heard the proprietor murmuring three times. Three times the old man spoke, and his breath made the candle flame lean to one side, quivering.

The candle flickered. . . .

And the cat, one moment playfully alert at Jules' feet, the next crying out in animal pain, leaped as if kicked, clawed the air, rolling and writhing and spitting.

For a moment it recovered. It leaped up, gained a hold upon the counter next to Jules and tumbled over into a nest of metal. Then it spit froth and blood, snarling. Its little, milk-colored head twisted as if an invisible hand were wringing it.

The green eyes bulged nightmarishly. The little red tongue was caught between clamped teeth. It gave one last convulsive shudder, jerked, and fell silent, its tail twitching.

IT WAS DEAD.

Jules sickened suddenly. His face paled, his thin lips were dry and he swayed unsteadily. He turned away from the kitten and looked at the candle with the oddly peaceful feminine figure, the contented face.

The proprietor blew the flame out. "You see—it works?"

Jules nodded.

The proprietor handed the candle back to Marcot. "I cannot sell you the candle," he said, softly. "But I can rent it to you for a short period of time. You pay half when you rent, half when you accomplish your work and return. Fair?"

A throng of thoughts crowded Jules' mind. He had little money saved. And he had proof, horrible proof, that the candle worked. Here in the shadows he could not doubt. Rationality had fled. But he didn't want to spend too much money. A bullet might be cheaper—maybe—

He feared to ask the price.

"Three thousand dollars . . ." came the answer to the unworded question.

THREE THOUSAND DOLLARS!

As well demand a ton of soil from the planet Mars! Jules Marcot's bank account advanced to three pitiful figures.

But with the unreasoning blindness of a potential killer, Marcot would not, could not give up this candle and its alleged powers.

He whirled and started for the door. "I have no money," he said. "Let me use the candle and pay later!"

"Money?" The proprietor poked out a red fist. "Or return the candle, quickly! I hold no commerce with the poor!"

"Wait, then!"

The proprietor lunged at Marcot with open hands.

Jules wheeled to one side, snatched up the first fistful of metal touching his hands, a cumbersome blunderbuss and struck with it, clumsily.

The weapon hit. The proprietor shrieked with pain, fell flat, unconscious. Not dead. Hastily, hiding the blue candle figurine in his overcoat, Jules departed the shop of cluttered shadows. He hurried into the marrow biting chill and strode down the street. Through his mind slipped the vision

of the kitten dying, the translation of the ancient inscription on the bronze candle-base:

"He who will in trouble be. Will quickly see the light in me!"

And now—to mete out vengeance on the head of the man who loved and took Helen away. And simultaneously to teach Helen a lesson she would never forget.

Her divorce from Jules would be of no avail now. Eldridge, her lover, would die. Marcot walked swiftly, confidently.

JULES MARCOT fitted the red ribbon bow to the package with trembling fingers. Then he panned a carefully worded note to his wife, slipped it into an envelope and attached it to the box containing the blue candle.

It was much better this way. To send the package, the candle and the curse directly to Helen, let her follow slightly altered directions. Let hers be the lips to pronounce the doom and death of Eldridge, hers the white fingers to light the taper, bringing destruction.

Better this way. More ironic. More wanting, more unbearable for her. He wanted to hurt her intensely. For now, with all the power of a blighted existence, he hated Helen.

Jules thought, was it not Oscar Wilde who wrote: "Each man kills the thing he loves?"

So let Helen kill John Eldridge. Jules checked the package very carefully. He picked it up, handed it to the waiting Western Union messenger.

"Deliver this immediately—to Helen Marcot, 413 Grant Street."

The messenger left. Marcot broke seal on a new packet of cigarettes. He noted the time. Eight o'clock. A night wind mourned outside. It would take the messenger twenty min-

And Helen
 ures to deliver the candle. And Helen
 scheduled her leave for Reno in the morn-
 ing, to divorce Jules and marry Eldridge.
 Twenty minutes for the package to be
 delivered. Five minutes for her to open it,
 read the enclosed note.

And then—how long?

How many minutes before Eldridge
 died? An hour, two hours, and, if Helen
 were rushed, perhaps not tonight, but
 surely tomorrow night. Helen was senti-
 mental. Jules counted on that quality. She
 would follow directions implicitly.

Marcott lit his third cigarette.

When he finished his tenth cigarette it
 was nine-fifteen. The package had been
 delivered. Now, all he had to do was wait.
 Go to bed and restlessly count the hours?
 No. Better to get out and walk in the park,
 breathe the night air. He'd know soon
 enough about Eldridge.

Marcott chuckled. What if Eldridge
 fell dead right in front of Helen? Lord,
 would that be revenge.

Jules laughingly ground out his ciga-
 rette and left his small, transient apart-
 ment.

So Helen was going to get a divorce.
 She disapproved of Jules and his meddling
 with psychology and mental diseases. She
 didn't like this and she didn't like that.
 So she was skipping off to Reno like a con-
 fused little animal.

Marcott smiled as he locked the door
 and pocketed the key. What was it she had
 said only three weeks ago? Something
 about Svenngul, meaning Jules, and herself
 as Trilly? That was funny.

Strange that a woman could run off be-
 cause of one quarrel. But Helen was a
 changeable woman. Anyway—
 Tomorrow morning—obituary column
 —the name Eldridge—

BUSY with his thoughts, Jules scarce
 noticed the direction in which he wan-
 dered until it was too late. He strode

in a mist of hopes and desires, until his
 ears, coming out of the fog of thought,
 heard brisk scuffling heels catching up with
 him. The sound of asthmatic breathing
 filled the night air.

A fat hand clutched Marcott's coat,
 twisted him about. A red, chubby face,
 toothless and angry, was thrust close.
 "Where is the candlestick?"

The hardware store proprietor!

Marcott expressed no immediate excite-
 ment. After all, Helen had the candle.
 Even now the final curtain in John Eld-
 ridge's life was being rung down.

Jules quietly lit another cigarette before
 he answered the shopkeeper. Then:

"I don't know your name, but you're
 definitely impolite. I assure you that if I
 did know your name I would promptly
 light the candle and put an end to you."

The shopkeeper clenched thick fists in
 rage. "I'll call the police!"

"Come now." Jules laughed softly.
 "Being in your sort of business, such an ac-
 tion wouldn't pay, would it?" He flicked
 his cigarette ashes disdainfully. "I'll re-
 turn your candlestick when it has done its
 work."

"I demand it *now!*"

"I don't have it."

"Who—"

"I sent it to my wife."

"What's your name?"

The dark smile did not leave Jules' face.
 "If you knew my name and retrieved the
 candle, then I'd be in a pretty fix, wouldn't
 I?" He shook his head. "You won't
 know it. Because if you did, then I'd take
 measures to insure your never finding your
 precious candle again."

The fat shopkeeper stopped breathing as
 hastily. He waited a moment, licking fat
 cherry-red lips, fingers shaking, the fat
 body swaying. Finally: "You—you will
 —you *promise* to return the candlestick?"
 There was a flicker of pleading in the voice.
 "Was that your *only* wonder-working

device?" laughed Marcott. "How ineffi-
 cient! Yes, I'll return it as soon as possi-
 ble, granting of course that you never know
 my name. You should be thankful I didn't
 look you up in the phone book to give your
 life to the flame."

"You should not have let it get out of
 your hands," muttered the old man. "What
 if it is lost?"

"It will not be lost. I sent it to my wife,
 enclosing a note, telling her it was—well,
 it was a clever idea of mine, all around.
 She's divorcing me, plans on marrying a
 man named Eldridge. They plane to Reno
 in the morning. But I thought of a rather
 interesting and different way of utilizing
 the candle to get rid of Eldridge. I'll let
 Helen—"

A brisk wind came up, drowning out
 Jules' voice, so that he had to speak louder,
 but speak he did. The little shopkeeper
 listened, nodding, approving in spite of
 himself, almost smiling.

The wind blew wilder and the stars were
 very clear. Jules thought, it is a glorious
 night. But—

One more question.

"The victim of the candle," asked
 Jules. "When the spell is cast, what hap-
 pens? Is it very bad?"

The shopkeeper nodded ominously.

"You saw what happened to the cat?"

Well—

HELEN MARCOTT jerked back as
 the hand cracked across her cheek
 for the second time. Tears started to her
 full brown eyes and the marks of John
 Eldridge's fingers scarred her face.

Eldridge stood over her. Then he
 whirled and went to the door. He turned,
 his face ugly and suffused. His eyes cut
 first at Helen Marcott and then at the
 freshly opened box, the box in which re-
 lined the feminine blue-pastel candle.

"Gifts from your husband! Behind my
 back!" he gazed. "What am I supposed
 to think? After all we supposedly meant
 to each other! Well, if you want *me*, you'll
 find me at—"

The door slammed, slicing off Eldridge's
 voice.

Helen Marcott heard his footsteps
 drumming down the hall out of her life.
 And tears streaked down her cheeks over
 the fresh red marks left by Eldridge's
 hand when he had slapped her.

He had *slapped* her!

All over a gift from Jules. All over a
 blue candle. Helen Marcott tried to think
 clearly. She was seeing Eldridge concisely
 for the first time.

She was still crying, thinking about her
 disillusionment in Eldridge, when she
 struck a match. Carefully she set the can-
 dle on the table next to herself and lit it.
 She paused. The candle looked so peace-
 ful and contented.

Helen Marcott picked up the letter
 Jules had thoughtfully enclosed. How
 gentle, how nice of him.

She read the letter over again, taking
 in every word.

"Darling Helen: A little remem-
 brance to show that there are no hard
 feelings. This is a prayer candle. To
 bring good fortune and happiness to the
 one you love, light the candle in the
 evening and, three times, repeat the
 name of your beloved.

"With fond memories,

"JULES."

Helen Marcott brushed away the tears.
 She turned to the flaming candlestick. Her
 gentle breath touched the flame, three
 times, quietly, fervently, longingly, as she
 said: "Jules—Jules—Jules—"
 The candle flame flickered.