

The Adventure of the Ball of Nostradamus– Ball
The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction, June, 1955
A Praed Street Dossier

Date

Copper/Early September, 1929
Patrick/NA

Quotes

- *The fulfillment of prophecies, like beauty, is too often only in the eye of the beholder. But I concede that the French physician offers as nearly adequate evidence for prevision as I know.*

The Case

A series of child murders have taken place on the Continent, with the last two in London. Pons believes one man is behind it all and gleans his identity from the deathbed ramblings of a dying assassin. The man holds a crystal ball used by Nostradamus.

Comments

- The July, 1953 issue of *The Magazine of Fantasy & Science Fiction* contained *The Adventure of The Snitch in Time*, a science-fiction Pons collaboration between Mack Reynolds and Derleth.

A second collaboration appeared in the same magazine in June of 1955. It was *The Ball of Nostradamus*.

- Two more attempts were made in this series, but neither was published and the idea simply faded away. It should be noted that the first story fell clearly within the science fiction genre, while *The Ball of Nostradamus* is a supernatural detective story.
- The original title submitted was *The Adventure of the Mad Dogs of Tomorrow*. That title does not make sense until late in the story, and it might be construed as painting a more favorable picture of the villain, which nonetheless is a difficult task for a child murderer.
- This is a much better story than the lightweight *Snitch in Time* and succeeds in casting a supernatural pall over the case. Abraham Weddigan brings to mind a combination of Aleister Crowley and Robert Lees (Jack the Ripper case).
- Weddigan refers to the girl who escaped him as Ana Rabinsohn. Rabinsahn was an Orthodox Jew who married Marcel Pauker. Ana Pauker became Foreign Minister of Romania from 1947 – 1952 and was de facto leader of the Romanian Communist Party. She was purged from power by Stalin and jailed. After his death she was moved to house arrest and never regained her standing.

Communists were the enemy in 1954 when Ball of Nostradamus was published. Time Magazine had put Pauker on the cover in 1948, calling her the most powerful woman alive. Thus, she is conveyed as a villain in this pastiche.

- Who is Josef Zollern? He is seen in the Ball inciting a crowd, wearing a scarlet tunic and with a saber-sash on his right cheek. He was in London as a youth. The name cries out “Prussian,” but who is it?