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**WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH**

# Hands of the Dead

By SEABURY QUINN

*A gripping story of weird surgery and dual personality—  
a tale of Jules de Grandin*

**I**F THERE were such a thing as a platinum blond tom-cat, I'm sure it would look like Doctor de Grandin." My dinner partner, a long-eyed, sleek-haired brunette in a black-crêpe gown cut to the base of her throat in front and slashed in a V below the waist behind, gestured with her oddly oblique eyes across the table toward Jules de Grandin. "He's a funny little fellow—rather a darling, though," Miss Travers added. "Just see how he looks at Virginia Bushrod; wouldn't you think she was a particularly luscious specimen of sparrow, and he——"

"Why should he watch Miss Bushrod, particularly?" I countered. "She's very lovely, but——"

"Oh, I don't think he's interested in her face, pretty as it is," Miss Travers laughed. "He's watching her hands. Everybody does."

I looked along the candle-lighted table with its ornate Georgian silver and lace-and-linen cloth until my eye came to rest upon Virginia Bushrod. Latest of the arrivals at the Merridews' house party, she was also probably the most interesting. You could not judge her casually. A pale, white skin, lightly tanned on beach and tennis court, amber eyes, shading to brown, hair waved and parted in dull-gold ringlets, curled closely on the back-curve of her small and shapely head. The dead-white gown she wore set off her bright, blond beauty, and a pair of heavy



"They pointed derisive fingers at me, and they were laughing at me."

gold bracelets, tight-clasped about her wrists, drew notice to her long and slender hands.

They were extraordinary hands. Not large, not small, their shapeliness was statuesque, their form as perfect as a sculptor's dream, with straight and supple fingers and a marvelous grace of movement expressive as a spoken word. Almost, it seemed to me as she raised the spun-glass Venetian goblet of Madeira, her hands possessed an independent being of their own; a consciousness of volition which made them not a mere part of her

body, but something allied with, though not subservient to it.

"Her hands are rarely beautiful," I commented. "What is she, an actress? A dancer, perhaps——"

"No," said Miss Travers, and her voice sank to a confidential whisper, "but a year ago we thought she'd be a hopeless cripple all her life. Both hands were mangled in a motor accident."

"But that's impossible," I scoffed, watching Miss Bushrod's graceful gestures with renewed interest. "I've been in medicine almost forty years; no hands

which suffered even minor injuries could be as flexible as hers."

"They did, just the same," Miss Travers answered stubbornly. "The doctors gave up hope, and said they'd have to amputate them at the wrist; her father told me so. Virginia gave Phil Connor back his ring and was ready to resign herself to a life of helplessness when——"

"Yes?" I smiled as she came to a halt. Lay versions of medical miracles are always interesting to the doctor, and I was anxious to learn how the "hopeless cripple" had been restored to perfect manual health.

"Doctor Augensburg came over here, and they went to him as a last resort——"

"I should think they would," I interjected. Augensburg, half charlatan, a quarter quack, perhaps a quarter genius, was a fair example of the army of medical marvels which periodically invades America. He was clever as a workman, we all admitted that, and in some operations of glandular transplanting had achieved remarkable results, but when he came out with the statement that he had discovered how to make synthetic flesh for surgical repair work the medical societies demanded that he prove his claims or stop the grand triumphal tour that he was making of his clinics. He failed to satisfy his critics and returned to Austria several thousand dollars richer, but completely discredited in medical circles.

"Well, they went to him," Miss Travers answered shortly, "and you see what he accomplished. He——"

Her argument was stilled as Jane Merriew, who acted as her brother's hostess, gave the signal for the ladies to retire.

CHINESE lanterns, orange, red, pale jade, blossomed in the darkness of the garden. Farther off the vine-draped wall cast its shadow over close-clipped

grass and winding flagstone paths; there were rustic benches underneath the ginkgo trees; a drinking-fountain fashioned like a lion's head with water flushing in an arc between its gaping jaws sent a musically mellow tinkle through the still night air. I sighed regretfully as I followed the men into the billiard room. The mid-Victorian custom of enforced separation of men and women for a period after dinner had always seemed to me a relic of the past we might well stuff and donate to a museum.

"Anybody want to play?" Ralph Chapman took a cue down from the rack and rubbed its felt-tipped end with chalk. "Spot you a dollar a shot, Phil; are you on?"

"Not I," the youth addressed responded with a grin. "You took me into camp last time. Go get another victim."

Young Chapman set the balls out on the table, surveyed them critically a moment, then, taking careful aim, made a three-cushion shot, and followed it with another which bunched the gleaming spheres together in one corner.

De Grandin raised a slender, well-manicured hand and patted back a yawn. "*Mon Dieu*," he moaned to me, "it is sad! Outside there is the beauty of the night and of the ladies, and we, *pardieu*, we sit and swelter here like a pack of *sacré* fools while he knocks about the relics of departed elephants. Me, I have enough. I go to join the ladies, if——"

"May I try, Ralph?" Glowing in defiant gayety, lips wine-moist, eyes bright and wandering, Virginia Bushrod poised upon the threshold of the wide French window which let out on the terrace. "I've never played," she added, "but to-night I feel an urge for billiards; I've got a yen to knock the little balls around, if you know what I mean."

"Never too late to learn," young Chap-

man grinned at her. "I'm game; I'll pay you five for every kiss you make."

"Kiss?" she echoed, puzzled.

"Kiss is right, infant. A purely technical term. See, here's a kiss." Deftly he brought the balls together in light contact, paused a moment, then with a quick flick of his cue repeated the maneuver twice, thrice, four times.

"O-oh, I see." Her eyes were bright with something more than mere anticipation. It seemed to me they shone like those of a drunkard long deprived of drink when liquor is at last accessible.

"See here, you take the stick like this," began young Chapman, but the girl brushed past him, took a cue down from the rack and deftly rubbed the cube of chalk against its tip.

She leant across the table, her smooth brow furrowed in a frown of concentration, thrust the cue back and forth across her fingers tentatively; then swiftly as a striking snake the smooth wood darted forward. Around the table went the cue ball, taking the cushions at a perfect angle. *Click—click*, the ivory spheres kissed each other softly, then settled down a little way apart, their polished surfaces reflecting the bright lamplight.

"Bravo, Virginia!" cried Ralph Chapman. "I couldn't have made a better shot myself. Talk about beginner's luck!"

The girl, apparently, was deaf. Eyes shining, lips compressed, she leant across the table, darted forth her cue and made an expert draw shot, gathering the balls together as though they had been magnetized. Then followed a quick volley shot, the cue ball circled round the table, spun sharply in reverse English and kissed the other balls with so light an impact that the click was hardly audible.

Again and again she shot, driving her cue ball relentlessly home against the others, never missing, making the most

difficult shots with the sure precision betokening long mastery of the game. Fever-eyed, white-faced, oblivious to all about her, she made shot follow shot until a hundred marks had been run off, and it seemed to me that she was sating some fierce craving as she bent above the table, cue in hand.

Phil Connor, her young fiancé, was as puzzled as the rest, watching her inimitable skill first with wonder, then with something like stark fear. At last: "Virginia!" he cried, seizing her by the elbow and fairly dragging her away. "Virginia, honey, you've played enough."

"Oh?" An oddly puzzled look gathered between her slim brows, and she shook her head from side to side, like a waking sleeper who would clear his brain of dreams. "Did I do well?"

"Very well. Very well, indeed, for one who never played the game before," Ralph Chapman told her coldly.

"But, Ralph, I never did," she answered. "Honestly, I never had a billiard cue in my hands before tonight!"

"No?" his tone was icy. "If this is your idea of being sporting——"

"See here, Chapman," young Connor's Irish blood was quick to take the implication up. "Ginnie's telling you the truth. There isn't a billiard table in her father's house or mine, there wasn't any in her sorority house; she's never had a chance to play. Don't you think I'd know if she liked the game? I tell you it was luck; sheer luck——"

"At five dollars per lucky point?"

"Word of honor, Ralph," Miss Bushrod told him, "I——"

"You'll find my honor good as yours," he broke in frigidly. "I'll hand you my check for five hundred dollars in the morning, Miss——"

"Why, you dam' rotten swine, I'll break your neck!" Phil Connor leaped

across the room, eyes flashing, face aflame; but:

"Gentlemen, this has gone quite far enough," Colonel Merridew's cold voice cut through the quarrel. "Chapman, apologize to Virginia. Connor, put your hands down!" Then, as the apology was grudgingly given:

"Shall we join the ladies, gentlemen?" asked Colonel Merridew.

"IT WAS a rather shoddy trick that Bushrod girl played on young Chapman, wasn't it?" I asked de Grandin as we prepared for bed. "He's a conceited pup, I grant, vain of his skill at billiards, and all that; but for her to play the wide-eyed innocent and let him offer her five dollars a point, when she's really in the championship class—well, it didn't seem quite sporting."

The little Frenchman eyed the glowing tip of his cigar in thoughtful silence for a moment; then: "I am not quite persuaded," he replied. "Mademoiselle Bushrod—*mon Dieu*, what a name!—appeared as much surprized as any——"

"But, man, did you notice her dexterity?" I cut in petulantly. "That manual skill——"

"*Précisément*," he nodded, "that manual skill, my friend. Did it not seem to you her hands betrayed a—how do you say him?—a knowledge which she herself did not possess?"

I shook my head in sheer exasperation. "You're raving," I assured him. "How the deuce——"

"*Tiens*, the devil knows, perhaps, not I," he broke in with a shrug. "Come, let us take a drink and go to bed."

He raised the chromium carafe from the bedside table, and: "Name of a devil!" he exclaimed in disappointment. "The thing holds water!"

"Of course it does, idiot," I assured

him with a laugh. "You wanted a drink, didn't you?"

"A drink, but not a bath, *cordieu*. Come, species of an elephant, arise and follow me."

"Where?" I demanded.

"To find a drink; where else?" he answered with a grin. "There is a tray with glasses on the sideboard of the dining-room."

The big old house was silent as a tomb as we crept down the stairs, slipped silently along the central hall and headed for the dining-room. De Grandin paused abruptly, hand upraised, and, obedient to his signal, I, too, halted.

In the music room which opened from the hallway on the right, someone was playing the piano, very softly, with a beautiful harpsichord touch. The lovely, haunting sadness of the *Londonderry Air* came to us as we listened, the gently-struck notes falling, one upon another, like water dripping from a lichened rock into a quiet woodland pool.

"Exquisite!" I began, but the Frenchman's hand raised to his lips cut short my commendation as he motioned me to follow.

Virginia Bushrod sat before the instrument, her long, slim fingers flitting fitfully across the ivory keys, the wide gold bracelets on her wrists agleam. Black-lace pajamas, less concealing than a whorl of smoke, revealed the gracious curves of her young body, with a subtle glow, as wisps of banking storm-clouds dim, but do not hide, the moon.

As we paused beside the door the sweet melody she played gave way to something else, a lecherous, macabre theme in C sharp minor, seductive and compelling, but revolting as a painted corpse already touched with putrefaction. Swaying gently to the rhythm of the music, she turned her face toward us, and

in the wavering candlelight I saw her eyes were closed, long lashes sweeping against pale-gold cheeks, smooth, fine-veined eyelids gently lowered.

I turned to Jules de Grandin with a soundless question, and he nodded affirmation. "But yes, she sleeps, my friend," he whispered. "Do not waken her."

The music slowly sank to a thin echo, and Miss Bushrod rose with lowered lids and gently parted lips, swayed uncertainly a moment, then passed us with a slow and gliding step, her slim, bare feet soundless as a draft of air upon the rug-strewn floor. Slowly she climbed the stairs, one shapely hand upon the carven balustrade, the dim night-light which burned up in the gallery picking little points of brightness from her golden wristlets.

"Probably neurotic," I murmured as I watched her turn left and disappear around the pillar at the stairhead. "They say she underwent an operation on her hands last year, and——"

De Grandin motioned me to silence as he teased the needle-points of his mustache between his thumb and finger. "Quite so," he said at length. "Precisely, exactly. One wonders."

"Wonders what?" I asked.

"How long we have to wait until we get that drink," he answered with a grin. "Come, let us get it quickly, or we need not go to bed at all."

**B**REAKFAST was no formal rite at Merridew's. A long buffet, ready-set with food and gay with raffia-bound Italian glassware, Mexican pottery and bowls, daisies, chickory and Queen Anne's lace, stood upon the terrace, while little tables, spread with bright-checked peasant linen, dotted the brick paving.

De Grandin piled a platter high with

food, poured himself a cup of coffee and set to work upon the viands. "Tell me, good Friend Trowbridge," he commanded as he returned from the sideboard with a second generous helping of steamed sole, "what did you note, if anything, when we caught Mademoiselle Bushrod at her midnight music?"

I eyed him speculatively. When Jules de Grandin asked me questions such as that they were not based on idle curiosity.

"You're on the trail of something?" I evaded.

He spread his hands before him, imitating someone groping in the dark. "I think I am," he answered slowly, "but I can not say of what. Come, tell me what you noticed, if you please."

"Well," I bent my brows in concentration, "first of all, I'd say that she was sleep-walking; that she had no more idea what she was doing than I have what she's doing now."

He nodded acquiescence. "Precisely," he agreed. "And——"

"Then, I was struck by the fact that though she had apparently risen from bed, she had those thick, barbaric bracelets on her wrists."

"*Holá, touché,*" he cried delightedly, "you have put the finger on it. It was unusual, was it not?"

"I'd say so," I agreed. "Then—why, bless my soul!" I paused in something like dismay as sudden recollection came to me.

He watched me narrowly, eyebrows raised.

"She turned the wrong way at the stairhead," I exclaimed. "The women's rooms are to the right of the stairs, the men's to the left. Don't you remember, Colonel Merridew said——"

"I remember perfectly," he cut in. "I also saw her turn that way, but preferred to have corroboration——"

THE clatter of hoofs on the driveway cut short his remarks, and a moment later Virginia Bushrod joined us on the terrace. She looked younger and much smaller in her riding-clothes. White breeches, obviously of London cut, were topped by a white-linen peasant blouse, gay with wool embroidery, open at the throat, but with sleeves which came down to the gauntlets of her doeskin gloves. For belt she wore a brilliant knit-silk Roman scarf, and another like it knotted turbanwise around her head, its glowing reds and greens and yellows bringing out the charming colors of her vivid, laughing face. Black boots, reaching to the knee, encased her high-arched, narrow feet and slender legs.

"Hello, sleepy-heads," she greeted as she sat down at our table, "where've you been all morning? Making up for night calls and such things? I've been up for hours—and I'm famished."

"What will it be, *Mademoiselle*?" de Grandin asked as he leaped up nimbly to serve her; "a little toast, perhaps—a bowl of cereal?"

"Not for me," she denied, laughing. "I want a man's-sized breakfast. I've ridden fifteen miles this morning."

As she peeled off her white-chamois gloves I caught the glint of golden bracelets on her wrists.

"We enjoyed your playing, *Mademoiselle*," the little Frenchman told her smilingly as, obedient to her orders, he deposited a "man's-sized" plate of food before her. "The *Londonderry Air* is beautiful, but that other composition which you played with such *verve*, such feeling, it was——"

"Is this a joke?" Miss Bushrod looked at him through narrowed eyes. "If it is, I can't quite see the humor."

"*Mais non*, it is no jest, I do assure

you. Music is one of my passions, and although I play but poorly, I enjoy to hear it. Your talent——"

"Then you've mistaken me for someone else," the girl cut in, a quick flush mounting to her face. "I'm one of those unfortunates who's utterly tone-deaf; I——"

"That's right," Christine Travers, virtually naked in a sun-back tennis blouse and shorts, emerged through the French windows and dropped down beside Miss Bushrod. "Ginnie's tone-deaf as an oyster. Couldn't carry a tune in a market basket."

"But, my dear young lady," I began, when a vicious kick upon my shin cut my protest short.

"Yes?" Miss Travers smiled her slow, somewhat malicious smile. "Were you going to tell Ginnie you've a remedy for tone-deafness, Doctor? Something nice and mild, like arsenic, or corrosive sublimate? If you'll just tell her how to take it, I'll see——"

"Doctar Trowbridge, Doctar de Granun, suh, come quick, fo' de Lawd's sake!" Noah Blackstone, Merridew's stout colored butler, burst upon the terrace, his usual serene aplomb torn to shreds by sudden terror. "Come runnin', gen'lemens, sumpin awful's happened!"

"Eh, what is it you say?" de Grandin asked. "Something awful——"

"Yas, suh; sumpin dreadful. Mistu—Mistu Chapman's done been kilt. Sum-buddy's murdered 'im. He's daid!"

"Dead? Ralph Chapman?" Horror mounted in Virginia Bushrod's amber eyes as she seemed to look past us at some scene of stark tragedy. "Ralph Chapman—dead!" Unthinkingly, mechanically as another woman might have wrung her handkerchief in similar circumstances, she took the heavy silver fork with which she had been eating and bent it in a spiral.



**S**PRAWLED supinely across the bed, protruding eyes staring sightlessly at the ceiling, Ralph Chapman lay, mouth slightly agape, tongue thrust forward. It needed no second glance to confirm the butler's diagnosis, and it required only a second glance to confirm his suspicion of murder, for in those bulging eyes and that protruding tongue, no less than in the area of bruise upon the throat, we read the autograph of homicide.

"So!" de Grandin gazed upon the body speculatively, then crossed the room, took the dead boy's face between his hands and raised the head. It was as if the head and body joined by a cord rather than a column of bone and muscle, for there was no resistance to the little Frenchman's slender hands as the young man's chin nodded upward. "Ah—so-o-o!" de Grandin murmured. "He used unnecessary violence, this one; see, my friend"—he turned the body half-way over and pointed to a purpling bruise upon the rear of the neck—"two hands were used. In front we have the murderer's thumb and finger marks; behind is ecchymosis due to counter-pressure. And so great a force was used that not only was this poor one strangled, but his neck was broken, as well."

He passed his fingers tentatively along the outline of young Chapman's jaw; then: "How long has he been dead, my friend?" he asked.

Following his example, I felt the dead boy's jaw, then his chest and lower throat. "H'm," I glanced at my watch, "my guess is six or seven hours. There's still some stiffening of the jaw, but not much in the chest, and the forearms are definitely hard—yes, I'd say six hours at the least, eight at the most, judging by the advance of rigor mortis. That would place the time of death——"

"Somewhere near midnight," he sup-

plied. Then, irrelevantly: "They were strong hands that did this thing, my friend; the muscles of our necks are tough, our vertebræ are hard; yet this one's neck is snapped as though it were a reed."

"You—you've a suspicion?" I faltered.

"I think so," he returned, sweeping the room with a quick, stock-taking glance.

"Ah, what is this?" He strode across the rug, coming to pause before the bureau. On the hanging mirror of the cabinet, outlined plainly as an heraldic device blazoned on a coat of arms, was a hand-print, long slender fingers, the mounts of the palm and the delicately sweeping curve of the heel etched on the gleaming surface, as though a hand, dank with perspiration, had been pressed upon it.

"Now," his slim black brows rose in saracenic arches as he regarded me quizzically, "for why should a midnight visitant, especially if bent on murder, take pains to leave an autograph upon the mirror, good Friend Trowbridge?" he demanded.

"B-but that's a woman's hand," I stammered. "Whoever broke Ralph Chapman's neck was strong as a gorilla, you just said so. A woman——"

"Tell me, my friend," he interrupted, fixing me with that level, disconcerting stare of his, "do you not wish to see that justice triumphs?"

"Why, yes, of course, but——"

"And is it your opinion—I ask you as a man of medicine—that a man's neck offers more resistance than, by example, a silver table-fork?"

I stared at him dumfounded. Ralph Chapman had publicly denounced Virginia Bushrod as a cheat; we had seen her going toward his room about the time of the murder; within five minutes we had seen her give a demonstration of manual strength scarcely to be equaled by a pro-

fessional athlete. The evidence was damning, but——

"You're going to turn her over to the police?" I asked.

For answer he drew the green-silk handkerchief peeping from the pocket of his brown sports coat, wadded it into a mop and erased the handprint from the mirror. "Come, my friend," he ordered, "we must write out our report before the coroner arrives."

THE mortician to whom Coroner Lordon had entrusted Chapman's body obligingly lent his funeral chapel for the inquest. The jury, picked at random from the villagers, occupied the space customarily assigned to the remains. The coroner himself sat in the clergyman's enclosure. Witnesses were made comfortable in the family room, being called out one by one to testify. Through the curtained doorway leading to the chapel—ingeniously arranged to permit the mourning family to see and hear the funeral ceremonies without being seen by those assembled in the auditorium—we saw the butler testify to finding the body and heard him say he summoned de Grandin and me immediately.

"You give it as your medical opinion that death had taken place some six or seven hours earlier?" the coroner asked me.

"Yes, sir," I replied.

"And what, in your opinion, was the cause of death?"

"Without the confirmation of an autopsy I can only hazard an opinion," I returned, "but from superficial examination I should say it was due to respiratory failure caused by a dislocation of the spinal column and rupture of the cord. The dislocation, as nearly as I could judge from feeling of the neck, took place between the second and third cervical vertebræ."

"And how was the spinal fracture caused?"

"By manual pressure, sir—pressure with the hands. The bruises on the dead man's neck show the murderer grasped him by the throat at first, probably to stifle any outcry, then placed one hand behind his head and with the other forced the chin violently upward, thereby simulating the quick pressure given the neck in cases of judicial hanging."

"It would have required a man of more than usual strength to commit this murder in the manner you have described it?"

I drew a deep breath of relief. "Yes, sir, it would have had to be such a man," I answered, emphasizing the final word, unconsciously, perhaps.

"Thank you, Doctor," said the coroner, and called de Grandin to corroborate my testimony.

As the inquisition lengthened it became apparent Coroner Lordon had a theory of his own, which he was ingeniously weaving into evidence. Rather subtly he brought out the fact that the household had retired by eleven-thirty, and not till then did he call for testimony of the quarrel which had flared up in the billiard room. The painful scene was re-enacted in minute detail; six men were forced to swear they heard young Connor threaten to break Chapman's neck.

"Mr. Connor," asked the coroner, "you rowed stroke oar at Norwood, I believe?"

Phil Connor nodded, and in his eyes was growing terror.

"Day before yesterday you won a twenty-dollar bet with Colonel Merridew by tearing a telephone directory in quarters, did you not?"

A murmur ran along the jury as the question stabbed young Connor like a rapier-thrust.

I saw Virginia Bushrod blanch beneath her tan, saw her long, slim hand go out

to clutch her lover's, but my interest in the by-play ceased as the final question hurtled like a crossbow bolt:

"Mr. Connor, where were you between the hours of twelve and two last night?"

The tortured youth's face flushed, then went white as tallow as the frightened blood drained back. The trap had sprung. He rose, grasping at the chair in front of him till lines of white showed on his hands as the flexor muscles stood out pallidly against his sun-tanned skin.

"I—I must refuse to answer——" he began, and I could see his throat working convulsively as he fought for breath. "What I was doing then is no affair——"

"*Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur le Coronier,*" de Grandin rose and bowed respectfully, "I do not wonder that the young man is embarrassed. He was with me, and—believe me, I am grieved to mention it, and would not, if it were not necessary—he was drunk!"

"Drunk?" a slow flush stained the corner's face as he saw his cherished case evaporating.

"Drunk?" the little Frenchman echoed, casting a grin toward the responsive jury. "But yes, *Monsieur*. Drunk like a pig; so drunk he could not mount the stairs unaided."

Before he could be interrupted he proceeded:

"Me, I am fond of liquor. I like it in the morning, I delight in it at noon; at night I utterly adore it. Last night, when I had gone to bed, I felt the need of stimulant. I rose and went downstairs, and as I reached the bottom flight I turned and saw Messieurs Connor and Chapman on the balcony above. They were in argument, and seemed quite angry. '*Holá, mes enfants,*' I called to them, 'cease your dispute and join me in a drink. It will dissolve your troubles as a cup of coffee melts a lump of sugar.'

"Monsieur Chapman would have none of it. Perhaps he was one of those unfortunates who have no love for brandy; it might have been he did not choose to drink with Monsieur Connor. At any rate, he went into his room and closed the door, while Monsieur Connor joined me in the dining-room.

"*Messieurs,*" he bent another quick smile at the jurymen, "have you ever seen a man unused to liquor making the attempt to seem to like it? It is laughable, is it not? So it was last night. 'This one'—he laid a patronizing hand upon young Connor's shoulder—"he tipped his glass and poured the brandy down, then made a face as though it had been castor oil. Ah, but he had the gameness, as you say so quaintly over here. When I essayed a second drink he held his glass for more, and when I took a third, he still desired to keep me company; but then he scarce knew what he did. Three glasses of good cognac"—he fairly smacked his lips upon the word—"are not for one who does not give his serious thought to drinking. No, certainly.

"Before you could pronounce the name of that Monsieur Jacques Robinson our young friend here was drunk. *Mordieu*, it was superb! Not in more than twenty years have I been able to achieve such drunkenness, *Messieurs*. He staggered, his head hung low between his shoulders, and rolled from side to side; he smiled like a pussy-cat who has lately dined on cream; he toppled from his chair and lay upon the floor!

"I raised him up. 'Come, *Monsieur,*' I told him, 'this is no way to do. You are like a little, naughty boy who creeps into his father's cellar and gets drunk on stolen wine. Be a man, *Monsieur*. Come to bed!'

"Ah, but he could not. He could not walk, he could not talk, except to beg me

that I would not tell his fiancée about his indiscretion. And so I dragged him up the stairs. Yes, I, who am not half his size, must carry him upstairs, strip off his clothes, and leave him snoring in a drunken stupor. He——”

“Then you think he couldn’t ‘a’ broke th’ other feller’s neck?” a jurymen demanded with a grin.

De Grandin left his place, walked across the chapel till he faced his questioner and leant above him, speaking in a confidential whisper which he nevertheless managed to make audible throughout the room. “My friend,” he answered solemnly, “he could not break the bow of his cravat. I saw him try it several times; at last I had to do it for him.”

The verdict of the jury was that Ralph Chapman came to his death at the hands of some person or persons to them unknown.

**D**E GRANDIN poured a thimbleful of old Courvoisier into his brandy sniffer, rotated the glass a moment, then held it to his nose, sighing ecstatically. “You know, my friend,” he told me as he sipped the cognac slowly, “I often wonder what became of them. It was a case with possibilities, that one. I can not rid my mind of the suspicion——”

“Whatever are you vamping about?” I cut in testily. “What case, and what suspicion——”

“Why, that of Mademoiselle Bushrod and her fiancé, the young Monsieur Connor. I——”

“You certainly lied Phil Connor out of the electric chair,” I told him with a smile. “If ever I saw a death-trap closing in on anyone, it was the snare the coroner had laid for him. Whatever made you do it, man? Didn’t *you* want to see justice triumph?”

“I did,” he answered calmly, “but jus-

tice and law are not always cousins german, my friend. Justly, neither of those young folks was responsible for——”

“Beg pardon, sor, there’s a lady an’ gentleman askin’ fer Doctor de Grandin,” interrupted Nora McGinnis from the doorway. “A Mither Connor an’ Miss Bushrod. Will I be showin’ ‘em in, I dunno?”

“By all means!” cried de Grandin, swallowing his brandy at a gulp. “Come, Friend Trowbridge, the angels whom we spoke of have appeared!”

**P**HIL CONNOR looked embarrassed; a darkling, haunted fear was in Virginia Bushrod’s eyes as we joined them in the drawing-room.

The young man drew a deep, long breath, like a swimmer about to dive into icy water, then blurted: “You saved my life, sir, when they had me on the spot last month. Now we’ve come to you again for help. Something’s been troubling us ever since Ralph Chapman died, and we believe that you’re the only one to clear it up.”

“But I am honored!” said de Grandin with a bow. “What is the nature of your worriment, my friends? Whatever I can do you may be sure I’ll do if you will take me in your confidence.”

Young Connor rose, a faint flush on his face, and shifted from one foot to the other, like a schoolboy ill at ease before his teacher. “It’s more a matter of your taking us into your confidence, sir,” he said at length. “What really happened on the night Ralph Chapman’s neck was broken? Of course, that story which you told was pure invention—even though it saved me from a trial for murder—but both Virginia and I have been haunted by the fear that something which we do not know about happened, and——”

“How do you say, you fear that some-

thing which you do not know about——” he began, but Virginia Bushrod cut in with a question:

“Is there anything to the Freudian theory that dreams are really wish-fulfillments, Doctor? I’ve tried to tell myself there is, for that way lies escape, but——”

“Yes, *Mademoiselle?*” de Grandin prompted as she paused.

“Well, in a misty, hazy sort of way I recollect I dreamt that Ralph was dead that night and that—oh, I might as well tell everything! I dreamt I killed him!

“It seemed to me I got up out of bed and walked a long, long way along a dark and winding road. I came to a high mountain, but oddly, I was on its summit, without having climbed it. I descended to the valley, and everything was dark; then I sat down to rest, and far away I heard a strain of music. It was soft, and sweet and restful, and I thought, ‘How good it is to be here listening——’”

“*Pardon, Mademoiselle*, can you recall the tune you heard?” de Grandin asked, his small mustache aquiver like the whiskers of an alert tom-cat, his little, round blue eyes intent on her in an unwinking stare.

“Why, yes, I think I can. I’m totally tone-deaf, you know, utterly unable to reproduce a single note of music accurately, but there are certain tunes I recognize. This was one of them, the *Londonderry Air*.”

“Ah?” the little Frenchman flashed a warning look at me; then: “And what else did you dream?” he asked.

“The tune I listened to so gladly seemed to change. I couldn’t tell you what the new air was, but it was something dreadful—terrible. It was like the shrieking and laughing of a thousand fiends together—and they were laughing at me! They seemed to point derisive fin-

gers at me, making fun of me because I’d been insulted by Ralph Chapman and didn’t dare resent it.

“I don’t suppose you’ve ever heard of the Canadian poet Service, Doctor, but somewhere in one of his poems he tells of the effect of music on a crowd of miners gathered in a saloon:

“The thought came back of an ancient wrong,  
And it stung like a frozen lash,  
And the lust arose to kill—to kill . . .

“That’s how that dream-tune seemed to me. The darkness round me seemed to change to dusky red, as though I looked out through a film of blood, and a single thought possessed me: ‘Kill Ralph Chapman; kill Ralph Chapman! He called you a low cheat before your friends tonight; kill him for it—wring his neck!’

“Then I was climbing up the mountain-side again, clambering over rocks and boulders, and always round me was that angry, bloody glow, like the red reflection of a fire at night against the sky. At last I reached the summit, weak and out of breath, and there before me, sleeping on the rocks, was Ralph Chapman. I looked at him, and as I looked the hot resentment which I felt came flooding up until it nearly strangled me. I bent over him, took his throat between my hands and squeezed, pressed till his face grew bluish-gray and his eyes and tongue were starting forward. Oh, he knew who it was, all right! Before I gave his neck the final vicious twist and felt it break beneath my fingers like a brittle stick that’s bent too far, I saw the recognition in his eyes—and the deadly fear in them.

“I wasn’t sorry for the thing I’d done. I was deliriously happy. I’d killed my enemy, avenged the slight he’d put on me, and was nearly wild with fierce, exultant joy. I wanted to call everybody and show them what I’d done; how those who called Virginia Bushrod thief and cheat were dealt with.”

HER breath was coming fast, and in her eyes there shone a bright and gleaming light, as though the mere recital of the dream brought her savage exaltation. "The woman's mad," I told myself, "a homicidal maniac, if ever I saw one."

"And then, *Mademoiselle?*" I heard de Grandin ask soothingly.

"Then I awoke. My hands and brow and cheeks were bathed in perspiration, and I trembled with a sort of chilled revulsion. 'Girl, you've certainly been on a wish-fulfilment spree in Shut-eye Town,' I told myself as I got out of bed.

"It was early, not quite five o'clock, but I knew there was no chance of further sleep, so I took a cold shower, got into my riding-clothes, and went for a long gallop. I argued with myself while riding, and had almost convinced myself that it was all a ghastly dream when I met you and Doctor Trowbridge having breakfast.

"When you mentioned hearing the *Londonderry Air* the night before, I went almost sick. The thought crashed through my brain: 'Music at midnight—music at midnight—music luring me to murder!'

"Then, when the butler ran out on the terrace and told you Ralph was dead——"

"Precisely, *Mademoiselle*, one understands," de Grandin supplied softly.

"I don't believe you do," she contradicted with a wan and rather frightened smile. "For a long time—almost ever since my accident—I've had an odd, oppressive feeling every now and then that I was not myself."

"*Eh*, that you were someone else?" he asked her sharply.

"Yes, that's it, that I was someone different from myself——"

"Who, by example, *Mademoiselle?*"

"Oh, I don't know. Someone low and vile and dreadful, someone with the bas-

est instincts, who—who's *trying to push me out of myself.*"

De Grandin tweaked the needle-points of his mustache, leant forward in his chair and faced her with a level, almost hypnotic stare. "Explain yourself—in the smallest detail—if you will be so good," he ordered.

"I'm afraid I can't explain, sir, it's almost impossible; but—well, take the episode in the billiard room at Colonel Merridew's the night that Ralph was killed. I gave him my word then, and I give you my solemn pledge now that never before in all my life had I held a billiard cue in my hand. I don't know what made me do it, but I happened to be standing on the terrace near the windows of the billiard room, and when I heard the balls click I felt a sudden overmastering urge, like the craving of a drug fiend for his dope, to go inside and play. It was silly, I knew I couldn't even hit a ball, much less make one ball hit another, but something deep inside me seemed to force me on—no, that's not it, it was as though my hands were urging me." She wrinkled her brow in an effort to secure a precisely descriptive phrase; then:

"It seemed as though my hands, entirely independent of me, were leading—no, *pulling* me toward that billiard table. Then, when I had picked up the cue I had a sudden feeling, amounting almost to positive conviction: 'You've done this before; you know this game, no one knows it better.' But I was in a sort of daze as I shot the balls around; I didn't realize how long I'd been playing, or even whether I'd done well or not, till Ralph accused me of pretending ignorance of the game in order to win five hundred dollars from him.

"That isn't all: I'd hardly been out of the hospital a month when one day I found myself in Rodenberg's department

store in the act of shoving a piece of Chantilly lace under the jumper of my dress. I can't explain it. I didn't realize I was doing it—truly I didn't!—till all of a sudden I seemed to wake up and catch myself in the act of shoplifting. "Virginia Bushrod, what *are* you doing?" I asked myself, then held the lace out to the sales girl and told her I would take it. I didn't really want it, had no earthly use for it; but I knew instinctively that if I didn't buy it I would steal it."

Abruptly she demanded: "Do you approve of brightly-colored nails?"

"*Tenez, Mademoiselle*, that depends upon the time and place and personality of the wearer," he responded with a smile.

"That's it, the personality," she answered. "Bright carmine nails may be all right for some; they're not becoming to my type. Yet I've had an urge, almost an irresistible desire, from time to time to have my nails dyed scarlet. Last week I stopped in Madame Toussaint's for a manicure and pedicure. When I got home I found the nails of both my hands and feet were varnished brilliant red. I never use a deeper shade than rose, and was horrified to find my nails all daubed that way; yet, somehow, there was a feeling of secret elation, too. I called the salon and asked for Héloïse, who'd done my nails, and she said, 'I thought it strange when you insisted on that vivid shade of red, Miss Bushrod. I didn't like to put it on, but you declared you wanted it.'

"Perhaps I did; but I don't remember anything about it."

De Grandin eyed her thoughtfully a moment; then:

"You have spoken of an accident you had, *Mademoiselle*. Tell me of it, if you please."

"It was a little more than a year ago," she answered. "I'd been over to the country club by Morristown, and was hurrying

back to keep a date with Phil when my car blew out a tire. At least, I think that's what happened. I remember a sharp, crackling *pop*, like the discharge of a small rifle, and next instant the roadster fairly somersaulted from the road. I saw the earth rush up at me; then"—she spread her shapely hands in a gesture of finality—"there I was, pinned beneath the wreckage, with both hands crushed to jelly."

"Yet you recovered wholly, thanks to Doctor Augensburg, I understand?"

"Yes, it wasn't till every surgeon we had seen had said he'd have to amputate that Father called in Doctor Augensburg, and he proved they all were wrong. I was in the hospital two months, most of the time completely or partly unconscious from drugs, but"—her delicate, long-fingered hands spread once again with graceful eloquence—"here I am, and I'm not the helpless cripple they all said I'd be."

"Not physically, at any rate," de Grandin murmured softly; then, aloud:

"*Mademoiselle*, take off your bracelets!" he commanded sharply.

Had he hurled an insult in her face, the girl could not have looked more shocked. Surprise, anger, sudden fear showed in her countenance as she repeated: "Take—off——"

"*Précisément*," the little Frenchman answered almost harshly. "Take them off, *tout promptement*. I have the intuition; what you call the hunch."

Slowly, reluctantly, as though she were disrobing in the presence of a stranger, Miss Bushrod snapped the clasps of the wide bands of gold which spanned her slender wrists. A line of untanned skin, standing out in contrast to her sun-kissed arms, encircled each slim wrist, testifying that the bracelets had been worn on beach and tennis court, as well as in her leisure

moments, but whiter still, livid, eldritch as the mocking grin of broken teeth within the gaping mouth-hole of a skull, there ran around each wrist a ring of cicatrice an inch or so above the styloid process' protuberance. Running up and down a half an inch or so from the encircling band of white were vertical scar-lines, interweaving, overlapping, as though the flesh had once been cut apart, then sewn together in a dove-tailed jointure.

Involuntarily I shrank from looking on the girl's deformity, but de Grandin scrutinized it closely. At length:

"*Mademoiselle*, please believe I do not act from idle curiosity," he begged, "but I must use the fluoroscope in my examination. Will you come with me?"

He led her to the surgery, and a moment later we could hear the crackling of the Crookes' tube as he turned the X-ray on.

MISS BUSHROD'S bracelets were replaced when they returned some fifteen minutes later, and de Grandin wore a strangely puzzled look. His lips were pursed, as though he were about to whistle, and his eyes were blazing with the hard, cold light they showed when he was on a man-hunt.

"Now, my friends," he told the lovers as he glanced at them in turn, "I have seen enough to make me think that what this lady says is no mere idle vagary. These strange influences she feels, these surprizing lapses from normal, they do not mean she suffers from a dual personality, at least as the term is generally used. But unless I am more mistaken than I think, we are confronted by a situation so bizarre that just to outline it would cast a doubt upon our sanity. *Alors*, we must build our case up from the ground.

"Tell me," he shot the question at young Connor, "was there anything un-

usual—anything at all, no matter how trivial, which occurred to *Mademoiselle* Bushrod a month—two months—before the accident which crushed her hands?"

The young man knit his brow in concentration. "No-o," he replied at length. "I can't remember anything."

"No altercation, no unpleasantness which might have led to vengeful thoughts, perhaps?" the Frenchman prompted.

"Why, now you speak of it," young Connor answered with a grin, "I did have a run-in with a chap at Coney Island."

"*Ab?* Describe it, if you please."

"It really wasn't anything. Ginnie and I had gone down to the Island for a spree. We think the summer's not complete without at least one day at Coney—shooting the chutes, riding the steeplechase and roller coasters, then taking in the side shows. This afternoon we'd just about completed the rounds when we noticed a new side show with a Professor *Mysterioso* or *Mefisto*, or something of the sort, listed as the chief attraction. He was a hypnotist."

"*Ab?*" de Grandin murmured softly, "and——"

"The professor was just beginning his act when we went in. He was extraordinarily good, too. Uncannily good, I thought. All dressed in red tights, like *Mefistofeles*, he was, and his partner—'subject' you call it, don't you?—was a girl dressed in a white gown with a blond wig, simulating *Marguerite*, you know. He did the darndest things with her—put her in a trance and made her lie stretched between two chairs, with her neck on one and heels on the other, with no support beneath her body, while six men stood on her; told her to rise, and she rose up three feet in the air, as though drawn by invisible wires; finally, he took half a dozen long, sharp knitting-needles



and thrust them through her hands, her forearms, even through her cheeks. Then he withdrew them and invited us to search her for signs of scars. It was morbid, I suppose, but we looked, and there wasn't the faintest trace of wounds where he had pierced her with the needles, nor any sign of blood.

"Then he called for volunteers to come up and be hypnotized, and when no one answered, he came down among the audience. 'You, Madame?' he asked Ginnie, stopping in front of her and grinning in her face.

"When she refused he persisted; told her that it wouldn't hurt, and all that sort of thing; finally began glaring into her eyes and making passes before her.

"That was a little bit too much. I let him have it."

"Bravo!" de Grandin murmured softly. "And then?"

"I expected he'd come back at me, for he picked himself up and came across the floor with his shoulders hunched in a sort of boxer's crouch, but when he almost reached me he stopped short, raised his hands above his head and muttered something indistinctly. He wasn't swearing, at least not in English, but I felt that he was calling down a curse on us. I got Virginia out before we had more trouble with him."

"And that was all?" de Grandin asked.

"That was all."

"*Parbleu*, my friend, I think it is enough to be significant." Then, abruptly: "This feminine assistant. Did you notice her?"

"Not particularly. She had a pretty, rather common sort of face, and long, slim, graceful hands with very brightly painted nails."

De Grandin pinched his pointed chin between a thoughtful thumb and finger. "Where did Doctor Augensburg repair

your injured hands, *Mademoiselle*?" he asked.

"At the Ellis Sanitarium, out by Hackensack," she answered. "I was in Mercy Hospital at first, but the staff and Doctor Augensburg had some misunderstanding, so he took me out to Ellis Clinic for the operation."

The little Frenchman smiled benignly on the visitors. "I can understand your self-concern, *Mademoiselle*," he told Miss Bushrod. "This feeling of otherhood, this impression that a trespasser-in-possession is inside of you, displacing your personality, making you do things you do not wish to do, is disconcerting, but it is not cause for great alarm. You were greatly hurt, you underwent a trying operation. Those things shock the nervous system. I have seen other instances of it. In the war I saw men make what seemed complete recovery, only to give way to strange irregularities months afterward. Eventually they regained normality; so should you, within, let us say"—he paused as though to make a mental calculation—"within a month or so."

"You really think so, Doctor?" she asked, pathos looking from her amber eyes.

"But yes, I am all confident of it."

"NAME of a most unpleasant small blue devil!" he swore as our visitors' footsteps faded on the cement walk outside. "I must make good my promise to her, but how—death of a dyspeptic hippopotamus!—how?"

"What?" I demanded.

"You know how dreams reflect the outside world in symbolic images. By example, you have kicked the covers off the bed, you are cold. But you are still asleep. How does the dream convert the true facts into images? By making you to think that you are in the Arctic and a

polar storm is raging, or, perhaps, that you have fallen in the river, and are chilled by the cold water. So it was with Mademoiselle Bushrod. She dreams she stands upon a mountain top, that is when she leaves her chamber. She dreams that she descends the mountain; that is when she walks downstairs. She hears a tune, of course she does, her hands, those hands which can not play a single note when she is waking, produce it. She dreams she reascends the mountain—climbs the stairs. *Ha*, then she sees before her her traducer, sleeping, helpless. She reaches forth her hands, and——

"What then, my friend? Are we to trust the symbolism of the dream still farther?"

"But," I began, and——

"'But' be damned and stewed in hell eternally!" he cut in. "*Attendez-moi*: Those hands, those lovely, graceful hands of hers, are not her own!"

"Eh?" I shot back. "Not—good Lord, man, you're raving! What d'ye mean?"

"Precisely what I say," he answered in a level, toneless voice. "Those hands were grafted on her wrists, as the rose is grafted on the dogwood tree. Her radii and unlae have been sawn across transversely; then other bones, processing with the wrist-joints of a pair of hands, were firmly fastened on by silver plates and rivets, the flexor muscles spliced with silver wire, the arteries and veins and nerves attached with an uncanny skill. It is bizarre, incredible, impossible; but it is so. I saw it with my own two eyes when I examined her beneath the fluoroscope."

**H**E LEFT the house directly after breakfast the next morning, and did not reappear till dinner had been waiting half an hour.

"*Sacré nom*," he greeted me across his cocktail glass, "what a day I had, my

friend! I have been busy as a flea upon a dog, but what I have accomplished! *Parbleu*, he is a clever fellow, this de Grandin!

"I took down copious mental notes while Mademoiselle Bushrod talked last night, and so this morning I set out for Coney Island. *Grand Dieu des rats*, what a place!

"From one small show-place to another I progressed, and in between times I engaged in conversation with the hangers-on. At last I found a prize, a jewel, a paragon. He rejoices in the name of Snead—Bill Snead, to give him his full title—and when he is not occupied with drinking he proclaims the virtues of a small display of freaks. *Eh bien*, by the expenditure of a small amount of money for food, and something more for drink, I learned from him enough to put me on the trail I sought.

"Professor Mysterioso de Diablo was a hypnotist of no mean parts, I learned. He had 'played big time' for years, but by a most unfortunate combination of events he was sent to prison in the State of Michigan. The lady's husband secured a divorce, *Monsieur le Professeur* a rigidly enforced vacation from the stage.

"After that his popularity declined until finally he was forced to show his art at Coney Island side shows. He was a most unpleasant person, I was told, principally noted for the way he let his fancies for the fair sex wander. This caused his partner much annoyance, and she often reproached him bitterly and publicly.

"Now, attend me carefully. It is of this partner I would speak particularly. Her name was Agnes Fagan. She was born to the theatrical profession, for her father, Michael Fagan, had been a thrower-out of undesired patrons in a burlesque theater when he was not ap-

pearing as a strong man on the stage or lying deplorably drunk in bed. The daughter was 'educated something elegant', my informant told me. She was especially adept at the piano, and for a time entertained ambitions to perform in concert work. However, she inherited one talent, if no other, from her estimable parent: she was astonishingly strong. Monsieur Snead had often seen her amuse her intimates by bending tableware in knots, to the great annoyance of the restaurant proprietor where she happened to perform. She could, he told me solemnly, take a heavy table fork and twist it in a corkscrew.

"*Eh bien*, the lure of the footlights was stronger than her love of music, it appears, for we next behold her as the strong woman in an acrobatic troupe. Perhaps it was another heritage from her many-sided sire, perhaps it was her own idea; at any rate, one day while playing in the city of Detroit, she appropriated certain merchandise without the formality of paying for it. Two police officers were seriously injured in the subsequent proceedings, but eventually she went to prison, was released at the same time that the professor received liberty, and became his partner, the subject of his hypnotism during his performances, and, according to the evil-minded Monsieur Snead, his mistress, as well.

"She possessed four major vanities: her musical ability, her skill at billiards, her strong, white, even teeth and the really unusual beauty of her hands. She was wont to show her strength on all occasions. Her dental vanity led her to suffer the discomfort of having a sound tooth drilled, gold-filled and set with a small diamond. She spent hours in the care of her extremities, and often bought a manicure when it was a choice of pampering her vanity or going without food.

"Now listen carefully, my friend: About a year ago she had a quarrel with her partner, the professor. I recite the facts as Monsieur Snead related them to me. It seems that the professor let his errant fancies wander, and was wont to invite ladies from the audience to join him in his acts. Usually he succeeded, for he had a way with women, Monsieur Snead assured me. But eventually he met rebuff. He also met the fist of the young lady's escort. He was, to use your quaint American expression, 'knocked for a row of ash-cans' by the gentleman.

"La Fagan chided him in no uncertain terms. They had a fearful fight in which she would have been the victor, had he not resorted to hypnotism for defense. 'She wuz about to tear him into little bits, when he put 'is hand up and said, "Rigid";' Monsieur Snead related. 'An' there she was, stiff as a frozen statoo, wid 'er hand up in th' air, an' her fist all doubled up, not able to so much as bat a eye. She stood that way about a hour, I expect; then suddenly she fell down flat, and slept like nobody's business. I reckon th' professor gave her th' sleepin' order from wherever he had beat it to. He had got so used to orderin' her about that he could control her at a distance 'most as well as when he looked into her eyes.'

"Thereafter he was often absent from the show where he performed. Eventually he quit it altogether, and within a month his strong and pretty-handed partner vanished. Like *pouf!* she was suddenly nowhere at all.

"**B**Y THE time the estimable Monsieur Snead had finished telling me these things he could impart no further information. He was, as I have heard it described, 'stewed like a dish of prunes', for all the while he talked I kept his tongue well oiled with whisky. Accordingly I

bid him farewell and pushed my research elsewhere. I searched the files of the journals diligently, endeavoring to find some clue to the vanishment of Mademoiselle Fagan. *Cordieu*, I think I found it! Read this, if you will be so good."

Adjusting my pince-nez I scanned the clipping which he handed me:

GIRL FALLS UNCONSCIOUS WITH  
STRANGE MALADY

**Collapses on Roadway Near Hackensack—  
Absence of Disease Symptoms  
Puzzles Doctors**

Hackensack, N. J., Sept. 17—Police and doctors today are endeavoring to solve the mystery of the identity and illness of an attractive young woman who collapsed on the roadway near here shortly after noon today, and has lain unconscious in the Ellis Clinic ever since.

She is described as about 30 years old, five feet two inches tall, and with fair complexion and red hair. Her hands and feet showed evidences of unusual care, and both finger- and toe-nails were dyed a brilliant scarlet. In her upper left eye-tooth was a small diamond set in a gold inlay.

She wore a ring with an oval setting of green stone, gold earrings in her pierced ears, and an imitation pearl necklace. Her costume consisted of a blue and white polka-dot dress, white fabric gloves, a black sailor hat with a small feather, and black patent leather pumps. She wore no stockings.

Alec Carter and James Heilmann, proprietors of an antique shop facing on the road, saw the young woman walking slowly toward Hackensack, staggering slightly from side to side. She fell in the roadway across from their store, and when they reached her she was unconscious. Failing to revive her by ordinary first aid methods, they placed her in an automobile and took her to the Ellis Clinic, which was the nearest point where medical aid could be secured.

Physicians at the clinic declared they could find no cause for her prolonged unconsciousness, as she was evidently neither intoxicated nor under the influence of drugs, and exhibited no symptoms of any known disease.

Nothing found upon her offered any clue to her identity.

"Well?" I demanded as I put the clipping down.

"I do not think it was," he answered. "By no means; not at all. Consider, if you please:

"Mademoiselle Bushrod's accident had occurred two weeks before, she had been given up by local surgeons; Augensburg, who was at the Ellis Clinic at the time, had just accepted her case.

"This strange young woman with the pretty hands drops down upon the roadway almost coincidentally with Mademoiselle Virginia's advent at the clinic. Do you not begin to sniff the odor of the rodent?"

"I don't think so," I replied.

"Very well, then, listen: The mysterious young woman was undoubtedly the Fagan girl, whose disappearance occurred about this time. What was the so mysterious malady which struck her down, which had no symptoms, other than unconsciousness? It was merely that she had been once again put under the hypnotic influence, my friend. You will recall that the professor could control her almost as well when at a distance as when he stared into her eyes? Certainly. Assuredly. She had become so used to his hypnosis that his slightest word or wish was law to her; she was his slave, his thing, his chattel, to do with as he pleased. Unquestionably he commanded her to walk along that road that day, to fall unconscious near the Ellis Clinic; to lie unconscious afterward, eventually to die. Impossible? *Mais non*. If one can tell the human heart to beat more slowly, and make it do so, under power of hypnosis, why may one not command it to cease beating altogether, still under hypnotic influence? So far as the young Fagan person was concerned, she had no thought, no will, no power, either mentally or physically, which the professor could not take from her by a single word of command. No, certainly.

"We were told Mademoiselle Bushrod's accident came from a tire blow-out, *n'est-ce-pas?* I do not think it did. I inquired—most discreetly, I assure you—and near the Ellis Clinic, and discovered that *Monsieur* the hypnotist visited that institution the very day that she was hurt, had a long conference with Doctor Au-

gensburg in strictest privacy and—when he came he bore a small, high-powered rifle. He said he had been snake-hunting. Me, I think the serpent which he shot was the tire of Mademoiselle Bushrod's car. That was the blow-out which caused her car to leave the road and crush her hands, my friend!

"Now, again: This Professor of the Devil, as he called himself appropriately, visited Doctor Augensburg at several times. He was in the room where the unknown woman lay on more than one occasion. He was at the clinic on the day when Augensburg operated on Mademoiselle Bushrod's hands—and on that day, not fifteen minutes before the operation was performed, the unknown woman died. She had been sinking slowly for some days; her death occurred while orderlies were wheeling our poor Mademoiselle Virginia to the operating-room.

"You will recall she was unknown; that she was given shelter in an institution which maintains no beds for charity or emergency patients? But did you know that Augensburg paid her bill, and demanded in return that he be given her unclaimed body for anatomical research, that he might seek the cause of her 'strange' death? No, you did not know it, nor did I; but now I do, and I damn think that in that information lies the answer to our puzzle.

"I do not have to tell you that the period between somatic death—the mere ceasing to live—and molecular, or true death, when the tissue-cells begin to die, is often as long as three or four hours. During this period the individual body-cells remain alive, the muscles react to electrical stimuli, even the pupils of the eye can be expanded with atropin. She had suffered no disease-infection, this unknown one, her body was healthy, but run down, like an unwound clock. More-

over, fifteen minutes after her death, her hands were, histologically speaking, still alive. What easier than to make the transplantation of her sound, live hands, to Mademoiselle Bushrod's wrists, then chop and maim her body in the autopsy room in such a way that none would be the wiser?

"And what of these transplanted hands? They were part and parcel of a hypnotic subject, were they not, accustomed to obey commands of the hypnotist immediately, even to have steel knitting-needles run through them, yet feel no pain? Yes, certainly.

"Very well. Are it not entirely possible that these hands which the professor have commanded so many times when they were attached to one body, will continue to obey his whim when they are rooted to another? I think so.

"In his fine story, your magnificent Monsieur Poe tells of a man who really died, yet was kept alive through hypnosis. These hands of Mademoiselle Fagan never really died, they were still technically alive when they were taken off—who knows what orders this professor gave his dupe before he ordered her to die? Those hands had been a major vanity of hers, they were skilled hands, strong hands, beautiful hands—*bélas*, dishonest hands, as well—but they formed a large part of their owner's personality. Might he not have ordered that they carry on that personality after transplantation to the end that they might eventually lead the poor Mademoiselle Bushrod to entire ruin? I think so. Yes.

"Consider the evidence: Mademoiselle Bushrod is tone-deaf, yet we heard her play exquisitely. She had no skill and no experience in billiards, yet we saw her shoot a brilliant game. For why should she, whose very nature is so foreign to the act, steal merchandise from a shopkeeper?

Yet she tells us that she caught herself in such a crime. Whence comes this odd desire on her part to have her nails so brightly painted, a thing which she abhors? Last of all, how comes it that she, who is in nowise noted for her strength, can twist a silver table fork into a corkscrew?

"You see," he finished, "the case is perfect. I know it can not possibly be so; yet so it is. We can not face down facts, my friend."

"It's preposterous," I replied, but my denial lacked conviction.

He read capitulation in my tone, and smiled with satisfaction.

"But can't we break this spell?" I asked. "Surely, we can make this Professor What's-his-Name——"

"Not by any legal process," he cut in. "No court on earth would listen to our story, no jury give it even momentary credence. Yet"—he smiled a trifle grimly—"there is a way, my friend."

"What?" I asked.

"Have you by any chance a trocar in your instruments?" he asked irrelevantly.

"A trocar? You mean one of those long, sharp-pointed hollow needles used in paracentesis operations?"

"*Précisément. Tu parles, mon vieux.*"

"Why, yes, I think there's one somewhere."

"And may one borrow it tonight?"

"Of course, but—where are you going at this hour?"

"To Staten Island," he replied as he

placed the long, deadly, stiletto-like needle in his instrument case. "Do not wait up for me, my friend, I may be very late."

**H**ORRIFIED suspicion, growing rapidly to dreadful certainty, mounted in my mind as I scanned the evening paper while de Grandin and I sipped our coffee and liqueurs in the study three nights later. "Read this," I ordered, pointing to an obscure item on the second page:

St. George, S. I., September 30—The body of George Lothrop, known professionally on the stage as Prof. Misterioso, hypnotist, missing from his rooming-house at Bull's Head, S. I., since Tuesday night, was found floating in New York bay near the St. George ferry slip by harbor police this afternoon.

Representatives of the Medical Examiners' office said he was not drowned, as a stab wound, probably from a stiletto, had pierced his left breast and reached his heart.

Employees at the side show at Coney Island, where Lothrop formerly gave exhibitions as a hypnotist, said he was of a sullen and quarrelsome disposition and given to annoying women. From the nature of the wound which caused his death police believe the husband or admirer of some woman he accosted resented his attentions and stabbed him, afterward throwing his body into the bay.

De Grandin read the item through with elevated brows. "A fortunate occurrence, is it not?" he asked. "Mademoiselle Bushrod is now freed from any spell he might have cast on her—or on her hands. Hypnotic suggestion can not last, once the hypnotist is dead."

"But—but you—that trocar——" I began.

"I returned it to your instrument case last Tuesday night," he answered. "Will you be good enough to pour me out a little brandy? Ah, thank you, my friend."

