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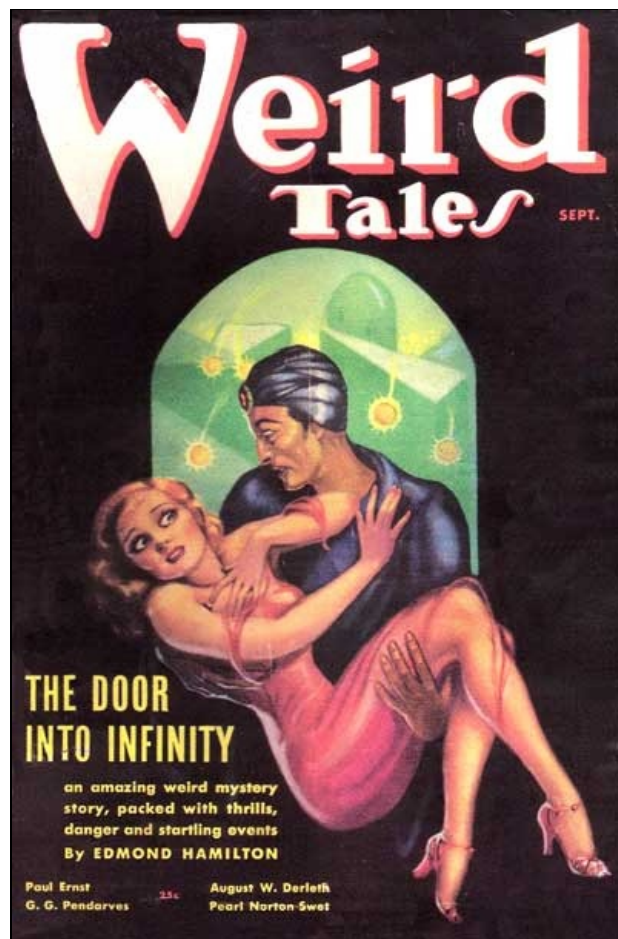
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The Diary of Philip Westerly

By PAUL COMPTON

A strange, brief tale of the terrible fear inspired by a man's horrendous reflection in a mirror

It has been ten years since my uncle, Philip Westerly, disappeared. Many theories have been advanced as to why and how he vanished so strangely and so completely. Many have wondered why a man should vanish and leave nothing behind him but a smashed mirror. But none of these theories or wild imaginings are half so fantastic as the story I gathered from the diary which some whim prompted him to keep.

But first a word about Philip Westerly. He was a wealthy man, and also a cruel, selfish man. His wealth was attributed to this same cruelty and selfishness. He also had many whims. One of them was keeping a diary. Another was his love for mirrors. He was handsome in a cruel sort of way and almost effeminate in his liking to stand before them and admire himself. This eccentricity was borne out by the fact that covering one whole side of his room was a mirror of gigantic size—the same mirror that is linked with his disappearance. But read the excerpts from the diary of Philip Westerly.

Aug. 3rd. *Afternoon*: Billings asked for an extension on that note today, but I saw no reason why I should grant him any such thing. When I told him this, he began cursing me in a frightful manner. He said I was cruel and that some day I would be called to account for the way I treated people. I laughed outright at this, but at the same time I felt a vague sense of uneasiness which even yet I have not dispelled.

Night: A remarkable thing has happened. I had gone to my room to dress for dinner and I was standing before the mirror tying my tie. I had begun the usual procedure that one follows, when I noticed that no such action was recorded in the mirror. True, there was my reflection in the glass, but it followed none of the movements that I made. It was immobile!

I extended my hand to touch the reflection and encountered nothing but the polished surface of the mirror. Then I noticed a truly remarkable thing. The reflection in the mirror wore no tie! I stepped back aghast. Was this an illusion? Had my mind and vision been affected by some malady that I was not aware of? Impossible! Then I regarded the reflection with a more careful scrutiny. There were a number of differences between it and myself. For one thing it wore a stubby growth of beard on its face. I was positive that I had visited the barber that very day and passed my hand across my chin to verify this. It encountered nothing but smooth skin. The lips of the man in the mirror drooped in a display of gnarled, yellow fangs, while my own bared nothing but two rows of gleaming, well-cared-for teeth.

I was filled simultaneously with a feeling of disgust and fear, and looked for further discrepancies. I found them. The feet and hands were abnormally large, and the clothing of the thing was old, baggy, and covered with filth.

I dared not stay longer. I tied the tie as best I could and descended hurriedly to dinner.

Aug. 4th. *Morning*: I awoke feeling jaded and tired. My friend in the mirror is still with me. Ordinarily the reflection of myself, in bed, is caught in the mirror, but not so this morning. Instead, I saw that the dweller within had, like myself, been having a night's rest. I hope he slept better than I did, for my own night was a series of fitful, restless tossings.

"Good morning," I said, rising.

When I moved, he moved. As I advanced toward the mirror he drew closer to me. I stopped and surveyed him. He resembled me only remotely—I hope. I smiled, and he responded with a wolfish twist of his mouth. I extended my hand as if I wanted to shake hands with him, but he drew back as if from fire. I can't understand the terror which he holds for me. I try not to show my fear in front of him, but I feel that, animal-like, he senses it. I refer to the reflection as "he," "him," or "it," for I cannot bring myself to admit that the thing in the mirror is my reflection. But I scarcely dare write what I do believe it to be. I have always been skeptical about such things as "soul," but when I look into the mirror—God help me!

Night: I am spending much time in my room now. I've spent most of the day here. This thing is

beginning to hold a morbid fascination for me. I can't stay away for any length of time. I wish I could. My wife is beginning to worry about me. She says I look pale. She tells me I need a rest—a long rest. If I could only confide in her! In anyone! But I can't. I must fight and wait this out alone.

Aug. 5th. There has been little or no change in our relationship. He still remains aloof.

Today my wife came to my room to see how I was feeling. She stood in such a position that looking into the mirror was unavoidable. She stood before the mirror arranging her hair. She noticed nothing out of the ordinary, but he was still there. Damn him! He was still there, and this time he snarled in triumph at me.

One other remarkable thing. My wife hadn't seen the thing there in the mirror, but neither had I seen her reflection. It was the same with Peter, my valet, and Anna, the maid. Anna would have dusted the mirror had I not stopped her. I must take no chances. A close scrutiny might reveal him to them, and they must not know—they must not know!

Aug. 6th. Three days. Three days of hell! That's what it has been since I discovered that damned thing. How he tortures me! He has begun to mock me. When he thinks he has given an extraordinarily clever impersonation he shakes with laughter. I can't hear him laugh. But I see him. And that's worse. I can't stand it much longer!

Aug. 7th. We never know how much we can stand until we go through some ordeal such as I am now undergoing. But I feel that my nerve is near the breaking-point.

I have locked the door of my room. Anna leaves a tray outside my door. Sometimes I eat the food she brings, but more often I don't. My wife begs me to let her in, but I tell her to go away. I'm afraid to tell her—I'm afraid to tell anyone. I know what they do with people who have "hallucinations". No, I can't tell. Neither can I leave. God knows why, but I can't.

Aug. 8th. It was the day before yesterday that I mentioned his mocking me. Today—I tremble at the thought—he is beginning to resemble me! This morning I looked in the mirror and discovered that he had discarded his rags and was now dressed in one of my suits. I ran to the wardrobe and discovered his clothes hanging where mine had been. I turned and faced him. He laughed and pointed toward my hands and feet. They were bloated beyond recognition. I dare not guess how far this change has gone. I can write no more today.

Aug. 9th. The change is complete. He looks more like me than I do myself. He has grown more cruel with the change. He taunts me with my ugliness. Finally I could stand it no longer. I fled from the room. At last I found the thing I was looking for—a mirror. When I came face to face with what I now am I nearly collapsed. Yes, he has taken my form. God pity me! I've taken his!

I slunk back to the room in horror. Back to his laughter and the hell that is now my existence. God knows what to-morrow will bring!

Aug. 10th. Seven days since that devil has been in the mirror. I have prayed to God that it may be the last. It will! I know it will! He, in the mirror, senses it too. I see the look of apprehension in his eyes. Damn him! It's my turn to snarl in triumph now. For when I lay down this pen, for the last time, perhaps, I shall leap through the mirror. And he exists only in the mirror. God help me! *I am laying down my pen!*



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