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graveyard tale of French Revolution

By SEABURY QUINN

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two million years in the future

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HYDRA

a horror from another dimension

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Jirel of Joiry in a weird adventure

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and other tales



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Weird Tales

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CONTENTS FOR APRIL, 1939

Number 4

Cover Design	Virgil Finlay	
<i>Illustrating a scene in "Susette"</i>		
The Red God Laughed	Thorp McClusky	5
<i>A strange tale about the end of human life on Earth</i>		
Trinities	Edgar Daniel Kramer	10
<i>Verse</i>		
"Their eyes upturned and begged and burned"	Virgil Finlay	11
<i>Pictorial interpretation of a poem by Sidney Lanier</i>		
Susette	Seabury Quinn	12
<i>An intriguing weird tale of the French Revolution</i>		
Hellsgarde	C. L. Moore	37
<i>Dead men guarded the treasure in Hellsgarde Castle—a tale of Jirel of Joiry</i>		
Armies from the Past	Edmond Hamilton	61
<i>An exciting story of time-travel and a world enslaved</i>		
The Red Swimmer	Robert Bloch	83
<i>Piracy on the Spanish Main—red arms that reached out of the sea</i>		
In an Old Street	Vincent Starrett	97
<i>Verse</i>		
Hydra	Henry Kuttner	98
<i>A ghastly horror reached back from another dimension of space</i>		
Fearful Rock (End)	Manly Wade Wellman	110
<i>An eery novel of evil powers and the War between the States</i>		
The High Places	Frances Garfield	123
<i>A ghost story of aviation</i>		
Mommy	Mary Elizabeth Counselman	128
<i>A very human weird tale about a little girl in an orphanage</i>		
Will-o'-the-Wisp	Charles Sloan Reid	134
<i>Verse</i>		
The Wicked Clergyman	H. P. Lovecraft	135
<i>A brief posthumous tale by a great master of eery fiction</i>		
Special News Bulletin	Vincent Gaddis	138
<i>A short weird tale of radio and a passenger air-liner</i>		
Weird Story Reprint:		
The Curse of Yig	Z. B. Bishop	140
<i>A grim story of the rattlesnake-god of the Indians</i>		
The Eyrie		153
<i>Readers' department</i>		

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.



WEIRD TALES ISSUED 1st OF EACH MONTH

Suette

By SEABURY QUINN

'An intriguing weird tale of the French Revolution—a romantic and appealing story that begins under the shadow of the guillotine, by the author of "Roads" and "The Phantom Farmhouse"'



1. Rain Falls in the Rue des Fenêtres

A SUDDEN spattering splash of rain came sifting through the almost naked branches of the old horse-chestnut trees as Mordecai Westhorne turned from the boulevard into the Rue des Fenêtres. He bent his head against the coming storm and hurried toward his lodgings, eager for their warmth and quiet, for a chance to rest, eager for the sight of things which

would remind him of America and sanity.

He needed reassurance that the world had not gone utterly insane, that there were places where men lived and went about their business with the fear of God before their eyes but with no fear of men gnawing their brains like canker-worms in festering fruit. For this was Paris in October—*Vendémiaire*, according to the Revolutionary calendar—and the guillotine—the



dreaded "chopper"—had been busy all day long.

On his way back from his *bureau* by the waterfront he had passed the tumbrils, eight of them, bumping heavily across the filthy flints on their way to the scaffold set in the Place de la Revolution, and the milling, jostling, screaming, cursing, bestial-throated crowd had caught him up and borne him like a chip dropped in the brook right to the line of civil guards that ringed the place of execution. The sight was sickening, but fascinating. He wished to look away, to shut his eyes, or hide them with his hands, but he could no more forbear staring at the chopper's grisly work than the charmed bird can avert its eyes from the approaching serpent.

Sanson—"Monsieur de Paris"—was in charge, and with him his full crew of "valets" in their crimson smocks, and the three knocks sounded swiftly, rhythmically, like the ticking of some monster clock of doom—the slapping knock of the long plank to which the *valets* strapped the victim prone, the clack of wood on wood as the neckpiece was adjusted, then the thud that sounded as the chopper fell. Two—four—a score—two score and ten and six victims strapped face-downward to the plank, their necks latched in the pillory, then the thumping of the dropping blade. A pile of twitching corpses, gaping necks cascading blood, fifty-six heads in the baskets; the scaffold and the plank, even the side-posts with the grooves in which the chopper slid, reeking, splashed and steamed with gore. And accompanying the carnival of death the yells and howls of obscene laughter from the mob that gathered around the scaffold like patrons at a comedy.

Mordecai was almost fainting when the orgy finally ended, and fought his way through the dispersing crowd with

desperate roughness. Even now the memory of the grisly spectacle struck at his stomach like an ice-cold blade, and despite the rising storm he stopped to lean against the wall and drink the cold air in with shuddering gasps. He was sick of Paris, sick of France, eager with a longing almost past endurance for the cleanness of New England and the freedom of America.

The spell of nauseating weakness passed and he bent his shoulders to the rain which now came down in almost drowning torrents. As he plodded through the storm his resolution strengthened. He had a job of work to do, and he would do it. England's cruisers had swept the French ships from the seas and, desperate for imports, France had opened her West Indian ports to neutral traders. New England skippers and shipowners were not backward in response, and a bridge of Yankee clippers carried cinnamon and coffee, sugar, rum, vanilla and tobacco from Martinique and Haiti to the ports of France, returning to their home docks with choice wines, louisine and kindred luxuries. Foremost in the fleet of carriers were the ships of Westhorne & Sons, shipowners of Boston, and while old Ezekiel Westhorne supervised the trade, and his sons Hezekiah, Obadiah and Micah sailed the clippers, Mordecai, the youngest, was in Paris as their representative, bargaining with shippers, supervising return loads, seeing that prompt payments were made in good hard *louis* and not in paper *assignats*. The Westhorne fortune increased steadily, and he was here to help it grow. He hated Paris, loathed the Frenchmen and longed for home until the longing hurt, but the family must be represented. French frugality—to use no harsher term—must be met with Yankee

shrewdness, again to use no harsher term. Even as he swore to pack his boxes and set sail for Boston when the *Mary Piper* next heaved anchor from the harbor of Bordeaux, he knew that he would stay till need for him in France was passed.

Through the drumming of the rain drops and the skirling of the storm wind came a cry, sharp and shrill as pain, quavering as mortal terror: "*Au secours, pour l'amour de Dieu—*" The screamed appeal rose secant as a naked knife-blade, then stopped quite abruptly, held for eternity at its top note, as if the screamer had been throttled in mid-scream.

MORDECAI looked up, eyes narrowed to the rain. A hundred feet away two figures, blurred in the driving storm, struggled with a third, and even as he sighted them he saw them drop a cloak or blanket over it and raise it between them as if it were a sack of meal or bale of merchandise.

Like everyone in Paris who was not armed with sword or knife or pistol, Mordecai bore an "executive authority"—a loaded blackthorn stick two inches thick and three feet long, secured to his wrist by a thong of rawhide. "*Halte-là!*" he shouted as he charged against the leveled lances of the rain. "What goes on here?"

They met his onslaught with a countercharge. Dropping their quarry to the walk unceremoniously, they separated, one to the right, one left, and rushed at him, one with a cutlas, the other with a nine-inch dirk.

The sworded ruffian hacked a chopping blow at Mordecai. Had he used his cudgel as a guard the steel would have cleft through it, but he was no amateur with either quarterstaff or sword, and as the cutlas descended he

dodged, swung back his stick and struck down savagely. The loaded bludgeon caught the poorly tempered blade midway between the point and hilt and snapped it short, as if it were an icicle.

"*Pardi!*, the devil's in his elbow!" swore the disarmed footpad. "Upon him, Jacques! Give him the *coup de Père François!*" The loaded stick swung again and he dropped to the brick footwalk, blood streaming from his ears and nostrils.

The other bravo was not idle. Even as he struck the swordsman with his cudgel Mordecai felt himself seized from behind. An arm was round his neck, a dagger flashed, he felt a blow above his heart that all but drove the breath from him.

Had it not been for the great care which Aunt Deborah Hastings took for all her nephews' souls' welfare, he would have felt nothing, for the dagger had a needle-point and was driven by the hand of one skilled in assassination. But before he left for Paris Aunt Deborah presented him with a small volume of religious exercises, "*Gems of Devotional Poetry for Occasional and Daily Use by the Rev. Japheth Higginbotham, M.A.,*" and made him promise he would keep it always with him while he stayed in the Gomorrah of the modern world. Mordecai's New England conscience would not let him break his promise; so into the breast pocket of his coat the Reverend Master Higginbotham's compilation of atrocious verse was thrust each morning when he set out for the office. It contained a hundred and twelve pages and was bound in full morocco and—as wickedness had aforetime met its master in the hard, uncompromising faith of old New England, so was the murderous dagger-point stopped by Master Higginbotham's poetry tonight.

With a quick bend Mordecai lunged forward, put his hands behind his neck and grappled with the rascal straddling his back. One who'd tussled with the toughest of the young roughs Boston's waterfront produced knew every hold, fair and unfair, the wrestler's art could boast, and the would-be assassin catapulted to the pavement with a force that sent him slithering across the wet bricks, brought him up against a house-wall with a thud, and left him lying as inert as was his broken-headed companion.

"Citizen, are you unhurt?" asked Mordecai as he turned toward the person in the blanket.

The square of sopping cloth moved like an alligator waking to sluggish life, and a face peered at him from an upraised corner. "They are gone, Citizen?" asked a girl's voice; then, as she saw him standing alone over her: "Do not make yourself anxious for me. I am of the good health." The blanket slipped away and she rose nimbly, unassisted, and looked at him through dripping light-brown curls.

"*La, la,*" her laughter trilled deliciously, "we be a sorry-looking pair of mortals, you and I. Mon—Citizen. You are as wet as any drowned rat, and I must look like some old beldame ducked for scolding! Will not you come with me and dry yourself? My house is not so far away."

Mordecai bowed stiffly, with such dignity as he could muster while rivulets of water ran from sleeves and boots and collar. To be laughed at when one has saved a damsel in distress! "I shall take no illness from my wetting, Citizeness," he answered, "but perhaps it were as well I walked with you. You may meet with other rascals in the street, and find help less conveniently near."

She made a little growling noise deep in her throat, as one who mocks a harmless puppy's show of fierceness; then, as he offered no response, she tucked her small hand in the crook of his elbow and fell in step with him as demurely as a Boston maid upon her way to Sabbath worship.

THEY came to halt before the wicket gate of a walled garden, and she fished a little key from the reticule dangling at her wrist. "*Entrez vous, s'il vous plait, et soyez le bienvenu.*" She took her dripping skirts between her thumbs and forefingers, lifted them an inch or so and bobbed him a small curtsy.

He hesitated for a moment, then bowed acknowledgment of her invitation.

Three times she rapped upon the white door of the little house, waited for a breath, then rapped twice more. A shuffling step came from behind the portal and a candle's glow quickened in the side-lights by the door as the handle turned and the panels swung a scant six inches back to reveal a pair of bright, black, mouse-small eyes in an incredibly wrinkled face.

"*Ma chérie, ma pauvre, ma petite!*" croaked the aged portress. "*Grace à Dieu, you have returned!* I thought you had been lost, drowned in the rain, or, worse, that *they* had come upon you!"

"S-s-sh, Marjotte, not so loud!" the girl bade softly. "Let us in, and quickly, then light the fire and brew some chocolate for the Citizen. He is wet unto the skin——"

"How of yourself, my little one; you too are doused," the old woman protested. "Let Marjotte get you dry clothing——"

"*Zut!* I can attend my own wants.

Do you light the fire and set the chocolate pot to boiling."

"*B'en, Mam'selle,*" the servant answered, and preceded Mordecai into the tiny drawing-room, where she knelt before the logs piled ready in the fireplace, set the tinder glowing and blew upon the kindling till the little orange flames curled upward cheerily. With a taper she set candles flickering in wall sconces and on the table, then with the merest intimation of a curtsy left him to his own devices.

The smoke steamed from his garments as he stood before the blaze, turning slowly round and round to dry himself on all sides, and as he felt the cheerful glow draw out the wetness from his clothes he took stock of the room. It was not large, but it was very elegant. The floor was spread with Bruxelles carpet, light-taupe in shade; the walls were pale cream, set with cameo-like plaques of delft-blue with white figures imposed on them. At the windows hung long drapes of gold and chamois-colored velvet. The mantelpiece was white marble, the little clock upon it ormolu. There was a sofa in Etruscan style, mahogany inlaid with bronze, chairs in Roman design. A gilded harpsichord stood near the center of the room. Books, too: Homer's *Odyssey*, Virgil's *Aeneid*, the plays of Aristophanes and the witty comedies of Beaumarchais, all bound in carved and gilded leather.

"*Pardonnez-moi, Monsieur* — Citizen—I hope I have not kept you waiting overlong," he heard her voice from the doorway. He had formed no estimate of her in soaking bonnet and rain-bedraggled dress; now, as she stood framed in the door, her skin aglow with vigorous toweling, he took a half-step forward and involuntarily drew in his breath. Unlike most French women

he had seen, she was fair, with very fine and silky hair the color of a frosted chestnut-burr. She wore it rather long, parted in the middle and draped in little curls each side her face, piled in a small Psyche-knot at back, and he knew her ringlets owed no debt to crimping-irons. Ten minutes earlier they had been wet as if dipped in the Seine, and there had been no time to curl them. Her little face was as arresting as an interrogation point, triangular, with high cheek-bones and generous mouth and eyes a pale and smoky gray. Unusual eyes he thought them, large, heavy-fringed, languishing and passionate, a little frightened-seeming, rather pleading in expression even when she smiled. And she was smiling now as with a noiseless tread she crossed the pale-taupe carpet and extended a slim hand.

"*Mon sauveur,*" she told him in a softly husky voice. "*Bienfaiteur.* To you I owe a debt I cannot ever pay, no, not even with the eyes of the head!"

He took the little hand in his and, a trifle self-consciously, raised it to his lips, then as he stepped back, made quick appraisal of her. Her gown was china silk, loosely draped from a high waist, and so sheer and clinging that it seemed to follow every curve of her slight figure. The sash that bound it just below the bosom was a three-yard length of pale-rose ribbon tied "*en coquette*" below the shoulders and trailing in fringed ends almost to her dress hem at the back. Save for the small gold rings that scintillated in her ears she wore no jewelry. As he straightened from his bow he saw her feet were stockingless and shod with sandals fastened with cross-straps of purple grosgrain laced about her ankles. Bible-trained from infancy, Mordecai's mind echoed with a stanza from the *Song of*

Songs: "How beautiful are thy feet with shoes, O Prince's daughter!" Truly, they were beautiful; slim, high-arched, narrow-heeled, with long toes straight and slender as the fingers of a well-kept hand.

THE subdued rattle of limoge cups on a silver tray called his attention as the old servant entered with a pot of steaming chocolate and a plate of biscuit.

The girl faced him across the orange points that flickered at the candle-tips, chocolate pitcher poised above a cup. "You are not Parisian, Citizen?" she hazarded. "Your accent——"

"No, *Mademoiselle*——"

"We do not say '*Monsieur*,' '*Madame*,' or '*Mademoiselle*' now, Citizen. The Convention has decreed that we are citizens and citizenesses, no more."

"I am American, *Mademoiselle*," he answered, ignoring the rebuke.

"Ah? One understands, then. I had thought perhaps you were a *ci-devant*——" She stopped abruptly, as if frightened at the boldness of her own words, and flashed a bright, hard look at him. Then she smiled again, and the hardness melted. "But no, one need not fear; did not you rescue me from *them*?"

He drew his brows down in a thoughtful frown. "Them?" he wondered. "Who were *they*?" Twice to-night he'd heard references to mysterious "them." The old servant had feared the girl had fallen into "their" hands; he had rescued her from "them," it seemed.

"You mean the robbers who accosted you——"

"They were no robbers, *Monsieur*." She dropped the masquerade of Revolutionary nomenclature and spoke with

the polite formality of the old regime. "They were agents of General Security." There was challenging defiance in her tone, as if the simple statement implied: "And aren't you sorry that you interfered, now? Don't you want to run away, before they come again and find you with me?"

"Oh, so they were Robespierre's bul-lies? Well, I think one of them will never trouble you or anyone again; too bad I didn't know, I could have finished both of them——"

Thunderingly, the knocking at the door broke through his words. "Open——open in the name of the Republic!"

Her face drained white as if she had been dead an hour. He saw her palsied fingers crawling up her throat, clamping suddenly against her lips to stifle back a cry. "They——they have traced me——"

"Quiet, *Mademoiselle*!" Mordecai was on his feet and blowing out the candles. The heavy draperies at the windows masked them from the outside, he was sure, but there must be no glow behind him when he went to the door.

"*Monsieur*, you must not go; you must flee, and quickly! They will take you to the conciergerie, to the Tribunal, the chopper——"

He laughed, low, harshly. "Remain here, if you please, *Mademoiselle*. I will outface them."

Stamping angrily, he crossed the little entrance hall. "Well?" he challenged as he flung the portal open. "What is this annoyance, Citizens? Cannot a man sleep quietly in his house——"

The tattered little *commissaire* of police and his ragged pikemen gaped as Mordecai glared at them. This tall, wide-shouldered man with the tan of sun and sea on him, cold, dominant blue

eyes and uncompromising manner was not what they expected.

"Your pardon, Citizen, but we are looking for the Citizeness Susanne Louvegny, *ci-devant* comtesse d'Aules——"

"And you expect to find her here—in my house? Imagine yourself that!" He laughed, one short, impatient, chiding note. "I am Mordecai Westhorne, Paris representative of Westhorne et Fils of Boston. You seek for cocottes here?"

The guardsmen drew aside a little. "*Un Américain—un bas bleu*—an American blue-stocking!" one whispered to the other.

"The Citizen has his passport?" The *commissaire* was ill at ease. One did not quite know how to take these savages from across the sea. Some of them were worldly men—*oui-da*, fellows most decidedly in the know—others were chill and cold as Calvinists, and all were very ready with the fist. Besides, their ships were needed for commerce. . . .

Mordecai drew his *laissez-passer* from his pocket and held it out in his left hand, tapping his boot impatiently with the blackthorn in his right. A very little light flowed past him through the door, the paper rattled in the wind, making reading difficult. "Come, come, man, don't be all night about it! I have been wet to the skin, and want to dry myself before the fire——"

"Your pardon, Citizen," the *commissaire* returned the passport unread. "Your papers seem in order. Naturally, there is no such person as the *ci-devant* comtesse here——"

"Naturally," Mordecai agreed. His mouth became a straight line, then curved in a slight smile. "There is no woman here but my old servant and Madame"—deliberately he flung the

aristocratic title in their faces—"Madame Westhorne." And thereupon he slammed the door on the Republic's authority.

HER face was very white, her lovely eyes shadowed and tragic, when he rejoined her. "They are gone, *Mademoiselle*," he told her soothingly. But still she looked at him with fear-filled, almost inattentive eyes, hardly seeming to perceive the meaning of his words.

Gently he repeated: "They are gone; I sent them off."

"Ah, but they will return, *Monsieur*! They will never give up searching, especially with Henriot to urge them on——"

She paused a long breath-space; then: "Do you truly think you killed him?"

"Killed him? Whom do you mean?"

"Macrin Henriot, the man from whom you rescued me; the one who bore the sword."

Mordecai laughed grimly. "I think I did, and if I did not, he will surely suffer from a headache for a long time——"

"Ah, but if he is not dead I am undone, and so are you. He has followed—hounded me, since I left Pont l'Evêque. He was my father's hostler——"

"Eh, a hostler——"

"But yes. We are Normans, we Louvegnyes; my father was the Comte d'Aules, a poor but very honorable gentleman.

"He farmed our estate, not disdainingly to take part in manual labor in the field himself, and believed as firmly in the Social Contract of Rousseau as he believed in heaven. When the States General were convoked he came to Paris as a delegate, and as a

member of the National Assembly helped draw the Constitution.

"One of the workers on our farm was Macrin Henriot, a farrier and stableman. He was about my age, and as children we were playmates, for social distinctions were not tightly drawn at Aules. He was handsome and high-spirited, but given to long periods of black melancholy. When these were on him he would neither speak nor eat. Once he tried to drown himself, and would have done so if I had not screamed until some laborers in the field heard me and ran to pull him from the river. May the good God pardon me that scream!

"Macrin's father was a farrier and wanted him to learn the trade, but he considered it beneath him; so when he was fourteen and I twelve, and I was sent for schooling to a convent, my father in the goodness of his noble heart sent Macrin to a notary at Caen to study for the law, paying all of his expenses.

"I was a pupil at the convent for three years, and when I came back to Aules I found Macrin in his father's place at our stables, doctoring and shoeing horses. He had made a wretched failure as a notary's apprentice, and had come back to the only work he knew.

"No one else would hire him, no one wanted him, for when he was not sullen he was drunk, and when he was not drunk he was inciting laborers and peasants to revolt.

"I was sorry for my old playfellow, and tried to comfort him, but he mistook my pity for a warmer, tenderer feeling, and had the audacity to demand my hand in marriage.

"Gentlewomen do not wed with stable-boys, however long they may have known them, and when my father tried

to make him understand, Macrin flew into a rage and stormed out of the château, vowing that we'd live to see the day when I should beg him on my knees to marry me, and he would spurn me.

"You know the recent history of this so unhappy country, *Monsieur* — how the Jacobins assumed authority, how they drove the patriot LaFayette to exile, slew the king and decreed all former nobles, even moderate Republicans, were traitors to the Revolution.

"Macrin Henriot had come to Paris and become an agent of General Security. It was he denounced my father to the Tribunal, and sent him to the chopper without trial. I did not even know that he had been arrested until I heard the urchins bawl the names of those who had 'drawn prizes in the lottery of Madame Guillotine.'

"What was one to do, *Monsieur*? To go home to Aules was to go to certain death, for in the North the peasants had revolted, our château had been burned to ashes; I should be recognized and denounced if I dared show my face in the vicinity. Besides, how could I make the journey? How could I obtain a *laissez-passer*, traveling without which meant sure death? I should be safer if I stayed in Paris and kept within-doors than in any other part of France. We had this little house in the Street of the Windows, and to it I and old Marjotte came for a refuge. She does the marketing; I stay indoors all day, and go out only in the evening when the sun has set. Tonight I took my customary *promenade de santé* and had not walked a hundred feet when I heard steps behind me. I walked more slowly; so did they. At last I became frightened and began to run, but before I had gone twenty paces they were on me, and when I turned to face them in

the rain I saw it was Macrin Henriot and another.

"*Bon soir, Mademoiselle la Comtesse,*" he accosted me, taking off his hat and bowing very low, as if he were a gentleman; 'it has been a long time since we met, but met again we have. Whom do you choose for husband now, milady, the poor despised Macrin the farrier's son, or the chopper?'

"I was so terrified I could not answer, and my silence seemed to drive him to a frenzy.

"What are we waiting for?" he asked his companion, and they unfolded a horse-blanket and attempted to envelop me in it. Then I screamed for help, and—thanks to God and you, I am still here."

THERE was stark, abysmal terror in her eyes and voice as she continued: "But now I can no longer stay here. They will hunt me out, run me to earth as though I were a rabbit. I must find some other place to hide, but where can one whose life is forfeit find a refuge?"

"I do not think you need distress yourself, *Mademoiselle,*" he comforted. "The fact that Henriot accosted you while you were walking in the street would indicate he did not know which house you lived in, and the thump I gave him on the head will lay him up for a long time, even if he does not die. His companion probably returned to General Security to report that you had been seen in the neighborhood, and the *commissaire* who came here was engaged in routine canvass of the houses in this street. I assured him that I lived here, and——"

He paused so long she prompted him with a half-whispered, breathless: "Yes, *Monsieur?*"

"Knowing Marjotte must have been

seen in the neighborhood and that perhaps you had been observed when you came out for your walks, I told the *commissaire* there were two women here, my aged servant and my wife."

"But, *Monsieur,* your artifice will be discovered——"

Mordecai's New England conscience troubled him a little as he broke in: "It need not be, *Mademoiselle.* I can pack a few belongings in pormanteaux and move them here in a short time. My lodgings are not far away, and I'll retain them for a time, but I can live here, thereby giving the illusion that this house is mine, Marjotte my servant, and you——"

He stopped, his sentence half completed, at the stricken look in her eyes. She had not moved, nor had her expression altered, but, oddly, her soul seemed retreating — racing in sheer panic-footed terror—behind her corneas. Before she had seemed merely frightened. Now she was horrified.

"What——" he began, but halted as she drew a deep, shuddering breath, then expelled it in a pitifully weary sigh.

She was like a victim led to sacrifice, and a mute appeal for pity mingled with the tears that dewed her lashes as she bent her head submissively and whispered brokenly: "You have saved my life, *Monsieur.* It is yours to do with as you please. I accept your proposition."

"What?" His cheeks flushed red as hers were pale. "You mean—you thought that I would be so base——"

"What else was there to think, *Monsieur?*"

"Woman"—the sternness of his Puritan forebears rose in his voice, making his words hard and brittle—"I am offering you protection; not asking an exchange——"

"*Ohé, Monsieur*, you mean"—the sudden light of relief flooding through her face was like a sunrise breaking through the piled-up black clouds of a stormy night — "you mean that you would live here in this house of mine as if you were my *frère de lait*—my foster-brother—like children playing house?"

"Precisely, *Mademoiselle*. 'Like children playing house'."

"*La, la!*" It was incredible how quickly her smile chased the look of desolation from her face. "But that will be the fun!

"Hurry, hasten, fly, *Monsieur!* Make haste to bring your things to this playhouse of ours.

"*Marjotte*," she called up the stairway, "make ready the guest room all quickly! *Monsieur* our rescuer will come to live with us!"

She swept him a deep curtsy as he paused upon the threshold. "Return all soon, *Monsieur*—*ohé*, shame on me for a thoughtless jade—I do not even know your name!"

"*Westhorne*," he answered. "*Mordecai Westhorne*."

"*Mardochée*," she pronounced, rendering the English into French, then with more difficulty, "*Voestone?*"

THE rain had stopped and the little garden was brown and still under its canopy of unshed October leaves as *Mordecai* set out for his lodgings. As he stepped into the Street of the Windows his heart rose. Aunt *Deborah* surely would have understood and approved what he was doing. What was the little French girl's name—*Susanne*? *Susanne*—*Susette*. He liked the name *Susette*, liked it better each time he repeated it, and he repeated it more times than one. *Susette*—*Susette*, its cadence kept time with the scuffing of

the rain-soaked leaves beneath his heels as he walked.

2. "*Like Children Playing House*"

THEY dined in the small *salle à manger* beside the latticed window. Two candles lighted them; old *Marjotte* served them, silent-footed, austere, handling dish and salver with a dignity that made the simple meal a rite: *consommé*—trust a woman peasant-bred to get the last fine bit of nourishment from a four-inch length of beef shin-bone!—smelts fried a crisp gold-brown in olive oil, steamed *escargots* in sauce *Bercy*—*Mordecai* was doubtful of the snails, but became enthusiastic with a convert's ardor after the first taste—a chicory salad, finally cheese and toasted biscuit with black, bitter coffee. The wine, a white *vin ordinaire*, was tart almost to acidness, but *Susette* would not be depressed. "This year's vintage is a bitter one for France," she told him as they clinked glasses, "but there will be other years and other vintages. *Danton* is gone, *Marat* is killed—the good God rest the martyred *Charlotte Corday's* soul — *Robespierre* cannot last for ever. The sun must shine again, surely!"

Mordecai had lived in the small villa for a month, and life with *Susette*—"like children playing house"—had been most pleasant. She was a gay, mercurial little creature, oddly mature sometimes, more often childishly artless. For a few days it had been "*bon jour, Monsieur*," when he left for the office, and "*enchantée de vous revoir*" when he came back at night. But that was only for a few days. Now it was a gay "*à bientôt*" when he left, and an even gayer "*bienvenu!*" at his return. Before they had been housemates for a week she turned her face up to be

kissed when he came home, naturally and unaffectedly as an affectionate child. Now the rite was performed three times daily: when he left for his *bureau*, when he returned at night, just before she bade him "*bonne nuit*," and he saw the flicker of her little feet upon the stairs as she went up to bed.

Tonight she was in high spirits, for it was their "anniversary"; she had been "Madame Voestone" a whole month. In honor of the occasion she had put on "her best—her very finest," and the result was ravishing.

Her bright fair hair was waved up from the neck and temples with curls massed high on top and filleted with violet ribbon in the Grecian mode which had swept Paris and all France with the revival of classicism. In her little ears were hung two beautifully matched cameos outlined in gold and seed-pearls and almost large as Spanish "pillar dollars." A necklace of antique matte gold hung round her throat and its pendant was a duplicate of her ear-ornaments. A bracelet of gold set with a fourth matched cameo was clasped about her left arm just above the elbow. Her gown of sheer white muslin would have been revelatory as a wisp of veiling if it had not been gathered in close knife-pleats running vertically from bosom to hem. It was cut with a round neck-line, low in front and back, with tiny puff-sleeves at the shoulders, fitted tightly at the bust, but flaring sharply from the high-set waist which was defined by a long, sweeping sash of violet ribbon tied at the back in a coquettish bow whose ends draped nearly to the floor. Her sandals were gilt leather, heelless as a ballet dancer's shoes, and laced with violet ribbons, and through the meshes of their silken lattice her white feet gleamed seductively.

The firelight played about them as they sat upon the sofa after dinner. Streaming out across the hearth it reddened walls and floor; shadows advanced and retreated as the ever-restless flames rose, wavered, and then flickered down again. Like sportive wavelets of a serene sea the glowing tide advanced across the blue tiles of the hearth, highlighting the satin house-pumps Mordecai was wearing, flashing on the golden soles and violet ribbons of Susette's little sandals.

"It has been pretty, this month, has it not, my Mardochee?" she asked in a small, almost voiceless whisper as she tucked one foot up under her and swung the other to and fro as if to tease the flickering firelight with the little white and gold and violet thing. Instinctively as a bird finds its nest her small hand stole into his big one. "It has been a garden filled with fragrant flowers; the memory of it will perfume all life hereafter. But yes, my Mardochee, although the blood-drinkers are raging through the land and the chopper takes the heads of all the good and brave and just who still remain, it is not hard to trust the future. There is no doubt of God's great goodness when I think of this time we have had together——" She broke off with a little sigh, half of contentment, half of melancholy.

"Why do you sigh, Susette?"

"I did but think."

"Of what?"

"Of how sweet it must be to be truly wed to one like thee, my Mardochee."

Mordecai's breath came so fast that it nearly stifled him. A quick throbbing, half pain, half ecstasy, seemed beating with insistent hammer-rhythm in his breast.

"Susette," he whispered, and the effort it cost him to speak was almost

more than he could bear, "you love me, Susette?"

She turned her face to him, lips moist and dewy with the yearnings of youth, a rich, ripe look of promise in her eyes. "More than I can tell, *mon adoré!*"

Warm and tender, her slim arms were tight about his neck, he could feel the tears from her eyes on his cheek, her voice was full of gentleness and love as she repeated murmuringly: "*Mon adoré, mon amoureux, mon précieux! O, Mardochée, je t'aime, je t'aime!*"

He drew her to him, kissed her slowly, bending her head back against the sofa-arm, pillowing her neck in his bent arm. She whimpered softly, almost as in pain, became limp and yielding, then tightened her arms round his neck again, drawing him down to the lusciousness of satin-smooth red lips.

Afterwhiles they sat upon the sofa, hand in hand and waist in arm, and gazed into the alternately leaping and curtsying flames as if they could fore-read the future in their flickering brightness. "We must be married very soon, my dear," said Mordecai. "Tomorrow, if possible. I will go to the *mairie* on my way to the *bureau*——"

"*Mon Dieu!*" The hand Susette had raised to rearrange her misty, glowing hair was checked at her forehead. "We cannot—dare not marry, Mardochée!"

"Why not, my love? It will be simple——"

"*Non, non!* Consider, if you please. I am Susanne Louvegny, *ci-devant* comtesse d'Aules. My father was beheaded on the guillotine, I myself am *hors la loi*—outside the law. To be recognized is to be arrested, to be arrested is to be condemned to death. They give us *ci-devants* no trial at the Tribunal, only sentence to the chopper. You see,

m'ami, it is not possible. There is no birth certificate or baptismal record for me that you can give them, you dare not even tell them who I am!"

"But when we're married you will be a citizen of the United States. They will not dare——"

"But certainly—*when* we are married! Until that time I am a citizeness of France, and subject to her laws, however savage they may be. Think you they would let you snatch me from them, cheat the chopper——"

"By Jupiter!" The impact of his hand against his knee broke off her half-hysterical recital.

"What is it that you have, *mon cher?*"

"Our ship the *Deborah*, commanded by my brother Hezekiah, will be at Le Havre within the week. I'll send a message to him, asking him to bring her up the Seine. We can go in a closed coach to the piers, and once you are aboard her we'll defy the whole *garde nationale* to take you off again. When we are out of cannon-shot of land my brother as the master of the ship will marry us. You shall go home with me, *petite* Susette, home to America, and be 'Madame Voestone' in fact as well as reputation!"

Then for a long space they sat looking in the fire and held each other tightly. Words were superfluous. Two have no need of words when they are deeply, tremulously, wonderingly in love.

3. Macrin Henriot Again

ALL day the city quailed before a storm which threatened but forbore to strike. There were occasional grumblings of thunder, now and then a livid cicatrix of lightning scarred the sky, but the air hung heavy, breathless-still, as if in mute expectancy; the dry

dead leaves were quiet on the trees, a menacing twilight, brassy-yellow and unreal, filled the streets. But Susette was indifferent to the threat of rain and tempest, her brain and heart were too filled with anticipation to give heed to such-like unimportant things. Returning from the notion shop where she had made a few purchases—soap, a flacon of perfume, a spool of silk and a small box of rice-powder—she walked with a sort of lilt, questing eagerness. The *Deborah* had come up the Seine that afternoon; tonight she and Marjotte and Mordecai would board her; tomorrow morning with the turning of the tide they'd set sail for America and love and freedom. No more to be a fugitive, hunted like a brute beast; no more to live in constant dread with the weight of never-ceasing fear upon her nerves and terror gnawing at her heart! One could not but be very happy in such circumstances. *Le bon Dieu* was very good indeed, life was very good, Mardochee, especially, was good. Unbidden and spontaneously a snatch from Mozart's *Marriage of Figaro* welled up to her lips:

What is this feeling makes me so sad?
 What is this feeling makes me so glad?
 Pain that delights me—how can it be?
 Pleasure that pains me,
 Fetter'd though free . . .

The song died in a little gasp, and up her back a tiny chill of apprehension rippled. There was no breeze—the leaves upon the street-side trees hung motionless as if they had been painted on the scenery of a theatre—but somewhere in the street behind her, or in the alley which let into it, there was a dry, harsh, crackling rustle. Not a footstep, but a scuffing, as of stealthy feet among the fallen leaves that strewed the gutters.

She quickened her pace almost to a

run; the rustle ceased, and she relaxed her haste. She was nervous, like a silly child that starts at nothing. Too long living in the shadow of the chopper, too much longing for tomorrow—"Thou little foolish one!" she chid herself. "It was a sparrow scratching in the leaves in hope of food, perhaps a dog or cat." But reason abdicates when terror comes. However sensible her explanation was, it did not satisfy her. Once more she quickened pace; her little sandaled feet were fairly twinkling as she turned into the Street of the Windows. Yonder was her home, there lay sanctuary. . . .

The live coals of the smoldering sunset died beneath the ashes of the twilight, and suddenly the street was filled with shadows. And something more! Ahead of her, obscure in the unlighted highway, a vague, half-visible, half-guessed-at umbrose something flitted from one tree trunk to another, and this time she heard unmistakably the scuffing of a boot-heel on the bricks.

WHAT was that behind her? At first it was so faint she could not tell if she heard or imagined it; now it approached, and she knew it was no figment of disordered fancy. *Step—shuffle—step*, she heard it limping nearer with a dreadful, dragging hobble, a sort of terrifying dot-and-carry-one, as though some obscene wounded thing were slithering toward her. Terror, stark, unreasoning, chilling terror, took her by the throat, and she broke into a run, the awkward, knock-kneed run of a woman, unmindful of what lay before her if only she could leave this shambling, dragging, stealthy pursuer behind.

"Your pardon, Citiziness, we would have a word with you!" from the darkness of the angle of a wall a form

emerged, and with it came another, and another. The street seemed filled to overflowing with vague shapes, shapes almost without outline or faces, only eyes.

She could not know — her terror would not let her realize—that they were men enveloped in long cloaks and muffled to the eyes. They seemed a cloud of horror-shapes more dreadful than the *loup-garou* of Norman forests with which her nurse had frightened her so long ago at Aules.

Fright mounted to sheer panic, and panic gave way to a paralyzing horror as the limping, dragging step came nearer, scuffed and shuffled to a halt, and paused beside her.

"*Ha, you have her? A merveille!*" The voice was low and harsh and raucous as the tearing of a sheet of paper, but she recognized it. Macrin Henriot!

And now the blind was snapped from a dark-lantern, and the beam shone in her face, dazzling her with its quick brightness—but not in time. Before her dazed eyes ceased to function she beheld him peering at her through the gloom, leering like a fiend that comes to snatch a forfeit soul to hell.

Macrin Henriot, playmate of her childhood, discredited notary's apprentice, farrier in her father's stables, agent of the police of the Terror—but how changed! His dark, handsome, morose face was twisted almost out of semblance to a human countenance; one eye was closed until it was the merest slit; a corner of the mouth sagged down until it set his lips in a perpetual twisted, sneering grin, exposing teeth and drooling spittle; the whole side of his face seemed to have slipped, as though it had been dough that sloughed to shapelessness with its own weight. It overflowed the line of his jawbone, hanging down with a hound's dewlap.

And as the face was, so the body was deformed. One shoulder thrust grotesquely up, as if his spine were permanently twisted in a corkscrew bend; the arm was bent at an unnatural angle and the hand was rigid, splay-boned, as unlike a human hand as if it were the gnarled root of a dead tree. One leg was stiffened at the knee as if bound fast in splints; the foot was twisted at the ankle till it turned in almost at a right angle.

This was the reason for the halting, dragging, shuffling limp, the dreadful dot-and-carry-one with which he walked. Paralysis! She had seen a peasant on her father's farm deformed in such a way when a horse had kicked him on the head. The blow from Mor-decai's lead-loaded bludgeon . . .

He was speaking, slowly, painfully, with a sort of slobbering lisp. His eyes were dilated and bright with hate, his twisted mouth fell open and clapped shut as if he had no mastery of it, his deformed hand was fumbling like a fish that dies upon the angler's string, he slobbered like a mad dog with each word he uttered. But she could understand him. All too well!

"*Bon soir, Mademoiselle la Comtesse.* I have long anticipated this meeting. This time it is the chopper, with no choice between it and the poor cripple, Macrin Henriot. It was a merry chase you led us with your masquerade of being Madame Voestone, but at last we have you in the net, my pretty little pigeon. This time we shall not suffer interruption by *Monsieur l'Américain*. I have seen to that!"

A great lump, hot as molten lead, was forming in Susette's throat; there was a ringing in her ears that shut out every other sound. Her heart seemed smashed to fragments and each separate, aching piece was being torn out by

the roots. She was taken on the eve of her escape; Mardochee was taken, too—had he not said, '*l'Américain*, I have seen to that'?—her world was broken into little bits and the bits were ground to powder in the cruel mills of the Gods of Desolation. There was a frantic feeling in her breast beside her heart, she was choking, stifling, dying.

"*Pardi!* she swoons!" she heard a man exclaim as a wave of blackness flooded over her.

"*Eh bien*, then bring her out of it. Thrust a pin in her!"

There was a fumbling in the crowd, the rustling of clothing as a pin was sought, then a bitter, piercing pain in her left leg as the pointed wire was inserted to the head. She tried to writhe away, to cry out, to plead for pity from the torture, but she could neither move nor speak nor make the smallest sound.

"*Tiens, mon commissaire*, I think that she has died of a heart failure," the man who stabbed her with the pin told Henriot. "She does not respond to my tickling."

Rough hands were on her wrists, she felt her eyelids drawn back and knew a light flashed in her pupils, even though she saw no light. Then another hand thrust underneath her fichu, her outraged virgin bosom felt the pressure of cold fingers just above her heart. The hand was withdrawn slowly, as if loath to leave her tender flesh, and: "*B'en oui, elle est morte. A coup sûr!*"

"Bring the candle. Give it here!"

She heard the lantern rattle as the candle was removed from it, felt her sandal torn without unlacing from her left foot, then, excruciatingly, a searing, branding pain against her first and second toes.

Again she tried to scream, to draw

away from the intolerable torment; once more she found herself unable so much as to flutter an eyelid or bend toe or finger.

"*Vraiment, elle est morte.*" It was Henriot speaking, and his voice was softer than it had been. She felt his breath against her cheek as he knelt down beside her, heard him murmur, "*Ohé*, my little Suzon, I am sorry! I would have sent you to the chopper, but only because I loved you. You were so beautiful, so lovely—and so far above me. If I could not have you, I could not bear that any other should——" A sob, deep retching, almost strangling, broke his whisper, and if she could have moved she would have winced beneath the impact of his twisted, flaccid lips as he pressed a kiss against her mouth. "*Adieu, petite compagne,*" he breathed, "*adieu pour l'éternité!*"

"*Eh bien*, it seems the chopper has been cheated," remarked a policeman. "The trench is still open at the *cimetière de la Madeleine*; only ten were chopped today. Shall we——"

"*Non!*" Henriot denied. "I will not have her buried in the common *fosse*. Let a three-year concession be opened——"

"The citizen *commissaire* forgets that graves cost money, even three-year graves," a guardsman cut in dryly. "Who will pay for the concession?"

"Here," Henriot thrust a crumpled wad of *assignats* into the fellow's hand, "see thou to it! Some of you stand guard by her; you others, come with me. I have some more arrests to make, but I will have a wagon sent for her."

4. "*Love Is Strong as Death . . .*"

MORDECAI was packing in his lodgings. Most of his things had been transferred to Susette's little house, but

some odds and ends remained in the apartment, and he was not minded to leave them behind.

A happiness so great it almost hurt suffused him like the afterglow of a drink of fine old sherry. Susette—Susette, his heart seemed beating to the rhythm of her name. This was almost too good to be true, it was like something dreamed or read in a romance, too wonderful, too sweet, too utterly heart-satisfying to have happened to anyone like him. A singing heart needs singing lips to complement it, and instinctively he raised his lusty baritone in Master Isaac Watts' *Varina*:

"There is a land of pure delight
Where saints immortal reign;
Eternal day excludes the night,
And pleasures banish pain.
There everlasting spring abides,
And never-fading flowers;
Death, like a narrow sea, divides
This heav'nly land from——"

"*M'sieur, M'sieur Mardochée*"—high, cracked, hysterical, old Marjotte's voice broke his rendition of the hymn—"pour l'amour de Dieu, come; oh, come at once!"

She was clawing at him blindly. Her gnarled old hands were so deformed with age and labor and rheumatism that they looked like malformed, dying branches on a dwarfed pine tree; her eyes were glazed and filmed with grief and terror; little flecks of bubble-froth hung in the corners of her convulsed mouth.

"Come, come, *M'sieur*," she gabbled, "it is *la petite*—the little Susette——" Her thin, shrill, brittle voice cracked like a shattering glass and she dropped down to the settle, hugging both hands to her stomach, rocking to and fro in an excess of agony too acute for words.

"Good heavens, what is it, Mar-

jotte?" Mordecai took her shoulders in his hands and shook her gently. "What has happened——"

"*Ohé, M'sieur*, they've taken her, and she is dead!"

"What? You mean Susette's arrested——"

"She is dead, *M'sieur*. *Oui-da*, I myself have seen her corpse!"

Mordecai dropped on the bed, eyes staring, mouth a little open. "Dead?" he echoed unbelievably.

"*Vraiment*. But yes, *M'sieur*. I saw her lying there all cold with the guardsmen round her——"

"When—how did it happen?"

"She went to the shop of *Mère Duval* to make some little purchases before the sun went down. I begged her not to go out in the twilight unattended, but she laughed at me. Had we not been safe from molestation since you took us under your protection? But certainly. I was preparing dinner, and when lamp-lighting time had come and she had not returned, I had concern. It was a dinner fit for our farewell to France, *M'sieur*—oysters, sole, *cane-ton au four*——"

"Yes, yes; of course. I'm sure the dinner was a work of art, Marjotte, but what of Mademoiselle Susette?"

"*B'en, M'sieur*. When she came not I had the anxiety, and went to seek for her. Less than a hundred meters from the house I came upon her lying in the street with a ring of guardsmen round her. I am old, but when I wish to be I am of the silent foot, *M'sieur*. I crept up to them as noiselessly as any mouse. There lay my little one, my lamb, my baby, dead upon her back, and they were standing by and looking at her. There was Macrin Henriot — may Satan snatch him to hell with his eyes wide open!—and with him were his so vile myrmidons. Me, I heard them

talking. Oh, yes! She had suffered a heart failure when they set upon her, it seemed, and one of them suggested that they pitch her in the common grave where those who have been chopped lie in *la Madeleine*. But Henriot demanded that she be put in a three-year concession—she who is a *noble dame* to lie in a vile pauper's grave! Better to be buried in the *fosse* with all the good ones done to death by Robespierre than lie in such a sepulcher—

"You're sure that she was dead, not fainting?"

"*Mais oui, M'sieur*. Too sure; too sure! I saw them feel her pulses, flash a light into her eye, and as the crowning infamy burn her little so sweet foot with fire to see if it would blister. *Hélas*, my little one, my tiny duckling, my sweet pigeon, thou art dead!"

Her wail became wild, high, keen, rose to a frenzied shriek, then failed with very intensity. She fought for breath, mouthed toothless gums as if she sought to bite the agony that racked her, rolled her eyes up till the pupils disappeared beneath the lids; then,



"Buried alive! She screamed in agony of soul and body."

with a choking, retching cry, half gasp, half hiccup, fell forward on her face, twitched spasmodically, and lay still.

It needed no physician to pronounce her dead. The film-glazed eyes, the flaccid jaw, the prolapsed tongue and idiotically opened mouth all bore their eloquent testimony. Marjotte lay dead of a broken heart, and Mordecai's heart was breaking.

How long he sat there staring sightlessly at nothing he could never tell. He was stunned, but not too stunned to suffer. The world seemed desolate as it had been before God's spirit moved upon the waters and decreed, "Let there be light."

Light? I' God's good name, what talk was this of light? There was no light! The sun and moon and stars had gone forever from his firmament; only shadows, cold and everlasting, stayed. He tried to face the facts, but one dreadful sentence rang with clamoring echoes in his brain, beating out all other thought. Susette, little sweet Susette, was dead. Dead, and already lying in a pauper's grave in the cemetery of the Madeleine. Nevermore would he be greeted by her purling, laughing voice, never feel the touch of her soft hands again, never look into her face. . . .

"By heaven, I will!" he shouted, and rose to fling his cloak about him and stamp out into the street. "*Adieu*, my poor Marjotte. I am going to her."

He'd promised her. "You shall go home with me, *petite Susette de mon coeur*," he'd said, and go with him she should.

She was buried in a three-year grave, virtually laid on the surface; he could tear the earth away, break the flimsy coffin with his hands and take her little body to the *Deborah*. Brother Hezekiah would provide a pipe of rum into

which they could put her; her flesh should not know corruption until they had reached Boston and he'd laid her in the Westhorne family plot within the shadow of Kings' Chapel.

THE wind was rising now, and the storm that had delayed all day was breaking. "Howl tempest; bellow, thunder; pour, rain!" It had been raining on the night he met her; it was fitting it should rain tonight.

"Susette—Susette!" As on the night he met her, so now the scuffing of his feet upon the leaves kept cadence with the syllables of her name. Tears streamed down his face as in his mind's eye he beheld her at the table with the gleam of candlelight upon her arms and shoulders, sensed the perfume of her nearness as they sat upon the sofa by the fire. When he closed his hand he almost felt the answering pressure of her little fingers.

Her little hands, her laughing eyes, her sweet, small, ivory-gleaming feet! They'd minded him of Solomon's canticle when he first saw them; now another stanza of the *Song of Songs* ran in his mind. He smiled sardonically as he recalled the citations—sixth verse, eighth chapter of the *Song of Songs*: "Love is strong as death!"

He repeated it, again—again. Its meter seemed to fall into the rhythm of a drum that beats time for a march—"Love—is—strong-as-death; Love—is—strong-as-death!"

Now he'd reached the Place de la Revolution. Grim and bare as Death's own hungry skeleton the chopper reared in ghastly silhouette against a flare of lightning. That way, to the right, the cemetery of the Madeleine lay. Rain came down in gusts, in torrents, floods. He walked through it unnoticing as if it had been moonlight.

... "Beat high, heart; hasten, feet; we are going to Susette!"

5. *Inferno*

WHEN Susette fell she tried to summon strength to scream. With almost superhuman effort she sought to cry out, at least to groan, to twitch a toe or bend a finger—to do anything to make them realize she was still alive. The thought of being strapped down to the chopper's plank, to have to look into the blood-stained basket waiting for her head, had been a constant nightmare, but the chopper would be preferable to this. To be nailed in a coffin, carted to the cemetery, buried while alive—to smother slowly, horribly . . .

"*Misère de Dieu*," she heard a guardsman swear, "will he never come, that one? Me. I am no *croque-mort*—no damned watcher of the dead——"

The clop-clop of a horse's hooves against the flints sounded. "*Holà, mes enfants*, you have a fare for old *Jacques-Corbillard*, yes?" a voice hailed through the gloom. "*Bon*. Help me with this *sacré* coffin. The devil take those carpenters, they make them heavier each day!"

The rough pine box thumped hollowly upon the pavement; she felt herself heaved into it, heard the grate of wood on wood as the cover was laid on, heard the bang of hammer against nail and felt the jarring impact as they fastened down the lid. They shoved the coffin in the cart. A whip cracked. . . .

Often she had wondered how the wretches in the tumbril felt as they were hurried to the guillotine. Now she knew if they could have compared her fate with theirs they would have sung for joy. Theirs was a mercifully swift end: a stroke, a shock, and all was done. She was being taken to a slow

and awful death by suffocation in the grave.

The minutes had seemed endless as she lay bereft of sight and movement on the pavement. Now it seemed the shambling cart-horse had the wings of Pegasus as it ambled slowly toward the cemetery.

They had halted. She felt the shock as they dragged her from the cart and dropped her on the muddy earth. Her feet were higher than her head as the driver and a helper manhandled the coffin. Another jarring thump and she had come to rest; then a report deafening as the bursting of a bombshell sounded just above her heart and the confined air inside the coffin beat against her ear-drums with the shock of it. A second detonation on the lid above her face, a third, a fourth, a perfect avalanche of shocks as clod on roaring clod came rattling down by shovelfuls upon the coffin top.

Her ears were paralyzed by the continuous battering of the falling earth; she could feel the constantly-increasing weight of it upon her breast, her mouth, her nostrils. She made a last supreme effort to rouse and scream for help; then a great flare, bright as blazing lightning, burst against her eyes, and the last shred of sensation left her.

SLOWLY consciousness returned. How good it was to lie here in her bed, to know the terrible experience had been a nightmare! She had not been seized by Henriot, not taken up for dead, not dropped unceremoniously in a grave. Presently, when she had had a chance to soothe her shaken nerves, she'd call Marjotte and have her make a cup of chocolate; then she'd rest until the morning came.

But how dark it was! The curtains had been drawn to keep the deadly

night air out, of course, but this was pitch-black darkness, impenetrable as a velvet hood. She moved her arms uneasily. To left and right were hard, rough wooden walls that pressed her sides and interfered with movement. She started up and fell back with a startled cry, for she had struck her head a violent blow. The air about her pressed against her ears; it had a damp and heavy feeling, as though confined.

Then with a reason-shattering shock she knew. Her scalp began to sting and prickle as the awful truth ran through her like an icy wave. This was no dream, but dreadful fact. The bonds of lethargy had dropped away, she was once more mistress of her body, conscious, able to call out for help—but none would ever hear her. She was confined, shut up beneath a mound of muddy earth in the cemetery of the Madeleine.

Buried alive!

She screamed in agony of soul and body. The horrible reverberation of her voice in the sealed coffin rang against her ears like thunder-claps tossed back by mountain-peaks.

Her eyes were open—open staring-wide—and she searched the Stygian darkness for a gleam of light. It was as if she pressed her fingers on her closed eyelids. Only fiery sparks and shining patches of bright lightning-color showed, changed and faded like the patterns of a kaleidoscope.

Then she went mad. Shrieking, cursing the day that she was born and the God that let this dreadful fate befall her, she writhed and twisted, kicked and struggled. The coffin sides pressed her so closely that she could not get her hands up to her head, else she would have torn her hair out by the roots and scratched her face to the bone; but she dug her nails into her thighs

through the flimsy stuff of her gown and bit her lips and tongue until her mouth was choked with blood and her raving cries were muted like the gurgles of a drowning man. At last with a tremendous effort she turned herself face down and beat her brow against the coffin floor. Again and again she struck her forehead on the rough pine planks, getting a slight surcease from her horror in the pain.

Once more she writhed inside the straitness of her tomb, twisted till she lay upon her back, arched her body, drew her knees up, kicked frenziedly against the coffin foot. It gave a very little and she thought she saw a flickering glow of light. One little minute, just long enough to breathe the air while they rushed her to the chopper—let her smell the open air once more! She started up, her forehead crashed against the coffin lid. A wave of weakness flooded over her. She fell back, sick and faint. . . .

6. "It Is a Vampire!"

THE rain had slackened almost imperceptibly as Mordecai strode toward the cemetery. By the time he reached the sexton's hut beside the gate there was no water falling save wind-lashed drippings from the trees and eaves.

His first knock brought no answer, but continued hammering at last evoked a shuffling step, and a blast of superheated, almost fetid air swept from the little house as the door was opened on a six-inch crack. Behind the little gnome-like man who peered at him through the small opening Mordecai descried a candle burning in a bottle and a charcoal *poêle* glowing redly.

"The Citizen has doubtless lost his way," the porter ventured. "This is the Cemetery of the Madeleine."

"The Citizen is not lost, and he is perfectly aware this is the Cemetery of the Madeleine," Mordecai replied; then, not waiting for the invitation which he knew would not be tendered, he pushed the little man aside and stepped into the pentice.

"The Citizen sexton would doubtless like to make some extra money?" he asked. "Say five hundred or a thousand francs?"

"*Un Américain*," the porter recognized his slight accent, "and mad, as

all the Yankees are. Drunk, too, *pardi*."

Mordecai seized the fellow's shoulder, for he was edging slyly toward the door, and shook a sheaf of *assignats* beneath his nose. "Have the kindness to smell those, my friend," he ordered. "Regard me well: five hundred now, a like amount when you've done what I ask."

Speculative avarice brought a much brighter gleam to the intendant's little eyes. "The Citizen *Américain* desires



"The pistol grasped in his hand with cadaveric rigor told the story."

that I help him kill someone?" From his tone it was quite evident he did not turn the proposition down unheard. "Or is it that he has outside a body he desires secretly interred?"

"Consult your records," Mordecai replied. "Some hours ago, since sunset, they brought the body of a woman here——"

"They have brought many bodies here, Citizen. The chopper has been very busy——"

"This one was not chopped. She was found dead upon the street and hurried here for burial. In a three-year grave——"

"*B'en oui*. One remembers now. I helped the cartman bury her——"

"I want her disinterred."

"*Parbleu*, you are a resurrectionist—an anatomist, perhaps?"

Mordecai drew out his purse and dropped a golden *louis* on the pile of paper money. "You will do it?"

The sexton eyed the money greedily. "For fifteen hundred francs, perhaps——"

"A thousand or nothing."

"*Mille tonnerres*, Citizen, you have no heart! A poor man scarcely has the wherewithal to live these days, and the risk I run is great. However"—as Mordecai prepared to thrust the notes and gold back in his pocket—"one consents. There is nothing else to do. If the citizen must have the body at his price, then he must have it at his price." He shrugged as only Frenchmen can shrug when they wish to indicate complete dissociation from a matter, shuffled to the corner and picked up a rusty spade and pick-ax. "I wait your pleasure, Citizen."

A SORT of eery half-light lay upon the graveyard as they picked their way down what had been a graveled

path. Across the clay-stained almost turfless lawn the *fosse* or common trench for executed bodies cut like a saber-slash in dirty flesh. Those whose names should be embalmed in history lay in the muddy ditch: Louis XVI, Charlotte Corday, Louis d'Orleans, Marie Antoinette. Silhouetted stark and ghastly by the torn clouds were the age-stained marble tombs of the wealthy, mostly empty now, for the mob had ransacked them for valuables and thrown their tenants out upon the bone-pile. A little farther off the rough unsodded mounds of ten-year graves were ranged beneath their wooden markers, none of which was cross-shaped, for religious emblems were forbidden for the dead as for the living. Huddled by the wall there showed the graves of the poor dead, five- and three-year concessions.

Graves of the five-year class were scarcely deeper than the coffins they enclosed, but their occupants could lie in them for half a decade. The three-year graves were little more than mounds of sodden earth heaped over coffins laid in two-foot trenches. In thirty-six months they would be leveled and the bodies in them thrown into the cemetery's common charnel-house. It was toward one of these the sexton strode.

"*Grand Dieu!*" he cried as the light from his dark-lantern picked the mound of mud from the surrounding darkness. "Observe him, Citizen!"

Face downward on the grave, arms spread as if he would embrace it, lay a man, and from the cockade in his hat and the tri-colored sash around his waist they recognized him as an agent of Public Security. No need to ask if he were dead or how he died. The wound in his right temple, spilling blood that dyed the red clay deeper

red, and the pistol grasped in his hand with cadaveric rigor told the story.

"*Morbleu, un suicide!*" the intendant murmured. "*Eh bien*, he chose a good place for it."

Unconcernedly as if he moved a bale of merchandise he prized the dead man from the grave-mound with his spade. The candle-lantern shed its gleam into the face of Macrin Henriot.

"*C'est ça*, that is that. Shall we begin, Citizen? Hold the lamp, if you please."

The sexton struck his spade into the grave, tossed back the clinging clay, and dug again. In a few minutes he had laid the coffin bare and with the flat end of his pick began to wrench the lid away.

Mordecai leaned forward, lantern raised. In the coffin lay Susette, rigid as if petrified. Her hands were tightly clenched, nails driven into palms, with little streams of drying blood running from each self-inflicted wound. Her eyes were closed, but on her slightly-parted lips there lay a double line of bloody froth.

"*Sainte Vierge*" — terror drove long-cultivated atheism from the intendant — "Blessèd Mary, pity us! Come, Citizen, and quickly. It is a vampire lying there! Behold the life-like countenance, the opened lips all bloody from the devil's breakfast, the hands all stained with gore!"

His teeth were chattering, but he was no coward. "Stand back, Citizen, and let me deal with it. I will strike it to the foul heart with my pickax, sever its unhallowed head with my spade, and we shall fill the grave again——"

"*Non, non!*" cried Mordecai as the sexton raised his pick to carry out his threat. Bending over the coffin he whispered, "Susette, little sweet Susette, did they do this to thee——" An impulse he could not explain moved him to lay

his hand against her cheek. Her flesh was warm.

He thrust the sexton back so violently he landed sitting in a pool of muddy water, where he squatted like an elderly and nervous duck, squawking pleas for Mordecai to "come away all quickly."

But Mordecai did not come. Sinking to his knees beside the grave he laid his hand on Susette's heart. There was no doubt of it. Faint as the fluttering of a fledgling dropped from its nest and almost perished with exposure, but still perceptible, a feeble pulse was beating.

"Here"—he tossed a fistful of *assignats* at the sexton—"close the grave, and keep the mouth closed, also, *mon vieux*."

Next moment he had bundled Susette in his cloak and started for the graveyard wall.

7. "*Until the Morning Comes . . .*"

THE alleyway behind the cemetery was lined with mews upon its farther side and almost dark as a tunnel. The sky, cloud-shrouded, pressed down on roofs and chimneys, but where the alley joined a cross-street a feeble patch of luminance coned down from an oil lantern fixed against a house wall. Slogging through the mud and filth that smeared the cobbles, Mordecai saw a cat dart from the shelter of the cemetery wall, pause in mid-step, one foot upraised, then shrink into invisibility against the miry roadway. It had seen something he could not, and with never-failing feline instinct distrusted it. Now from somewhere in the street beyond the turning came a foot-fall, then another. Flowing through the gloom that waited just outside the circle of the lantern's infirm beams he saw shadows darker than the shadows that

were there before. In an instant light gleamed on bayonets and pike-heads and a sword. It was the *patrouille grise*—the night patrol upon their rounds. The alley was a cul-de-sac, the blank-faced stables were all barred and double-locked, behind him was the eight-foot cemetery wall, and anyone who ran or sought to hide was instantly suspect.

He drew a deep breath, swung Susette down to his side, supporting her with one arm around her waist beneath the cloak, and, staggering, half in simulation, half with the awkwardness of his burden, began to sing:

*"La vie est brève,—hic
Un peu d'espoir,
Un peu de rêve,—hic
Et puis—bon soir!"*

The hiccup terminating the ditty was a masterpiece of inebriety, and the brigadier commanding the patrol laughed sympathetically. He too enjoyed an evening in the wine shops. To guzzle good red wine and feel the amorous touch of little hands—*parbleu*, that was the man's life, not walking through the stinking alleys searching for aristocrats! "*Hé, Citizen,*" he called, "you would best go home and sleep it off, that *débauche*. *Mon Dieu*, but you are drunk like a pig—lucky one!"

THE streets were gray and empty, like the veins of a corpse from which the blood has been drained slowly; a hard dull-pewter luminance, not light nor yet darkness, permeated the air, and the wind was damp and chilling as the breath from a forced-open tomb as Mordecai turned toward the river.

Here were the wharves, redolent with bilge and brackish water and the strange scents of cargoes from far away. Ships' masts and yard-arms barred the eastern sky like barriers at prison windows. The deserted quays echoed small sounds like an empty auditorium: the scuttering of rats' feet, the grind of oaken sides on piles, the groan of cables in hawse-holes.

Susette stirred and whimpered, like a child affrighted by a dream. He bent his head and kissed her lightly. "Safe, my darling—safe! Rest thou in my arms until the morning comes and shadows flee away. . . ."

The sky was gray as a soiled silver bowl, but morning-light was polishing it to brightness. Dawn was at the city gates, and Paris slept.

A ship's lamp glinted on the blade of a cutlas; the thump of sea-boots sounded on the flagstones as a sentry paced before the gangway of a clipper tied up at the quay. Though he was far away, the hymn-tune that he sang to while away his vigil sounded with an unmistakable New England accent:

*"One day of prayer and praise
His sacred courts within,
Is sweeter than ten thousand days
Of pleasurable sin."*

"What ship is this?" Panting, staggering, all but spent, Mordecai approached the singing sailor, his precious burden clasped tight in his arms.

"She's th' *Deborah* out o' Boston town — howdy, Master Mordecai! Come aboard, we're waitin' fer ye," answered the seaman; then, with a bellow up the gangway:

"Hey, Cap'n Westhorne; they've arrove!"