

FEBRUARY

Weird Tales

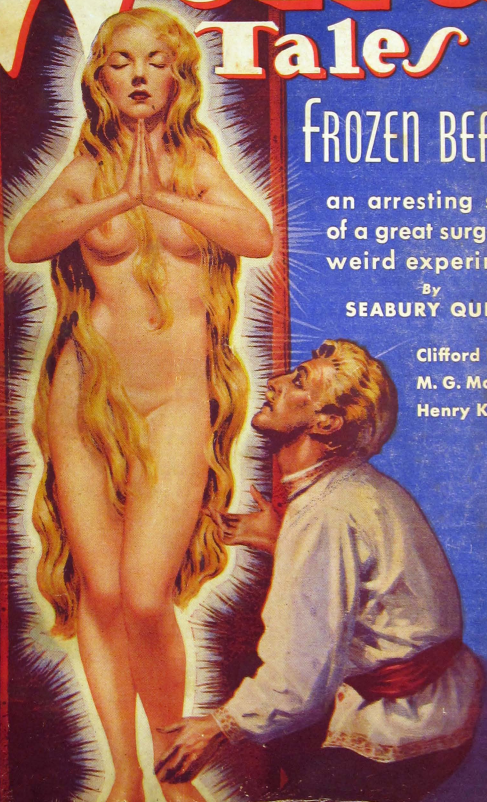
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FROZEN BEAUTY

an arresting story
of a great surgeon's
weird experiment

By
SEABURY QUINN

Clifford Ball
M. G. Moretti
Henry Kuttner





A MAGAZINE OF THE BIZARRE AND UNUSUAL

Weird Tales

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WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

"They scuttled off pell-mell in mortal fear."



Frozen Beauty

By SEABURY QUINN

*A story of Jules de Grandin, and the weird exploit of a great Russian physician who was murdered before he could complete his daring experiment
—a fascinating novelette of weird science*

THE heat had been intolerable all day, but now a rain was falling, a soft and cooling summer rain that spread a gleaming black veneer across the highway pavement and marked the traffic lamps with cross-shaped fuzzy glows of

green and ruby. Falling on our faces as we drove home from the club with the roadster's canvas cover folded back it was cool and gracious, delicate and calm upon our brows as the light touch of a skilful nurse's fingers on a fever-patient's fore-

head, soothing nerves stretched taut by eighteen holes of golf played in a blistering sun.

My friend Jules de Grandin's satisfaction with himself was most annoying. He had ceased playing at the second hole, found a wicker rocker on the clubhouse porch and devoted the entire afternoon to devastation of gin swizzles.

"*Tiens,*" he chuckled, "you are droll, my friend, you English and Americans. You work like Turks and Tartars at your professional vocations, then rest by doing manual labor in the sun. Not I, by blue; I have the self-respect!"

He leant back on the cushions, turning up his forehead to the cooling rain and hummed a snatch of tune:

*"La vie est vaine,
Un peu d'amour——"*

With a strident screech of brakes I brought the roadster to a stop in time to keep from running down the man who stood before us in the headlights' glare, arm raised imperatively. "Good heavens, man," I rasped, "d'ye want to be run over? You almost——"

"You're a doctor?" he demanded in a sharp, thin voice, pointing to the Medical Society's green cross and gold caduceus on my radiator.

"Yes, but——"

"Please come at once, sir. It's the master, Doctor Pavlovitch. I—I think he's very ill, sir."

The ethics of the medical profession take no account of work-worn nerves, and with a sigh I headed toward the tall gate in the roadside hedge the fellow pointed out. "What seems to be the matter with the doctor?" I inquired as our guide hopped nimbly on the running-board after swinging back the driveway gate.

"I—I don't know, sir," he replied. "Some kind o' stroke, I think. Th' telephone went out of order just at dinner-

time—lightning musta hit th' line when th' storm was blowin' up—an' I took th' station wagon to th' village for some things th' grocer hadn't sent. When I got back everythink was dark an' I couldn't seem to make th' lights work, but they flashed on all sudden-like, an' there was Doctor Pavlovitch a-layin' in th' middle o' th' floor, with everythink all messed up in th' study, an' I couldn't seem to rouse him; so I tried to get th' village on th' phone, but it still won't work, and when I tried to start th' station wagon up I found that somethink had gone wrong with it; so I starts to walk down to th' village, an' just then you come down th' road, an' I seen th' little green cross on your car, so——"

"I'll have that darn thing taken off tomorrow," I assured myself; then, aloud, to stop the servant's endless chatter: "All right, we'll do everything we can, but we haven't any medicines or instruments; so maybe we shall have to send you for supplies."

"Yes, sir," he replied respectfully, and to my relief lapsed into momentary silence.

THE big house Doctor Michail Pavlovitch had purchased two years previously and in which he lived in churlish solitude, attended only by his English houseman, sat back on a deep lawn thick set with huge old trees, fenced against the highway by an eight-foot privet hedge and surrounded on the three remaining sides by tall brick walls topped with broken bottles set in mortar. As we circled up the driveway I could feel the eery atmosphere that hovered round the place. It was, I think, the lights which struck me queerly, or, to be more accurate, the absence of familiar lights in a place we knew to be inhabited. Blinds were drawn down tightly, with forbidding secrecy, at

every window; yet between their bottoms and the sills were little lines of luminance which showed against the darkness like a line of gray-white eyeball glimpsed between the lowered eyelids of a corpse.

We hurried down the wide hall to a big room at the rear and paused upon the threshold as the glare of half a dozen strong, unshaded lamps stabbed at our eyes. Everything about the place was topsy-turvy. Drawers had been jerked from desks and literally turned out upon the floor, their contents scattered in fantastic heaps as though they had been stirred with a gigantic spoon. The davenport was pulled apart, its mattress tipped insanely sidewise; pillows were ripped open and gaped like dying things, their gasping mouths disgorging down and kapok. The whole room might have been a movie set at the conclusion of a slapstick farce, except for that which occupied the center of the floor.

In the midst of the fantastic jumble lay a man in dinner clothes, save for the jacket which, sleeves turned half out and linings slit to tatters, was crumpled on a chair. He lay upon his back, his partly-opened eyes fixed on the ceiling where a cluster of electric bulbs blazed white and hard as limelight. He was a big man with a big mustache curled in the fashion of the pre-war days, and what hair he had was touched with gray.

"Gawd, sir, he ain't moved since I left 'im!" the houseman whispered. "Is 'e paralyzed, d'ye think?"

"Completely," nodded Jules de Grandin. "He is very dead, my friend."

"Dead?"

"Like a herring, and unless I miss my guess, he died of murder."

"But there's no blood, no sign of any wound," I interrupted. "I don't believe there was a struggle, even. The place has been ransacked, but——"

"No wound, you say, *mon vieux?*" he broke in as he knelt beside the dead man's head. "*Regardez, s'il vous plaît.*" He raised the massive, almost hairless head, and pointed with a well-groomed finger to a gleaming silver stud protruding from the flesh. Plunged in the rather beefy neck a tiny silver-headed bodkin showed. Less than half an inch of haft protruded, for the little awl was driven deep into that fatal spot, the medulla oblongata, with deadly accuracy. Death had been instantaneous and bloodless.

"How——" I began, but he shut me off with an unpleasant laugh as he rose and brushed his knees.

"*Cherchez la femme,*" he murmured. "This is undoubtedly a woman's work, and the work of one who knew him quite well. All the evidence suggests it. A little, tiny bodkin driven into the brain; a woman's weapon. Probably she did it with her arms about his neck; a woman's finesse, that. Who she was and why she did it, and what she and her confederates looked for when they made a bears' den of this place is for the police to determine."

Turning to the servant he demanded: "This Doctor Pavlovitch, did he have callers in the afternoon?"

"No sir, not as I knows of. He was a queer 'un, sir, though he was a proper gentleman. Never had no callers I remember, never used th' telephone while I was here. If anybody ever come to see 'im they done it while I was away."

"One sees. Did he ever mention fearing anyone, or suspecting that he might be robbed?"

"Him? Lor, sir, no! Six foot three in 'is stockin's, 'e was, an' could bend iron bars in 'is bare hands. I seen 'im do it more'n once. Had a regular harsenal o' guns an' things, too, 'e did, an' kept th' house locked like a jail. Didn't take

no chances on a robbery, sir, but I wouldn't say he was afraid. He'd 'a been a nasty customer in a row; if anyone 'ad broken in he'd 'a give 'em what-for good an' proper, sir."

"U'm?" Going to the telephone the little Frenchman raised the instrument from its forked cradle and held it to his ear. "*Parbleu!*" he pressed the contact bar down with a triple rattle, then dropped the speaking-tube back in its rack. "Remain here, if you please," he bade the servant as he motioned me to follow. Outside, he whispered: "There is no dial tone discernible. The line is cut."

WE CIRCLED round the house seeking the connection, and beside a chimney found the inlet. The wires had been neatly clipped, and the fresh-cut copper showed as bright against the severed insulation as a wound against dark flesh.

"What d'ye make of it?" I asked as he knelt on the wet grass and searched the ground for traces of the wire-cutters. "Think that chap inside knows more than he pretends?"

"Less, if possible," he said shortly. "Such stupidity as his could not be simulated. Besides, I know his type. Had he been implicated in a murder or a robbery he would have set as great a distance between him and the crime-scene as he could." With a shrug of resignation he straightened to his feet and brushed the leaf-mold from his trousers. "No tracks of any sort," he murmured. "The grass grows close against the house, and the rain has washed away what little tale the miscreants' footprints might have told. Let us go back. We must inform the police and the coroner."

"Want me to take the car and notify 'em?" I asked as we turned the corner of the house. "It's hardly safe to trust the servant out of sight before the officers

have had a chance to question him, and you don't drive, so——"

The pressure of his fingers on my elbow silenced me, and we drew back in the shelter of the ivy-hung wall as the crunch of wheels came to us from the lower driveway.

"What the deuce?" I wondered as I glimpsed the vehicle between the rain-drenched trees. "What's an express van doing here this time o' night?"

"Let us make ourselves as inconspicuous as possible," he cautioned in a whisper. "It may be that they plan a ruse for entering the house, and——"

"But good heavens, man, they've already gone through it like termites through a log," I interjected.

"*Ab bah*, you overlook the patent possibilities, my friend. What do we really know? Only that Doctor Pavlovitch was murdered and his study ransacked. But why do people search a place? To find something they want, *n'est-ce-pas?* That much is obvious. Still, we do not know they found the thing they sought, or, if they found it, we cannot say that others do not also seek it. It must have been a thing of value to have caused them to do murder."

"You mean there may be two gangs hunting something Pavlovitch had hidden in his house?"

"It is quite possible. He was a Russian, and Russia is synonymous with mystery today. The old noblesse have smuggled fortunes from the country, or have plans for getting out the treasures they could not take with them in flights; plots and counterplots, intrigue, plans for assassination or revenge are natural to a Russian as fleas are to a dog. I think it wholly possible that more than one conspiracy to deprive the amiable Pavlovitch of life and fortune has been in progress, and he would not have been a good insurance

risk even if the ones who murdered him tonight had done their work less thoroughly."

The big green truck had drawn up at the steps and a man in express uniform hopped out. "Doctor Pavlovitch?" he asked when the houseman answered to his thunderous banging at the knocker.

"No-o, sir," gulped the servant, "the doctor isn't home just now——"

"Okay, pal. Will you sign for this consignment and give us a lift with it? It's marked urgent."

With grunts and exclamations of exertion, plus a liberal allowance of the sort of language prized by soldiers, stevedores and sailors, the great packing-case was finally wrestled up the steps and dropped unceremoniously in the hall. The express van turned down the drive, and we slipped from our concealment to find Pavlovitch's houseman gazing at the giant parcel ruefully.

"What'll I do with it now, sir?" he asked de Grandin. "I know th' doctor was expectin' somethink of th' sort, for he told me so hisself this mornin'; but 'e didn't tell me what it was, an' I don't know whether I should open it or leave it for th' officers."

De Grandin tweaked an end of waxed mustache between his thumb and forefinger as he regarded the great crate. It was more than six feet long, something more than three feet wide, and better than a yard in height.

"*Eh bien*," he answered, "I think the citizens of Troy were faced with the same problem. They forbore to open that which came to them, with most deplorable results. Let us not be guilty of the same mistake. Have you a crowbar handy?"

WHOWER put that case together had intended it to stand rough usage, for the two-inch planks that formed it

were secured with mortises and water-swollen dowels, so though the three of us attacked it furiously it was upward of an hour ere we forced the first board loose; and that proved only the beginning, for so strongly were the shooks attached to one another that our task was more like breaking through a solid log than ripping a joined box apart. Finally the last plank of the lid came off and revealed a packing of thick felt.

"*Que diable?*" snapped de Grandin as he struck his crowbar on the heavy wadding. "What is this?"

"What did you expect?" I queried as I mopped a handkerchief across my face.

"A man, perhaps a pair of them, by blue!" he answered. "It would have made an ideal hiding-place. Equipped with inside fasteners, it could have been thrown open in the night, permitting those who occupied it to come forth and search the place at leisure."

"Humph, there's certainly room for a man or two in there," I nodded, prodding tentatively at the black felt wadding with my finger, "but how would he get air—I say!"

"What is it?" he demanded. "You have discovered something——"

"Feel this," I interrupted, "it seems to me it's——"

"*Parbleu*, but you have right!" he exclaimed as he laid his hand against the felt. "It is cool, at least ten degrees cooler than the atmosphere. Let us hasten to unearth the secret of this *sacré* chest, my friends, but let us also work with caution. It may contain a charge of liquid air."

"Liquid air?" I echoed as with the heavy shears the servant brought he started cutting at the layers of laminated felt.

"*Certainement*. Liquid air, my friend. Brought in sudden contact with warm

atmosphere it would vaporize so quickly that the force of its expansion would be equal to a dynamite explosion. I have seen it——"

"But that's fantastic," I objected. "Who would choose such an elaborate——"

"Who would choose a woman's bodkin to dispatch the learned Doctor Pavlovitch?" he countered. "It would have been much simpler to have shot him; yet—*morbleu*, what have we here?"

The final layer of felt had been laid back, and before us gleamed a chest of polished dark red wood, oblong in shape, with slightly rounded top with chamfered edges and a group of Chinese ideographs incised upon it. I had seen a case like that but once before, but I recognized it instantly. A friend of mine had died while traveling in Mongolia, and when they shipped his body home . . . "Why, it's a Chinese coffin!" I exclaimed.

"*Précisément, un cercueil de bois chinois*, but what in Satan's name does it do here? And behold, observe, my friend; it, too, is cold."

He was correct. The polished puncheon of Mongolian cedar was so cold that I could hardly bear to rest my hand upon it.

"I wonder what those characters stand for?" I mused. "If we could read them they might give some clue——"

"I do not think so," he replied. "I can make them out; they are the customary *hong* for Chinese coffins, and mean *cheung sang*—long life."

"'Long life!'—on a coffin lid?"

"But yes. *C'est drôle ça*," he agreed. "It seems the heathen in his blindness has hopes of immortality, and does not decorate his tombs with skulls and cross-bones, or with pious, gloomy verses in the Christian manner. However"—he raised his narrow shoulders in a shrug—"we have still the puzzle of this so cold

coffin to be solved. Let us be about it, but with caution."

With more care than the average dentist shows when he explores a tooth, he bored a small hole in the cedar with an auger, pausing every now and then to test the temperature of the small bit against his hand. Some thirty seconds later he leaped back. "I have struck nothingness; the bit is through—stand clear!" he cautioned, and a gentle hissing followed like an echo of his warning as a plume-like jet of feathery remex geysered upward from the coffin lid.

"Carbon dioxide snow!" we chorused; and:

"*Tiens*, it seems we shall not listen to the angels' songs immediately," added Jules de Grandin with a laugh.

The casket followed usual Chinese patterns. Made from a single hollowed log with top and bottom joined by dowels, it was covered with successive coats of lacquer which made it seem an undivided whole, and it was not till we searched some time that we were able to discern the line between the lid and body. A series of small auger-holes was driven in the wood, and with these for starting-points we had begun the arduous task of prizing off the heavy lid when the sudden screech of brakes before the house gave warning of a new arrival.

"Take cover!" bade de Grandin, dropping down behind the massive coffin as he drew his pistol. "If they think to carry us by storm we shall be ready for——"

"MICHAEL—Michailovitch, has it come? Proudhon and Matrona are here; we must make haste! Where are you, man?" Rattling at the knob, kicking on the panels, someone clamored at the front door furiously, then, as we gave no sign, burst out in a torrent of

entreaty phrased in words that seemed entirely consonants.

De Grandin left his ambush, tiptoed down the hall and shot the bolt back from the door, leaping quickly to one side and poising with bent knees, his pistol held in readiness. The heavy door swung inward with a bang and a young man almost fell across the sill.

"Michail," he called hysterically, "they're here; I saw them on the road today. Has it come, Michail—oh, my God!"—as he saw the coffin stripped of its enclosures standing in the glaring light from the hall chandelier—"too late; too late!" He stumbled blindly a few steps, slumped down to his knees, then crept across the polished floor, dropping head and hands upon the coffin lid and sobbing broken-heartedly. "Nikakova, *radost moya!*" he entreated. "Oh, too late; too late!"

"Tenez, *Monsieur*, you seem in trouble," de Grandin moved from his concealment and advanced a step, pistol lowered but eyes wary.

"Proudhon!" the stranger half rose from his knees and a look of utter loathing swept his face. "You——" His furious expression faded and gave way to one of wonder. "You're not—who are you?" he stammered.

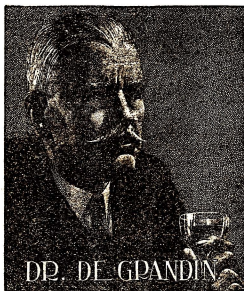
"*Eb bien*, my friend, I think that we might say the same to you," de Grandin answered. "It might be well if you explained yourself without delay. A murder has been done here and we seek the perpetrators——"

"A murder? Who——"

"Doctor Pavlovitch was murdered something like an hour ago; we are expecting the police——"

"Pavlovitch killed? It must be Proudhon was here, then," the young man breathed. "Was this coffin like this when you found it?"

"It was not. It came after Doctor Pav-



lovitch was murdered. We suspected it might be connected with the crime and were about to force it when you came howling at the door——"

"Quick, then! We must take it off before——"

"One moment, if you please, *Monsieur*. A murder has been done and everyone about the place is suspect till he clears himself. This so mysterious parcel came while we were seeking clues, and neither it nor any other thing may be removed until the police——"

"We can't wait for the police! They wouldn't understand; they'd not believe; they'd wait until it is too late—oh, *Monsieur*, I don't know who you are, but I beg that you will help me. I must remove this coffin right away; get it to a safe place and have medical assistance, or——"

"I am Doctor Jules de Grandin and this is Doctor Samuel Trowbridge, both at your service if you can convince us that you have no criminal intent," the little Frenchman said. "Why must you rush away this casket which was brought here but a little while ago, and why should

you desire to keep its presence hidden from the officers?"

A look of desperation crossed the other's face. He laid his forehead on the chilly coffin top again and burst into a fit of weeping. Finally: "You are educated men, physicians, and may understand," he murmured between sobs. "You must believe me when I tell you that unless we take this coffin out at once a terrible calamity will follow!"

De Grandin eyed him speculatively. "I will take the chance that what you say is true, *Monsieur*," he answered. "You have a motorcar outside? Good. Doctor Trowbridge will accompany you and guide you to our house. I shall stay and wait until the police have been notified and aid them with such information as I have. Then I shall rejoin you."

Turning to the servant he commanded: "Help us place this box upon the motor, if you please; then hasten to the nearest neighbor's and telephone the officers. I await you here."

WITH the long box hidden in the tonneau of his touring-car the young man hugged my rear fender all the way to town, and was at my side and ready to assist in packing the unwieldy case into the house almost before I shut my motor off. Once in the surgery, he crept furtively from one window to another, drawing down the blinds and listening intently, as though he were in mortal fear of spies.

"Well, now, young fellow," I began as he completed his mysterious precautions, "what's all this about? Let me warn you, if you've got a body hidden in that casket it's likely to go hard with you. I'm armed, and if you make a false move——" Reaching in my jacket pocket I snapped my glasses-case to simulate—I hoped!—the clicking of a pistol being cocked, and frowned at him severely.

The smile of child-like confidence he gave me was completely reassuring. "I've no wish to run away, sir," he assured me. "If it hadn't been for you they might have—Jesu-Mary, what is that?" He thrust himself before the red wood coffin as though to shield it with his body as a rattle sounded at the office door.

"*Salut, mes amis!*" de Grandin greeted as he strode into the surgery. "I am fortunate. The *gendarmes* kept me but a little while, and I rode back to town with the mortician who brought in the doctor's body. You have not opened it? *Très bon*. I shall be delighted to assist you."

"Yes, let us hurry, please," our visitor begged. "It has been so long——" a sob choked in his throat, and he put his hand across his eyes.

The wood was heavy but not hard, and our tools cut through it easily. In fifteen minutes we had forced a lengthwise girdle round the box, and bent to lift the lid.

"Nikakova!" breathed the young man as a worshipper might speak the name of some saint he adored.

"*Sacré nom d'un fromage vert!*" de Grandin swore.

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated.

A coat of hoarfrost fell away in flakes, and beneath it showed a glassy dome with little traceries of rime upon it. Between the lace-like meshes of the gelid veil we glimpsed a woman lying quiet as in sleep. There was a sort of wavering radiance about her not entirely attributable to the icy envelope enclosing her. Rather, it seemed to me, she matched the brilliant beams of the electric light with some luminescence of her own. Nude she was as any Aphrodite sculptured by the master-craftsmen of the Isle of Melos; a cloven tide of pale-gold hair fell down each side her face and rippled over ivory shoulders, veiling the pink nipples of the full-blown, low-set bosoms and coursing

down the beautifully shaped thighs until it reached the knees. The slender, shapely feet were crossed like those on mediæval tombs whose tenants have in life made pilgrimage to Rome or Palestine; her elbows were bent sharply so her hands were joined together palm to palm between her breasts with fingertips against her chin. I could make out gold-flecked lashes lying in smooth arcs against her pallid cheeks, the faint shadows round her eyes, the wistful, half-pathetic droop of her small mouth. Oddly, I was conscious that this pallid, lovely figure typified in combination the austerity of sculptured saint, lush, provocative young womanhood and the innocent appeal of childhood budding into adolescence. Somehow, it seemed to me, she had lain down to die with a trustful resignation like that of Juliet when she drained the draft that sent her living to her family's mausoleum.

"Nikakova!" whispered our companion in a sort of breathless ecstasy, gazing at the quiet figure with a look of rapture.

"Hein?" de Grandin shook himself as though to free his senses from the meshes of a dream. "What is this, *Monsieur*? A woman tombed in ice, a beautiful, dead woman——"

"She is not dead," the other interrupted. "She sleeps."

"*Tiens*," a look of pity glimmered in the little Frenchman's small blue eyes, "I fear it is the sleep that knows no waking, *mon ami*."

"No, no, I tell you," almost screamed the young man, "she's not dead! Pavlovitch assured me she could be revived. We were to begin work tonight, but they found him first, and——"

"*Haïte la!*" de Grandin bade. "This is the conversation of the madhouse, as meaningless as babies' babble. Who was this Doctor Pavlovitch, and who was this young woman? Who, by blue, are you, *Monsieur*?"

The young man paid no heed, but hastened around the coffin, feeling with familiar fingers for a series of small buttons which he pressed in quick succession. As the final little knob was pressed we heard a slowly rising, prolonged hiss, and half a dozen feathery jets of snowflakes seemed to issue from the icy dome above the body. The room grew cold and colder. In a moment we could see the vapor of our breaths before our mouths and noses, and I felt a chill run through me as an almost overwhelming urge to sneeze began to manifest itself.

"*Corbleu*," de Grandin's teeth were chattering with the sudden chill, "I shall take pneumonia; I shall contract coryza; I shall perish miserably if this continues!" He crossed the room and threw a window open, then leant across the sill, fairly soaking in the moist, warm summer air.

"Quick, shut the lights off!" cried our visitor. "They must not see us!" He snapped the switch with frenzied fingers, then leaned against the door-jamb breathing heavily, like one who has escaped some deadly peril by the narrowest of margins.

As the outside air swept through the room and neutralized the chill, de Grandin turned again to the young man. "*Monsieur*," he warned, "my nose is short, but my patience is still shorter. I have had enough——too much, *parbleu!* Will you explain this business of the monkey now, or do I call the officers and tell them that you carry round the body of a woman, one whom you doubtless foully murdered, and——"

"No, no, not that!" the visitor besought. "Please don't betray me. Listen, please; try to realize what I say is true."

"My friend, you cannot put too great a strain on my credulity," de Grandin answered. "Me, I have traveled much, seen much, know much. The things which I know to be true would make a

less experienced man believe himself the victim of hallucinations. Say on, *mon vieux*; I listen."

WITH steamer rugs draped around our shoulders we faced each other in the light of a small, shaded lamp. Our breath fanned out in vapory cumuli each time we spoke; before us gleamed the crystal-hooded coffin, like a great memento mori fashioned out of polar ice, and as it radiated ever-growing cold I caught myself involuntarily recalling a couplet from Bartholomew Dowling:

"And thus does the warmth of feeling
Turn chill in the coldness of death . . ."

Till then the rush of action had prevented any inventory of our visitor. Now as I studied him I found it difficult to fit him into any category furnished by a lifetime's medical experience. He was young, though not as young as he appeared, for pale-blond coloring and slenderness lent him a specious air of youth which was denied by drooping shoulders, trouble-lines about his mouth and deep-set, melancholy eyes. His chin was small and gentle, not actually receding, but soft and almost feminine in outline. The mouth, beneath a scarcely-visible ash-blond mustache, suggested extreme sensitiveness, and he held his lips compressed against each other as though the trait of self-suppression had become habitual. His brow was wider and more high than common, his blue eyes almost childishly ingenuous. When he spoke, it was with hesitancy and with a painfully correct pronunciation which betrayed as plainly as an accent that his English came from study rather than inheritance and use.

"I am Serge Aksakoff," he told us in his flat, accentless voice. "I met Nikakova Gapon when I was a student at the University of Petrograd and she a pupil at

the Imperial Ballet Academy. Russia in 1916 was honeycombed with secret liberal societies, all loyal to the Little Father, but all intent on securing something of democracy for a land which had lain prostrate underneath the iron heel of autocrats for twenty generations. Perhaps it was the thrill of danger which we shared; perhaps it was a stronger thing; at any rate we felt a mutual attraction at first meeting, and before the summer ended I was desperately in love with her and she returned my passion.

"Our society numbered folk of every social stratum, workmen, artisans, artists and professional people, but mostly we were students ranging anywhere from twenty to sixteen years old. Two of our foremost members were Boris Proudhon and Matrona Rimsky. He was a tailor, she the mistress of Professor Michail Pavlovitch of the University of Petrograd, who as a physicist was equal to Soloviev in learning and surpassed him in his daring of experiment. Proudhon was always loudest in debate, always most insistent on aggressive action. If one of us prepared a plan for introducing social legislation in the Duma he scoffed at the idea and insisted on a show of force, often on assassination of officials whose duties were to carry out unpopular ukases. Matrona always seconded his violent proposals and insisted that we take direct and violent action. Finally, at their suggestion, we signed our names beneath theirs to a declaration of intention in which we stated that if peaceful measures failed we favored violence to gain our ends.

"That night the officers of the Okhrana roused me from my bed and dragged me to the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. They locked me in a stinking, vermin-swarming cell and left me there three weeks. Then they led me out and told me that because I was but seventeen they

had decided to extend me clemency; so instead of being hanged or sent to the Siberian mines with most of my companions I was merely to be exiled to Ekaterinburg for a term of sixty months. During that time I was to be subjected to continuous surveillance, to hold no communication with my family or friends in Russia, and not engage in any occupation without express permission."

"But you'd done nothing!" I protested. "The paper that you signed declared specifically that you favored peaceful measures; you merely said that if these measures failed——"

Aksakoff smiled sadly. "You didn't have to be a criminal to be exiled," he explained. "'Political unreliability' was sufficient cause, and the officers of the political police were sole judges of the case. You see, administrative exile, as they called it, was technically not a punishment."

"Oh, that's different," I replied. "If you were merely forced to live away from home——"

"And to make a journey longer than from New York to Los Angeles dressed in prison clothes and handcuffed to a condemned felon, shuffling in irons so heavy that it was impossible to lift your feet, to be fed infrequently, and then on offal that nothing but a half-starved dog—or man—would touch," he interrupted bitterly. "My only consolation was that Nikakova had been also granted 'clemency' and accompanied me in exile."

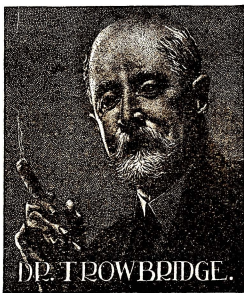
"The officer commanding our escort came from a family some of whom had also suffered exile, and this made him pity us. He allowed us to converse an hour a day, although this was prohibited, and several times he gave us food and tea from his own rations. It was from him we learned that Proudhon and Matrons were *agents provocateurs* of the

political police, paid spies whose duty was not only to worm their way into the confidence of unsuspecting children such as we, but to incite us to unlawful acts so we might be arrested and deported.

"Since I had no money and the Government did not care to fee me, I was graciously permitted to take service with a cobbler at Ekaterinburg, and Nikakova was allowed to do work for a seamstress. Presently I found a little cottage and she came to live with me."

"It must have been some consolation to be married to the girl you loved, even in such terrible conditions——" I began, but the cynicism of the look he gave me stopped my well-meant comment.

"I said she came to live with me," he repeated. "'Politicos' were not permitted marriage without special dispensation from the police, and this we could not get. We had no money to pay bribes. But whatever church and state might say, we were as truly man and wife as if we'd stood before the altar of St. Isaac's and been married by the Patriarch. We pledged our love for time and all eternity kneeling on the floor of our mean cabin



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with a blessed ikon for our witness, and because we had no rings to give each other I took two nails and beat them into circlets. Look——"

He thrust his hand out, displaying a thin band of flattened wire on the second shaft of the third finger.

"She had one, too," he added, beckoning us to look upon the body in the frost-domed coffin. Through the envelope of shrouding ice we saw the dull gleam of the narrow iron ring upon one of the shapely folded hands.

IN THAT northern latitude the twilight lasts till after ten o'clock, and my labors with the cobbler started with the sunrise and did not end till dark," Aksakoff continued as he resumed his seat and lit the cigarette de Grandin proffered. "There is an English saying that shoemakers' children go unshod. It was almost literally true in my case, for the tiny wage I earned made it utterly impossible for me to purchase leather shoes, and so I wound rags round my feet and ankles. Nikakova had a pair of shoes, but wore them only out of doors. As for stockings, we hadn't owned a pair between us since the first month of our exile.

"One evening as I shuffled home in my rag boots I heard a groan come from the shadows, and when I went to look I found an old man fallen by the way. He was pitifully thin and ragged, and his matted, unkempt beard was almost stiff with filth and slime. We who lived in utter poverty could recognize starvation when we saw it, and it needed but a single glance to see the man was famishing. He was taller by a head than I, but I had no trouble lifting him, for he weighed scarcely ninety pounds, and when I put my arm round him to steady him it was as if I held a rag-clothed skeleton.

"Nikakova helped me get his ragged

clothing off and wash away the clotted filth and vermin; then we laid him on a pile of straw, for we had no bedsteads, and fed him milk and brandy with a spoon. At first we thought him too far gone for rescue, but after we had worked with him an hour or so his eyes came open and he murmured, "Thank you, *Gaspadin* Aksakoff."

"*Gaspadin!*" It was the first time I had heard that title of respect since the night the police dragged me from my bed almost a year before, and I burst out crying when the old man mumbled it. Then we fell to wondering. Who was this old rack of bones, clothed in stinking rags, filthy as a mujik and verminous as a mangy dog, who knew my name and addressed me with a courteous title? Exiles learn to suspect every change of light and shadow, and Nikakova and I spent a night of terror, starting at each footstep in the alley, almost fainting every time a creak came at our lockless door for fear it might be officers of the *gendarmerie* come to take us for affording shelter to a fugitive.

"The starving stranger rallied in the night and by morning had sufficient strength to tell us he was Doctor Pavlovitch, seized by the Okhrana as a politically dangerous person and exiled for five years to Ekaterinburg. Less fortunate than we, he had been unable to obtain employment even as a manual laborer when the Government, preoccupied with war and threat of revolution, had turned him out to live or starve as fate decreed. For months he'd wandered through the streets like a stray animal, begging kopeks here and there, fighting ownerless dogs and cats for salvage from swill-barrels; finally he dropped exhausted in his tracks within a hundred yards of our poor cabin.

"We had hardly food enough for two, and often less than the equivalent of a

dime a week in cash, but somehow we contrived to keep our guest alive through the next winter, and when spring came he found work upon a farm.

"The forces of revolt had passed to stronger hands than ours, and while we starved at Ekaterinburg Tsar Nicholas came there as an exile, too. But though the Bolsheviki ruled instead of Nicholas it only meant a change of masters for the three of us. Petrograd and all of Russia was in the hands of revolutionists so busy with their massacres and vengeance that they had no time or inclination to release us from our exile, and even if we had been freed we had no place to go. With the coming of the second revolution everything was communized; the Red Guards took whatever they desired with no thought of payment; tradesmen closed their shops and peasants planted just enough to keep themselves. We had been poor before; now we were destitute. Sometimes we had but one crust of black bread to share among us, often not even that. For a week we lived on Nikakova's shoes, cutting them in little strips and boiling them for hours to make broth.

"The Bolsheviks shot Nicholas and his family on July 17, and eight days later Kolchak and the Czechs moved into Ekaterinburg. Pavlovitch was recognized and retained to assist in the investigation of the murder of the royal family, and we acted as his secretaries. When the White Guards moved back toward Mongolia we went with them. Pavlovitch set up a laboratory and hospital at Tisingol, and Nikakova and I acted as assistants. We were very happy there."

"One rejoices in your happiness, *Monsieur*," de Grandin murmured when the young man's silence lengthened, "but how was it that Madame Aksakoff was

frozen in this never quite sufficiently to be reprobated coffin?"

Our visitor started from his reverie. "There was fighting everywhere," he answered. "Town after town changed hands as Red and White Guards moved like chessmen on the Mongol plains, but we seemed safe enough at Tisingol till Nikakova fell a victim to taiga fever. She hovered between life and death for weeks, and was still too weak to walk, or even stand, when word came that the Red horde was advancing and destroying everything before it. If we stayed our dooms were sealed; to attempt to move her meant sure death for Nikakova.

"I told you Pavlovitch was one of Russia's foremost scientists. In his work at Tisingol he had forestalled discoveries made at great universities of the outside world. The Leningrad physicians' formula for keeping blood ionized and fluid, that it might be in readiness for instant use when transfusions were required, was an everyday occurrence at the Tisingol infirmary, and Carrell's experiment of keeping life in chicken hearts after they were taken from the fowls had been surpassed by him. His greatest scientific feat, however, was to take a small warm-blooded animal — a little cat or dog — drug it with an opiate, then freeze it solid with carbonic oxide snow, keep it in refrigeration for a month or two, then, after gently thawing it, release it, apparently no worse for its experience.

"There is hope for Nikakova," he told me when the news came that the Bolsheviks were but two days away. "If you will let me treat her as I do my pets, she can be moved ten thousand miles in safety, and revived at any time we wish."

"I would not consent, but Nikakova did. 'If Doctor Pavlovitch succeeds we shall be together once again,' she told me, 'but if we stay here we must surely

die. If I do not live through the ordeal—*nichevo*, I am so near death already that the step is but a little one, and thou shalt live, my Serge. Let us try this one chance of escape.'

"Pavlovitch secured a great Mongolian coffin and we set about our work. Nikakova was too weak to take me in her arms, but we kissed each other on the mouth before she drank ten drops of laudanum which sent her into a deep sleep within half an hour. The freezing process had to be immediate, so that animation would come to a halt at once; otherwise her little strength would be depleted by contending with the chill and she would really die, and not just halt her vital processes. We stripped her bedrobe off and set her hands in prayer and crossed her feet as though she came back from a pious pilgrimage, then sealed her lips with flexible collodion and stopped her nasal orifices; then, before she had a chance to suffocate, we laid her on a sheet stretched on carbonic oxide snow, spread another sheet above her and covered her with a sheet-copper dome into which we forced compressed carbonic oxide. The temperature inside her prison was so low her body stiffened with a spasm, every drop of blood and moisture in her system almost instantly congealing. Then we laid her in a shallow bath of distilled water which we froze as hard as steel with dry ice, and left her there while we prepared the coffin which was to be her home until we reached a place of safety.

"PAVLOVITCH had made the coffin ready, putting tanks of liquefied carbonic oxide underneath the space reserved for the ice plinth and arranging vents so that the gas escaping from the liquid's slow evaporation might circulate continuously about the icy tomb in which my darling lay. Around the ice block we

set a hollow form of ice to catch and hold escaping gases, then wrapped the whole in layer on layer of *yuria*, or tent-felt, and put it in the coffin, which we sealed with several coats of Chinese lacquer. Thus my loved one lay as still as any sculptured saint, sealed in a tomb of ice as cold as those *zaberegas*, or ice mountains, that form along the banks of rivers in Siberia when the mercury goes down to eighty marks below the zero line.

"We trekked across the Shamo desert till we came to Dolo Nor, then started down the Huang Ho, but just north of Chiangchun a band of Chahar bandits raided us. Me they carried off to hold for ransom, and it was three days before I made them understand I was a penniless White Russian for whom no one cared a kopek. They would have killed me out of hand had not an English prisoner offered them five pounds in ransom for me. Six months later I arrived at Shanghai with nothing but the rags I stood in.

"White Russians have no status in the East, but this was helpful to me, for jobs no other foreigner would touch were offered me. I was in turn a ricksha boy, a German secret agent, a runner for a gambling-house, an opium smuggler and gun runner. At every turn my fortunes mounted. In ten years I was rich, the owner of concessions in Kalgan, Tientsin and Peiping, not much respected, but much catered to. *Maskee'*—he raised his shoulders in a shrug—"I'd have traded everything I owned for that red coffin that had vanished when the Chahars captured me.

"Then at last I heard of Pavlovitch. He had been made the surgeon of the bandit party which co-operated with the one that captured me, and when they were incorporated in the Chinese army had become a colonel. When he saved a war lord's life by transfusion of canned

blood they presented him with half a city's loot. Shortly afterward he emigrated to America. The coffin? When the Chahars first saw it they assumed that it was filled with treasure and were about to smash it open, but its unnatural coldness frightened them, and they buried it beneath the ice near Bouir Nor and scuttled off pellmell in mortal fear of the ten thousand devils which Pavlovitch assured them were confined in it.

"It cost me two years and a fortune to locate Nikakova's burial-place, but finally we found it, and so deeply had they buried her beneath the *zaberega's* never-melting ice that we had to blast to get my darling out. We wrapped the coffin in ten folds of tent-felt wet with ice-and-salt solution, and took it overland to Tientsin, where I put it in a ship's refrigeration chamber and brought it to America. Yesterday I reached this city with it, having brought it here in a refrigeration car, and all arrangements had been made for Pavlovitch to revive Nikakova when—this afternoon I saw Proudhon and the Rimsky woman driving down the road toward Pavlovitch's house and knew that we must hasten."

"*Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur*, but why should seeing your confrères of Russian days impress you with this need for desperate haste?" de Grandin asked.

Aksakoff smiled bleakly. "Do you remember what befell the people who investigated the assassination of the Tsar?" he answered. "The assassins covered up their bloody work completely, so they thought; burned the bodies in a bonfire and threw the ashes down the shaft of an abandoned mine, but patient research under Sokoloff made all precautions useless. It was Pavlovitch whose work unearthed the evidence of crime. From the ashes in the old Isetsy mine he sifted little bits of evidence, the Emperor's Mal-

tese cross, six sets of steels from women's corsets, a mixed assortment of charred buttons, buckles, parts of slippers, hooks and eyes, and a number of small dirty pebbles which, when cleaned and treated chemically, turned out to be pure diamonds. It was this evidence which proved the Bolsheviki's guilt—after they bare-facedly denied all implication in the regicide, and all who helped to prove their guilt were marked for 'execution'—even those who occupied the posts of clerks have been run down and murdered by their secret agents. There is no doubt Proudhon and the woman who was Pavlovitch's mistress—and whose betrayal caused his exile in the Tsarist days—were sent here to assassinate him. It was unquestionably that female Judas who killed Pavlovitch, and after he was dead she and Proudhon rummaged through his papers. Their task is not only to stop oral testimony of their Government's guilt, but to destroy incriminating documents, as well."

"One sees. And it is highly probable they found messages from you to him, advising him of your arrival. *Tiens*, I think that you were well advised to take this coffin from the house of death without delay."

"But in killing Pavlovitch they killed my darling, too!" sobbed Aksakoff. "The technique of his work was secret. No one else can bring beloved Nikakova from her trance——"

"I would not say as much," denied the little Frenchman. "I am Jules de Grandin, and a devilish clever fellow. Let us see what we shall see, my friend."

"It's the most fantastic thing I ever heard!" I told him as we went to bed. "There's no doubt the freezing process has preserved her wonderfully, but to hope to bring her back to life—that's ut-

terly absurd. When a person dies, he's dead, and I'd stake my reputation that's nothing but a lovely corpse in there," I nodded toward the bathroom where the plinth of ice stood in the tub and Aksakoff stretched on a pallet by the bolted door, a pistol ready in his hand.

De Grandin pursed his lips, then turned an impish grin on me. "You have logic and the background of experience to support your claims," he nodded, "but as Monsieur Shakespeare says, heaven and earth contain things our philosophy has not yet dreamed of. As for logic, *eh bien*, what is it? A reasoning from collated data, from known facts, *n'est-ce-pas?* But certainly. Logically, therefore, wireless telegraphy was scientifically impossible before Marconi. Radio communication was logically an absurd dream till invention of the vacuum tube made former scientific logic asinine. Yet the principles that underlay these things were known to physicists for years; they simply had not been assembled in their proper order. Let us view this case:

"Take, by example, hibernating animals, the tortoise of our northern climates, the frog, the snake; every autumn they put by their animation as a housewife folds up summer clothes for winter storage. They appear to die, yet in the spring they sally forth as active as they were before. One not versed in natural lore might come upon them in their state of hibernation and say as you just said, 'This is a corpse.' His experience would tell him so, yet he would be in error. Or take the fish who freezes in the ice. When spring dissolves his icy prison he swims off in search of food as hungrily as if he had not paused a moment in his quest. The toad encrusted in a block of slate, such as we see unearthed in coal mines now and then, may have been 'dead' *le bon Dieu* only knows how many

centuries; yet once release him from encasement and he hops away in search of bugs to fill his little belly. Again——"

"But these are all cold-blooded creatures," I protested. "Mammals can't suspend the vital process——"

"Not even bears?" he interrupted with mock-mildness. "Or those Indians who when hypnotized fall into such deep trances that accredited physicians do not hesitate to call them dead, and are thereafter buried for so long a time that crops of grain are sown and harvested above them, then, disinterred, are reawakened at the hypnotist's command?"

"Humph," I answered, nettled. "I've never seen such things."

"*Précisément*. I have. I do not know how they can be. I only know they are. When things exist we know that they are so, whether logic favors them or not."

"Then you think that this preposterous tale is true; that we can thaw this woman out and awaken her, after she's lain dead and tombed in ice for almost twenty years?"

"I did not say so——"

"Why, you did, too!"

"It was you, not I, who called her dead. Somatically she may be dead—clinically dead, in that her heart and lungs and brain have ceased to function, but that is not true death. You yourself have seen such cases revived, even when somatic death has lasted an appreciable time. She was not diseased when animation was suspended, and her body has been insulated from deteriorative changes. I think it possible the vital spark still slumbers dormant and can be revived to flame if we have care—and luck."

THE bathroom vigil lasted five full days and nights. There seemed a steel-like quality to the icy catafalque that defied summer heat and gently-drip-

ping water from the shower alike, as if the ice had stored up extra chill in the long years it lay locked in the frost-bound earth of Outer Mongolia, and several times I saw it freeze the water they dropped on it instead of yielding to the liquid's higher temperature. At last the casing melted off and they laid the stiff, marmoreal body in the tub, then ran a stream of water from the faucet. For ten hours this was cool, and the gelid body showed no signs of yielding to it. Time after time we felt the stone-hard arms and hands, the legs and feet that seemed for ever locked in algid *rigor mortis*, the little flower-like breasts that showed no promise of waking from their frigid unresponsiveness. Indeed, far from responding to the water's thermal action, the frozen body seemed to chill its bath, and we noticed little thread-like lines of ice take form upon the skin, standing stiffly out like oversized mold-spores and overlaying the white form with a coat of jewel-bright, quill-like pelage.

"Excellent, parfait, splendide; magnifique!" de Grandin nodded in delight as the ice-fur coat took form. "The chill is coming forth; we are progressing splendidly."

When the tiny icicles cleared away, they raised the water's temperature a little, gradually blending it from tepid to blood-warm, and fifteen hours of immersion in the warmer bath brought noticeable results. The skin became resilient to the touch, the flesh was firm but flexible, the folded hands relaxed and slipped down to the sides, slim ankles loosed their interlocking grip and the feet lay side by side.

"Behold them, if you please, my friend," de Grandin whispered tensely. "Her feet, see how they hold themselves!"

"Well?" I responded. "What——"

"*Ab bab*, has it been so long then since your student days that you do not remember the flaccidity of death? Think of the cadavers which you worked upon—were their feet like those ones yonder? By blue, they were not! They were prolapsed, they hung down on the ankles like extensions of the leg, for their flexor muscles had gone soft and inelastic. These feet stand out at obtuse angles to the legs."

"Well——"

"*Précisément; tu parles, mon ami*. It is very well, I think. It may not be a sign of life, but certainly it negatives the flaccidness of death."

Periodically they pressed the thorax and abdomen, feeling for the hardness of deep-seated frozen organs. At length, "I think we can proceed, my friends," de Grandin told us, and we lifted the limp body from the bath and dried it hurriedly with warm, soft towels. De Grandin drew the plugs of cotton from the nostrils and wiped the lips with ether to dissolve the seal of flexible collodion, and this done he and Aksakoff began to rub the skin with heated olive oil, kneading with firm gentleness, massaging downward toward the hands and feet, bending arms and legs, wrists, neck and ankles. Somehow, the process repulsed me. I had seen a similar technique used by embalmers when they broke up *rigor mortis*, and the certitude of death seemed emphasized by everything they did.

"Now, *Dei gratia*, we shall succeed!" the Frenchman whispered as he turned the body on its face and knelt over it, applying his hands to the costal margins, bearing down with all his might. There was a gentle, sighing sound, as of breath slowly exhaled, and Aksakoff went pale as death.

"She lives!" he whispered. "O Nika-kova, *lubimui moi, radost moyá*——"

I felt a sob of sympathy rise in my throat. Too often I had heard that vital simulation when air was forced between a corpse's lips by sudden pressure. No physician of experience, no morgue attendant, no embalmer can be fooled by that. . . .

"*Mordieu*, I think . . . I think——" de Grandin's soft, excited whisper sounded from the bed. He had leant back, releasing pressure on the corpse, and as he did so I was startled to observe a swelling of the lower thorax. Of course it could be nothing but mechanical reaction, the natural tendency of air to rush into an emptied space, I told myself, but . . .

He bent forward swiftly, pushing down upon the body with both hands, retained the pressure for a moment, then swung back again. Forward—back; forward—back, twenty times a minute by the swiftly-clicking second hand of his wrist watch he went through the movements of the Schaefer method of forced respiration, patiently, methodically, almost mechanically.

I shook my head despairingly. This hopeless labor, this unfounded optimism . . .

"Quick, quick, my friend, the suprarenalin!" he gasped. "Put fifteen minims in the syringe, and hurry, if you please. I can feel a little, so small stirring here, but we must perform a cardiocentesis!"

I hastened to the surgery to prepare the suprarenal extract, hopeless as I knew the task to be. No miracle of medicine could revive a woman dead and buried almost twenty years. I had not spent a lifetime as a doctor to no purpose; death was death, and this was death if I had ever seen it.

De Grandin poised the trocar's point against the pallid flesh beneath the swell of the left breast, and I saw the pale skin

dimple, as though it winced instinctively. He thrust with swift, relentless pressure, and I marveled at the skill which guided pointed, hollow needle straight into the heart, yet missed the tangled maze of vein and artery.

Aksakoff was on his knees, hands clasped, eyes closed, prayers in strangled Russian gushing from his livid lips. De Grandin pressed the plunger home, shooting the astringent mixture deep into a heart which had not felt warm blood in half a generation.

A quick, spasmodic shudder shook the pallid body and I could have sworn I saw the lowered eyelids flutter.

The Frenchman gazed intently in the calm, immobile face a moment; then: "*Non?*" he whispered tensely. "*Pardieu*, I say you shall! I will it!"

Snatching up a length of sterile gauze he folded it across her lightly parted lips, drew a deep breath and laid his mouth to hers. I saw his temple-veins stand out as he drained his lungs of air, raised his head to gasp more breath, then bent and breathed again straight in the corpse's mouth. Tears stood in his eyes, his cheeks seemed losing every trace of color, he was becoming cyanotic. "Stop it, de Grandin!" I exclaimed. "It's no use, man, you're simply——"

"*Triomphe, victoire; succès!*" he gasped exultantly. "She breathes, she lives, my friends; we have vanquished twenty years of death. *Embrasse-moi!*" Before I realized what he was about he had thrown both arms around me and planted a resounding kiss on both cheeks, then served the Russian in like manner.

"Nikakova—Nikakova, *radost moyá*—joy of life!" sobbed Aksakoff. The almost-golden lashes fluttered for an instant; then a pair of gray-green eyes looked vaguely toward the sobbing man, unfocussed, unperceiving, like the eyes of

new-born infants struggling with the mystery of light.

It was impossible, absurd and utterly preposterous. Such a thing could not have happened, but . . . there it was. In the upper chamber of my house I had seen a woman called back from the grave. Sealed in a tomb of ice for almost twenty years, this woman lived and breathed and looked at me!

PHYSICALLY she mended rapidly. We increased her diet of albumins, milk and brandy to light broth and well-cooked porridges in two days. She was able to take solid food within a week; but for all this she was but an infant magnified in size. Her eyes were utterly unfocussed, she seemed unable to do more than tell the difference of light and shade, when we spoke to her she gave no answer; the only sounds she made were little whimpering noises, not cries of pain or fear, but merely the mechanical responses of vocal cords reacting to the breath. Two nurses were installed and de Grandin scarcely left her side, but as the time drew out and it became increasingly apparent that the patient whom he nursed was nothing but a living organism without volition or intelligence, the lines about his eyes appeared more deeply etched each day.

A month went by without improvement; then one day he came fairly bounding in to the study. "Trowbridge, *mon vieux*, come and see, but step softly, I implore you!" he commanded, clutching at my elbow and dragging me upstairs. At the bedroom door he paused and nodded, smiling broadly, like a showman who invites attention to a spectacle. Aksakoff knelt by the bed, and from the piled-up pillows Nikakova looked at him, but there was nothing infantile about her gaze.

"Nikakova, *radost moya*—joy of life!" he whispered, and:

"Serge, my love, my soul, my life!" came her murmured answer. Her pale hands lay like small white flowers in his clasp, and when he leant to her, her kisses flecked his cheeks, his brow, his eyelids like lightly fluttering butterflies.

"*Tiens*," de Grandin murmured, "our Snow Queen has awakened, it seems; the frosts of burial have melted, and—come away, my friend; this is not for us to see!"

'He tweaked my sleeve to urge me down the hall. The lovers' mouths were joined in a fierce, passionate embrace, and the little Frenchman turned away his eyes as though to look on them were profanation.

NIKAKOVA seemed intent on catching up the thread of interrupted life, and she and Serge with de Grandin spent long hours shopping, going to the theatre, visiting museums and art galleries or merely taking in the myriad scenes of city life. The semi-nudity of modern styles at first appalled her, but she soon revised her pre-war viewpoint and took to the unstockinged, corsetless existence of the day as if she had been born when Verdun and the Argonne were but memories, instead of in the reign of Nicholas the Last. When she finally had her flowing pale-gold hair cut short and permanently waved in little tight-laid poodle curls she might have passed as twin to any of a million of the current crop of high school seniors. She had an oddly incomplete mode of expression, almost devoid of pronouns and thickly strewn with participles, a shy but briar-sharp sense of humor, and an almost infinite capacity for sweets.

"No, recalling nothing," she assured us when we questioned her about her

long interment. "Drinking laudanum and saying good-bye to my Serge. Then sleep. Awakening finds Serge beside me. Nothing more—a sleep, a waking. Wondering could death—true death—be that way? To fall asleep and wake in heaven?"

As soon as Nikakova's strength returned they were to go to China where Serge's business needed personal direction, for now he had recovered his beloved the matter of accumulating wealth had reassumed importance in his eyes. "We suffered poverty together; now we shall share the joy of riches, *radost moyá*," he declared.

DE GRANDIN had gone to the county medical society, where his fund of technical experience and his Rabelaisian wit made him an always welcome guest. Nikakova, Aksakoff and I were in the drawing-room, the curtains drawn against the howling storm outside, a light fire crackling on the hearth. She had been singing for us, sad, nostalgic songs of her orphaned homeland; now she sat at the piano, ivory hands flitting fitfully across the ivory keys as she improvised, pausing every now and then to nibble at a peppermint, then, with the spicy morsel still upon her tongue, to take a sip of coffee. I watched her raptly. Serge looked his adoration. She bore little semblance to the pale corpse in its ice-bound coffin, this gloriously happy girl who sat swaying to the rhythm of her music in the glow of the piano lamp. She wore a gown of striped silk that flashed from green to orange and from gold to crimson as she moved. It was negligible as to bodice, but very full and long of skirt. Brilliants glittered on her cross-strapped sandals, long pendants of white jade swayed from her ears.

In the trees outside, the wind rose to

a wail, and a flock of gulls which flew storm-driven from the bay skirred like lost souls as they wheeled overhead. A mile away a Lackawanna locomotive hooted long and mournfully as it approached a crossing. Nikakova whirled up from her seat on the piano bench and crossed the room with the quick, feline stride of the trained dancer, her full skirt swirling round her feet, the firelight gleaming on her jewel-set sandals and on brightly lacquered toenails.

"Feeling devils," she announced as she dropped upon the hearth rug and crouched before the fire, chin resting in her palms, her fingers pressed against her temples. "Seeming to hear *zagovor*—'ow you call heem?—weetches' spell-charm? On nights like this the weetches and the wairwolves riding—dead men coming up from graves; ghosts from dead past flocking back—"

She straightened to her knees and took a match-box from the tabouret, bent a match stave till it formed an L turned upside down and drove the end of the long arm into the box top. Breaking off another stave to make it match the first in height, she stood it with its head against that of the upturned L, then pressed her cigarette against the touching sulfurous heads.

"Now watching!" she commanded. A sudden flare of flame ensued, and as the fire ran down the staves the upright match curled upward and seemed to dangle from the crossbar of the L. "What is?" she asked us almost gleefully.

"The man on the flying trapeze?" I ventured, but she shook her head until her ear-drops scintillated in the firelight.

"But no, great stupid one!" she chided. "Is execution—hanging. See, this one"—she pointed to the fire-curved match—"is criminal hanged on gibbet. Perhaps he was—"

"A Menshevik who suffered justly for his crimes against the People's Revolution?" Softly pronounced, the interruption came in slurring, almost hissing accents from the doorway, and we turned with one accord to see a man and woman standing on the threshold.

He was a lean, compactly put together man of something more than medium height, exceedingly ugly, with thin black eyebrows and yellowish-tinted skin. His head was absolutely hairless, yet his scalp had not that quality of glossiness we ordinarily associate with baldness. Rather, it seemed to have a suède-like dullness which threw no answering gleam back from the hall lamp under which he stood. His small, side-slanting eyes were black as obsidian and his pointed chin thrust out. His companion wore a blue raincoat, tight-buttoned to the throat, and above its collar showed her face, dead-white beneath short, jet-black hair brushed flat against her head. Her brows were straight and narrow, the eyes below them black as prunes; her lips were a thin, scarlet line. She looked hard and muscular, not masculine, but sexless as a hatchet.

I saw terror like cold flame wither my companions' faces as they looked up at the trespassers. Although they said no word I knew the chill and ominous foreknowledge of sure death was on them.

"See here," I snapped as I rose from my chair, "what d'ye mean by coming in this way——"

"Sit down, old man," the woman interrupted in a low, cold voice. "Keep still and we'll not hurt you——"

"Old man?" I choked. To have my house invaded in this way was injury, to be called an old man—that was added insult. "Get out!" I ordered sharply. "Get out of here, or——" The gleam of light upon the visitors' pistol barrels robbed my protest of authority.

"We have come to execute these traitors to the People's Cause," the man announced. "You have doubtless heard of us from them. I am Boris Proudhon, commissar of People's Justice. This is Matriona Rimsky——"

"And you will both oblige me greatly if you elevate your hands!" Standing framed in the front door, Jules de Grandin swung his automatic pistol in a threatening arc before him. He was smiling, but not pleasantly, and from the flush upon his ordinarily pale cheeks I knew he must have hurried through the rain.

There was corrosive, vitriolic hatred in the woman's voice as she wheeled toward him. "Bourgeois swine; capitalistic dog!" she spat, her pistol raised.

There was no flicker in de Grandin's smile as he shot her neatly through the forehead, nor did he change expression as he told the man, "It is a pity she should go to hell alone, *Monsieur*. You had better keep her company." His pistol snapped a second spiteful, whip-like crack, and Boris Proudhon stumbled forward on the body of his companion spy and fellow murderer.

"*Tiens*, I've followed them for hours," the Frenchman said as he came into the drawing-room, stepping daintily around the huddled bodies. "I saw them lurking in the shadows when I left the house, and knew they had no good intentions. Accordingly I circled back when I had reached the corner, and lay in wait to watch them. When they moved, so did I. When they so skilfully undid the front door lock all silently, I was at their elbows. When they announced intention to commit another murder—*eh bien*, it is not healthy to do things like that when Jules de Grandin is about."

"But it was scarcely eight o'clock when you went out; it's past eleven now. Surely you could have summoned the police,"

I protested. "Was it necessary that you shoot——"

"Not necessary, but desirable," he interrupted. "I know what's in your thought, Friend Trowbridge. Me, I can fairly see that Anglo-Saxon mind of yours at work. 'He shot a woman!' you accuse, and are most greatly shocked. *Pourquoi?* I have also shot the female of the leopard and the tiger when occasion called for it. I have set my heel upon the heads of female snakes. Had it been a rabid bitch I shot in time to save two lives you would have thought I did a noble service. Why, then, do you shudder with smug horror when I eliminate a blood-mad female woman? These two sent countless innocents to Siberia and death when they worked for the Tsarist government. As agents of the Soviets they fed their blood-lust by a hundred heartless killings. They murdered the great savant Pavlovitch in cold blood, they would have done the same for Nikakova and Serge had I not

stopped them. *Tenez*, it was no vengeance that I did; it was an execution."

Aksakoff and Nikakova crossed the room and knelt before him, and in solemn turn took his right hand and raised it to their brows and lips. To me it seemed absurd, degrading, even, but they were Russians, and the things they did were ingrained as their thoughts. Also—I realized it with a start of something like surprize—Jules de Grandin was a Frenchman, emotional, mercurial, lovable and loving, but—a Frenchman. Therefore, he was logical as Fate. He lived by sentiment, but of sentimentality he had not a trace.

It was this realization which enabled me to stifle my instinctive feeling of repugnance as he calmly called police headquarters and informed them that the murderers of Doctor Pavlovitch were waiting at my house—"for the wagon of the morgue."
