

Weird Tales



SEPTEMBER, 1941

Cover by Margaret Brundage

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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.

Published bi-monthly by *Weird Tales*, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 28, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 15 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, 90c. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand, London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unmailed manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. Copyright, 1941, by *Weird Tales*. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

Vol. 36, No. 1

D. McILWRAITH, Editor.

HENRY AVELINE PERKINS, Associate Editor.

He was wild with rage, for hunters had killed his mate. He snatched her up
—and bore her off to the forest.



Birthmark

By SEABURY QUINN

*She was haunted by a curse—a blight born in the steaming
jungles of Equatorial Africa.*

LAST-MINUTE shopping at Liberty's and the Garelies LaFayette had taken more time than I'd reckoned, and the six-seated compartment to which I'd been assigned on the Treves

rapide was nearly filled when I finished checking through the provost marshal's booth at the Gare del'Est and scuttled down the inner platform. Three of the four early arrivals I recognized: Amberson

who as a former New York police lieutenant had been assigned to the Intelligence, Weinberg of the Medical Corps, like me assigned to base hospital work in Treves, and Fontenoy apKern, an infantryman about to take up duties at the provost marshal's office at the old walled city.

The fourth man was unknown to me and, for no reason I could think of, I disliked him with the sudden spontaneity of a chemical reaction. The double braid on his cuffs marked him as a captain and where the raccoon collar of his short coat was thrown back I saw crossed rifles on the neckband of his blouse. His uniform was well-cut and expensive—English made, I guessed—his blond hair neatly trimmed, his slim, long, white hands sleekly manicured. More of a fop than a soldier he seemed, some dandy from the fashionable East Fifties with a bullet-proof commission going from the secretariat at Paris to staff headquarters at Coblenz; but in the army one goes where he is sent and does the work they set him at; it wasn't mere resentment of a grime-and-blood veteran for a pantywaist soldier that stirred my quick, instinctive dislike. It was the smug arrogance of him. Clear-cut as the image on a coin his profile silhouetted against the window, high-cheeked, hard-eyed, sharp-chinned, Prussian as an *oberleutnant* of the Elite Guards Corps, that face would have seemed more in its proper setting above the field gray of a German uniform than the olive drab of our army.

The stranger glanced up quickly at my advent and I had a momentary glimpse of faintly sneering mouth and hard, cold, haughty eyes, then he resumed his reading of the Paris edition of the London Daily Mail.

Greetings were in character: "Hullo," said Amberson, sweeping me with the quick look of suspicion which is the mark of the professional policeman. "Thought you'd gone A.W.O.L.," grinned Wein-

berg. "Wouldn't blame you if you had. Lot o' flu up Treves way; lots o' work for us poor suckers in the M.C." "Hi, lug!" apKern saluted me. "Mopped 'em all up on the Paris sector and goin' up to croak a few in Germany?"

The blond captain of infantry took no notice of me, or any of us.

I stumbled over an assorted lot of feet, stowed my duffel in the rack above my seat and dropped down on the hard cushions. The place across from me was vacant, but a white card indicated it had been reserved. "Wonder who'll draw it?" apKern wondered. "Pity the poor bloke, havin' to look at your ugly mug from here to Treves. Gosh, when I came to up at Catigny and saw you starin' at me I thought I still was under ether and havin' a bad dream! If I could a' talked I'd a' asked the nurse to slip me a fresh dose of anesthetic—"

"Quiet!" cut in Weinberg. "Who'd know when you were conscious or anesthetized, anyhow? If I'd been there I would a' operated on you as they brought you in, you—" His amiable insults stopped half uttered, and a sudden blankness wiped expression from his face as he looked past apKern to the compartment door.

Followed by a railway porter a girl stood at the entrance, and I felt my own heart skip a beat as I looked at her. "Mentally I commented, "There ain't no such animal!"

She was quite young, not more than twenty-three or -four, quite breath-taking in her loveliness. A red cross gleamed upon her overseas cap, beneath her heavy dark coat with its wide fur collar showed a white stock and the well-cut, smoothly-fitting whipcord uniform of the Red Cross Motor Corps. Three service chevrons on her left cuff showed she was no post-Armistice importation, and her utter lack of self-consciousness showed she was at home with soldiers. More like an effeminate boy than a young woman she seemed

as she stepped lissomely between the rows of booted feet and dropped down in the seat across from me. I realized her eyes were golden, a light brown that was almost orange, harmonizing to perfection with her copper hair, her smooth pale cheeks and slim red lips.

When she took her cap off and shook her hair I saw that it was close-cropped, almost like a man's, and riotous with curls.

I cast a glance at apKern, sitting two seats from her, and he must have read the malice in my eyes, for almost instantly he sounded off. "See this?" he tapped the dispatch case that rested on his knees. "Lot o' valuable dope in here; lot o' suspected enemy agents and so forth I'm takin' up to Treves. 'Captain apKern,' the general says to me, 'I've got some very confidential documents to go to Germany. They're so secret that I daren't trust 'em to an ordinary courier. Only a man of proved sagacity, indomitable courage and more than usual cleverness can be entrusted with these papers, Captain. You're going up to Treves, aren't you?'"

"Sure, General," I tells him. "I'm fed up with all this coffee-collin' in Paris; want to get where there's a chance for action, so I'm joinin' the M.P.'s at Treves. I'll be happy to accommodate you by taking those papers, and you need fear nothing. They'll be safe with me as if—"

"You published 'em in the New York Times," completed Amberson sarcastically.

I glanced across the narrow aisle at the girl. She was joining in the laugh that followed Amberson's deflation of apKern. Her lips were opening like a flower and a smile glowed in her orange eyes. "Lovely!" I whispered to myself. "Perfect—" as I eyed the long sweet line from her waist to knee, from knee to ankle, the small gentle bosom and the long slim hands and feet—"she's just perfect."

THE guard had blown his absurd tin trumpet and we slid out of the station, past the platform bright with French officers in fur coats or long capes of horizon blue, like birds of brilliant plumage among the somber O.D. of our own and British uniforms, through the blinking lights that marked the station yard and out into the fog-blurred night.

The train had a *wagon-restaurant* and presently the girl went forward, followed in a moment by apKern, Weinberg and Amberson. I'd lunched late at the *Café de la Paix* and had no wish for food, so settled back in my seat with a copy of the *Bystander*.

Our coach was German, taken over by the Allies, and a sign phrased with Teutonic arrogance stared at me from the farther wall of the compartment with the information that such indiscretions as smoking or falling from the window were stringently *verboten* under penalty of heavy fine. I grinned at it. I was an American soldier on my way to conquered territory. Presently their officers would be saluting me as I walked down the street, their civilians crowding to the curb to give me sidewalk-room. Their signs meant nothing to me, and I broke out a packet of *Fatimas*. "Smoke?" I proffered the pack to my silent companion.

"No," he returned shortly, never glancing up from his paper, and with renewed irritation I realized that he had not added "thank you," to his refusal.

In a little while the diners came back from their meal, on the best possible terms with each other, and I was duly presented to Miss Fedocia Watrous of Philadelphia. Moved by common courtesy I bent to catch the aloof infantryman's eye, intending to introduce him. For just a moment he looked up at me above his paper, and I was fairly chilled by the cold challenge in his agate stare. To hell with him! All of us, except Amberson who was a major, were

his equals in rank. Where did he get off treating us like a lot of railway porters? Let him read his London Daily Mail and be damned to him!

Stories of the front and service of communications lines, of base hospitals, Paris, Brest and Saint-Nazaire sped the time till we passed Epemay and the air grew cold with a hard bitterness while the fog congealed to sleety rain that spattered like thrown sand against the window and gushed down the glass like the back-wash of a sullen tide. The window casing somehow rattled loose from its slides, and a current of chilled air, with now and then a spit of sleet, came straight against me. After several ineffectual efforts to right matters I turned the collar of my trench coat up about my ears, slid down until I rested on the extreme end of my spine, and sought forgetfulness of my discomfort in sleep.

Conversation had died down to monosyllables, even apKern seemed drained dry of wisecracks, and Amberson rose lurching from his seat. "See you in the morning—I hope," he rumbled, jerking at the leather cord that worked the single light in the compartment. For a moment the globe glowed with fading incandescence, then we were smothered in Cimmerian darkness.

Was it a trick of tired nerves, the retention of the light-image upon my retina in the dark? I wondered. Somehow, it seemed to me that as night flattened on the window and the blackness closed about us the orange eyes of the girl sitting opposite me glowed with a sort of smoky, sulphurous luminance, like those of a cat, in the gloom. The impression lasted but a moment. Either she had lowered her lids or my eyes had grown accustomed to the lack of light, and I was staring sightlessly into a shadow as impenetrable as a velvet curtain.

Memory was scratching at my brain, softly but insistently as a cat demanding admission to a room. Miss Watrous' face

was poignantly familiar to me and, dimly, I connected it with something vaguely unpleasant.

I tried to fit the pieces of the mental picture-puzzle together, assembling keywords, fumbling with my thoughts. The riddle of her strange familiarity—that persistent thought, "I've seen her somewhere"—was within reach of my brain if only I could get the facts in proper perspective, I was sure. Her name: Fedocia Watrous. Did its syllables strike some note of memory? No. Try again: That face, that sweet, pale oval face, almost too perfect in its symmetry, the long red lips of that red, sensitive mouth, those glowing orange eyes and hair as russet as the leaves of a copper-beech in autumn; she came from Philadelphia—I had it!

The triumph of remembering brought me up right in my seat, I almost snapped my fingers in delight. Not faintly, but clear-cut as a motion picture flashed upon a screen, I saw that scene in Fairmount Park. I was in my final year of internship and, as always, short of money, had gone to the zoo for the afternoon. Beside the monkey cage a boy and girl stood idly. Through closed lids I could see them perfectly with my mind's eye, the lad in baggy trousers rolled high above his ankles to display bright socks, a V-necked sweater with the F that showed he was an athlete at Friends' School; the girl in Peter Thompson suit, hatless, her small proud head aflame with copper hair as sweetly poised as a chysanthemum upon its stalk. They had a bag of sugar cookies and had tossed one to the ravenous little rhesus monkeys swarming up the bars. One of the greedy little simians fastened on a cake fragment with its hand, then, not content, seized another with its hand-like foot, leaped to an overhanging perch and proceeded to feed itself, nibbling first from the bit clutched in its hand, then from the fragment grasped in its prehensile foot.

"Look there!" the lad exclaimed as he nudged his companion. "Lookit that glut-ton feedin' his face with hands *and* feet. Bet you couldn't do that!"

The innocent remark was devastating in effect. The girl seemed suddenly to lose all strength and wilted brokenly against the railing set before the cages. Her face was twisted in mute agony, her brow was glistening with sweat, her cheeks had gone pale with a pallor that passed white and seemed gray verging on green. And from the tortured mask of stricken features her eyes seemed to beg for pity.

I ran to offer her my help, but she smiled away my kindly meant assistance. "A—little—faint," she murmured in a voice that shook as if it took her last remaining ounce of strength to speak. "I'll—be—all—right." Then with the frightened boy assisting me we got her to the red-wheeled dog-cart waiting by the fountain, and he had driven her away.

That had been in 1910—nine years ago. I had been a barely-noticed bystander—a member of the audience of her brief drama—she had been the star of the short tragedy. No wonder she had failed to recognize in the uniformed medical officer the callow intern who had helped her.

Was there, I asked myself as I leaned back against the hard, uncomfortable cushions of the German railway coach, some connection between the lad's reference to her inability to feed herself with her foot and her collapse, or had she been seized with a fainting spell? If she had, it sounded like a cardiac affection, yet the girl who slept so peacefully across from me was certainly in the prime of health. More, she must have passed a rigid physical examination before they let her come overseas. Puzzling over it I saw the lights of Châlons station flash past, watched the darkness deepen on the window pane once more, and fell into a chilled, uncomfortable sleep.

CONSCIOUSNESS came to me slowly. The window had worked farther down in its casings, and sleet-armed rain was stabbing at my face. My feet and legs felt stiff with a rheumatic stiffness, my head was aching abominably.

"Damn these Jerry coaches," I swore spitefully as I rose to force the window back in place. "If I ever see a Pullman car again I'll—"

My anger protests slipped away from my lips. The blackness of the night had given way to a diluted gray, and by this dim uncertain light I made the forms of my companions out— and there was something horribly wrong with them. ApKern was slumped down in his seat as if he had been a straw man from which the stuffing had been jerked, Amberson lay with feet splayed out across the aisle; Weinberg's shoulders drooped, his hands hung down beside his knees and swung as flaccidly as strings with each movement of the train. The girl across from me lay back against her cushions, head bent at an unnatural angle. Thus I called the roll with a quick frightened glance, and noted that the stranger was not present.

Yes, he was! He was lying on the floor at apKern's feet, one arm bent under him, his legs spread out as though he'd tried to rise, felt too tired for it, and decided to drop back. But in the angles of his flaccid legs, their limpness at the hips and knees and ankles, I read the signs no doctor has to see twice. He was dead.

The others? I jerked the leather light-cord, and as the weak bulb blossomed into pale illumination took stock. Dead? No, their color was too bright. Their cheeks were positively flushed—too flushed! I could read it at a glance. Incredibly, I was the only person in that cramped compartment not suffering carbonic oxide poisoning.

I drove my fist through the window, jerked the door open, and as the raw air

whistled through the compartment bent to examine Miss Watrous. Her pulse was very weak but still perceptible, so were Weinberg's, Amberson's and apKern's. The stranger was past helping and the air would help revive the others. My first job was to find the *chef de train*—the conductor—and report the casualty.

"Find whoever is in charge of this confounded pile o' junk," I told an enlisted man I met in the corridor of the next coach. "There's been an accident back there—four officers and a Red Cross woman gassed—"

"Gassed?" he echoed unbelievably. "Does the captain mean—"

"The captain means just what he says," I snapped. "Go get me the conductor tout sweet. Shake it up!"

"Yes, sir." He saluted and was off like the proverbial shot, returning in a few moments with a young man whose double bars proclaimed him a captain, with the red R denoting he was in the Railroad Section on his shoulder.

It was no time to stand on ceremony. Technically, I suppose, the Medical Corps outranked the Railroad Section, but I tendered him a salute. "Gas?" he echoed as the corporal had when I completed my recital.

"If we haven't five cases of carbon monoxide poisoning—one of 'em fatal—back there I never rode an ambulance," I answered shortly. "How it happened I don't know—"

"How'd you happen not to get it?" he broke in suspiciously.

"I was sitting by the window, and it worked loose in the night. Air blew directly in my face. That accounts for the girl's not being more affected, too. She was facing backward, so didn't get the full effect of ventilation, but her case seems the mildest. Major Amberson who was farthest from the window seems most seriously affected, but all of them were unconscious."

We had reached the compartment as I concluded. "Help me with this poor chap," I directed, bending to take up the dead man's shoulders. "If they have a spate compartment we can put him in that."

"There's one right down the corridor," he told me. "Party debarked at Châlons when we took the train over from the Frogs."

"Thank the Lord for that," I answered. "If the French were still in charge we'd have the devil of a time explaining—*ah!*" Amazement fairly squeezed the exclamation from me.

"What is it, sir?"

"This," I answered, reaching under apKern's feet and holding up a metal cylinder. The thing was six or eight inches long by about two inches in diameter, made of brass or copper, like those fire extinguishers carried on trucks and buses in America, and fitted with a nozzle and thumb-screw at one end.

"What's it smell like?" he demanded, staring at my find uncomprehendingly.

"Like nothing. That's just it—"

"How d'ye mean—"

"That cylinder was filled with CO—carbon monoxide—which is a colorless and odorless gas almost as deadly as phosgene. It was pumped in under pressure and late last night someone turned the thumb-screw while we were asleep, let the gas escape, and—"

"Nuts!" he interrupted with a shake of his head. "No one would be such a fool. It'd get him, too—"

"Yes?" I broke in sarcastically. "Think so, do you?" Rolling the dead man over to get a grip beneath his arms I had discovered something he was lying on. A small, compact, but perfect gas mask.

"Well—I'll be a monkey's uncle!" he declared as I held my find up. "I sure will. But how'd it happen he was the only one to get it in the neck, when he was all prepared—"

"That's what we'll have to find out, or what a board of inquiry will determine," I replied. "Help me get him into that compartment, then we'll see about first aid for these—"

"Here, what goes on?" Weinberg sat up suddenly and stared about him like a man emerging from a bad dream. "What're you guys up to?"

"How d'ye feel?" I countered.

"Terrible, now you mention it. My head is aching like nobody's business, but"—he bent and touched the supine dead man, then straightened with a groan as he pressed hands against his throbbing temples—"what's all this? Did his Nibs pass out, or—"

"Clear out," I assured him. "He's dead as mutton, and the rest of us came near joining him. Look after 'em a moment, will you? I'll be right back."

Fresh air and copious draughts of cognac, followed by black coffee and more brandy, had revived the gas victims when I returned, Amberson was still too weak to stand, apKern complained of dizziness and clouded vision; but Weinberg, tough and wiry as a terrier, seemed none the worse for his close call. Due to her seat beside the window Miss Watrous seemed less seriously affected than the rest. In half an hour she was ministering to apKern and Amberson, and they were loving it.

"LOOK here, Carmichael," Weinberg said as we bent above the dead man while Amberson went through his papers, "this is no case of CO poisoning."

"If it isn't I never used a pulmotor on a would-be suicide in South Philly," I rejoined. "Why, there's every indication of—"

"Of your granddad's Sunday-go-to-meetin' hat!" he broke in. "Take a look, Professor."

Obediently, I bent and looked where he was pointing. "Well, I'll be—" I began,

and he grinned at me, wrinkling up his nose and drawing back his lips till almost all his teeth showed at the same time.

"You sure will," he agreed, "but not until you've told me what you make of it."

"Why, the man was throttled!" I exclaimed.

There was no doubting it. Upon the dead man's throat were five distinct livid patches, one, some three inches in size, roughly square, the other four extending in broken parallel lines almost completely around the neck.

"What d'ye make of it?" he insisted.

I shook my head. "Possibly the bruise left by some sort of garotte," I hazarded. "The neck's broken and the hyoid bone is fractured; dreadful pressure must have been exerted, and with great suddenness. That argues against manual assault. Besides, no human hand is big enough to reach clear round his neck—he must have worn a sixteen collar—and even if it were, there isn't any thumb mark here."

He nodded gloomily, almost sullenly. "You said it. Know what it reminds me of?"

"I'll bite."

"Something I saw when I was hoppin' ambulances at Bellevue. Circus was playin' the Garden and a roustabout got in a tangle with one of the big apes. It throttled him."

"So?" I raised my brows. "Where's the connection?"

"Right here. These livid patches on this feller and the ones on that poor cuss we took down to the morgue are just alike. Charlie Norris had us all down to the mortuary when he performed the autopsy on that circus man and showed us the characteristic marks of an ape's hand contrasted with a man's. He was particular to point out how a man grasps something, using his thumb as a fulcrum, while the great apes, with the exception of the chimpanzee, make no use of the thumb, but use the fin-

gers only in their grasp. Look here—" he pointed to the large square livid mark—"this would be the bruise left by the heel of the hand, and these—" he indicated the long, circling lines about the dead man's neck—"would be the finger-marks. That's just the way the bruises showed on that man at the Bellevue Morgue."

"Snap out of it!" I almost shook him in my irritation. "Here's one time when observed phenomena don't amount to proof. It seemed fantastic enough to find a cylinder of concentrated carbon monoxide in the car, with you chaps and Miss Watrous almost dead of CO poisoning, but to lug in a gorilla or orang-utan to throttle our would-be murderer before he had a chance to slip his gas mask on—Poe never thought up anything as wild as that."

"Okay. Have it your own way," he grumbled, "but—"

A grunt from Amberson deflected our attention from the corpse. "Take a look at this, you fellers," he commanded, holding out the sheaf of papers he had taken from the inside pocket of the dead man's blouse. "Ever see a finer set-up?"

The first paper was a pass from G-2 declaring the bearer might circulate where he chose inside our lines in uniform or plain clothes; he was not to be delayed; all railroad transportation officers were directed to give him every preference. Intelligence work.

The next identified him as Captain Albert Parker Tuckerman, infantry unassigned, on leave with special permission to visit the Paris area. Next were travel orders to Brest, Saint-Nazaire, Treves, Coblenz—each issued in a different name. Last, but far from least, was a complete list of our personnel at provost marshal's offices, intelligence and liaison officers, and orders for troop movements and concentrations in occupied Germany.

Weinberg pursed his lips and gave a soundless whistle. "Looks as if you've

caught a fish here, sir. Who was he; any idea?"

"Nope," Amberson shook his head, "but I'll bet G-2 will be glad to see his photograph. There's a Jerry undercover man been raisin' merry hell with our arrangements; shouldn't wonder if he's here—" he jerked a thumb toward the still form stretched on the railway seat. "Just for once I'm grateful to that big-mouthed apKern. When he began to sound off about carrying confidential papers we all knew it was for Miss Watrous' benefit, but this bird fell for it. He must have traveled with that can of carbon monoxide and gas mask all ready for such emergencies. Maybe that'll account for some of the mysterious disappearances of papers from our offices. Anyway, it's fairly obvious that when we fell asleep he opened up his little bag o' tricks and was about to swipe apKern's dispatches when he got a whiff o' his own poison and passed out."

"But he didn't die that way—" Weinberg began.

"Take it easy, buddy," I admonished as I administered a none too gentle nudge with my field boot. "Let the board of inquiry decide how he died. Don't go broadcastin' that gorilla-stuff. Want to be slapped in the booby-hatch before you have a chance to sop a drink up at Treves?"

Weinberg lit a cigarette and took a thoughtful puff. "I don't know how the big lug died," he finally admitted. "Maybe he woke up and apKern talked him to death. But there's something dam' funny about it, just the same."

"How?" Amberson demanded.

"Oh, nothing. It couldn't have any bearing on the case."

"Everything has bearing on a case like this," the major answered with the cocksureness of the professional policeman. "What was it?"

"Well, when I went to give first aid to Miss Watrous I noticed that her left puttee

was unfastened and her shoe untied and only partly laced."

"Humph. No, I guess that hasn't any bearing on our case. I know just how she must have felt," agreed Amberson. "When I first came in the service I almost died with my puttees. Even now I sleep better sitting up when I can loosen 'em and un-knot my shoes."

LIFE was pleasant, even gay, at Treves. There was much influenza, but after the exertions of field and base hospitals with their never-ending lines of surgical emergencies we found routine visitation and dedication of bed-patients almost a vacation. My quarters in the Blumenstrasse were comfortable, for a huge white porcelain stove drove back the raw damp cold, and the great bed of carved mahogany was equipped with double feather mattresses. In intervals between duty I saw the town, visited the Porta Nigra, the great fortified gate past which the life of Treves had flowed since Roman days, the brick basilica and the vast amphitheatre where Constantine had butchered captives or turned them loose to be torn by wild beasts for the amusement of the populace.

In the evening there was always plenty of amusement, dances, dinners or the opera where fat German tenors serenaded equally fat German sopranos with a zest that defied years and embonpoint.

Fedocia Watrous was a favorite everywhere, pouring tea at the officers' club, dining at headquarters, or serving buns and coffee to the men. Half the younger officers were wild about her, but it took apKern to put their disappointment into words. "Hang it, Carmichael," he complained, "the gal ain't human! She has you stopped before you get a chance to get cranked up. She's—she's like a nun. You know—just a mere spiritual entity, with her body already in the grave and only her soul remaining, and that swathed in

a religious habit. You don't fall in love with a nun any more than you do with a ghost, but—" he made a gesture of futility as he reached for the brandy to replenish his drink—"there it is! I'd go for her in a big way if she'd give me a break, or even act as if she knew that I'm around."

I knew just what he meant. She had an odd trick—or an unconsciously conditioned reflex—of fading out of the real world at times and becoming entirely oblivious of her surroundings. Her power to dismiss the world from her consciousness, apparently to notice nothing about her, or even completely to forget the existence of the person talking to her, was extremely disconcerting to young men with matrimonial designs, and utterly absorbing to a doctor with a leaning toward psychiatry.

THEN came the influenza epidemic of '19. Ambulances strained and stalled with their loads of the stricken, hospitals were bulging with fresh cases till we set beds in the corridors and cellars and still required room for more cots. The only reason that we worked no longer was that no day could be stretched to yield a twenty-fifth hour. Our patients died like flies; at first that hurt us, for it's no easier for a doctor than a layman to stand by and watch men die, but presently we grew used to it.

I had a patient in 19-B, an infantry lieutenant named Ten Eyck, and from the first I knew his case was hopeless. He fought for life with a tenacity that almost startled me. "I have to get well, Doctor—" civilian titles were the rule among civilian soldiers—he told me. "There's a girl back home I've got to see—"

"Of course, you will, son," I soothed him. "You're getting stronger all the time. Like me to write a letter to her for you?" I hadn't time to act as secretary to a dying man, but somehow I determined to snatch it.

"I'd be obliged if you would, sir. I've

loved her since I was that high—" He tried to raise one hand to indicate a Lilliputian stature, found he lacked the strength for it, and lay back, panting, on his pillow. "Her father was a Presbyterian minister and her mother died when she was born."

"Take it easy, Lieutenant," I counseled. "Just tell me what you'd like to say to her; don't waste strength on biographies."

"But you ought to know this, sir. It explains why I love her so. You see, 'way back in 1894 her folks went out to Africa as missionaries, and she was born there. Their station was in western equatorial Africa, the gorilla country. One day while her mother was walking in the garden a great big buck gorilla came charging from the jungle. Hunters had killed his mate and he was wild with grief and rage. He snatched her up and made off to the forest, but he didn't hurt her. They found her next day in the hammock he'd made for his dead mate, quite mad from fright, but physically unharmed."

"Her baby was born the next week, and she died in childbed."

As far as I could see there wasn't any connection between the tragedy of the missionary's wife and this young man's love for his daughter, but he seemed to think there was. "He quit the mission field and came back to Philadelphia," he continued in a whisper. "They lived next door to us and Mother sort o' raised her. She was in our house as much as in her own, I guess, and we grew up together. Funny thing about her, though, she'd never go in wadin' with me. When we'd be out in the country she'd go walkin' in the woods or fields, but never took her shoes an' stockings off. Seemed to be sort o' touchy about her feet, though they were small and pretty, and—"

"Better tell me what you'd like to say, son," I advised. It didn't need a doctor's training to see that his sands were running low. "If you'll tell me—"

"Last thing she said when I went off to

camp was, 'I'll be waitin', Tommy,' " he continued in a husky whisper. "Can't let her down when she said that, can I, Doc? Got to get well and go back to her. You see that, don't you?"

"Of course," I nodded. "Sure, son, I see perfectly. Now, if you'll just give me her name and address—"

The signs were bad. When I'd come in he had been running a high temperature, now there was a wreath of sweat-drops on his brow beneath the hair-line and his lips were almost lead-colored. I had to bend to catch his answer; even then it hardly reached me, for his voice was faint and thick as if his throat were packed with cotton-wool: "Fe—Fedocia Watrous, six-sixteen Spring—" The pitifully-forced words stopped, not abruptly, but with a slowly sinking faintness, like a voice heard on the radio when the current is shut off with a slow turn.

"Fedocia Watrous!" I repeated. "Why, she's right here in Treves. I'll get her for you in an hour—Nurse!" There was no time for conversation now, and I pressed the buzzer frantically. "Nurse!" Where the devil was that dam' girl, flirting with those convalescent aviators down the hall?

"Strychnine in a hypo hurry!" I commanded when the girl came stumbling in her haste. "If you'd pay more attention to your duties—" It wasn't fair. She'd been on duty since the night before and there were heavy violet circles underneath her eyes, but raw nerves make raw words, and heaven knew our nerves were all rasped raw. "Never mind," I added as she turned reproachful eyes on me. "Never mind the hypo, Nurse. Call the head orderly and tell him to bring the wheel-cot and change the linen on this bed. We've got another vacancy."

"Oh!" her sob was hard and ugly, like a smothered cry. "Another?"

"Another," I repeated as I drew the sheet across the dead boy's face. I'd nailed

another lie. Familiarity doesn't breed contempt. Not for death, anyway.

I was in that state of bodily exhaustion that gives a curiously deceptive sense of brightness of mind as I walked down the corridor from B-19. Nine years could make a lot of changes, but at the end I'd recognized Lieutenant Thomas Ten Eyck as surely as if I'd known him always. As I glanced through the grimy window to the cheerless courtyard where the February wind was busy chasing little whirls of snow across the red-brick tiles it seemed to me that I could look clear down the vista of the years and straight across the ocean to a sun-washed summer afternoon in Fairmount Park where a boy and girl were idling by the monkey cage and he was telling her, "I bet you couldn't do it," as a little monkey fed itself from its hind foot.

She'd almost fainted at his none too witty sally. Why? Did it bring up tragic thoughts of her mother? Hardly. She'd not been fearful of the monkey's. Seeing them had raised no phobia. Not until he called attention to the monkey's feeding, and expressed doubt she could duplicate it, did she wilt. Why? The question rose again, insistently, but found no answer.

Funny thing about life, I reflected. I had seen them for a possible three minutes on that day nine years ago. Then our lives had crossed again in Germany. She was somewhere in the city now, unmindful of his presence; he was lying in his bed back there with a sheet across his face, past all hopes and all defeats, quits with destiny before his manhood fairly started.

"CHARMICHAEEL, for Gawd's sake, give me a snort!" Weinberg came stamping into my quarters, flakes of February snow adhering to the collar of his sheepskin, a drawn and almost haunted look on his face.

"Surest thing in Germany," I returned

as I broke out brandy, soda water and glasses. "Been wishin' I had someone here to drink with me."

He splashed about three ounces of raw cognac in the tumbler and drained it almost at a gulp. His hand had trembled when it put the drink to his lips, but in a moment it grew steady, which to anyone who knows drinking and drinking men, is a bad sign.

"Easy on, old top," I cautioned as he poured a second, even larger, drink. "You know you're welcome to it, but—"

I stopped my protest as I looked into his eyes.

There was no trace of the brilliant, carefree, wise-cracking young medico whose steadiness of hand and eye and uncanny ability as an orthopedist were the talk of all who knew him. Instead, his countenance was serious with what Carlyle once called "the awful, deadly earnestness of the Hebrew."

"I saw it again tonight," he told me, and despite the warming glow of the brandy he shivered.

"Saw what?"

"Remember the lividities on that bloke's neck—the one we found dead on the train from Paris?"

"The one you said looked as if he'd been throttled by a gorilla?"

He nodded, taking a long sip of brandy. "Check."

"Where?"

"Over at the mortuary. I'd come off duty and was washing up in the basement when young Himiston—you know him, Cornell '16; came over with the last replacement from the draft—called me over to a wheel-cot standing by the entrance to the autopsy room. 'Ever see anything like this, Captain?' he asked, drawing back the sheet from a body. 'Nobody can figure it; they found him in the hall outside N-18, the women's ward, dead as a hering, with his head turned almost all the

way around—just as if something had wrung his neck like a chicken's.

"There it was, so help me, Carmichael, point for point and line for line, the same bruise-pattern as the one you saw on the train from Paris, and I'd seen once before at Bellevue Mortuary."

"What's the history?" I demanded as I helped myself to cognac. Somehow I, too, was beginning to feel chilly, despite the fierce heat from the porcelain stove.

"Here it is—" He spread his fingers fanwise and checked the items off. "There's a crowd of nurses—five or six of 'em—laid up with the flu in N-18. Next door, in a semi-private which happens to be private now because the other inmate died this afternoon, is Miss Watrous. Just down the corridor, in M-40, is Amberson, in dry-dock with a smashed collar-bone, and next to him, in 41, is apKern with the flu. Notice anything?"

"Three of the five people who were in the compartment when the German spy was throttled were within a hundred feet or so of the spot where, presumably, this man was killed—again presumably—in the same way."

"Right. Right as a rabbit. This fellow was a Polack from Pennsylvania, miner or something; big as a horse and strong as a bull. Influenza convalescent who'd gone raving-wild on some whiskey someone smuggled into the first floor wards. Crazy as a chinch-bug, and with a killing streak on him.

He'd knocked an orderly out cold and gone wandering through the hospital. While they were looking for him on the ground floor he was running up and down the second-story corridors, peeking into rooms and wards and scaring all the patients senseless. Finally he reached the nurses' ward."

"And—" I prompted as he fell silent.

"'And' is right," he answered finally. "He came barging into the ward, snatched

the blankets off the first bed, and lay down in it. When the patient in it tried to get out he grabbed her.

"No," he answered the unspoken question in my eyes, "he might have thought about that later; right then he was intent on murder and destruction. He took her by the hair with one hand and clutched her throat in the other, and was about to break her neck when something—get this, they're all agreed on it—something rushed in from the corridor, snatched him by the neck and dragged him out."

"Something? What was it?" I asked fatuously.

"That's just what nobody knows. The only light in N-18 was a candle, no electric bulbs in there, for it used to be a store-room and was never wired. When the big Bohunk fanned the bedclothes back he blew the candle out, so all the light they had was what came through the window from the courtyard. The girls were all too weak to fight him, but not too weak to yell, and they were setting up an awful clamor when it rushed in.

"Keep your blouse on, can't you?" he demanded irritably as I leaned forward with another question. "I'm telling you everything I know. When I say 'It' I'm as near to being specific as anybody. Something—and no two of 'em are agreed on what it was—came crashing in from the hallway and grabbed the murdering drunkard by the neck, hustled him out and killed him, just as something we don't know about did in that Jerry secret agent on the train from Paris."

"Some of the girls declare it looked like a great white ape, one thinks it was a spider bigger than a man, but all agree it handled that six-footer as if he'd been a baby.

"Now—" he tapped me on the knee in sober emphasis—"I'm not saying there's any connection between the fact that some of those who were with us on the Paris train were within striking distance of N-18

tonight, but I do say it gives us something to think about."

"I'm afraid you're goin' off the deep end, Alvin," I told him. "Amberson's laid up with a smashed clavicle. That lets him out. A man in that condition can't wash his own face, let alone go tearing men to pieces. apKern's a fairly husky lad, but not quite up to wringing Pennsylvania miners' necks. As for Miss Watrous—poor kid, she's got a bad break coming when I tell her about him."

"About him? Who?"

"Young Tom Ten Eyck. I didn't realize they'd brought her into hospital that day. She must have been checked in before he died."

"Who in the name of Caesar's night-shirt was this Tom Ten Eyck?"

I told him how the lad died, then how I'd seen him and Fedocia years before in Fairmount Park. "Funny, isn't it?" I ended.

"Not very," he replied somberly. "Maybe medicine has been too cock-sure about what can and what can't happen all these years."

"How d'ye mean?"

He shrugged into his sheep-lined mackinaw and held his hand out. "Thanks for the drink, Pat. If I should tell you what I'm thinking you'd say I'm crazy as a coot. Maybe I am, at that. Good-night."

FOR some inexplicable reason a wave of intestinal disorders swept across our section of the Army of Occupation, and the incidence of appendicitis mounted steadily. I'd performed three appendectomies that evening, two cases had reached paraappendicitic stages, and I was thoroughly depressed, dispirited and exhausted by the time the cold and dismal twilight darkened into colder night. The courtyard was filled with sad, muddy puddles, relics of the melting snow, a fine mist, half sleet, blew against my cheeks, everywhere was

humid cold as I walked back and forth and drew great gulps of frosty air into my lungs. It seemed to me I'd never get the taint of ether out of my nostrils and throat.

"Bad night, sir, ain't it?" asked the sentry chattily as I paused to do a right about at the end of the quadrangle. "'Minds me o' th' waterfront down by th' Brooklyn Bridge. 'Member how th' mists comes up from th' Bay when th' wind is changin'—my Gawd, sir, what's that?"

He was looking toward the high brick wall that loomed against the drizzle-darkened night across the courtyard, dark and sinister as the wall of some old haunted castle, and his face was set in a stiff, frozen mask of terror. His eyes were fixed, intense, it seemed as if the very substance of his soul was pouring from them as he looked. "*Mater purissima, refugium peccatorum*—" I heard him mumble between chattering teeth, searching memory for the half-forgotten prayers learned at parochial school—"Mater salvatoris—"

My eyes caught the object of his fascinated gaze, and I felt my throat close with a quick fear while something terrible and numbing-cold seemed clutching at my stomach.

Against the blackness of the fog-soaked wall a form—a human form—was moving, not grip by slow and painful grip as it clung to irregularities worn in the masonry by stress of years and weather, but with an almost effortless progress, *head-downward*, like a monstrous lizard!

"Good Lord, it can't be—" I began, but his voice, high-pitched, honed sharp by hysteria, drowned my words out.

"I'll get it, Captain; ghost or devil, I'll get it—"

"Don't shoot! Don't shoot!" I heard Weinberg's frantic cry as he dashed out into the courtyard. "Don't fire, I tell you—it's—"

The clatter of the sentry's automatic cut across and blotted out his frenzied warn-

ing. The pistol was a captured German job, a ten-shot Luger issued to our Medical Department men as sidearms for patrol work. It operated like a miniature machine gun and with the trigger held back spewed its whole load in a stream of shots. Whether he was naturally a marksman or whether fear lent accuracy to his hand, or if it were an accident I don't know. I do know that his shots all seemed to take effect; I saw the crawling lizard-thing pause in its downward course, hang clinging to the wall a moment, as if it clutched the wet, cold, slippery bricks with a spasmodic grasp, then suddenly go limp and hurtle to the half-hard lush that lay upon the courtyard tiles, quiver reflexively a moment, then lie still.

"You fool, you damned, fat-headed, superstitious fool!" Weinberg fairly shrieked at the sentry. "I'll have you up before a general court for this—oh, hell, what's the use?"

He was crying as he raced across the quadrangle with me at his heels. The tears were streaming down his cheeks, mingling with the drizzling rain that blew into his face. "Help me with her, Pat," he begged as he fell to his knees beside the still body. "Help me carry her inside. Maybe it's not too late—"

I bent to help him, then, despite myself, drew back. Clothed in outing flannel pajamas, drenched with blood that spurted from at least ten wounds, and obviously dead, Fedocia Watrous lay, a huddled, mangled, bullet-riddled corpse, before us on the rain-diluted snow.

THE liquor that the pharmacist broke out at Weinberg's order was far from palatable, but it was "Whiskey, U.S.P.," which meant it was one hundred proof—fifty percent grain alcohol—and that was what we needed right then.

"I was afraid of this," he told me as he gulped a second potion down. "She'd

been delirious all day, and I asked that they have a nurse with her every minute. I s'pose the girl had left to get her tray, or something, though, and that was when it happened. The moment she was free from surveillance she went for the window—"

"What in heaven's name are you driving at, Al?" I broke in. "What's Fedocia's being in delirium got to do with—"

"Sorry," he apologized. "I hadn't told you what it was I suspected.

"Remember the other night at your quarters I told you I thought medical opinion and theories were due for overhauling?"

"Yes, but—"

"Never mind the buts, old man. Ever since we found that Jerry secret agent throttled in our railway coach I'd puzzled over his bruises. The evidence all pointed to a great ape's having throttled him, but that was palpably absurd. I'd found Fedocia's putt and shoe unfastened, but that could have no bearing on the case—I thought. Then the other night you told me what Ten Eyck had said before he died—Fedocia's mother had been frightened into madness by a gorilla just before she had her baby; Fedocia never showed her feet to anyone; seemed sensitive about them; you saw her almost faint when young Ten Eyck joked about her ability to feed herself with her feet. Remember?"

"Yes, of course; but—"

"Hold hard, feller; let me finish. Nearly everybody's heard—and most laymen believe—stories of pre-natal influence; that if a mother's frightened by an animal her baby's likely to be marked with some characteristic of the beast. A mother terrified by a vicious dog, for instance, may give birth to a dog-faced child; or one who's been chased by a bull may bear a child with vestiges of horns upon its head—"

"What are you building up to?" I demanded. "Those old wives' tales of pre-natal influence have been discredited a century and more. Davenport in his *Heredity*

in *Relation to Eugenics* states clearly that—

"Sure," he broke in sarcastically, "and you can find plenty o' people who believe that Bacon wrote Shakespeare, and just as many others who'll tell you that Bacon laid an egg, but let me tell you something, Pat Carmichael:

Fedocia Watrous killed that German spy and saved us all from asphyxiation. She must have wakened when he got his gas-kit out and saw that he was up to—remember you told me how her eyes seemed to glow in the dark? She was probably better able to see in dim lights than we are, just as animals can. So she whipped her shoe and puttee off and killed him with a single grasp of her foot, but the gas got her before she'd quite finished redressing, so—"

"Al, you're drunk or crazy; maybe both!" I interrupted. "How in blazes could she have throttled him with her foot? I suppose you'll tell me next she killed that crazy miner and saved those nurses—"

"Of course, she did," he broke in almost savagely. "Come here—" Seizing me by the cuff he led me up the stairs and down the almost lightless corridor to the room where they had laid her.

She was so peaceful, so lovely, lying in her white cot with the blankets drawn up cozily about her throat that though I'd seen her die I had to look a second time to make sure that I did not see the flutter of her bosom underneath the coverlet. The rain had stopped some time before, and now an early-morning beam of sunshine slanted through the window. But for Fedocia, as for the boy who'd loved her since their childhood, the night had come.

"Look here, Pat," commanded Weinberg, "look and tell me if those 'old wives' tales' have been completely discredited." He drew the covers almost reverently from the foot of the cot.

Her lovely legs were shaped as gracefully as any ever sculptured by the master-craftsmen of old Greece, her ankles were as sharply turned and clean-cut as a thoroughbred race horse's, but her feet—"Good heavens!" I ejaculated as I looked.

They were like hands; like powerfully-sinewed hands with scarcely any palms, but with fingers of abnormal length and thickness. The thumbs—or great toes—were mere vestigial stumps, and over all was thick, lead-colored *hide*, coarse and tough and callous as the skin that covers a gorilla's foot.

