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RESTLESS SOULS

by SEABURY
QUINN

"I heard her bones crack under the impact."

"TEN thousand little green devils! What a night; what an execrable, odious night!" Jules de Grandin paused beneath the theater's porte-cochère, scowling ferociously at the pelting rain.

"Well, summer's dead and winter hasn't quite come," I reminded soothingly. "We're bound to have a certain amount of rain in October, you know. The autumnal equinox—"

"May the Devil's choicest imps fly away with the autumnal equinox!" the little Frenchman retorted. "*Morbleu*, I have seen no sun or blue sky since the good God alone knows when! Besides that, I am most abominably hungry."

W. T.—2

"We can soon remedy that condition," I promised, nudging him from under the awning's shelter toward my parked car. "Suppose we stop at the Café Bacchanale? They usually have something good to eat."

"Excellent, capital," he agreed enthusiastically, skipping nimbly into the car and rearranging the collar of his raincoat and the turned-down brim of his hat. "Trowbridge, *mon vieux*, you are a true philosopher. Always you tell me that which I most wish to hear."

They were having an hilarious time at the cabaret, for it was the evening of October 31 and the management had put on a special Halloween celebration. As de Grandin and I sur-

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rendered our wraps to the cheek-girl and entered the dining-room a burst of Phrygian music greeted us, and a dozen agile young women in abbreviated attire were performing the gyrations of the latest negroid dance under the leadership of an apparently boneless damsel whose costume was principally composed of strands of jangling hawk-bells looped about her wrists, neck and ankles.

De Grandin regarded the list of soft drinks on the menu's reverse with a jaundiced eye. "They make merry on the Eve of All Saints," he commented almost resentfully. "They would better be at home, attending their devotions."

"Don't be such a spoil-sport," I returned, ordering two Welsh rabbits; "there's plenty to look at if you'll only tear your mind away from prohibition for a while. That girl yonder, for instance"—I nodded toward a table several places removed from ours—"she's certainly a sight for tired eyes."

The little Frenchman dropped the *carte du jour* and turned in the direction indicated by me, his little blue eyes narrowing slightly with the intensity of his gaze. "*Parbleu*, yes," he admitted after a moment's discreet inspection, "she is all that you say, my friend! Me, I should very much like to know her." He tweaked the ends of his miniature blond mustache alternately, teasing the waxed hairs to needle-sharp points.

She fully merited the second long glance he gave her. In utter indifference to the prevailing vogue of cropped hair, this girl's tresses had never known the profanation of shears or clippers. Like a royal diadem they were, plaited and wound about her small, shapely head in a sort of Grecian coronel and looped in heavy coils at the nape of her slender, arching neck. Bright chestnut, almost copper-colored, the locks were, with deep, shadow-laden waves, and at times they seemed to give back spark-

ling, metallic glints under the rays of the crystal-beaded electroliers of the café. Her small, delicate nose had slender, sensitive nostrils which seemed to palpitate above her lusciously curving, crimson lips, and her rather long, oval face possessed a strange, indefinable charm, its ivory pallor enhanced by the shadows of long, silken lashes and the deep purple lights of the slightly slanting eyes which gave the exquisite visage a delicious Oriental flavor. They were extraordinary eyes, eyes blue with deepening violet tints, now sparkling and scintillating with the sudden flash of suppressed, now seemingly dimmed by welling, unshed tears.

As I stole a second glance at her, it seemed to me she had a vague yet unmistakable expression of invalidism. Nothing definite, merely the combination of certain factors which pierced the shell of my purely masculine admiration and struck response from my years of experience as a medical practitioner—a certain blueness of complexion, which meant only "interesting pallor" to the layman, but spelled imperfectly oxidized blood to the physician; a slight tightening of the muscles about the mouth which gave her lovely, pouting lips a pathetic droop; and a scarcely perceptible retraction at the junction of cheek and nose which meant fatigue and exhaustion, either nervous or muscular.

Idly mingling admiration with diagnosis, I turned my glance to her companion, wondering what manner of man he was who basked in the light of those captivating eyes. My lips tightened slightly as I made a mental note: "Gold-digger!" The man was large, big-boned, coarse, with wide, bunchy shoulders, round bullet-head set aggressively forward on a short, thick neck, and the pasty, unhealthy oyster-white complexion of one who drinks far too much and exercises far too little. His heavy, deep-lined face, as he listened to the girl's conversa-

tion, was almost totally expressionless; his small, rather prominent eyes reminded me unpleasantly of the lidless, unchanging eyes of a fish, and whether they rested with a look of proprietorship on the charming girl across the table or roved restlessly about the room, it seemed to me they were as set and fixed in their stare as those of a corpse. Yet, as I watched, I saw the fellow's lack-luster orbs glint sharply once or twice as they rested on some of the more attractive women, as though their leaden dullness had been scratched to sudden brightness. It was an unpleasant, a gross, an immoral face the man possessed, the kind of countenance which stamped him a gambler or crooked politician or the follower of some other equally unsavory trade where humanity or even common decency would be wholly out of place.

"Too bad," I muttered, turning impatiently from the ill-mated pair and giving my attention to the excellent Welsh rabbit the waiter set before us. But the thought of that lovely, delicate girl in company with that bestial ruffian took much of the flavor from the simmering golden-yellow delicacy on my plate.

For a while neither de Grandin nor I spoke. I was sick at heart to think of such a girl debasing her womanhood by appearing in public with such a man; the Frenchman seemed to have no earthly ambition but the acquisition of the greatest possible amount of Welsh rabbit in the least possible time.

AT LENGTH, as though continuing an uninterrupted conversation, de Grandin remarked: "Trowbridge, my friend, I do not like it. It is strange; it is queer; it is not right."

"Eh?" I returned.

"Those two over there"—with a curt sideways nod he indicated the couple on whom our attention had been focused—"they are, somehow, out of harmony. Attend me: On three

separate occasions they have ordered food and spent considerable time in making their selections, yet each time they have allowed it to grow cold before them, let it remain untouched upon the table till borne away by the *garçon*. I ask you, is that right?"

"Why—er——" I began, but he hurried on:

"Once, indeed, my friend, as I watched, I saw the woman make as though to lift a goblet to her lips, but the gesture of her escort arrested the movement half made; she set the beverage down untasted. I do not understand."

"Well, are you going to investigate?" I responded with a grin. The little Frenchman's curiosity was almost as great as his gigantic self-esteem, and I should not have been surprised if he had marched over to the strange couple's table and demanded an explanation.

"Investigate?" he echoed thoughtfully. "U'm. Perhaps I shall."

He poured himself a cup of coffee, mixed it thoroughly with cream, and leaned forward, his little, round eyes staring unwinkingly into mine. "You know what night this is, my friend?" he demanded soberly.

"Certainly, it's October thirty-first, and tomorrow will be——"

"Another day," he supplemented, "but much may happen before that next day's sun ascends, Friend Trowbridge, for tonight is also the eve of All Saints, called by your people All Hallow Eve, or, more simply, Halloween."

"Quite so," I agreed. "I'd forgotten that. All the little devils in town will be out tonight, stealing garden gates, knocking at front doors, peeping into windows and——"

"And, perchance, the larger devils, or those who faithfully serve them, may also be abroad," he cut in.

"Oh, come, now," I protested, "you can't be serious, de Grandin! Bobbie Burns wrote a silly poem about Halloween, but——"

"*Pssst*; be still!" he interrupted sharply. "I have something to do besides listen to foolishness, Friend Trowbridge. *Regardez-vous!*" Another imperative nod from him fixed my attention on the pair at the farther table.

Seated directly opposite the strange couple was a young man, occupying a table to himself. He was a good-looking, sleek-haired youngster of the type to be found by scores on any college campus and by dozens in any of the larger New York brokerage offices. Had de Grandin brought the same charge of food wastage against him he had leveled at the other two, he would have been equally justified, for the youngster left an elaborate order practically untasted while his infatuated eyes devoured every line and lineament and movement of the lovely girl.

As de Grandin's curt gesture brought his gaze to bear upon the boy, I noticed from the tail of my eye that the girl's escort nodded once, peremptorily, in the same direction, bowed with awkward, big-waisted clumsiness to his companion and abruptly left the table, stalking to the door with never a backward glance.

The girl half turned in her chair and cast a single languishing look toward her youthful admirer, then averted her face with a subtle, provocative smile on her curving, crimson lips. The boy half rose from his seat, evidently bent on accepting the overture, but before he could cross the short space separating them the café's lights abruptly blinked out and the shrill, bombinating hum of fiddles, seconded by the titillation of mandolins and banjos sounded through the dark. A big, artificial moon rose slowly from behind the orchestra's stand, flooding the place with an eerie blue-green light, and tripping noiselessly from the upper end of the place came a file of girls arrayed in the loose, black-and-white costume made famous years ago in the Yama-

dama dance, pointed witch-caps on their heads, splint brooms brandished in their hands.

"When the moon comes up like fox-fire
On the night of Halloween,
When the candles and the fire-logs
Burn with flames of ghostly green,
When the farmers and the townsfolk
Hide away from this night's harms,
Then the wizards and the witches
Weave their old, uncanny charms!"

sang the leader of the chorus, performing a grotesque rigadon and screwing her pretty, rather vapid face into what she conceived to be a witch-like grimace.

I raised my hands in applause, but the sharp, urgent grip of the Frenchman's fingers on my forearm arrested me. "Quick, my friend, after them!" he ordered, half dragging me from my seat. "Leave money for our food on the table, but dally not with the waiter; it is of importance that we see which way they go!" With his free hand he pointed dramatically toward the exit.

Arm in arm, totally oblivious to the dancing girls' song, the young man and the beautiful young woman were leaving the place.

"Oh, for goodness' sake, be sensible!" I scolded. "Let them flirt, if they want to. I'll warrant she's in much better company now than she was when she came in here with that——"

"Precisely!" the little Frenchman's retort was almost a hiss. "You state facts, my friend, and it is of that 'better company' that I think when I have the anxiety. Come, immediately, at once, right away!"

Brushing past other diners, stepping over out-thrust shins and more than once treading on unwary toes, we made our way from the cabaret in the wake of the retreating boy and girl, recaptured our hats and rain-coats from the check-girl, and hastened to the street.

"That couple, that young man and young woman—they did go which way, if you please, *Monsieur le Con-*

cierge?" de Grandin demanded of the imposingly uniformed doorman.

"Huh?" replied the other.

The Frenchman repeated his question, punctuating it with the display of a dollar bill.

"Oh, *them*," the attendant answered, as though the offered bill had recalled his wandering memory. "Yeah, *them*. Uh, they went down th' street that-a-way. Little limey taximan drivin' 'em." He indicated the direction with a wave of his gold-laced arm. "Looked to me like th' young feller had made a mash. Yeah, he'll *git* mashed, too, if that tough bimbo 'at brought th' broad in ketches him messin' 'round wid his wren. He sure will. That gink's one awful mean-lookin' bozo, what I mean."

"But of course," de Grandin agreed. "And this Monsieur le Gink of whom you speak, which way did he go, if you please?"

"Huh, he went outa here 'bout ten minutes ago like th' income tax fellers wuz after him. Took off down th' street that-a-way hell-bent fer election. Uh huh, *musta bin goin'* faster than I figured, even, for I turned away a second when he wuz half-way down th' block, an' when I looked again he'd evaporated, *dam'* if he hadn't, though I don't see how he managed to cover that other half-block an' round th' corners in less'n thirty seconds."

"*Ah!*" de Grandin's reply was so sharp that the other looked at him with sudden suspicion. "Hurry, Friend Trowbridge. Hasten, rush, fly!" he called as I brought the car to a stop at the curb before him. "I would that we get them in sight before they are effectually lost in the storm."

IT WAS a matter of only a few minutes to pick up the tail light of the big car in which the truants sped toward the outskirts of town. Their conveyance was one of the better class of public vehicles, graduated down-

ward from the rolling-stock of some prosperous funeral director to general taxi service, but still retaining its air of distinction and its strength of motor. My little two-seater was put to it to keep the fleeing car's lights in sight once the traffic-burdened thoroughfares of the downtown section were passed. More than once we lost our quarry, only to catch a fleeting glimpse of them several blocks away, ever speeding onward through the rain-washed, deserted streets, always bearing outward toward the unfashionable east end of town where row on row of workmen's cottages, a few scattered factories, a jumble of marble yards and the two principal cemeteries marked the boundary between city and frayed-out, poverty-stricken suburbs.

"This is the craziest thing we've ever done," I grumbled as I trod on my accelerator in an effort to draw closer to the larger, more powerful motor. "There isn't a chance of our—Great Scott, they've stopped!"

Impossible as it seemed, the car ahead had drawn up before the imposing Canterbury gate of Shadow Lawn Cemetery!

"Hurry, Friend Trowbridge, more speed, be quick!" the Frenchman bade, leaning forward in his seat like a jockey in his saddle, as though he would aid the motor in making haste.

Try as I would, my efforts were futile, and only an empty limousine and a thoroughly mystified and profane chauffeur awaited us when we drew up at the burying-ground, our engine puffing and laboring like a winded horse.

"Which way, my friend—where did they go?" de Grandin almost screamed, vaulting over the side of my car before I had a chance to shut off the engine.

"Hinside the blinkin' gryveyard—that's w'ere they went!" replied a fruity Cockney voice. "Can ye 'magine ut, gov'nor? Drags me out through the bleedin' rye to this

Gawd-forsaken plyce, an' 'ands me the icy mitten, so they does! Says the lidy, says she: 'Ye needn't wyte fer us, chauffeur, we'll not be comin' back.' Gawd a'mighty—not be comin' back! Who but dead corpses goes to the cemet'ry an' don't come back, I axes ye!"

"Who, indeed?" the Frenchman murmured; then to me: "Come, Friend Trowbridge, we must hasten, we must run, *parbleu*, we must fly!"

SOLEMN as the purpose to which it was dedicated, the burial park stretched dark and forbidding about us as we stepped through the grille in the imposing stone gateway. The curving graveled avenues, bordered by tall double rows of cedars and Lombardy poplars which swayed dolorously in the rain-laden north wind, stretched away like labyrinthine mazes, and the black turf, with its occasional corrugations of mounded graves or decorations of pallid marble monuments, sloped upward from us, seemingly stretching outward to infinity. To follow a trail in such surroundings was a task to tax old Leatherstocking at his best. To me it seemed worse than hopeless.

Like a terrier on the scent, de Grandin hurried forward, bending now and again to pass beneath the down-swaying bough of some rain-laden evergreen, pausing every few paces to throw his head back like a hunting dog sniffing the wind, then hustling forward along the smoothly kept roadway.

"You know this place, Friend Trowbridge?" he demanded during one of his brief halts.

"Better than I want to," I admitted. "I've been out here to several funerals."

"Good—*très bon!*" he returned. "You can tell me, then, where is the—how do you call it?—the receiving-vault?"

"Over there, almost in the center

of the park," I replied, and he nodded understandingly, then took up his course, almost at a run.

At last, panting for breath, we neared the point where the squat, graystone receiving-mausoleum stood, and the Frenchman hurried forward, seizing the massive bronze ring-bolts in the vault's heavy doors and trying them, one after the other, as though he would violate the sepulcher. "A loss!" he ejaculated disappointedly as each of the tomb's great metal doors defied his efforts. "Come, we must search elsewhere."

Turning on his heel he half ran, half trotted to the open space in the road reserved for parking funeral vehicles, cast a quick, appraising look about, arrived at a decision and shot like a cross-country runner down the winding road toward a long row of imposing family mausoleums. At each tomb he stopped, trying the strong metal gratings with which they were stopped, even dropping to his knees and peering into their gloomy interiors with the aid of his pocket flashlight. Knowing how useless it was to argue or ask for information when he was in one of these frenzied moods, I trotted silently at his heels, mentally resolving to give him the scolding of his life when we got home.

Tomb after tomb we visited in the mad quest. At length, when my patience was about exhausted and I was on the point of announcing my intention of leaving, with or without him, he grasped me by the arm, halting in his tracks and pointing dramatically before him with his free hand. "Look, Trowbridge, my friend," he commanded sharply. "Look and tell me what it is that you see."

I followed the line of his pointing finger with my eyes, wagged my head and blinked my eyes with incredulity. "Wh—why, it's a man!" I gasped.

"*Prie Dieu* you may be right!" he replied, darting forward and dropping to his knees beside the dark, inert object which sprawled over the short

flight of steps leading to the mausoleum.

I took the electric torch from him and played its light over the prostrate figure. It was the young man we had seen leave the café with the strange woman, and at first glance I thought him dead. His hands, pale and stiff as though already in the grip of rigor mortis, clawed impotently at the stone steps; his face, pressed cheek-downward on the rain-chilled granite, was bruised and already discolored; and on his forehead was a nasty cut as though from some blunt instrument swung with terrific force—a blackjack, for instance.

Quickly, skilfully, de Grandin ran his supple, practised hands over the youngster's body, pressed his fingers to his pulse, bent to listen to his chest. "He lives," he announced at the end of his inspection, "but his heart—I do not like it. Come; let us take him away, my friend."

"AND NOW, *mon enfant*," de Grandin demanded half an hour later when we had revived the unconscious man with smelling-salts and cold applications, "perhaps you will be good enough to tell us why you left the haunts of the living to foregather with the dead?"

The young man made a feeble effort to rise from the examination table, gave it up as too difficult and sank back. "I thought I was dead," he confessed.

"U'm?" de Grandin regarded him narrowly. "You have not yet answered our question, young *Monsieur*."

The boy made a second attempt to rise, and an agonized expression spread over his face, his hand shot up to his left breast, and he fell back, half lolling, half writhing on the table.

"Quick, Friend Trowbridge," de Grandin cried, "the amyl nitrite, where is it?"

"Over there," I waved my hand to-

ward the medicine cabinet. "You'll find some three-minim capsules in the third white box."

In a moment de Grandin had secured the pearly little pellets, crushed one in his handkerchief and applied it to the fainting boy's nostrils. "Ah, so; you feel better now, my poor one?" he asked solicitously.

"Yes, thanks," the other replied, taking another deep inhalation of the powerful palliative, "much better." Then: "How'd you know what to give me? I didn't think——"

"My friend," the little Frenchman interrupted, "I was practising the treatment of angina pectoris when you were as yet unthought of. Now, if you are sufficiently restored, you will please tell us why you left the *Café Bacchanale*, and what occurred thereafter. We wait."

Slowly, assisted by de Grandin on one side and me on the other, the young man descended from the table and seated himself in an easy chair. "I'm Donald Rochester," he announced without further preliminary, "and this was to have been my last night on earth."

"Ah?" murmured Jules de Grandin.

"Six months ago," the youth continued, "Dr. Simmons told me I had angina pectoris. My case was pretty far advanced when he made his diagnosis, and he gave me only a little while to live. Two weeks ago he told me I would be lucky to see the month out, and the pain has been getting greater and greater and the attacks more frequent; so today I decided to give myself one last party, then go home and make a quick, clean end of it."

"Damn!" I muttered. I know Simmons, a pompous old ass, but a first-rate diagnostician and a good heart man, though absolutely brutal with his patients.

"I ordered the sort of meal they haven't allowed me in the last half year," Rochester went on, "and was

about to enjoy myself with it when—when I saw her come in. Man”—he turned from de Grandin to me, as though expecting greater sympathy from a fellow countryman—“did you see her, too?” An expression of almost religious rapture overspread his face.

“Perfectly,” de Grandin answered.

“We all saw her. Tell us more.”

“I’ve knocked about quite a bit for a fellow my age,” Rochester rejoined, “and thought I’d seen about all there was, but the first sight of that girl bowled me out. I always thought this love stuff was a lot of hooey, but I’m cured now. I know how it feels to love at first sight—I even forgot my farewell meal, couldn’t see anything or think of anything but her. If I’d had even two more years to live, I thought, nothing could have kept me from hunting her out and asking her to mar—”

“Parbleu, yes, we concede you were fascinated,” the Frenchman interrupted testily, “but for the love of a thousand pale blue monkeys, tell us what you did, not what you thought, if you please. This is no class in psychology.”

“I just sat and goggled at her,” the other responded. “I couldn’t do anything else. When that big brute she was with got up and left, and she smiled at me, this poor old heart of mine almost blinked out, I tell you. When she rose to leave, and smiled again, there wasn’t enough chain in the country to hold me back.

“You’d have thought she’d known me all her life by the way she fell in step when I joined her at the door. She had a big, black car waiting outside, and I climbed right in with her. Before I knew it, I was telling her who I was, how long I had to live, and how my only regret was losing her just when I’d found her. I—”

“You told her *this!*” There was something like horror in de Grandin’s incredulous whisper.

“I certainly did, and a lot more. I

blurted out that I loved her—worshiped the ground she trod and the air she breathed—before I knew what I was about.”

“And she—”

“Gentlemen, I’m not sure whether I ought to have delirium or not with this disease, but I’m pretty sure I’ve had a touch of something. Now, I want you to know that I’m not crazy before I tell you the rest, but I might have had a heart attack, or something, then fallen asleep and dreamed it.”

“Say on,” de Grandin ordered, a trifle grimly. “We listen.”

“Very well. When I said I loved her, that girl just put her hands up to her eyes—like this—as though she’d wipe away some unshed tears. I’d expected her to get angry, or maybe to giggle, but she didn’t. All she said was: ‘Too late—oh, too late!’

“‘I know it is,’ I answered. ‘I’ve already told you I’m as good as dead, but I can’t go west without letting you know how I feel.’

“And she said, ‘Oh, no, it’s not that, my dear. That’s not what I meant at all. For I love you, too, but I’ve no right to say so—I’ve no right to love anyone—it’s too late for me, too.’

“After that I just took her in my arms and held her tight, and she sobbed as if her heart would break. Finally I asked her to make me a promise. ‘I’d rest better in the grave if I knew you wouldn’t ever go out with that ugly brute I saw you with tonight,’ I told her, and she let out a little scream and cried harder than ever.

“Then I had the awful thought that maybe she was married to that beast, and that was what she meant when she said it was too late. The thought tortured me, and I asked her point-blank.

“She said something devilish queer, then. She told me: ‘Oh, I must go with him whenever he wants me. Though I hate him as you can never understand hate, when he calls

I have to go. This is the first time I've ever accompanied him, but I must go again, and again, and again! She kept screaming that one word till I stopped her mouth with kisses.

"Presently the car stopped and we got out. We were in front of some sort of park, I think. I was so engrossed helping her compose herself that I didn't notice much of anything.

"She led me through a big gate and down a winding road, and finally stopped before some sort of lodge-gate. Then I took her in my arms for one last kiss.

"I don't know whether the rest of it really happened or whether I passed out and dreamed it. What I *thought* took place was this: She didn't kiss in the ordinary way. Instead of putting her lips against mine, she put them *around* them and seemed to draw the very breath out of my lungs. I could feel myself getting faint, like a swimmer caught in the surf and mauled and pounded till his lungs are full of water, and my eyes seemed to go blind with some sort of mist. I could hear a sort of ringing in my ears, then everything went black and I began to sag at the knees. I could still feel her arms about me; but it seemed as if she'd transferred her lips to my throat. I kept getting weaker and weaker with a sort of languorous ecstasy, if that means anything to you. It was like sinking to sleep in a soft, dry bed with a big drink of brandy in you after you're dog-tired from a tour of duty on the firing-step, or slipping into a warm bath when you're lousy-dirty and chilled to the bone from crawling through mud and filth and dodging flares and 'typewriter' bullets half the night. The next thing I knew I'd toppled over and fallen down the steps with no more strength in my legs than a rag-doll has. I got an awful crack on the head as I went down, I reckon, for I passed completely out, and the next I remember

was waking to find you gentlemen working over me. Tell me, did I dream it all? I'm—about—played—out."

The sentence trailed off slowly, as though he were falling to sleep, and before either of us realized, his head had dropped forward and his hands slipped nervously from his lap, trailing flaccidly on the floor beside him.

"Has he gone?" I whispered as de Grandin sprang across the room and ripped his collar open.

"Not quite," he answered. "More amyl nitrite, if you please; he will revive in a moment, but go home he shall not, unless he promises faithfully not to destroy himself. *Mon Dieu*, destroy himself he assuredly would, both body and soul, were he to send a bullet through his brain before—ah, behold, Friend Trowbridge. It is even as I thought!"

On Donald Rochester's throat were two tiny, perforated wounds, as though a fine needle had been thrust through a fold of skin.

"H'm," I murmured. "If there were four of them, I'd say a snake had bitten him."

"She had! Name of a little blue man, she had!" de Grandin snapped. "A serpent more virulent and subtle than any which goes upon its belly has sunk her fangs in him; but by the wings of Jacob's angel, we shall thwart her, Friend Trowbridge. We shall show her that Jules de Grandin must be reckoned with here. *Ycs, cordieu*, her and that fish-eyed paramour of hers, as well, or may I eat accursed stewed turnips for Christmas dinner and wash them down with ditch-water!"

IT WAS a serious face de Grandin showed at breakfast next morning. "You have perhaps half an hour's liberty this morning?" he asked as he drained his fourth cup of well-creamed coffee.

"H'm, I suppose so," I replied. "Anything special you'd like to do?"

"But yes. I would that you drive me to that Shadow Lawn Cemetery once more. There is that there which I would examine by daylight, if you please."

"Shadow Lawn Cemetery!" I echoed in amazement. "What in this world—"

"Only partially," he interrupted. "Unless I am more mistaken than I think, our business has much to do with another world, as well. Come; you have your patients to attend, I have my duties to perform. Let us go."

The rain had vanished with the night and a bright November sun was shining brightly when we drew up before the graveyard.

Making straight for the tomb where we had found young Rochester a few hours earlier, de Grandin inspected it as carefully as though he contemplated buying it. Carefully he walked round it, noting its massive masonry construction, examining the strong, porteillislke bronze grille with which its wide entrance was stopped. On the lintel of the doorway he invited my attention to the single incised word:

HEATHERTON

"U'm," he commented, nursing his narrow, pointed chin in the cupped palms of his hand. "That name, I must remember it, my friend."

Inside the tomb, arranged in two superimposed rows, were the crypts containing the remains of deceased Heathertons, each sealed by a white marble slab set with cement in a bronze frame, a two-lined legend telling the name and vital data of the occupant of each narrow tenement. The withered remains of a funeral wreath clung by a knot of ribbon to the bronze ring-bolt ornamenting the marble panel of the farthest crypt, and behind the disintegrating circle of roses and ruscus leaves I made out the epitaph:

FULVIA HEATHERTON

Sept. 28, 1904

Oct. 2, 1928

"You see?" he demanded.

"I see that a girl—I suppose Fulvia is a feminine name—died a month ago at the age of twenty-four," I admitted; "but what that has to do with last night is more than—"

"But of course," he broke in. "There is a very great much which you can not see, Trowbridge, my friend, and there is much more at which you blink tight your eyes, like a child passing over the unpleasant pages of a picture-book or a fundamentalist 'refuting' the doctrine of behaviorism, but I fear I must ask you to unfurl your lids upon some unpleasant sights before we write *finis* to this matter. Now, if you will be so kind as to leave me, I shall interview *Monsieur l'Intendant* of this so beautiful park, and perhaps several other people as well. If possible, I shall be home by dinner time, for my conscience would smite me without ceasing were I to miss a meal. However"—he elevated his narrow shoulders and pursed his lips in a gesture of resignation—"even a good dinner must sometimes be slighted."

THE consommé had grown cold and the roast lamb was kiln-drying in the oven when the stutter of my office telephone bell called me to the instrument. "Trowbridge, my friend," de Grandin's rather shrill, excited voice came over the wire, "come at once. Meet me at the Adelphi Mansions as soon as you can! I would have you for witness."

"Witness?" I echoed, but the sharp click of the receiver thrust unceremoniously into its hook announced he had rung off without further ado, and I was left staring bewilderedly at the unresponsive instrument. There was nothing to do but go; so, with a hasty apology to Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, for deserting her elaborate dinner untasted, I hustled into hat, coat and gauntlets and set out for the fashionable apartment house de Grandin had named as rendezvous.

He was striding impatiently back and forth across the sidewalk when I arrived, and refused to answer a question as he fairly dragged me through the apartment's ornate doorway and to the elevators. As the car shot upward, he reached into an inner pocket and produced a shiny, thumb-smudged photograph which he handed me with the explanation: "I did beg it from the office of the *Journal* this afternoon. They had no further use for it."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed as I glanced at the picture. "Why—why, it's——"

"Assuredly it is," he answered in a level, expressionless tone. "It is the young Mademoiselle Heatherton, beyond a doubt; she whose tomb we did visit this morning, she whom we did see with the young Rochester last night."

"But that's impossible!" I protested, yet felt a chilling horripilation at the back of my neck, even as I voiced the denial. If the girl of the picture were not the one we had seen last night, she was enough like her to be her identical twin.

He laughed shortly. "I was convinced you would say that," he informed me. "Come, let us visit Madame Heatherton."

A trim negro maid in neat black-and-white uniform answered our summons and took our cards to her mistress. As she left the sumptuous reception room I glanced covertly about me, noting the rugs from China and the Near East, the early American mahogany, the subdued luster of old blue and mulberry china, and the elaborately wrought mediæval tapestry depicting a scene from the *Nibelungenlied* with its legend in formal Gothic text: "*Hic Siegfriedum Aureum Occidunt.*"

"Dr. Trowbridge? Dr. de Grandin?" the soft, cultured voice recalled me from my study of the needlework as an imposing, white-haired lady entered the room.

"Madame, a thousand pardons for this intrusion!" De Grandin clicked his heels together and bowed stiffly from the hips. "Believe me, we have no desire to trespass on your privacy, but a matter of the utmost importance brings us here. You will forgive me if I inquire concerning the circumstances of your daughter's death, for I am from the *Sûreté* of Paris, and make my investigation as a scientific research."

Mrs. Heatherton was, to use an overworked term, a "perfect lady." Nine women out of ten would have frozen at de Grandin's announcement, but she was the tenth. The direct glance the little Frenchman gave her and the evident sincerity of his tone, combined with his perfect manners and immaculate dress, carried conviction. "Pray be seated, gentlemen," she invited. "I can not see where my poor child's tragedy can interest an officer of the Paris secret police, but I've no objection to telling all I know, for you could get a garbled account of it from the newspapers anyway."

"Fulvia was my youngest child. She and my son Ralph were two years apart, almost to the day. Ralph graduated at Cornell year before last, majoring in civil engineering, and went to Florida to take charge of some construction work. Fulvia died while visiting him."

"But—pardon my seeming rudeness, Madame—your son, is he not also dead?"

"Yes," Mrs. Heatherton returned. "He is dead, also. They died almost together. There was a man down there, a fellow townsman of ours, Joachim Palenezke—not the sort of person one knows, but Ralph's superior in the work. He had something to do with promoting the land development, I believe. When Fulvia went down to visit Ralph, this person presumed on his position and the fact that we were all from the same city,

and attempted to force his attentions on her."

"U'm? And then?" de Grandin prompted softly, nodding thoughtfully.

"Ralph resented the fellow's overtures. Palenezke made some insulting remarks—some scurrilous allusions to Fulvia and me, I've been told—and they fought. Ralph was a small man, but a thoroughbred. Palenezke was almost a giant, but a thorough-going coward. When my boy began to best him in the fight, he drew a revolver and fired five shots into my poor son's body. Ralph died the next day after hours of terrible suffering.

"Palenezke fled to the swamps where it would be difficult to track him with dogs, and, according to some negro squatters, committed suicide, but there must have been some mistake, for——" She broke off, pressing her crumpled handkerchief to her mouth as though to force back the sobs which rose unbidden to her lips.

De Grandin reached from his chair and patted her hand gently, as though consoling a child. "My poor lady," he murmured, "I am distressed, I am grieved, I am desolated at your sorrow, but I pray you believe me when I say I do not ask questions from idle curiosity. Tell me, if you will, why you think the report of this vile miscreant's self-destruction was an error."

"Because—because he was seen again!" she gasped in a muted, horrified whisper. "He killed Fulvia!"

"*Nom d'un nom!* Do you tell me so?" de Grandin's comment was a suppressed shout. "Tell me, tell me, *Madame*, how came this vileness about?" His words fairly tumbled over each other in his eagerness. "This is of the greatest importance. This explains much which was inexplicable. Say on, *chère Madame*, I implore you!"

"Fulvia was prostrated at the tragedy of Ralph's murder, and for a time it seemed that she would be seri-

ously ill, but she rallied like the true gentlewoman she was, and set about making preparations for returning north with her brother's body. There was no railway nearer than fifteen miles, and she wanted to catch an early train, so she set out by motor the night before her train was due. As she drove through a length of lonely, unlighted road between two stretches of undrained swampland, someone emerged from the tall reeds—I have the chauffeur's statement for this—and leaped on the running-board. He struck the driver senseless with a single blow, but not before he was recognized. It was Palenezke, of course. The car ran into the swamp when the chauffeur lost consciousness, but fortunately for him the mud was deep enough to stall the machine, though not deep enough to engulf it. He recovered in a short time and raised the alarm.

"They found them both next morning. Palenezke had apparently slipped in the bog while trying to escape and been drowned. Fulvia was dead—from shock, the physicians said. Her lips were terribly bruised; there was a wound on her throat, though not serious enough to cause death; and she had been——"

"Enough! Say no more, *Madame*, I beseech you!" de Grandin cried. "*Sung de Saint Denis!* Is Jules de Grandin a monster that he should roll stones upon a mother's breaking heart? *Dieu de Dieu, non!* But tell me, if you can, and I shall ask you no more thereafter, what became of this ten thousand times damned—your pardon, *Madame!*—this so execrable *cochon* of a Palenezke?"

"They brought him home for burial," Mrs. Heatherton replied softly. "His family is very wealthy. Some of them are bootleggers, some are in the real estate business, some are politicians. He had the most elaborate funeral ever seen in the local Greek Orthodox Church—they say the flowers alone cost more than five thousand

dollars. But Father Apostolakos refused to say mass over him, merely recited a short prayer, and denied him the right of burial in the consecrated part of the church cemetery."

"Ah!" De Grandin looked meaningfully at me, as though to say, "I told you so!"

"This may interest you, too, though I don't know," Mrs. Heatherton added: "A friend of mine, who knows a reporter on the *Journal*—newspaper men know everything," she added with simple *naïveté*, "told me that the low coward really must have tried suicide and failed, for there was a bullet-mark on his temple, though, of course, it couldn't have been fatal, since they found him drowned in the swamp. Do you suppose he could have wounded himself purposely where those negro swamp-dwellers could see him, so that the story of his suicide would get about and the sheriff's posse would stop looking for him?"

"Quite possibly," de Grandin agreed as he rose. "*Madame*, we are your debtors more than you suspect, and, though you can not know it, we have saved you at least one pang this night. *Adieu, chère Madame*, and may the good God watch over you—and yours." He laid his lips to her smooth, white fingers and bowed himself from the room.

As we passed through the outer door we caught the echo of a sob and Mrs. Heatherton's despairing cry: "Me and mine—there are no 'mine.' All, all are gone!"

"*La pauvre!*" de Grandin murmured as he closed the door softly. "All the more reason for *le bon Dieu's* watchfulness, though she knows it not!"

"Now what?" I demanded, dabbing furtively at my eyes with my handkerchief, for Mrs. Heatherton's story had affected me profoundly.

De Grandin made no effort to conceal his tears. They trickled down his

face as though he had been a half-grown schoolboy.

"Go home, my friend," he ordered. "Me, I shall consult the priest of that Greek Church. From what I hear of him, he must be a capital fellow, and I think he will give credence to my story. If he do not so, then, *parbleu*, we shall take matters into our own hands. Meanwhile, crave humble pardon for us from the excellent Nora; have her prepare some slight refreshment, and be you ready to accompany me forth again when we shall have regaled ourselves. *Nom d'un canard vert*, I fear we shall have many offices to perform before the blessed sun drives away the shadows of this night!"

IT WAS nearly midnight when he returned, but from the sparkle in his eyes I knew he had successfully attended to some of the "offices" of which he had spoken.

"*Barbe d'une chèvre*," he exclaimed as he disposed of his sixth cold lamb sandwich and emptied his coffee cup with three famished gulps, "that Father Apostolakos of the Orthodox Church, he is no man's fool, my friend. Well learned in the ways of the world, he is, and wise in matters concerning other things, as well; no empty-headed modern, knowing so much that he knows nothing at all is he, but a man to whom one skilled in occult matters may talk freely and be as freely understood. He will help us."

"U'm?" I commented noncommittally.

"Precisely," he agreed, refilling his coffee cup and stirring a liberal portion of cream and sugar into the steaming beverage. "Exactly, my friend. The good *Papa* is supreme in matters ecclesiastical, and he will give the necessary orders tomorrow morning, without so much as 'by your leave' from the so estimable bootleggers, real estate agents and politicians who compose the illustrious Palenezke

family. It is very well. Now, if you are ready, we will go."

"Go—go where?" I demanded.

"To Monsieur Rochester's, of course. I would have further talk with that young man."

As we left the house I saw him transfer a small oblong packet from his jacket to his overcoat. "What's that?" I asked.

"Something the good father lent me. I hope we shall have no occasion to use it, but it will prove most convenient, if we do."

A LIGHT mist, dappled here and there with chilling November rain, was settling over the early-morning streets as we departed for Rochester's home. Forms of occasional late passengers loomed dim and ghostly through the fog and the street lamps showed faintly cruciform bars of luminance.

Half an hour's cautious driving brought us to the bachelor apartment where Donald Rochester lived. As I drew up at the curb the Frenchman tapped me lightly on the shoulder, pointing upward as he did so.

"You see?" he asked. "That light burns in the young *Monsieur's* rooms. Can it be he entertains visitors at this hour?"

The night elevator operator was sound asleep, and guided by de Grandin's cautious gesture, I followed his lead in tiptoeing past him and ascending the stairs.

"There is no need to announce ourselves prematurely," the Frenchman whispered when we were safely out of earshot. "It is better that we arrive as a party of surprize, I think."

He rapped lightly on Rochester's door, repeated the summons a second time, and was on the point of trying the handle when the young man himself responded.

He was arrayed in the same faultless dinner clothes he had worn the night before, and there was no hint of sleep or fatigue about him. On the

contrary, he seemed wide awake, and not particularly pleased to see us.

"We are unexpected, my friend," de Grandin announced, "but we are here, nevertheless. Have the kindness to permit us to enter, if you please."

"But—but you can't come in at this hour," Rochester protested. "I really can't see you now. If you'll come back tomorrow, I'll be glad—"

"This is tomorrow, *mon vieux*," the Frenchman returned, brushing past our reluctant host and walking rapidly down the hall to the lighted living-room.

It was a typical well-to-do bachelor's "diggings" we entered. The room, larger than the average apartment chamber, was tastefully and substantially furnished, a rich Turkey carpet on the floor, strongly built pieces of maple and hickory—mostly low, roomy armchairs—scattered about. A shaded lamp on the table cast a circle of subdued light over the center of the room, and the leaping, crackling flames from the fireplace threw constantly shifting splashes of illumination on the white bearskin rug spread before the polished brass andirons. In the darker corners of the place we could make out tall cases in which rank on rank of handsomely bound volumes stood at attention, the reflection from the dancing flames picking out pleasing highlights on their gold-embossed covers. The scent of Egyptian cigarette smoke hung heavy in the air, but mingling with it was another odor, the faint, hardly perceptible yet alluringly provocative scent of heliotrope.

I stared about me with an almost guilty feeling. Rochester, clean-cut, masculine to the tips of his long fingers and the smoothly brushed hairs of his head, was not the sort of man to use perfume—yet there the scent was. There was no mistaking it.

De Grandin was less formal than I. At the farther side of the room was a wide archway closed by two

Paisley shawls hung lambrequinwise from a brass rod. Toward these the Frenchman strode with an assured step, his right hand deep in his top-coat pocket, his ebony cane, which I well knew concealed a keen sword blade, held lightly by its silver-mounted handle in his left hand.

"De Grandin!" I cried in shocked amazement, dumfounded at his air of proprietorship.

"Don't!" Rochester called warningly, hurrying to place himself between the Frenchman and the door. "You mustn't—"

The rich hangings at the archway parted, and a girl stepped forward between them. The long, clinging gown of purple silk-tissue, utterly unadorned, in which she was clad hung to her exquisite form like a veil, disclosing, rather than concealing, the perfection of the ivory body beneath. Her luxurious copper-colored hair, smoothly parted in the middle, was unbound and swept in a double cascade of rippling brightness across her high, white forehead and swirled like sun-flecked, flowing water about her bare white shoulders. Halted in the act of advancing, one tiny, high-arched foot, innocent of covering, showed its blue-veined whiteness against the deep red of the rug like a single spot of moonlight upon a midnight woodland pool. As her gaze met the advancing Frenchman she paused with a sibilant intake of breath, and her right hand, from which the flowing, loose sleeve of her silken garment had fallen back, clutched at the curtain as if for support while her eyes widened with an expression of mingled fright and horror.

Yet it was no shamefaced glance she gave him; no look of detected guilt or brazen attempt at facing out a hopelessly embarrassing situation. Rather, it was the look of one in imminent peril of death; such a look as she might have given had it been a tiger or rattlesnake advancing on her

instead of the immaculately dressed, debonair little Frenchman.

"So!" she breathed, and I could see the rise of her laboring breast beneath her robe as she spoke; "so you knew! I feared you would, but I did not think—" She broke off with an expression of acute distress as de Grandin advanced another step and swerved till his right-hand coat pocket was within arm's length of her.

"*Mais oui, mais oui, Mademoiselle la Morte,*" he returned, retreating a step or two and bowing ceremoniously, but without removing his hand from his coat. "I knew, as you say. The question now rises, 'What shall we do about it?'"

"See here"—Rochester flung himself between them—"what's the meaning of this unpardonable intrusion, Dr. de Grandin? I demand an explanation."

The little Frenchman turned toward him, an expression of mild inquiry on his face. "*You demand an explanation?*" he returned. "I should think, if explanations are in order—"

"Damn your innuendos!" Rochester cut in. "I'm my own man, and accountable to nobody. Fulvia came to me tonight, and I love her. I'm going to marry her, if it's the last thing I do on earth!"

"It probably will be," de Grandin replied *sotto voce*; then, aloud: "How did she come, if you care to tell?"

The young man seemed to catch his breath, like a runner struggling to regain his wind at the end of a hard course. "I—I went out for a little while," he faltered, "and when I came back—when I came back—"

"My poor one!" de Grandin interrupted sympathetically. "You do lie like a gentleman, but also you lie very poorly. Listen, I will tell you how she came: This night, I know not exactly when, but well after the evening's shadows had replaced the

cleanly light, you did hear a knock-rap at your window or door, and when you looked out, there was the so beautiful *demoiselle*. You thought you dreamed, but again the lovely fingers tap-tapped at the window-pane, and the beautiful eyes opened wide and looked love into yours, and you opened the sash and cried out to her to enter, content to entertain the dream of her, since there was no chance of her coming in the flesh. Tell me, young *Monsieur*, and you, young and beautiful *Mademoiselle*, I recite the facts, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

Rochester and the girl stared at him in dumb amazement. Only the quivering of the young man's eyelids and the tremble of the girl's sensitive lips gave testimony he had spoken accurately.

For a moment there was a tense, vibrant silence; then, with a little gasping cry the girl tottered forward on soft, soundless feet and dropped half prostrate before de Grandin. "Have pity—be merciful!" she besought, grasping him about the knees. "Be merciful to me as you may one day hope for mercy yourself. It is such a little thing I ask. You know *what* I am; do you also know who I am, and why I am now—now the accursed thing you see, instead of being free to love as other women do? Oh, it is too cruel—too cruel!" She released her hold and buried her face in her hands. "I am young," she sobbed. "I'm only a girl, and all of life lay before me. I'd never known real love till it was too late. You can't be so unkind as to drive me back now; you can't!"

Tears quivered on de Grandin's lashes and his voice was very soft and sorrowful as he gently placed his hand on the girl's shining head and replied: "My poor little one, my poor, innocent lamb, slaughtered before you had even the lambkin's right to play! I know all there is to know of you. Your sainted mother told me more than she dreamed this afternoon. I

am not cruel, my lovely one; I am all sympathy and sorrow, but life is cruel and death even more so, and you must know what the end will be if I do not do that which I must. *Hélas*, were I a worker of miracles, I would roll back the gates of the tomb and bid you be happy with life and love until your natural time had come to die, but——"

"I don't care what the end may be!" the girl blazed, sinking backward till she sat upon her upturned, bare soles. "I only know I was denied every woman's birthright, and I've found love and want it; I want it! He's mine, I tell you; mine, and I love him.

"Think"—she crept forward and took de Grandin's hand in both of hers, fondling it and pressing it to her cheek—"think how little it is I ask. Just a tiny ruby of blood now and then. Only a tiny drop, to keep my beautiful body whole. If I were alive—if I were like other women, and Donald were my lover, how gladly he would submit to a transfusion—to giving pints, quarts of blood, if necessary for my health and strength. Is it so much then if I ask only an occasional drop? Just a drop now and then, and once in a while a draft of living breath from his lungs to——"

"To slay his poor, sick body and then destroy his wholesome, clean soul!" the Frenchman interrupted softly. "It is not of the living that I think so much, but of the dead. Would you deny him the right to lie quietly in his grave when he shall have lost his life because of you? Would you refuse him the comfort of peaceful sleep until the dawn of God's Great Tomorrow?"

"O-b-oh!" the cry wrung from her pale lips was like the wail of a lost spirit. "You are right—it is his soul we must protect. I would crush that, too, even as mine was crushed that night in the swamps. Oh, pity, pity me, dear Lord! Thou who didst heal

the unclean lepers and despised not the Magdalen, have mercy on me, the soiled, the unclean!"

Scalding tears of agony trickled down her lovely face and fell between the fingers of her long, transparent hands as she held them before her face. Then:

"I am ready," she announced suddenly, seeming to find courage for complete renunciation. "Do what you must to me. If it must be knife and stake, strike quickly. I will not scream or cry, if I can help it."

For a moment de Grandin looked pitifully into her face as he might have looked into the coffin of a dear friend, then: "Monsieur Rochester," he announced suddenly, "I would look at you. I would examine into the state of your health."

We stared at him astounded, but he calmly proceeded to strip back the young man's waistcoat and open his shirt, listening carefully to the action of his heart, testing his chest by percussion, counting the pulse action, then feeling slowly up and down the arm.

"U'm," he remarked judicially at the end of the examination, "you are in bad condition, my friend. With medicines, careful nursing and more luck than the physician usually has, I might keep you alive a month. Again, you may drop over at any moment. But in all my life I have never given a patient his death warrant with greater happiness."

We regarded him in mute wonder a moment, but it was the girl who spoke first. "You mean," she trilled, laughter and a light such as never was on land or sea breaking in her eyes, "you mean I can have him until——"

"Precisely, exactly, quite so," he responded before she could conclude. Turning from her he addressed Rochester directly.

"You and Mademoiselle Fulvia are to love each other as much as you please, while life holds out," he an-

nounced. "Afterward"—he extended his hand and grasped the girl's slender fingers—"afterward, *Mademoiselle*, I will do the thing which is needful—for you both. Ha, Monsieur Diable, I have tricked you; Jules de Grandin has made a fool of all hell!"

He threw back his head and stood in an attitude of defiance, his eyes flashing, his lips twitching with excitement and elation.

With a sob of grateful joy the girl bent forward, pressing de Grandin's hand again and again to her lips. "Oh, you are kind—kind!" she cried. "No other man in all the world, knowing what you know, would have done what you have done!"

"But of course not," the Frenchman returned imperturbably. "You do forget, *Mademoiselle*, that I am Jules de Grandin.

"Come, Friend Trowbridge, we do intrude most unwarrantably here," he told me. "What have we, who drained the purple wine of youth long years ago, to do with those who laugh and love the night away? Let us go."

We turned to leave, but a stifled scream from the girl and a choked exclamation from Rochester brought us up short.

Rat-tat-tat! Sharp as the merciless clatter of a machine-gun, something was striking against the fog-glazed window-pane. Wheeling in my tracks, I felt the breath go hot and chokingly sulfurous in my throat as I gazed toward the window. Outside in the night, seemingly floating in the lazily whirling mist, was a human form!

A second glance told me it was the brutal-faced man we had seen at the café the previous night. But now his ugly, evil face was the visage of a demon fresh from lowermost hell, the eyes unnaturally wide open, the mouth gaping, the tongue lolling and protruding as though an invisible hand had him by the throat, and the whole loathsome countenance instinct

with hate and inexpressible wickedness.

"Ha, *Monsieur*, is it you, indeed?" de Grandin asked nonchalantly. "I thought you might come, so I am prepared.

"Do not invite him in!" he called in sharp command to Rochester. "Hold your beloved—place your hand upon her mouth, lest she, being his thing and chattel, however unwillingly, give him permission to enter. Remember, he can not cross the sill without the bidding of someone in the room!"

Flinging up the sash, he regarded the hovering apparition with a sardonic smile. "What have you to say, *Monsieur*, before I bid you be off?" he demanded coolly.

The thing outside mouthed and gibbered at us, very fury depriving it of words. At last:

"She's mine!" it shrieked. "Mine—I made her what she is, and she belongs to me. I'll have her, and that dough-faced, dying thing she holds in her arms, as well. All, all of you are mine! I shall be king, emperor, god! You nor any mortal can not stop me. I am all-powerful, I am supreme, I am——"

"You are the greatest liar outside burning hell!" de Grandin cut in icily. "As for your power and your claims, *Monsieur*, tomorrow you shall claim nothing, not so much as a little plot of earth to call a grave. Meantime, behold this, devil's spawn; behold and tremble!"

Whipping his hand from his overcoat pocket, he produced a small, flat case, like the leather containers sometimes used for holding photographs, pressed a concealed spring and snapped back the folding doors of the container. For a moment the thing in the night gazed at the object de Grandin held with stupefied, unbelieving horror; then, with a wild cry, fell backward, its uncouth motion somehow reminding me of the convulsions of a hooked bass.

"Ah, you like it not, I see," the Frenchman mocked. "*Parbleu*, you stinking truant from the charnel-house, you defiler of hell's own self, begone!" He advanced the leather object in his hand till it seemed to touch the phantom face outside the window.

A wild, blood-freezing screech echoed through the fog-bound night as the thing reeled backward, and on its lowering, unwholesomely white forehead there showed a red weal, as though the Frenchman had scored it with a white-hot iron.

"Close the windows, *mes amis*," de Grandin directed as casually as though nothing hideous hovered outside. "Shut them tight and hold each other close till the morning comes and the shadows flee away."

"FOR heaven's sake," I besought as we began our homeward drive, "tell me what it all means, de Grandin. You and Rochester called that girl Fulvia, and you said her mother had told her story to you. Fulvia Heatherton is dead; died a month ago. I saw her tomb this morning, and her mother described her death this afternoon. If she's dead, how could she be there? Is this girl her double, and if she is——"

"She is no double, Friend Trowbridge," he answered in a tone of finality. "It was Fulvia Heatherton whom we saw tonight, and none other."

DAYLIGHT had not yet broken, though the eastern horizon was beginning to show streaks of light when de Grandin's insistent pounding on my bedroom door roused me from a troubled sleep.

"Up, Friend Trowbridge!" he shouted, punctuating his summons with a second double knock. "Up and dress as quickly as may be. We must go immediately, right away, at once. Tragedy has overtaken them!"

Hardly aware of my movements, I stumbled from bed, felt my way into my clothes and, with the film of sleep still dimming my eyes, descended to the lower hall where the little Frenchman waited in a perfect frenzy of impatience.

"What is it?" I asked as we began a mad drive toward Rochester's.

"Misfortune—the worst!" he panted. "Fifteen minutes ago, just before the first crowing of the cock, I was awakened by the telephone. 'It is for Friend Trowbridge,' I told me. 'Some patient with the *mal de l'estomac* desires a little medicine and much sympathy. I shall not waken him, for he is all tired with the night's exertions.' But the bell rang violently and without ceasing, and so, as you continued to chant hymns to Morpheus with your nose, I descended to the office to take the message. My friend, it was Mademoiselle Fulvia. *Hélas*, great as was her love, her weakness was greater. But when the harm was done, she had the courage to call and tell us. Remember that when you come to judge her."

I would have paused for explanation, but he waved me on impatiently. "Hurry, hurry, my friend," he besought. "We must to the young Rochester's house at once; perhaps it is even now too late."

There was no traffic in the streets, and we made the run to Rochester's in record time. Almost before we realized it we stood before the polished door of the apartment again, and this time de Grandin stood on no ceremony. Flinging the door open without so much as a warning knock, he raced down the hall and into the living-room, pausing at the threshold with a sharp gasp of indrawn breath.

"So!" he breathed. "He was thorough, this one."

The room was a wreck. Chairs were overturned, pictures hung awry on the walls, bits of broken bric-à-brac strewed the rug, and the long throw-cover of the center table had been

snatched bodily from its place, overturning the litter of odds and ends with which the table was laden and dumping them indiscriminately in the center of the floor.

Lying supine on the bearskin rug before the dead fire was Donald Rochester, one leg crumpled queerly beneath him, his right arm stretched flaccidly along the floor, the hand bent at a sharp right-angle to the wrist.

De Grandin crossed the room at a run, unfastening the clasps of his medicine case as he leaped. Dropping beside the still form, he bent forward, listened intently at the young man's heart a moment, then stripped back his sleeve, swabbed the arm with alcohol and inserted the needle of his hypodermic syringe. "It is a desperate chance I take," he muttered as he shot the plunger home, "but the case is also desperate."

Rochester's eyelids fluttered as the powerful stimulant took effect. He moaned weakly and turned his head with great effort, but made no attempt to rise. As I knelt beside de Grandin and helped him raise the injured man I understood the cause of his immobility. His spine had been fractured at the fourth dorsal vertebra, paralysis resulting.

"Young *Monsieur*," de Grandin whispered softly, "you are going fast. Your minutes are more than numbered in the circle of the watch-face. Tell us, and quickly, what happened." Once more he injected the stimulant into Rochester's arm.

The young man wet his drawn, blue lips with the tip of his tongue, attempted a deep breath, but found the effort too great, then replied in a voice so low we had to bend down to understand. "It was he—that fellow you scared off last night."

"Fulvia and I lay on the hearth-rug, counting our minutes together as a miser counts his gold. I heaped the fire with logs, for she was cold as death itself, but it didn't seem to do

any good. Finally she began to pant for breath and I put my mouth to hers and let her draw breath from me. That revived her, and when she'd sucked a little blood from my throat she seemed herself once more, though I could not feel the movement of her heart as she lay beside me.

"It must have been just before daybreak—I don't know just when, for I'd fallen asleep in her arms—when I heard something clattering against the window-pane, and someone calling to be let in. I remembered what you said and tried to hold Fulvia, but she fought me off, ran to the window and flung it up, saying, 'Enter, master; there is none to stop you now!'

"He made straight for me, and she realized what he was about and tried to stop him, but he flung her aside as if she were a rag-doll—took her by the hair and dashed her against the wall. I heard her bones crack under the impact.

"I grappled with him, but I was no more his match than a three-year-old child was mine. He threw me down and stamped on me, breaking my arms and legs under his feet, and the pain was so great I could hardly stand it. Finally he grabbed me up and hurled me to the floor again, and then I felt no more pain, except this dreadful headache. I couldn't move, but I was conscious, and the last thing I remember was seeing Fulvia stepping out the window with him, hand in hand. She left without so much as looking back once."

For a moment he paused, fighting desperately for breath; then, lower and weaker than before, as though there were scarce air enough in his tortured lungs to force the words forth: "Oh, Fulvia, Fulvia—how could you? And I loved you so!"

"Peace, my poor one," de Grandin whispered in return. "She did not do it of her own accord. That fiend holds her in a thrall stronger than

you can know. She is his thing and creature more completely than ever black slave belonged to his master. Hear me, my friend, and go with this thought uppermost in your mind: She loves you. It is because she called us that we are here now, and her last word was one of love for you. Do you understand? 'Tis sad to die so young, *mon pauvre*, but surely it is something to have walked hand in hand with love, if only for a little while, and to have seen the shadow of his purple wings fall across your lady's face. Many a man lives out a whole life without as much, and many there are who would trade a span of four-score and ten gladly for five little minutes of the ecstasy which was yours last night.

"Rochester—do you hear me?" he called more sharply, for the young man's face was taking on the grayness of impending death, and his light breathing was sinking till it could no longer be heard.

"Ye-yes," the other gasped. "She loves me"—he essayed a weak, wan smile—"she loves me. Fulvia—Fulvia!" And with the name sighing from his lips, his facial muscles loosened, his eyes took on the set, unwinking stare of eyes which see no more, and a convulsive tremor fluttered his breast.

DE GRANDIN gently drew the lids across the sightless eyes and raised the fallen jaw, then set about straightening the room with methodical haste. "As licensed practitioner you will sign the death certificate, Friend Trowbridge," he announced matter-of-factly. "Our young friend has long suffered from angina pectoris. This morning he suffered an attack, and, after calling us, fell from a chair on which he stood to reach his medicine, thereby fracturing several bones. He told us this when we arrived to find him dying. You understand?"

"No, I'm hanged if I do!" I returned. "You know, as well as I, that——"

"That we were the last ones to see him alive," he supplied, "and that the police may have embarrassing questions to answer if we have not a plausible story to tell. Think you for one little minute they would believe the true facts if we did relate them?"

Much as I disliked it, I followed his orders to the letter and the poor boy's body was turned over to the ministrations of an undertaker within an hour.

As Rochester was an orphan without known family, de Grandin assumed the rôle of next friend, made all arrangements for the funeral, and gave orders that the remains be cremated without delay, the ashes to be turned over to him for final disposition.

Most of the day was taken up in making these arrangements and in my round of professional calls. I was thoroughly exhausted by 4 o'clock in the afternoon, but de Grandin, hustling, indefatigable, seemed as fresh as he had been at daybreak.

"Come, Friend Trowbridge," he urged as I would have sunk into the embrace of my favorite armchair for a few minutes' rest, "there is yet much to be done. Did not you hear my promise to Monsieur Palenezke last night?"

"Your promise——"

"*Précisément*. Unless the good Father Apostolakis has failed us, we have one very great surprize in store for that Monsieur Palenezke, one from which he is not likely to recover in a hurry. Are you ready?"

Grumbling, but with a curiosity which overrode my fatigue, I followed him outside and drove to the parsonage of the little Greek Orthodox Church. Parked before the door was an undertaker's service wagon, its chauffeur yawning audibly at the delay in getting through his errand.

De Grandin ran lightly up the steps to the rectory, gained admission and returned in a few minutes with the venerable priest arrayed in full canonicals. "*Allons, mon brave*," he called to the funeral chauffeur, "be on your way; we follow!"

It was not till we had driven the better part of two hours that I realized our purpose. Even when we neared the imposing granite walls of the North Hudson Crematory I failed to understand de Grandin's hardly suppressed glee.

All arrangements had apparently been made. The retort was ready for reception of the body, and the crematory attendants went about their task with the speed of practised experts. In the little chapel over the oven Father Apostolakis recited the orthodox burial office, and the coffin sank slowly from view on the concealed elevator provided for conveying it to the incineration chamber below.

The aged priest bowed courteously to us and left the building, seating himself in my car, and I was prepared to take my place at the wheel when de Grandin motioned to me imperatively. "Not yet, Friend Trowbridge," he remarked. "Come with me and I will show you something."

Together we made our way to the subterranean chamber where incineration took place. The body was ready for committal to the heat, but de Grandin stopped the attendants with upraised hand. Tiptoeing across the tiled floor, he bent above the open cradle in which the dead man lay, motioning me to approach.

As I paused beside him, I recognized the heavy, evil features of the man we had first seen with Fulvia in the cabaret, the same bestial, furious face which mouthed curses and obscenities at us from Rochester's window the night before. Prepared though I was, I felt myself going sick and weak at the recognition, but de Grandin was jubilant.

"Ah, *Monsieur le Cadavre*," he asked in a whisper so low that none but I could hear as he bent above the dead thing's ear, "what think you of this, *hein?* You who would be king, emperor and god of the dead, you who boasted no power on earth could keep you from claiming that man and that woman—did not Jules de Grandin promise you that before this day's sun had set you should claim nothing, not even one poor little plot of earth to call a grave? *Pah*, murderer and ravisher of women, killer of men, where now is your power? Go through the fire of this furnace to the hell-fire that knows no quenching, but take this with you!" And he spat full in the cold, upturned visage of the corpse.

It might have been the trick of overwrought nerves or an optical illusion produced by the electric lights, but I still believe I saw the dead, long-buried body writhe in the cremation cradle and a look of terrible, unutterable hate disfigure the waxen features. Whatever the cause of my impression, it did not last long, for the Frenchman made a quick, imperative motion to the attendants, the sheet-iron trough slid smoothly forward on its tracks, and the heavy metal door of the furnace clanged shut.

For a moment the Frenchman stood with his eye glued to the peep-hole of the door, then turned away with a smile so cold and cruel and terrible that it froze the blood in my veins. "Aye, writhe, foul offswEEPing of hell," he murmured. "Wriggle, turn and twist. You will find a fire hotter than this awaiting your soul, and the damned of hell will bow their heads beneath a new indignity when you are put amongst them!

"Come," he turned to me, "we must convey the good father to his parsonage, and then comes dinner, and last of all—*cordieu*, how I dread it!—there is one more duty to be per-

formed, one more promise to be kept."

IT WAS somewhat after midnight when we made our way once more to Shadow Lawn Cemetery. Unerringly as though going to an appointment, de Grandin led the way to the Heatherton family mausoleum, let himself through the massive bronze grille with a key he had procured somewhere, and ordered me to stand guard outside.

Lighted by the flash of his electric torch he entered the tomb, a long, cloth-covered parcel clasped under his arm. A minute later I heard the clank of metal on metal, the sound of some heavy object being drawn across the floor; then, as I grew half hysterical at the long-continued silence, there came the short, half-stifled sound of a gasping cry, the sort of cry a patient in the dental chair gives when a tooth is extracted without anesthetic.

Another period of silence, broken by the rasping of heavy objects being moved, and the Frenchman emerged from the tomb, tears streaming down his face. "Peace," he announced chokingly. "I gave her peace everlasting, Friend Trowbridge, but oh! it was pitiful to hear her moan, and more pitiful yet to see that lovely, live-seeming body shudder into the embrace of relentless death. *Sang de Saint Denis*, she is now with the blessed ones above—perhaps her spiritual lips feel those of her dead lover—but Jules de Grandin's soul will be in torment whenever he thinks of what he had to do for mercy's sake this night!"

JULES DE GRANDIN selected one of my coronas from the humidior, applied a match with infinite care and sent a cloud of fragrant smoke drifting toward the ceiling. "Yes, my friend," he admitted, "the events of the last three nights are, as you say, decidedly queer. But what would

you? All that lies outside our experience is queer. To the untutored peasant the sight of an ameba beneath the microscope is queer; the Eskimos undoubtedly thought Monsieur Byrd's airplane queer; we think the sights which we have seen these nights queer. Luckily for us, and for all mankind, they are.

"To begin: Just as there exist today certain of protozoa which are probably identical with the earliest forms of life on earth, so there still persist, though in constantly diminishing quantities, certain holdovers of ancient evil. Time was when earth swarmed with them—devils and devildkins, imps, satyrs and demons, elementals, ghouls, werewolves and vampires. All were once numerous; all, perhaps, exist in considerable numbers to this day, though we know them not, and most of us never so much as hear of them. It is with the vampire that we had to deal this time. You know him? No?

"Strictly, he is an earthbound soul, a spirit which because of its manifold sins and wickednesses is bound to the world wherein it worked its evil and can not betake itself to its proper sphere. He is in India in considerable numbers, also in Russia, Hungary, Rumania and throughout the Balkans, also in Egypt, Turkey and Mesopotamia—wherever civilization is very old and decadent, there he seems to find a favorable soil. Sometimes he steals the body of one already dead; sometimes he continues in the body which he had in life, and then he is most terrible of all, for he needs nourishment to support that living-through-dead body, but not such nourishment as you or I take. No, he can subsist on the life of the living, imbibed through their blood, for the blood is the life. He must suck the breath from the living, or he can not breathe; he must drink the blood of the living, or he starves to death. Here is where the great danger arises, then: A suicide, one who dies under

a curse, or *one who has been inoculated with vampire virus* by having his blood sucked by a vampire, becomes a vampire in his turn after death. Innocent of all wrong he may be, often is, yet he is doomed to tread the earth by night, preying ceaselessly upon the living, ever recruiting the grisly ranks of his tribe. You apprehend?

"Consider this case: This Palenezke, because of his murder and suicide, perhaps partly because of his Slavic ancestry, maybe also because of his many sins as well, became a vampire when he had killed himself. Madame Heatherton's information was right, he did destroy himself; but his evil body and more evil soul continued to cling together, ten thousand times a greater menace to mankind than when they had been partners in natural life.

"Enjoying the supernatural power of his life-in-death, he rose from the swamplands, waylaid Mademoiselle Fulvia's motor, assaulted her chauffeur, then dragged her off into the bog. There he worked his awful will upon her, gratifying at once his vampire's thirst for blood and his revenge for her rejection of his wooing. When he had killed her, he had made of her such a thing as he was, although she was innocent of all wrong.

"Now, if the vampire added all the powers of men to his supernatural powers, we should have no defense, but he is governed by certain unbreakable laws. He can not independently cross the thread of a running stream, he must be carried; he can not enter any house or building unless expressly invited by someone already there; he can fly through the air, enter at keyholes and window-chinks or through the crack of a door, but he can move about only at night—between sunset and cock-crow. From sunrise to dark he is only a corpse, helpless as any other, and must lie in his tomb. At such times he can most easily be slain, but only

in certain ways. First, if his heart be pierced by a stake of ash and his head severed from his body, he is dead in good earnest and can rise to plague us no more. Second, if his sinful body be completely burned to ashes, he is no more, for fire cleanses all things.

"Now, with this information, fit together the puzzle which has so mystified you: The other night at the Café Bacchanale I liked the looks of this Palenezke not at all. He had the face of a dead man and the look of a villain, as well as the eye of a fish. Of his companion I thoroughly approved, though she, too, had an otherworldly look. Wondering about them, I watched them from my eye's tail, and when I observed that they ate nothing, although they ordered in abundance, I thought it not only strange, but menacing. Normal people do not do such things; abnormal people are dangerous and usually bear investigating.

"When Palenezke left his so charming companion alone, after having indicated that she might make overtures to the young Rochester, I liked the looks of things very little. My first thought was that it was a game of decoy and robbery, and I thought I would follow them and see what I could see. *Eh bien*, my friend, but we did see a very great plenty, *n'est-ce pas?*

"You recall the young Rochester's experience in the cemetery, and as he related it to us, I saw at once what manner of foe we were pitted against, though as yet I did not know how innocent the sweet Fulvia was. Our information from Madame Heatherton confirmed my worst fears. What we saw at Rochester's apartment that night proved all I had imagined, and more.

"Ah, but I had not been idle meantime. No. I had seen the good Father Apostolakos and told him what I had learned. He understood at once what was needed, and made immediate arrangements to have Palenezke's foul

body exhumed and taken to the crematory for incineration. He also lent me a sacred *ikon*, the blessed image of a saint whose potency to frighten off demons had been proved more than once in the old country. You did notice, undoubtedly, how Mademoiselle Fulvia shrank from me when I approached her with the relic in my pocket, and how the restless soul of Palenezke fled from it as living flesh shrinks from burning iron?

"Very well. Rochester loved this woman already dead. He himself was moribund. Why not let him taste of love with the shade of the woman who returned his passion for the few days he had yet to live? When he died, as die he must, I was prepared so to treat his poor clay that, though he were already half a vampire from the vampire's kisses on his throat, he could yet do no harm. You know I have done so. The cleansing fire which sterilized Palenezke's sinful corpse will cleanse him, also. Also I pledged myself to do as much for the poor, beautiful, sinned-against Fulvia when her brief aftermath of earthly happiness should have expired. I have kept my word.

"It was unfortunate that Palenezke should have killed young Rochester, but he only hastened death by a few hours, at most, and, thanks to kindly heaven, the rascal's very violence prevented his victim's suffering much, since he broke his spine, thereby providing complete anesthesia.

"The end of Palenezke you witnessed today. Young Rochester will be cremated tomorrow or the day following—the harm he can do is *nil*; poor Mademoiselle Fulvia—her I rendered harmless with stake and knife this very night, nor do I think she suffered greatly, for I took with me, in addition to my implements of mercy, a syringe loaded with two grains of morphine, and I gave her an injection before I began my work. Her moan at dissolution and the tor-

ture of her poor body, they were but reflex acts, not signs of conscious suffering."

"But look here," I objected, "if Fulvia was a vampire, as you say, and able to float about after dark, how comes it that she was in her coffin when you went there tonight?"

"Ah, my friend," he replied, and tears welled up in his eyes, "she awaited me. We had a definite assignation, and the poor child lay in her coffin awaiting the knife and stake which should set her free from bondage. She—she smiled at me, and

pressed my hand when I dragged her forth from the tomb!"

From the long-necked bottle on the table he poured an ounce or so of cognac into a tall, wide-mouthed glass, passed the goblet under his nostrils, inhaling the liquor's rich bouquet, then drained it at a gulp.

"To you, young Rochester," he announced, elevating the empty glass in salute, "and to your lovely lady. Though there be neither marrying nor giving in marriage where you have gone, may your restless souls find peace and rest eternal—together."
