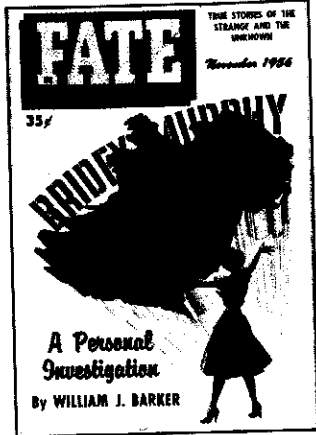


Fifty years ago



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The "Autobiography" of Cellini is filled with amazing escapades—but the most amazing of all is...

## Cellini's Encounter with Devils

by John Hallmark

The *Autobiography* of Benvenuto Cellini, the great Florentine goldsmith of the Renaissance, is the story of a turbulent life.

"I can bring to mind some pleasant goods and some inestimable evils," writes Cellini, "which, when I turn my thoughts backward, strike terror in me, and astonishment that I should have reached this age of 58..."

The reader soon finds himself wholeheartedly sharing the astonishment of the author.

But perhaps the most terrifying adventure in his stormy life involved neither gunpowder nor swordplay, nor flesh and blood

enemies, but nameless creatures that do not belong in the world of men.

Occultists believe there are spheres of consciousness tangent to our own which are inhabited by inhuman beings. Many of these beings, occultists say, are animal-like and indifferently good or evil. Others, the angels and devils of the world's religions, have far greater intelligence and power than man. From earliest times occult practitioners have attempted to contact these otherworld denizens. And, unfortunately, they have preferred the attendance of demons for the average occultist—like the man on the street—is far more interested in worldly gain than in spiritual blessing.

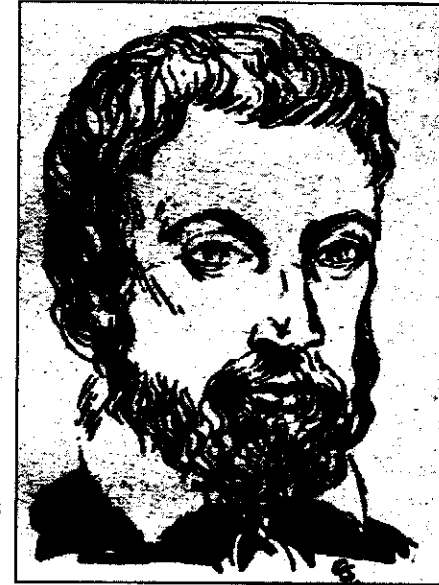
Cellini always had had "the most intense desire to see or learn something of this art" of spirit invocation. His opportunity came when he became intimate with a Sicilian priest who was very learned in the black arts.

"A stout soul and a steadfast heart must the man have who sets himself to such enterprise," the priest warned. Cellini replied that of strength and steadfastness he should have enough and to spare, provided he found the opportunity. The priest promised that he would satisfy the curiosity of the young man and they agreed upon the adventure.

While the magician awaited a propitious time, the young artist returned to thoughts of Angelica. He had fallen in love with this beautiful Sicilian girl and had arranged to elope with her "for a year." But the girl's mother, somehow acquainted with the plans, had taken the girl away with her secretly from Rome. Cellini had done a "multitude of mad things" to discover the whereabouts of the young woman, but without avail. Distraught, he had vainly sought to forget her by losing himself in the wildest excesses, but wine and other women had not brought forgetfulness of his lovely Angelica.

At last the priestly sorcerer was ready for the dark ceremony. Here is the account of the terrifying invocations in Cellini's own words:

"The priest one evening made his preparations, and bade me find a comrade, not more than two. I invited Vincen-



zio Romoli, a very dear friend of mine, and the priest took with him a native of Pistoja, who also cultivated the black art. We went together to the Coliseum; and there the priest, having arrayed himself in necromancer's robes, began to describe circles on the earth with the finest ceremonies that can be imagined. I must say that he had made us bring precious perfumes and fire, and also drugs of fetid odour. When the preliminaries were completed, he made the entrance into the circle; and taking us by the hand, introduced us one by one inside it. Then he assigned our several functions; to the necromancer, his comrade, he gave the pentacle to hold; the other two of us had to look after the fire and the perfumes; and then he began his incantations. This lasted more than an hour and a half; when

several legions appeared, and the Coliseum was all full of devils. I was occupied with the precious perfumes, and when the priest perceived in what numbers they were present, he turned to me and said: 'Benvenuto, ask them something.' I called on them to reunite me with my Sicilian Angelica. That night we obtained no answer; but I enjoyed the greatest satisfaction of my curiosity in such matters. The necromancer said that we should have to go a second time, and that I should obtain the full accomplishment of my request; but he wished me to bring with me a little boy of pure virginity.

"I chose one of the shop-lads, who was about 12 years old, and invited Vincenzo Romolo again; and we also took a certain Agnolino Gaddi, who was a very intimate friend of both. When we came once more to

the place appointed, the necromancer made just the same and even more impressive details. Then he introduced us into the circle, which he had reconstructed with art more admirable and yet more wondrous ceremonies. Afterwards he appointed my friend Vincenzo to the ordering of the perfumes and the fire, and with him Agnolino Gaddi. He next placed in my hand the pentacle, which he bid me turn toward the points he indicated, and under the pentacle I held

the little boy, my workman.

"Now the necromancer began to utter those awful incantations, calling by name on multitudes of demons who are captains of their legions, and these he summoned by the virtue and potency of God, the Un-created, Living, and Eternal, in phrases of the Hebrew, and also of the Greek and Latin tongues, insomuch that in a short space of time the whole Coliseum was full of a hundredfold as many as had appeared upon the first occasion. Vincenzo Romoli, to-

gether with Agnolino, tended the fire and heaped on quantities of precious perfumes. At the advice of the necromancer, I again demanded to be reunited with Angelica. The sorcerer turned to me and said: 'Hear you what they have replied; that in the space of one month you will be where she

is?' Then once more he prayed me to stand firm by him, because the legions were a thousandfold more than he had summoned, and were the most dangerous of all the denizens of hell; and now that they had settled what I asked, it behooved us to be civil to them and dismiss them gently.

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said, moreover, that four huge giants had appeared, who were striving to force their way inside the circle. Meanwhile the necromancer, trembling with fear, kept doing his best with mild and soft persuasions to dismiss them. Vincenzo Romoli, who quaked like an aspen leaf, looked after the perfumes. Though I was quite as frightened as the rest of them, I tried to show it less, and inspired them all with marvelous courage; but the truth is that I had given myself up for dead when I saw the terror of the necromancer. The boy had stuck his head between his knees, exclaiming: 'This is how I will meet death, for we are certainly dead men.' Again I said to him: 'These creatures are all inferior to us, and what you see is only smoke and shadow; so then raise your eyes.' When he had raised them, he cried out: 'The whole Coliseum is in flames, and the fire is advancing on us;' then covering his face with his hands, he groaned again that he was dead, and that he could not endure the sight longer.

"The necromancer appealed for my support, entreating me to stand firm by him, and to have assafetida flung upon the coals; so I turned to Vincenzo Romoli, and told him to make the fumigation at once... (Then) the boy told us that but few remained, and those were at a distance. When the necromancer had concluded his ceremonies, he cut off his wizard's robe, and packed up a great bundle of books which he had brought with him; then, altogether, we issued with him from the

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circle, huddling as close as we could to one another, especially the boy, who had got into the middle, and taken the necromancer by his gown and me by the cloak. All the while that we were going toward our houses in the Banchi, he kept saying that two of the devils he had seen in the Coliseum were gambolling in front of us, skipping now

along roofs and now upon the ground. The necromancer assured me that, often as he had entered magic circles, he had never met with such a serious affair as this. He also tried to persuade me to assist him in consecrating a book, by means of which we should extract immeasurable wealth, since we could call up fiends to show us where treasures were, whereof the earth is full; and after this wise we should become the richest of mankind..."

But less than a month later, Cellini became involved in another street fray and, believing that he had killed his opponent, fled from Rome. A friend who aided his flight advised him to go to Naples. On the road he met a sculptor of his acquaintance, Solosmeo, who accompanied him to the city:

"When Solosmeo had inspected his affairs at Monte Cassino, we resumed our journey; and having come within a mile of Naples, we were met by an innkeeper, who invited us to his house, and said he had been at Florence many years with Carlo Ginori; adding, that if we put up at his inn, he would treat us most kindly, for the reason that we both were Florentines. We told him frequently that we did not want to go to him. However, he kept passing, sometimes in front and sometimes behind, perpetually repeating that he would have

us stop at his hostelry. When this began to bore me, I asked if he could tell me anything about a certain Sicilian woman called Beatrice, who had a beautiful daughter named Angelica...he said 'Two or perhaps three days ago a woman and a girl came back to a house in my neighbourhood; they had the names you mentioned, but whether they are Sicilians I cannot say.' I answered: 'Such power over me has that name of Angelica, that I am now determined to put up

at your inn.'

"We rode on all together with mine host into the town of Naples, and descended at his house. Minutes seemed years to me til I had put my things in order, which I did in the twinkling of an eye; then I went to the house, which was not far from our inn, and found

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there my Angelica, who greeted me with infinite demonstrations of the most unbound passion. I stayed with her from evenfall until the following morning, and enjoyed such pleasure as I never had before or since; but while drinking of this delight it occurred to my mind how exactly on the day the month expired, which had been prophesied within the necromantic circle by the devils. So then let every man who enters into relation with those spirits weigh well the inestimable perils I have passed through!"