

Weird Tales



ALL STORIES NEW—NO REPRINTS

SEPTEMBER, 1946

Cover by Pete Kuhlhoff

NOVELETTE

- LOTTE Seabury Quinn 6
When a mystery presents itself it gnaws like a magot at the brain, nor can it be dislodged till the solution is found

SHORT STORIES

- DAY OF JUDGMENT Edmond Hamilton 20
Some day, some eternity away, there will be a last man and a last woman. And who will be their judges?

- ENOCH Robert Bloch 28
Have you ever felt the tread of little feet walking across the top of your skull?

- ALICE AND THE ALLERGY Fritz Leiber 36
It's only common sense to be scared of a killer—sometimes even after he has been apprehended and executed!

- NOT HUMAN Bert David Ross 41
A tulka does not really live—therefore a tulka is indestructible. It cannot die

- THE HORN Charles King 50
A goat's horn, marvelously endowed with strange virtues and an unforgivable future

- THE MACHINE Allison V. Harding 54
A machine, so sensitive as to be human, was the scientist's goal. What he got was as utterly unexpected as it was horrific!

- SIX FLIGHTS TO TERROR Manly Banister 66
The building's bizarre architecture was as though it had been lifted bodily and transported here from some haunted place deep in a mysterious Europe

- POLAR VORTEX Malcolm Ferguson 74
All alone on the night side of the world time moves at a snail's pace

- THRESHOLD OF ENDURANCE Betsy Emmons 82
What is, can be—what happens, can happen again

- XERKES' HUT Harold Lawlor 84
A small unpretentious hut, with an eternity of history and an unguessable secret within four walls of horror

VERSE

- THE PORT H. P. Lovecraft 65

- SUPERSTITIONS AND TABOOS Irwin J. Weill 73

- THE EYRIE AND THE WEIRD TALES CLUB 93

Except for personal experiences, the contents of this magazine is fiction. Any use of the name of any living person or reference to actual events is purely coincidental.

Published bi-monthly by Weird Tales, 9 Rockefeller Plaza, New York 20, N. Y. Reentered as second-class matter January 26, 1940, at the Post Office at New York, N. Y., under the act of March 3, 1879. Single copies, 15 cents. Subscription rates: One year in the United States and possessions, 20c. Foreign and Canadian postage extra. English Office: Charles Lavell, Limited, 4 Clements Inn, Strand London, W.C.2, England. The publishers are not responsible for the loss of unsolicited manuscripts although every care will be taken of such material while in their possession. Copyright, 1946, by Weird Tales. Copyrighted in Great Britain. Title registered in U. S. Patent Office.

PRINTED IN THE U. S. A.

173
Vol. 39, No. 7

b. McLLWRAITH, Editor.

LAMONT BUCHANAN, Associate Editor.

Lotte

"LADIES and Gentlemen," the orchestra leader stepped to the edge of his dais, "Pablo and Francesca." On the heels of his announcement brass and woodwinds sounded a long chord, the hot erotic rhythm of a rumba

started and a young man and woman glided out upon the dance floor of the Gold Room.

Jules de Grandin nibbled at a morsel of pink peppermint, washed it down with a sip of black coffee and wiped his lips with a

Heading by A. R. TILBURNE



quick brushing motion, taking care not to disturb a blond hair of his trimly-waxed mustache. "Come, Friend Trowbridge, if you are finished let us call for *l'addition* and depart," he suggested. "Me, I have dined most excellently well, but this—" he glanced at the dancers circling on the polished oak—" *cela m'ennuie*. I am bored, me."

I nodded sympathetically. When one is on the shadowed side of fifty and hasn't danced in almost thirty years the tortions of a dance team leave him rather cold. Besides, the curtain at the Cartaret would rise in twenty minutes and a decent respect for the comfort of others demanded we be in our seats when the house lights lowered.

"Right with you," I agreed. "Soon as we can get that waiter's eye—"

"*Grand Dieu des petits porcs verts!*" his exclamation slashed through my words. Some small bright object, a prism from the chandelier above the dance floor, I thought, had flashed down like a minuscule meteor and crashed like a missile against the sleekly pomaded hair of the male dancer.

With me at his heels the small Frenchman wove his way between the tables and slipped across the polished oak boards of the dance floor. The blow had been surprisingly heavy for so small a projectile, and the young man was unconscious when we reached him. "Do not make yourself un-

Her father had been a headsman; she herself took naturally to the bloody work



easy, *Mademoiselle*," de Grandin whispered to his distraught partner. "We are physicians. We shall give him the assistance. He cannot be hurt badly—

"*Hola, mon brave*," he sank to his knees beside the young man. "You are making the recovery, no? Ah, that is good. That is very good, indeed!" as the youngster's lids fluttered up and he attempted to rise. "*Non, restez tranquille*, you will be completely well in one small moment." As a waiter passed he raised a finger. "A little brandy, if you please, and some ice water."

"Lottë," the patient whispered, then, recovering his poise, "What happened? Did I fall—"

"You did, indeed, *Monsieur*," de Grandin assured as he held the pony of cognac to the young man's lips, then dipped the napkin in the bowl of ice water and laid the cold compress on the knot already forming over the boy's right temporal bone. "So, rest easily a moment." Methodically he took the patient's pulse, pursed his lips, then nodded shortly. "No bones are broken, nor is the skin ruptured. I would not suggest that you dance again tonight, but if you continue to improve—"

Mr. Melton, the hotel manager, had elbowed his way through the circling crowd. "What happened?" he demanded. "Was he drunk? I won't have drinkin' among the help, on duty or off. Get your traps packed and get out!" he ordered the young dancer curtly.

"*Monsieur*, I should not be too hasty were I in your most undoubtedly tight shoes," de Grandin advised coldly. "The young man was stricken by a pendant falling from the chandelier. Dr. Trowbridge and I both saw it, and if he should decide to take legal action—"

"Oh, there won't be any trouble," Melton interrupted hastily. "Everything will be all right. Feel up to finishing the act, Paul?"

"Yeh, I—I guess so," answered the young man as he got to his feet a little unsteadily, shook his head like a fighter who has taken a heavy punch, and smiled reassuringly at his partner.

"*Très bien*," de Grandin nodded. "I do not think that you have received much hurt, *Monsieur*, but if you are not well entirely in the morning you should see a physician.

If—" he glanced coldly at Melton—"there should be complications with the hotel, do not hesitate to call on me for testimony."

HE HANDED a card to the young man, bowed formally to the girl and led the way from the dining room.

"Friend Trowbridge, it is that I am puzzled," he confided as we drove toward the theatre.

"How's that?" I answered.

"That young man, Monsieur Pablo. You did observe his injury, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Of course, it was a simple bruise of the right temporal region with moderate ecchymosis. Nothing serious, I'd say, though it was surprising that so light an object as a pendant from the chandelier could have caused so much injury. I've seen bruises like that made by clubs or blackjacks—"

"*Précisément*. You have right there, my friend. But did you see him take his hurt?"

"Now that you mention it, no. I saw the missile hurtle through the air and saw him stagger and fall, but—"

"*Exactment*. But did you note the relative positions of Monsieur Pablo and the chandelier at the time?"

"No-o—"

"*Ab-ha!* That is enigma Number One. He was not under the fixture when he was struck. No. He was fifteen—possibly twenty—feet from it. The broken prism had to travel obliquely a distance of at least ten feet in order to strike him. What do you make from that, *hein?* Is it not against the laws of gravity?"

"You're sure?"

"But of course. Did not I see it?"

"It couldn't have been a strong draft—"

"*Mais non*. A wind sufficient to have hurled a bit of glass that distance, and with force enough to strike a man unconscious, would have to be of hurricane velocity."

"Ye-es. I suppose so."

"Indubitably. Moreover, when the so unfortunate young man revived from his swoon, what did he say?"

"I'm not sure, but it sounded like a woman's name—Lottë."

"You have entirely right, my old. And did it not seem to you he was frightened?"

"Well, now you speak of it, it did. But—"

"No buts, if you will be so kind. Now for enigma Number Two: The young man was unconscious from a sudden violent blow, *n'est-ce-pas?* That means he had sustained a shock, which as you know amounts to relaxation or abolition of the controlling influence the nervous system exercises over vital organic functions. Yes. Pulsation should have been slowed down, and respiration much retarded. But were they? Not at all, by damn it. *Au contraire*, they were very much accelerated. He was frightened, very badly frightened, that one."

"You may be right," I agreed as I jockeyed the car into the last remaining parking space before the theatre, "but it seems to me you're making an Alp out of an anti-hill."

"NON," he muttered moodily as we paused in the kitchen for a good-night snack, "I do not understand him, me."

"What the dickens are you maundering about?" I asked as I refilled his mug with beer. "At your confounded ghost-hunting again?"

"Not at all, by no means; quite the contrary," he denied, his mouth half full of cheese and biscuit, a foaming beer mug half-way to his lips. "This time I seek to dodge the specter, my friend. I wish to wipe my mind as blank as a dunce-schoolboy's slate, to dismiss all thought of the matter from my memory. But *bélas*, you know this Jules de Grandin. He annoys me. He is a very curious person. When a mystery presents itself it gnaws like a maggot at his brain, nor can he dislodge it till he has found its solution. *Ab bab*," he shrugged his shoulders irritably. "I shall think of it no more. Let the devil worry over it. Me, I have the craving for eight hours sleep, and if I wake before—"

The sharp, insistent clamor of the doorbell sawed through his words like an alarm clock shattering sleep, and I sighed in vexation as I glanced at my watch. "Half-past one, and some idiot with a bellyache comes for a dose of paregoric."

A girl was standing in the vestibule, a slim slip of a thing in lustrous furs with a pale face from which dark eyes looked, dilated and frightened. "Is Doctor—the

French gentleman here?" she asked tremulously. "Etienne, the *maitre d'hôtel* at the Gold Room said he knows about such things, and—"

"*Para servir á Vd. Señorita*," broke in de Grandin in his best Spanish. In her changed costume, and with fright like a mask on her face, I had failed to recognize the girl, but as de Grandin spoke I realized she was the female member of the dance team we had seen at the Berkeley-York.

"Oh, sir," she knotted thin hands in a gesture of entreaty which somehow did not seem theatrical, "please help us! Etienne told us you know all about such things, and—may I bring Paul in? He's waiting in the taxi."

For the first time I noticed a cab parked at the curb, and at de Grandin's nod she dashed across the porch and down the steps and front walk, the spool heels of her sling-back sandals clattering on the cement.

She leant into the cab's darkness a moment, then emerged slowly, helping a young man to climb from the machine, steadying him with both arms as he tottered drunkenly up the walk. "Let me," I offered, taking the unsteady man's free arm. "He must have had a greater shock than we'd supposed."

De Grandin seized the patient's other arm and motioned to the girl to precede us and open the consulting-room door. "So," he murmured as we eased the young man into an armchair. "That is good, *Señor*. Very good, indeed. Now, let us have a look—*que diable?*" With quick, practiced fingers he had felt the youngster's head, examining not only the discolored area on the right temple, but feeling for an evidence of skull-fracture or *contre-coup* lesions. "What is it, *Señor*? You seem in fair condition physically, yet—" Abruptly he lowered his hands, felt the boy's neck just below the hairline, then took the patient's right hand in his own. I noticed how the lad's slim fingers closed convulsively upon the Frenchman's, clinging to them as a drowning man might grasp at a twig. An interne could have diagnosed nervous exhaustion bordering on neurasthenia.

"Strychnine?" I suggested.

"Brandy," he corrected. "A large dose, if you please, at least four ounces, Friend Trowbridge. Five or six would be more

better. Fear is gnawing at his nerves like a starved wolf. We must relax him, break his inhibitions down, before we can determine what our treatment should be."

I BROUGHT the cognac and de Grandin held the goblet to the patient's mouth. "A little, so small sip, he directed. "*Très bon*. Now another—and another. Let them prepare the way for that which follows. Now, all at once, *Señor*. Gulp him, swallow him. Down with him all!"

The patient made a face as if he had ingested raw quinine instead of old cognac, but his reaction to the liquor was almost instantaneous. The hands which had been tensely clasped on the chair arms relaxed gradually, color seeped into his pale cheeks, and the drawn lines round his mouth became a little slack.

De Grandin beamed with satisfaction. "*Esta mejor?*" he asked.

The young man looked at him and the ghost of a smile hovered on his lips. "You needn't use that Spig talk to me, sir. I'm an American," he answered.

"American? *Mon Dieu!* But your names—"

"Oh, that!" the girl broke in with the suspicion of a giggle. "Pablo and Francesca are just our stage names. We're really Paul and Frances Fogarty."

"Irish?"

"As Paddy's pig, sir. Our accent—when we use it—is assumed for strictly business purposes, and is as phony as our stage names."

The little Frenchman grinned delightedly. "*Parbleu*, you carry it off well, *mes amis*. One would swear you are from Argentina, or, perhaps Mexico." He glanced appreciatively from one of them to the other.

They were, as he had said, extremely "South of the Border" in appearance. Paul Fogarty wore dinner clothes of extreme cut, trousers fitted snugly at the waist and hips with a series of vertical tucks and flowing to bell bottoms like those of a sailor, satin waistcoat drawn so tightly as to suggest a corset, and a jacket with sloping, close-fitting shoulders. His hair, worn rather long, was trained down his cheeks in sideburns and brushed straight back from the brow, plastered sleekly with pomade till it fitted

his head like a skullcap of black patent leather.

The girl, too, was perfectly in character. Her hair was so intensely black it seemed to give off blue lights like a grackle's throat, and, defiant of the current fashion, it was cut short as a boy's. Like a boy's, too, it was parted far on the left side and plastered down with bandoline till it gleamed in the lamplight. Close-clipped manish sideburns descended her cheeks before her ears and were rendered more conspicuous by the heavy pendants of green jade that dangled from the small pierced lobes almost to her shoulders. Her dull-black satin gown clung to her narrow figure with such sheath-tightness that it had to be slit at the sides to give her room to step—and incidentally display slim, silk-smooth legs and miniature feet in high-arched sandals. The dress was long-sleeved and high-necked at the front, but left her back exposed almost down to the coccyx. The jade earrings and the synthetic emerald buckles of her sandals were her only ornaments, the carmine of her painted lips and the green lacquer on her toe-and fingernails were the sole spots of color in her ensemble. She was not beautiful or even pretty. Her features were too small and too irregular, but she was seductive in a strange way. She had little animal appeal, but her slender, almost boyish body, pale, thin face and scarlet lips had an appeal at once attractive and almost terrifying, like that of the fabled sirens—Circe in a Paris frock, Medea with Rue de la Paix accessories.

"You are perhaps *Monsieur* and *Madame* Fogarty?" de Grandin asked, "or is it *Monsieur* and *Mademoiselle*?"

"*Monsieur* and *Madame*, if you want it that way," the girl answered, as she gave him a languishing glance from dark eyes. Few women could resist de Grandin. "We're husband and wife. That's what's the matter."

"*Comment?*" he answered sharply. "The matter, *Madame*? Is it that you do not love each other?"

"No, sir, it's not that. We love each other till it hurts, but—"

"*Ab-ha!* That twenty-times-cursed but! What is it, *Madame* Fogarty? Perhaps I can help you—"

"Did I say anything when I came out of it at the Gold Room?" young Fogarty cut in.

De Grandin turned to face him almost fiercely. "You did, indeed, *Monsieur*. You said, if I do not make the mistake, 'Lottè.' I assumed at the time you called upon *Madame* your wife. A man does such things in the half light of returning consciousness sometimes."

"That's the answer," Fogarty returned dryly. "I know it sounds as nutty as a pecan roll, but I'm—we're both—convinced she's at the bottom of the trouble. Etienne told us—"

"One moment, if you please," de Grandin raised a slim white hand. "The estimable Etienne can wait. It is of yourselves I wish to know. Begin at the beginning if you please, *Monsieur*, and omit nothing. If we are to help you we must know all, and all does not imply a part, or even most, but everything. He dropped into a chair, lit a cigarette and crossed his knees, staring at our visitor like a cat at a rat-rolé."

"O K A Y, sir, if you want my life history," young Fogarty took a deep breath and an Irish grin broke through his carefully cultivated Latin exterior. "I'm a dancer; always been a dancer; never did anything else and never wanted to. Gram-paw Donnally said that I was born with jingle-boxes in both feet, and I guess he hit it right, for I've never seen the time when music didn't make me want to prance. Before I'd left kindergarten I could do an Irish jig as well as anyone, by the time I'd reached grade school I'd learned to imitate George M. Cohan, Frisco and Pat Rooney. I was on the program every time there was an entertainment at church or school, and by the time I'd reached fourteen I was coping prizes regularly at amateur nights in the vaudeville houses."

"But I was a lousy student, and nothing but the truant officers kept me in school till I was sixteen, then I ran away and shipped on a freighter for South America, jumped ship at Buenos Aires and hung around until I managed to get a job as bus boy in the Café 25 de Mayo. In six months I'd picked up enough Spanish to be promoted to waiter. One night I got the orches-

tra leader drunk and chiseled-a dance job out of him.

"That started it. They billed me under the name of Pablo, as an exponent of *las Danzas de América del Norte*, and my act went over pretty well, especially my imitations of Frisco's soft-shoe routines. But I knew it couldn't last, so every *centavo* I made above bare living expenses went into dancing lessons and I learned the works—tango, rumba, bolero, lulu-fardo, maxixe and seguidilla, as well as most of the folk-dances. I even took some ballet instruction, but that, like fencing lessons, was more for poise than actual use. Within a year I spoke Argentine Spanish well enough to pass for a native—among foreigners—and had a spot in the floor show at El Centro. While I was working there a German vaudeville agent named Hans Ewers saw me and offered me a job at the Café Zur Nekke in Berlin."

"It was there I met Lottè. I'd dropped into the Rixdorfer on my night off, thinking I might see some other act that would give me ideas, when she came on. I'd never seen anything like her. She was tall, tall as a tall man, slightly built, and with the small, cold, regular features that distinguish Saxon women from Prussians or Bavarians. In contrast to her cold, almost contemptuous face, her hair was flaming red. I don't mean russet or that shade of sepia we usually call red, but true flame-color, like molten copper in a crucible, and I knew instinctively that if she let it down it would reach to her knees. She had that white, almost transparent skin that sometimes goes with hair like that, and there was a bright, powdery dust of small gold freckles on her high cheekbones. Her eyes were a hot tortoiseshell, and in them I could see desire straining like a hound at the leash. There are people like that, you know. People to whom music, especially percussion, is intoxicating as an aphrodisiac, whose emotions almost burst the bounds of restraint when they dance. Lottè was one of them. She was drunk with the rhythm of the music, driven almost to frenzy by the movements of her own body."

"When she finished her turn she saw me watching her and came over to my table. I don't know just how to describe it; it

seemed as if we were two chemicals that needed only to be brought together to explode with a heat like a bursting atom bomb. A thrill that was as sharp as a pang of pain shot through me as she dropped into the chair opposite, it nearly lifted the hair on my head; I know it made me positively dizzy. It wasn't what you could call love at first sight; it wasn't love at all. It was something terrifying, like bewitchment, and I knew as I looked into her eyes she had it, too.

"For almost an hour as we sat there drinking champagne mixed with cognac, and I don't believe in all that time either of us took his eyes off the other's. It was as if our gaze was magnetized. It wasn't that we didn't want to look away; we couldn't. When she finally rose to leave I followed her, walking like a drunken man, of one who has been hypnotized.

"Of course, we teamed up. Her contract at the Rixdorfer was about to finish the night I met her, and she joined me at the Café Zur Nekke."

YOUNG Fogarty took a deep, trembling breath and shivered like a man on whom a sudden chilling wind has blown. "Have you ever been possessed, sir? I mean that literally. Most likely you haven't, so I can't hope to make you understand how utterly I became enslaved. Lottë dominated me as completely—more so—as she did her pet dachshund Fritz. To say that I had no more privacy than a goldfish would be understating it. I had to be with her constantly—every moment. Even when I went to shave or wash my hands I had to leave the bathroom door open that she might see me; I had to give up having my hair cut at the Adlon barber shop and have one of the male *coiffeurs* at the beauty shop she patronized cut it, so she could be with me, and watch me the whole time. If a woman, no matter how old, smiled at me or spoke she was vixenishly jealous; she even resented my exchanging a word with another man or a child, and had to be present while I talked our routines over with the bandleader.

"I couldn't stand it, no man could. It was worse than being in prison. It was like being sewn up in a strait-jacket and gradually strangled. I loved her—if you

want to call the fierce, unreasoning enchantment I was under love—but at the same time I hated her, and the hate was growing stronger than the love.

"It wasn't long before she felt the same way about me. We'd be lying side by side, sometimes kissing, sometimes in each other's arms, sometimes only hand in hand, when suddenly she'd jump up, call me '*dumkopf*' or '*schlemmiel*' and give me a contemptuous kick, or spit on me and slap my face. And when I'd leap up in a rage she'd fairly fling herself on me, twine both arms about me so I was helpless—for she was strong as a man in spite of her slenderness—and smother me with kisses.

"One of us surely would have killed the other if it had gone on much longer, but in 1940 the draft came and my number was one of the first called. 'I have to go,' I told her. 'If I don't I'll be an outlaw.'"

"She stormed and screamed hysterically, went to her knees before me. 'Do anything you want with me,' she begged. 'Do you want to beat me? I'll go fetch the dog whip that I use on Fritz. Tear my skin with your teeth. Slash me with your razor—anything. Drink my blood; do whatever you care to, only don't leave me. Let them take the others to make war on the Führer. Stay with me. We can fly together to the mountains where no one will ever find us. I'll cook your food and wash your clothes and keep your house—be your servant, your slave—only don't leave me, *liebchen!*'"

"But this was my chance for escape, and I wasn't letting it go by. 'I've got to go,' I repeated. 'This is more than either—or both—of us, Lottë. It's my country.'

"She threw her arms about my knees and pressed her cheeks against them, begging me to beat her, torture her, kill her, but not leave her, and when I finally managed to break free she fell face-forward on the floor and beat her forehead on it. The last I saw of her she lay full-length on the rug with her unbound red hair about her like a pool of blood, beating both fists on the carpet and screaming, 'You shall not leave me; I'll never let you go—never—never—never!'

"I was inducted as soon as I reached New York and went at once to training camp:

Just before we sailed for England I met Frances at the USO. She was an entertainer, one of the best dancers I had ever seen, and when she heard I'd been a professional in civil life we were drawn together by our mutual interests.

"This time it was love, the real thing, not an unholy fascination.

"The entertainers weren't allowed to date with soldiers, but she gave me her address, and we corresponded regularly. We were married the day after my discharge and formed a team, using the Spanish form of our names—Pablo and Francesca. Fran hasn't been very well lately, and we're planning a vacation as soon as we've saved enough. I was stone-broke after almost six years in the army, and it cost my separation pay plus the few war bonds I'd managed to accumulate to outfit us. Costumes are expensive and don't wear very long."

DE GRANDIN nodded smiling. "I congratulate you on the thoroughness of your report; Monsieur Paul, but what of Fraulein Lottë? You said that you suspected her."

"So I do, sir. Listen: I wanted to forget Lottë as I'd forget a bad dream, but she kept a constant stream of letters flowing to me till Pearl Harbor and our entrance into the war. They were all in the same tone, how she loved me, idolized me, worshiped me, how she counted every heartbeat till we were together again, and every one ended with, 'You are mine and mine alone. I shall never let you go!'

"After we got in the war I lost touch with her, thank the Lord, and when I next heard of her it was through the Army scuttlebutt. The British had swooped down on Geirstein and caught the Jerries in the act of trying to liquidate three hundred prisoners before they could be freed to testify. From all accounts Geirstein was worse than either Buchenwald or Dachau, but like them it had both he- and she-devils in charge. The leader of the female *schwartzstaffelkorps* was a tall, redheaded woman said to be as beautiful as Helen of Troy and crueler than Countess Bathony. They laid more than two hundred deaths of helpless Jews and Poles and Czechs to her, but none of them had died outright, all died under tor-

ture supervised or actually inflicted by her. I was shocked but not too much surprised when I heard her name was Lottë Dalberg. Her father had been a *scharfrichter* or headsman, and I supposed she took naturally to the bloody work.

"She was tried and found guilty with the other members of the Geirstein staff. Two months ago we read she had been hanged." Young Fogarty paused, swallowed twice and reached for the now-empty brandy glass.

"*Mais certainement*, but of course," de Grandin volunteered and poured out a fresh potion of cognac. "And then?"

"Then it began. Fran and I were practicing a new routine. Come to think of it, it was the very day they hanged Lottë, but, of course, we didn't know about that then. Suddenly the stool was jerked from under Tony. Anthony Nusbaum is pianist in the band at the Gold Room and plays for our rehearsals. It couldn't have slipped. It was standing on a rug, not the bare floor, and Tony weighs at least two hundred pounds. If anything would hold that stool down as if it had been nailed he would, but there it was, halfway across the room, with Tony sitting on his fanny and looking surprised as a kid who'd just sat down on a pin put in his school seat.

"In a moment every pane of glass in the windows began rattling as if a gale were blowing, though we could see the trees dead still outside, and the light bulbs in the chandelier all popped. They didn't go out, they burst and shattered, as if they'd been squeezed by an unseen hand.

"Fran was wearing rayon slacks with deep cuffs for practice, and had caught her heel in one of them, giving it a nasty rip. She'd had her sewing basket out to mend the tear and left a needle sticking in the spool of thread and there were half a dozen more in a paper packet. Not loose, but stuck in the black paper, the way they come, you know. Just as the light bulbs popped those needles detached themselves and came darting through the air, every one of 'em sticking in my face. Six of 'em stuck half an inch into my cheeks and the threaded one thrust itself into my nose, trailing half a yard of linen string. You won't believe that, I know, but it's absolutely true."

"*Monsieur*," de Grandin assured him, "I

believe you implicitly. Proceed with your *précis*, if you please."

"WE HAVEN'T had much peace since, sir. Several times a day, and most especially at night, something like that occurs. Chairs, books, tables and even such heavy pieces of furniture as a piano are moved about, sometimes slowly, sometimes fairly thrown, and jewelry and other small objects are hurled through the air. The blankets are jerked off our beds while we're sleeping, our clothes are snatched off hangers and wadded on the wardrobe floor or tossed into the corners of the room, food is snatched off the table before us. Only yesterday the whole tablecloth was jerked away as we were eating breakfast, spilling food and dishes over us and the floor."

"*Bien oui*," de Grandin murmured. "Thus far it runs entirely true to pattern. What else, if you please?"

"Last night I wakened at the sound of something scratching. When I got up and lit the light I saw a sentence taking form upon the wall of the bedroom. There was no pencil—nothing that could make the letters visible—but the scratching kept up steadily as words were spelled out against the paint."

"You could read them? They were not cryptic, like those showing on the palace wall at the feast of Belshazzar?"

"Yes, sir, I could read them, all right," grimly. "I recognized the writing, too. I'd seen it often enough."

"Ah, and it said—"

"Just what I'd read in half a hundred letters from Lottè, the sentence with which she always ended: 'You are mine and mine alone. I shall never let you go.'"

"*Parbleu*," de Grandin began, but got no further, for, apparently from the floor of the consulting room there came a deafening, clanging, banging racket, like a tin can bumping over cobbles at the tail of some luckless mongrel, and out of empty air, apparently some six feet overhead, burst a mocking, maniacal laugh.

The silence fairly beat upon our ears as the unholy racket stopped abruptly as it had begun, and Fogarty smiled bleakly. "You get used to it in time," he said wearily. "You saw that broken prism from the

chandelier hit me tonight. You know it didn't fall on me; you know that it was thrown."

"I do, indeed, *Monsieur*."

"Then look at this." The boy stripped back his jacket cuff and shirt sleeve. On his bared forearm, apparently scratched with some sharp instrument, was an intricately wrought, but easily decipherable, monogram: "L. D." "Tonight she put her brand on me. Now see this." From his jacket pocket he drew out a folded handkerchief and spread it on the table before us. Smears on the linen, apparently with lipstick, was a seventeen-word message: "Pablo you are mine to torment and to kill I shall do both in my good time." The writing was bold, ill-formed, angular, the sort of writing one accustomed to use German script might use to write English.

"And this came—?" de Grandin arched the slim black brows which were such a vivid contrast to his blond hair and mustache.

"Tonight, after we'd done our last turn. Fran was making up her mouth when the lipstick was snatched out of her hand and the handkerchief from my breast pocket. Next instant handkerchief and lipstick were flung into the far corner of the dressing room. When we picked 'em up we found this."

"*Tiens*," the little Frenchman began, then, "*Sacré nom!*" as he ducked his head. With a sharp click the key had turned in the lock of the instrument case that stood by the farther wall, the glass door swung open and from the upper shelf a lancet rose, shot like an arrow from a bow in low parabola and sped whirring past his head, missing his cheek by the bare fraction of a centimeter as it flashed across the room to bury itself a full inch in the wall.

"*Nom, de nom, de nom, de nom, de sacré nom!*" he swore savagely. "No twenty-times-accursed *fantôme*, no never-quite-to-be-sufficiently-anathematized *lutin* shall throw a knife at Jules de Grandin and boast of the exploit. *Mademoiselle la Revenante*, I am annoyed with you. I take your gauntlet up. I accept your challenge, me. *Parbleu*, but we shall see who makes a monkey out of whom before this business is finished!"

HE LOOKED from one of us to the other, the sharp vertical wrinkles of a frown of concentration etched between his brows. "My friends, I think I have the diagnosis, but as to treatment, *tenez*, that is another matter. Friend Trowbridge, have you not noted one constant factor in these so untoward happenings?"

"Why—" I temporized. "Why—"

"Not why, but what," he corrected with a quick grin. "Think, concentrate, meditate, if you will be so kind."

"H'm. The only condition common to all these occurrences as Mr. Fogarty has related them seems to be that he and his wife have been together—"

"Bravo! Bravissimo!"

"But of course, that could have no earthly bearing on—"

"Name of a small blue man, has it not so? I tell you it is diagnostic, my friend."

"I fail to see—"

"*Précisément, exactement*; quite so. Permit that I instruct you. Across the Rhine in that dark country which has spewed war twice upon the world in one generation they have some words which are most expressive. Among them is *poltergeist*, which signifies a pelting ghost, a ghost which flings things round the house and plays the stupid, childish tricks. More often he is not a ghost at all in the true sense, he is some evil entity which plagues a man or more often a woman. Not for nothing did the old ones call the Devil Prince of the Powers of the Air, for there are very many evil things in the air which we can no more see than we can see the micro-organisms of disease. Yes, it is so." He nodded solemn affirmation.

"This one, I damn think, however, are a true ghost, the earthbound spirit of a human creature tainted with the deadly sins of lust and murder. Also, it are a *poltergeist* of the first water.

"For why? Why should it not come back as an ordinary specter, sighing, weeping, wailing, crying, manifesting itself through the appreciative senses rather than as a *poltergeist*, a pelter, a mover-around-of-furniture?"

"You ask it? *Pardieu*, I shall tell you! The usual, ordinary haunting-ghost may make a noise, often a most unpleasant noise, and sometimes, with or without the aid of

a medium, manifest itself visually. It may raise the hair upon the head of the beholder, frighten him until he is well-nigh witless, but that appears to be about the limit of its powers. It does not fling crockery, it does not move the furniture about, it does not exercise the physical force. The *poltergeist* does so. You apprehend? You follow me? Of course.

"This Lottë Dalberg was a very wicked woman. She was a bloodstained wanton who paid with her life for her crimes. And death has not reformed her. She would torment, injure, perhaps kill the man who had escaped her in life. And in order that she may have power to exercise the *violence physique* she comes back as a *poltergeist*. Yes, certainly; of course.

"Very well, then. Experience with such things shows some agent is essential for the *poltergeist's* activities. The agent, who may be, and usually is entirely innocent of all evil intent, is almost always one possessing some physical or mental abnormality. She are often a young girl in her teens, less often a boy of the same age, sometimes an old or sick person, perhaps a cripple whose vitality is low."

"You begin to comprehend? Monsieur Fogarty has told us that *Madame* his wife is unwell, that they wait only to accumulate a little money before they take a long vacation. *Madame*," he bowed to the girl, "you have consulted a physician? He has diagnosed your illness?"

"Yes," tremulously, "he said I'm suffering from anemia. Things had gotten pretty bad for me before the war. Vaudeville had just about disappeared, there weren't enough floor shows to give employment to a tenth of the dancers 'at liberty.' I had to take what I could get. I was a taxi dancer at the Posieland Dance Hall—five cents a dance and a ten percent commission on the drinks I vamped the patrons into buying. For more than a year I ate ten-cent breakfasts and luncheons; if I had enough to dine at the steam table at the Automat I thought I was in luck. Something has to give way when you starve all day and dance all night, you know, sir."

"*Mordieu, tu parles, ma petite pauvre*," he answered with a gleam of sympathy in his eyes. "You have said it, truly. But so it

is. The so unpleasant workings of this naughty *poltergeist* undoubtedly are conditioned by your presence."

"You mean—" there was stark panic in the girl's cry—"you mean that I'm responsible—"

"Not at all, by no means, *Madame*. I mean the *poltergeist* works through, not with you. The movement of objects and the application of violence without the use of any physical force known to science is technically known as telekinesis. The *poltergeist* accomplishes it by means of an imponderable substance called teleplasm, which is akin to, though not the same as the ectoplasm or psychoplasm exuded by the medium at a spiritualistic séance. Now, neither the mind nor that discarnate entity we call a ghost for want of more exact terminology can affect matter without the influence of a human intermediary. You, *Madame*, are that. It is from you that this entirely detestable spirit-thing derives the necessary teleplasm. Yes.

"But should you blame yourself? *Bien non*. No more than the unfortunate householder whose home has been ravaged by a burglar. Indeed, the simile is apt. You have not given her the teleplasm; she has stolen it from you."

"Then what are we to do? Must Paul and I separate—"

He held a slim hand up for silence. Permit me, *Madame*. I think, I concentrate; I cogitate."

At length: "I would suggest you spend the night apart, my friends. The farther the better. One of you should take the train for Philadelphia and stop at some hotel. The other should remain here. Tomorrow night, if all goes well, we shall attempt an experiment. I make no promises, but we shall see what we shall see. Yes. This Fraulein Lottë Dalberg has affronted me. She has thrown a knife at me. I am insulted, and I do not suffer insult placidly. If one thing fails we shall essay another, and another until we strike upon the proper one. Yes, I have said it, me."

IT WAS shortly after four o'clock next afternoon when we knocked at the door of the suite occupied by Paul and Frances Fogarty at the Berkeley-York. "And how

were things last night?" de Grandin asked as Paul let us in.

"A little better, thank you," answered Fogarty. "I went to Philadelphia as you suggested. Fran stayed here, and aside from a bad dream I had no trouble."

"A bad dream? Like what, Monsieur Paul?"

"I dreamed I was some place, I don't quite know where, but it was probably a mountain top, for everything was shrouded in a heavy mist, and yet there was a wind blowing. It was intensely cold, and I felt very lonely. At last I couldn't stand it any longer and called for Fran."

"And then?"

"I got no answer, but when I called a second time I saw a figure coming slowly toward me through the fog. When it came closer I saw it was Lottë. She was wearing a long scarlet robe, and her hair, as red as the silk of her gown, hung down about her. Her arms were bare, so were her head and feet, and every time she took a step a flash of flame came from the ground where she had trod, and a little puff of yellow smoke accompanied it. It had an odd, nose-tickling smell, like that you get when you put a match to your cigarette before the sulphur has quite burned away."

"U'm," Jules de Grandin commented. "One need not be a Freud or Jung or Stekel to interpret the symbolism of that dream. What next, if you please?"

"I tried to run away, but had no power to move. It was as if I'd suddenly been turned to stone. No, not quite that, either. It was more as if I'd suddenly been paralyzed. I was entirely conscious, but powerless to move. I couldn't even shut my eyes, or take them off her as she walked toward me with a kind of gloating smile on her face. But I could feel my heart beating and the breath hissing in my throat. A bird must feel something like that when a snake creeps up on it.

"She came up to me and put both hands on my shoulders, while she looked straight in my eyes. 'I'm burning, Pablo,' she told me, 'burning for you. Soon I shall burn with you.' Then she kissed me.

"I felt her mouth against my mouth and the light nip of her sharp teeth on my lips, and a mist as red as blood—red as her robe

and her hair—blinded me. I felt as if I were sinking into some dream-scented fog, half conscious, half unconscious, like a patient on the operating table when the ether is applied and the doctor tells him to begin counting: One—two—three. Then suddenly the fog caught fire, and I was burning, too. Flames leaped and roared and hissed about me, stripping the skin off my flesh and the flesh from my bones. The agony of it was almost past endurance, and yet—yet—

"*Précisément, Monsieur,*" de Grandin supplied. "And yet you found the torment in a sense delightful. Even the damned in hell have some pleasures. One takes it that you awoke then?"

"I woke up in what seemed a raging fever, yet I was shaking as with a severe chill."

"And not one little minute too soon, either, *mon jeune. Me,* I think that was no ordinary dream you had. It was a vision, and one which might well have ended in disaster. Tell me," his face showed sudden concern, "you did not speak to her, you did not make her any promise, or declare your love or express rapture at the embrace?"

"No, sir."

"That is good. That is very fortunate, indeed. Poor, weak, finite human nature has its limitations, and the powers of hell are very strong. It seems that not content with doing you physical injury this vile one now would steal away your soul. She is a very naughty person, that one."

Abruptly he turned to Frances Fogarty. "*Madame!*"

"Yes, sir?"

"Attend me, if you please." From his waistcoat pocket he drew a short length of silken cord from which dangled a bright silver disc about the size of a dime. "See him," he ordered. "Is he not a pretty thing?"

SLOWLY, like a pendulum, he swung the bright disc back and forth. Frances watched it, fascinated. "Sleep, Madame Françoise," he commanded softly. "Sleep. The clock is ticking; tick—tock; tick—tock. Slowly, very slowly, it is counting off the second, *ma petite.* Tick-tock. You are weary, very, very weary; you are tired, you

long for sleep. Sleep is what you most desire, it is not? Tick—tock; tick—tock!"

The girl's eyes wavered back and forth, following the arc of the bright disc, but as he droned his monotone they became heavy-lidded, finally closed. Her slender bosom rose and fell convulsively a time or two, then regular soft breathing told us she was sleeping. He bent above her, pressing gentle fingers on her lids. "You are asleep, Madame Françoise?"

"I am asleep," she answered drowsily.

He turned from the girl to her husband. "It is expedient that you join her, Monsieur Paul."

"You mean you want to hypnotize me?"

"Perfectly."

"O.K. I'll take a chance." He dropped into a chair beside his wife, settled his head comfortably and smiled tiredly. "Hope this works, sir," he muttered.

Once more de Grandin swung the shining silver disc, once more his soothing monotone commanded sleep. In something less than five minutes Paul was slumbering peacefully.

"Madame Françoise?" the Frenchman called softly. No answer came, and he repeated the summons. At last a sleepy little murmur like the whimper of a half-roused child responded. "The hypnosis is deep," he whispered, then aloud to the girl, "I am your master am I not, Madame Françoise?"

"You are my master."

"You will obey my command?"

"I will obey you."

"Then I command you to forget all thought of Lotté Dalberg. Dismiss her from your mind and memory, utterly, completely, wholly. As far as you are concerned there was never any such person. Her name if heard will evoke no memories pleasant or unpleasant. It will be the name of a stranger, never heard before. You understand?"

"I understand."

"You will obey?"

A long pause followed, then: "Madame Françoise, who is Lotté Dalberg?" he asked sharply.

"Lotté Dalberg?" sleepily. "I never heard of her. Should I know her?"

"No, emphatically no, my little."

He swung round to the sleeping Paul and repeated the commands he had given

Frances. Then, five minutes later, "Who was Lottë Dalberg, Monsieur Paul?" he asked.

"She was—" the young man seemed to grope for an answer, then, slowly, like one trying to recall a half-forgotten snatch of poetry—"she was a German girl whom I met in Berlin. I loved her—hated her—"

"*Non, par la barbe d'un bouc vert*, you shall not say it!" de Grandin cut in savagely. "Attend me, Monsieur Paul: She was no one. She never had existence. There was never such a person. Do you understand?"

"I—I think so."

"Good. Now, who was Lottë Dalberg, Monsieur Paul?"

"I don't know."

"Think; think hard, my Paul. Who was she? Do not you recall your days and nights together in Berlin, the kisses and the vows of never-dying love?"

"No."

"You cannot recall her?"

"Who?"

"What was her name?"

"Whose name?"

"*Très bien.*" He turned to me, his little round blue eyes gleam. "I damn think that does it—"

"What's that?" I interrupted, seizing him by the elbow and spinning him around. "There, on the wall?"

SOMETHING like a water-stain was forming on the green-painted plaster. It grew, expanded, lengthened, widened till it was the silhouette of a female figure standing on tiptoe facing us. Tiny lines of red like veins began to show within the outline of the stain. Some were heavy, some lighter, and together they traced out a pattern like a line drawing crudely executed in red pigment.

The thing was like a five-pointed star, the widely outspread legs its lower points, the upstretched, outspread arms its upper ones, the head, thrust forward, the apex. Now we could see the snaky locks of red hair rippling unbound down the brow and neck and shoulders, reaching almost to the knees; the long and tapered arms uplifted as in evocation, the wide-opened and staring eyes, glaring at us in malevolent fury.

"*Hola,*" de Grandin greeted mockingly.

"*Comment vous portez-vous, aujourd'hui, Fraulein Lottë?*—how are you?"

The red-etched picture seemed to struggle to free itself from the wall. Grotesquely, horribly, it was like some enormous beetle enmeshed on a sheet of flypaper. He laughed sarcastically. "It is no use, *Fraulein*. Two dimensions are the most you can achieve; soon there will be none."

He dropped his bantering tone and voice and eyes were hard as he proceeded: "Unquiet spirit of the unrepentant dead, go forth. You have said to the grave, 'Thou art my lover, in thy arms will I lie,' and to Death, 'Thou art my father and my mother.' The cord of memory and fear by which you held these ones is broken; your power over them is ended. Save in the memories of those who hate you and the records of the court that tried and sentenced you to death there is no thought or mention of your name. Oblivion has claimed you. You are swallowed up, wiped out; extinct. Now get you gone to that place prepared for you, and may your scarlet sins find pardon in the end. *Avaunt, be gone; te conjuro, abire ad tuum locum!*"

The simulacrum on the wall began to fade like a picture projected from a magic lantern when the light behind it dims, became a featureless shadow, a dull, amorphous stain—nothing.

"*Bien,*" de Grandin dusted one hand on the other. "That is indubitably that, Friend Trowbridge."

To the sleeping couple he called softly: "*Monsieur and Madame*, sleep until the time has come to rise and work, but forget all that has transpired. You never heard of Lottë Dalberg, have no recollection of the persecution with which she plagued you, never have you seen or heard of Jules de Grandin or his friend Dr. Samuel Trowbridge. All, all has been forgotten, *mes amis. Adieu.*"

He opened the door softly and we stepped out into the hall.

"NO," he denied as we finished dinner that night, "I would not call it intuition, my friend. It was rather tentative and impractical. Consider, if you please:

"This thing which haunted Monsieur Fogarty was in the nature of a *poltergeist*,

but it were not a true one. While it moved furniture and hurled light objects it had none of the droll mischievousness of the true *poltergeist*, who, while he often proves annoying, even dangerous, is a species of a ghostly clown who plays his Puckish tricks without much rhyme or reason. This naughty one had a very definite reason for everything she did, she was unquestionably bent on persecuting Monsieur Fogarty, perhaps eventually on killing him. Because she sought to do him physical injury by physical means she resorted to the form of *poltergeist*, and so the pattern of her actions—and her limitations—were those of that species of a ghost.

"Very well. We determined Madame Françoise was the agent through which the so wicked Fraulein Lottë operated, the reservoir of her supply of teleplasm without which she had no power for violence. *Très bien*. What then?

"It is an axiom of the occultist that this teleplasm is what you call idioplastic, that is, it takes its appearance, its seeming, from the thoughts of those among whom it operates. Both Monsieur and Madame Fogarty knew and hated Lottë Dalberg, and with excellent reason. That gave her a hold on their minds. When she appeared to Monsieur Paul in Philadelphia last night she was knocking at the door of his subconscious, seeking to insinuate herself into his brain as well as do him bodily injury through external force.

"Now, I ask me, 'Jules de Grandin, are you afraid of the spirit of this most unpleasant young woman who has died upon the gallows for her murders and undoubtedly is most uncomfortable at present for her other sins?' 'Damn no, Jules de Grandin,' I reply to me. 'I am ashamed of you that you should ask such a question.'

"Very well, suppose we hypnotize this poor, tormented couple, make them not afraid, even not aware, of Lottë Dalberg. What then?

"Hypnotism, in the last analysis, is nothing but the substitution of the operator's mind for that of the subject. In a measure, by fear and memory, the *revenant* had substituted her intelligence for that of Monsieur Paul and Madame Françoise. So what did I do? I thrust my mind into their brains, *pardieu*, and made them unafraid and even unaware of her. Thereafter, she had no

place to go. She could not make them fear her, they had completely forgotten her. It was as if she had been trespassing in their brain-house when *pouf!* along comes Jules de Grandin and evicts her.

"But though they had forgotten her in their hypnotic sleep I had not. I thought of her, and there was still sufficient teleplasm to enable her to take feeble form as a picture on the wall. She was a fearsome, frightening sight, *n'est-ce-pas?* Ha, but she chose the wrong one for her frightening! Me, I told her which was what in no uncertain terms. I told her all her power was gone, that she was as forgotten as last year's bird's nest. Her last remaining ligamentary tie with earth was snapped. She had no place to go but outer darkness."

"You don't think she'll come back?"

"I do not, my friend. What was it that she said to Monsieur Paul in his vision? 'I burn'? *Parbleu*, I think that is exactly what she does.

"And me, I also burn. My throat is dry, my tongue is parched, my lips are all afire. Will you not have the goodness to refill my glass, Friend Trowbridge?"