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"Chenevort and I seized Goodlowe by the elbows and stopped him in his stride."

The Door to Yesterday

By SEABURY QUINN

'A gripping tale of a great white snake, weird deaths, and strange racial memories—an exploit of Jules de Grandin

DINNER would be ready in fifteen minutes, and we were to have lobster Cardinal, a thing Jules de Grandin loved with a passion second only to his fervor for *La Marseillaise*. Now he was engaged in the rite of cocktail-mixing, intent upon his work as any alchemist brewing an esoteric philtre. "Now for the vermouth," he announced, decanting a potion of amber liquid into the tall silver shaker half filled with gin and

fine-shaved ice with all the care of a pharmacist compounding a prescription. "One drop too little and the cocktail she is spoiled; one little so small drop too much, and she is wholly ruined. Ah—so; she is now precisely perfect, and ready for the shaking!" Slowly, rhythmically, he began to churn the shaker up and down, gradually increasing the speed in time with the bit of bawdy ballad which he hummed:

*Ma fille, pour pénitence,
 Ron, ron, ron, petit tapoton,
 Ma fille, pour pénitence,
 Nous nous embrasserons—*

"Captain Chenevert; Misther Gordon Goodlowe!" announced Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, from the study doorway, annoyance at having strangers call when dinner was about to be served showing on her broad Irish face.

On the heels of her announcement came the callers: Captain Chenevert, a big, deep-chested young man attired in that startling combination of light and dark blues in which the State of New Jersey garbs its gendarmerie; Mr. Goodlowe, a dapper, slender little man with neatly cropped white hair and short-clipped white mustache, immaculate in black mohair jacket and trousers, his small paunch trimly buttoned underneath a waistcoat of spotless linen.

"Sorry to interrupt you, gentlemen," Captain Chenevert apologized, "but there have been some things happening at Mr. Goodlowe's place which no one can explain, and one of my men got talking with a member of your local force—Detective Sergeant Costello—who said that Doctor de Grandin could get to the bottom of the trouble if anybody could."

"Eh, you say the good Costello sent you?" de Grandin asked, giving the cocktail mixer a final vigorous shake. "He should know better. Me, I am graduated from the *Sûreté*; I no longer take an interest in criminal investigation."

"We understood as much," the captain answered. "That's why we're here. If it had been a matter of ordinary crime-detection, or an extraordinary one, I think that we could handle it; but it's something more than that, sir." He paused and grinned rather sheepishly; then: "This may sound nutty to you, but I'm more than half convinced there's

something supernatural about the case."

"Ah?" De Grandin put the cocktail shaker by. "Um?" He flung a leg across the table-corner and, half sitting, half standing, regarded the visitors in turn with a fixed, unwinking stare. "*Ab-ba?* This is of interest," he admitted, breaking open a blue packet of "Maryland" cigarettes and setting one of the malodorous things aglow. "Proceed, if you please, gentlemen. Like the ass of Monsieur Balaam, I am all ears."

Mr. Goodlowe answered: "Last year my brother, Colonel Clarke Clay Goodlowe, sold his seat on the stock exchange and retired from active business," he began. "For some years he had contemplated returning to Kentucky, but when he finally gave up active trading in the market he found that he'd become acclimated to the North—reckon the poor fellow just couldn't bear to get more than an hour or two away from Wall Street, as a matter of fact—so he built himself a home near Keyport. He moved there with his daughter Nancy, my niece, last April, and died before he'd been there quite a month."

De Grandin's slender, jet-black eyebrows rose a fraction of an inch nearer the line of his honey-colored hair. "Very good, *Messieurs*," he answered querulously. "Men have died before—men have been dying regularly since Mother Eve and Father Adam partook of the forbidden fruit. What is there so extraordinary in this especial death?"

"I didn't see my brother's body——" Mr. Goodlowe began.

"But I did!" Captain Chenevert broke in. "Every bone from skull to metatarsus was broken, and the whole form was so hammered out of shape that identification was almost impossible."

"Ah?" de Grandin's small blue eyes

flickered with renewing interest. "And then——"

Mr. Goodlowe took up the narrative: "My niece was almost prostrated by the tragedy, and as I was in England at the time it was impossible for me to join her right away. Accordingly, Major Derringer, a rather distant kinsman, and his wife came up from Lexington to attend the funeral and make such preliminary arrangements as were necessary until I could come home.

"The day following the funeral, Major Derringer was found on the identical spot where my brother's body was discovered—dead."

"Crushed and mauled almost out of resemblance to anything human," Captain Chenevert supplied.

"Mrs. Derringer was taken severely ill as a result of her husband's dreadful death," Mr. Goodlowe added. "She was put to bed with special nurses in attendance day and night, and while the night nurse was out of the room for a moment she rose and slipped through the window, wandered across the lawn in her nightclothes, and——"

The thing was like an antiphon. De Grandin looked inquiringly at Captain Chenevert as Mr. Goodlowe paused, and the trooper nodded grimly.

"The same," he snapped. "Same place, same dreadful mutilation—everything the same, except——"

"Yes, *parbleu*, except——" de Grandin prompted sharply as the young policeman paused.

"Except that Mrs. Derringer had bled profusely where compound fractures of her ribs had forced the bones through her sides, and on the tiled floor of the loggia near the spot where she was found was the trail of a great snake marked in blood."

"Good heavens!" I exclaimed.

"By damn-it," murmured Jules de Grandin, "this is truly such a case as I delight in, *Monsieur le Capitaine*. If you gentlemen will be good enough to join us at dinner, I shall do myself the honor of accompanying you to this so strange house where guests are found all crushed to death and serpents write their autographs in blood. Yes, certainly; of course."

PROSPECT HILL, the late Colonel Goodlowe's house, was a reproduction of an English country seat done in the grand manner. Built upon a rise of ground, heading a little valley in the hills, it was a long, low red-brick mansion flanked by towering oaks and chestnut-trees. Leveled off before the house was a wide terrace paved with tessellated tiles and bordered by a stone balustrade punctuated at regular intervals by wide-mouthed urns of stone in which petunias blossomed riotously. A flight of broad, low steps ran down through succeeding terraced levels of smooth-shaved lawns to a lake where water-lilies bloomed and several swans swam lazily. Across a stretch of greensward to the left was a formal garden where statted nymphs stooped to beds of clustering roses which drenched the air with almost drugging sweetness. Low, colonnaded loggias, like cloisters, branched off from the house at either side, the left connecting with the rose-garden, the right leading to a level square of grass in which was set a little summer-house of red brick and wrought iron.

"One moment, if you please," de Grandin ordered as we clambered from the car before the house. "Show me, if you will be so good, *Monsieur le Capitaine*, exactly where it was they found Madame Derringer and the others. We

might as well prepare ourselves by making a survey of the terrain."

We walked across the lawn toward the little summer-house, and Captain Chenevert halted some six feet from the loggia. "I'd say we found 'em here," he answered. "U'm, yes; just about here, judging by the——" He paused a moment, as though to orient himself, then stepped forward to the green-tile paving of the loggia, drawing an electric flashlight from his blouse pocket as he did so.

The long summer twilight had almost faded into night, but by such daylight as remained, aided by the beam of Captain Chenevert's torch, we could descry, very faintly, a sinuating, weaving trail against the gray-green of the tiles. I recognized it instantly. There is no boy brought up in the country districts before the coming of the motor-car had caused earth roads to give way to hard-surfaced highways who can not tell a snake-track when he sees it in the dust!

But never had I seen a track like this. In form it was a duplicate of trails which I had seen a thousand times, but in size—it might have been the mark left by a motor-lorry's wheel. Involuntarily I shuddered as I beheld the grisly thing, and Captain Chenevert's hand stole instinctively to the walnut stock of the revolver which dangled in its holster from his belt. Gordon Goodlowe, scion of a dozen generations of a family who chose death in preference to dishonor, held himself in check by almost superhuman force. Jules de Grandin showed no more emotion than if he were in a museum viewing some not-especially interesting relic of the past.

"U'm?" he murmured softly to himself, studying the dull, reddish-brown tracing with pursed lips and narrowed eyes. "He must have been the *bisaïeul* of

the serpents, this one." He raised his narrow shoulders in a shrug, and:

"Come, let us go in," he suggested. "Perhaps there is more to see inside."

Mr. Goodlowe cleared his throat angrily, but Captain Chenevert laid a quick hand on his elbow. "S-s-sh!" he cautioned softly. "Let him handle this his own way. He knows what he's about."

AN AGED, but by no means decrepit colored butler met us at the door. In one hand he held an old fashioned candle-lamp, in the other a saucer containing grains of wheat.

"What the devil?" Mr. Goodlowe snapped. "Has the electric power gone off again, Julius?"

"Yes, sir," said the colored man, his words, despite the native softness of his voice, having a peculiar intonation revealing that his mother tongue was not the English of the South. "The current has been gone since six o'clock this afternoon, and the telephone has been out of order for some time, as well."

"Dam' poor service!" muttered Goodlowe, but:

"How long's it been since your light and telephone died before?" sharply queried Captain Chenevert.

I saw the Negro shiver, as though he felt a sudden draft of gelid air. "Not since Madame Derringer——" he began, but the captain shut him off.

"That's what I thought," he answered; then, to de Grandin, in a whisper:

"Something dam' funny about this, sir. Their electric light all died the night Mrs. Derringer was—er—died, and the telephone went dead at the same time. Same thing happened on both previous occasions, too. D'y'e mind if I pop over to the barracks and put in a trouble call? I've got my motorcycle parked out in the yard."

De Grandin had been studying the butler with that intent, unwinking stare of his, but now turned to the trooper with a nod. "By all means," he replied. "Go there, and go quickly, my friend. Also return as quickly as may be with one of your patrol cars, if you please. Park it at the entrance of the grounds, and approach on foot. It may be we shall be in need of help, and I would have it that our reinforcements come unannounced, if possible."

"O. K.," the other answered, and turned upon his heel.

"How's Miss Nancy, Julius?" Mr. Goodlowe asked. "Feeling any better?"

"No, sir, I'm afraid she's not," the butler replied, and again it seemed to me that he shivered like a man uncomfortable with cold, or in mortal terror.

Jules de Grandin's gaze had scarcely left the Negro since he saw him first. Now, abruptly, he addressed him in a sudden flow of queer, outlandish words, vaguely reminiscent of French, but differing from it in tone and inflection, no less than in pronunciation, as the argot of the slums differs from the language of polite society.

The Negro started violently as de Grandin spoke to him, glanced shamefacedly at the plate of wheat he held, then, keeping his eyes averted, answered in the same outlandish tongue. Throughout the dialogue was constantly repeated a queer, harsh-sounding word: "*looga-roo*," though what it meant I had no faintest notion. At length:

"*Bon*," de Grandin told the butler; then, to Mr. Goodlowe and me: "He says that *Mademoiselle* your niece is feeling most unwell, *Monsieur*, and that he thinks it would be well if we prescribed for her. He and his wife have attempted to assist her, but she has fallen into a profound stupor from which they can

not rouse her, and it was while attempting to summon a physician from Keyport that he discovered the telephone had gone out of order. Have we your permission to attend *Mademoiselle*?"

"Yes, of course," Mr. Goodlowe answered, and, as we followed the butler up the wide, balustraded stairway:

"*Dam*' West Indian niggers—I can't think why Clarke had 'em around. I'll be gettin' rid of 'em in short order, as soon as I can get some of our servants up here from the South. Why the devil couldn't he have told *me* about Nancy?"

"Perhaps because he had no opportunity," de Grandin answered with a mildness wholly strange to him. "I surmised that he came from Haiti or Martinique by his accent and by—no matter. Accordingly, I addressed him in his native *patois*, and he responded. I must apologize for breaking in upon your conversation, but there were certain things I wished to know, and deemed it best to ask him quickly, before he fully understood the nature of my mission here."

"Humph," responded Mr. Goodlowe. "Did you find out what you wanted?"

"Perfectly, *Monsieur*. Forgive me if I do not tell you what it is. At present I have no more than the vaguest of vague suspicions, and I should not care to make myself a laughing-stock by parading crazy theories unbacked by any facts."

Plainly, Mr. Goodlowe was unimpressed with Jules de Grandin as an investigator, and it was equally plain that he had in mind setting forth his dissatisfaction in no uncertain terms, but our advent at his niece's bedroom door cut off all further conversation.

"MISS NANCY—oh, Miss Nancy!" the butler called in a soft, affectionate tone, striking lightly on the panels with his knuckles.

No answer was forthcoming, and, waiting a moment, the old Negro opened the door and held his candle high, standing aside to permit us to pass.

In the faint, yellow light of half a dozen candles flickering in wall-sconces we descried a girl lying still as death upon the tufted mattress of a high, four-poster bed. Her eyes were closed, her hands were folded lightly on her breast, and on her skin was the ghastly, whitish-yellow pallor of the moribund or newly dead. Small gouty drops of perspiration lay like tiny beads of limpid oil upon her forehead; a little ridge of glistening globules of moisture had formed upon her upper lip.

"My God, she's dead!" cried Mr. Goodlowe, but:

"Not dead, but sleeping—though not naturally," de Grandin answered. "See, her breast is moving, though her respirations are most faint. Attend her, Friend Trowbridge."

Placing his finger-tip against her left radial artery, he consulted the dial of the diminutive gold watch strapped against the under side of his left wrist, motioning me to take her right-hand pulse.

"Great heavens!" I exclaimed as I felt the feeble throbbing in her wrist. "Why, her heart's beating a hundred and twenty, and——"

"I make it a hundred and twenty-six," he interrupted. "What diagnosis would you make from the other signs, my friend?"

"Well," I considered, lifting the girl's eyelids and holding a candle to her face, "we have pallor of the body surface, subnormal temperature, rapid pulse and weak respiration, together with dilated pupils—acute coma induced by anemia of the brain, I'd say."

"Consequent on cardiac insufficiency?" he added.

"That's my guess."

"Perfectly. Mine also," he agreed.

"A little brandy ought to help," I hazarded, but:

"Undoubtedly," he acquiesced, "but we shall not administer it.

"*Monsieur*," he turned to Mr. Goodlowe, "will you be good enough to leave us? We must take measures for *Mademoiselle's* recovery, and"—he raised his brows and shoulders in a shrug—"it would be better if you left us with the patient."

Obediently, our host turned from the room, and as the door swung to upon him:

"*Dépêchez, mon vieux!*" de Grandin told the butler, who, at his signaled order, had remained in the room. "Cords, if you please; make haste!"

Lengths of linen were snatched down from the windows, quickly twisted into bandages, then bound about the girl's wrists and ankles, finally knotted to the uprights of the bed. Last of all, several bands were passed completely around her body and the bed, binding her as fast upon the mattress as ever criminal was lashed upon the rack.

"Whatever are you doing?" I asked him angrily as he knotted a final cincture. "This is positively inhuman, man."

"I fear it is," he admitted; then, turning to the butler:

"Summon your wife to stand guard, *mon brave*, and bid her call us instantly if *Mademoiselle* awakes and struggles to be free. You understand?"

"*Parfaitement, M'sieu,*" returned the other.

"What the deuce does it mean?" I demanded as we descended the stairs. "First you interrogate that servant in some outlandish gibberish; then you lash that poor, sick girl to her bed, as though she were a violent maniac—that's the

damnedest treatment for anemic coma I ever saw! Now——"

"*Cordieu*, my friend, unless I am much more mistaken than I think, that is the damnedest anemic coma that I ever saw, as well!" he broke in. "Anon I shall explain, but—ah, here is the good *Monsieur Goodlowe*; there are things which he can tell us, too." We entered the library where Mr. Goodlowe paced furiously before the fireless fireplace, a long cigar, unlighted, in his mouth.

"There you are!" he barked as we entered the room. "How's Nancy?"

De Grandin shook his head despondently. "She is not so good, *Monsieur*," he answered sadly. "We have done what we could for her at present, and the butler's wife sits watching by her bed; meanwhile, we should like to ask you several things, if you will kindly answer."

"Well?" Goodlowe challenged.

"How comes it that *Monsieur* your brother had servants from the French West Indies in his service, rather than Negroes from his native state?"

"I don't see that has any bearing on the case," our host objected, "but if you're bound to have the family pedigree——"

"Oh, yes, that would be most helpful," de Grandin assured him with a smile.

THE other eyed him narrowly, seeking to determine whether he spoke ironically, and at length:

"Like most Kentuckians, our family came from Virginia," he returned. "Greene Clarke, our maternal great-grandfather, was a ship-owner in Norfolk, trading principally with the West Indies—it was easier to import sugar from Saint Domingue, as they called it then, than to bring it through the Gulf from Louisiana; so he did a thriving trade with the islands. Eventually, he ac-

quired considerable land holdings in Haiti, and put a younger brother in charge as overseer. The place was overrun and burned when the Blacks revolted, but our great-granduncle escaped and later, when Christophe set up stable government, the family re-acquired the lands and farmed them until the Civil War. The Virginia branch of the family always kept up interest in the West Indian trade, and Clarke, in his younger days, spent considerable time in both Haiti and Martinique. It was on one of his sojourns in Port au Prince that he acquired Julius and Marie as household servants. They came with him to the States and were in his service more than forty years. They'll not be here much longer, though. I don't like West Indian niggers' impudent ways, and I'm going to give 'em the boot as soon as I can get a couple of our servants up here."

De Grandin nodded thoughtfully; then:

"You have no record of your ancestor's activities in Haiti before the Blacks' revolt?" he asked.

"No," Mr. Goodlowe answered shortly.

"Ah? A pity, *Monsieur*. Perhaps we might find in that some explanation of the so strange deaths which seem to curse this house. However—but let it pass for the present; we must seek our explanation elsewhere, it would seem."

He busied himself lighting a cigarette, then turned once more to Mr. Goodlowe. "Captain Chenevert should be here shortly," he announced. "It might be well if you accompany him when he leaves, *Monsieur*. Unless I misread the signs, the malign genius which presides over this most unfortunate house is ready for another manifestation, and you are in all probability the intended victim. We may foil it and learn something which will enable us to thwart it permanently in

your absence; if you remain—*eh bien*, whõ can say what may occur?"

Mr. Goodlowe eyed him coldly. "You're suggesting that I run away?" he asked.

"Ah, no; by no means, *Monsieur*, merely that you make a temporary retreat while Friend Trowbridge and I fight a rear-guard engagement. You can not help us by your presence. Indeed, your being here may prove a great embarrassment."

"I'm sorry, sir," our host returned, "but I can't agree to any such arrangement. I've called you in to solve this case at Captain Chenevert's suggestion, and against my own best judgment. If I'm to pay you, I must at least demand that you put me in possession of all facts you know—or think you know. Thus far your methods have been more those of the fortune-telling charlatan than the detective, and I must say I'm not impressed with them. Either you will handle the case under my direction, or I will write you a check for services to date and call another into consultation."

De Grandin's little, round blue eyes flashed ominously, with a light like winter ice reflecting January moonlight. His thin lips drew away from his small, white teeth in a smile which held no mirth, but he controlled his fiery temper by an almost superhuman effort. "This case intrigues me, *Monsieur Goodlowe*," he answered stiffly. "It is not on your account that I hesitate to leave it; but rather out of love for mastering a mystery. Be so good as to listen attentively, if you please:

"To begin, when first I saw your butler I thought I recognized in him the earmarks of the Haitien. Also, I noted that he bore a saucer filled with wheat when he responded to our knock. Now, in Haiti, as I know from personal experience, the natives have a superstition

that when an unclean spirit comes to haunt a place, protection can be had if they will scatter grains of rice or wheat before the door. The visitant must pause to count the scattered grain, they think, and accordingly daylight will surprise him before the tale is told. The *Quasbee*, or Haitien blacks, refer indifferently to various unpleasant members of the spirit world as '*loogaroo*,' which is, of course, a corruption of *loup-garou*, or werewolf.

"Very well. I drew my bow at random and addressed your man in Haitien *patois*, and instantly he answered me. He told me much, for one who hears himself addressed in the language of his childhood in a strange land will throw away reserve and give full vent to his emotions. He told me, by example, that he was in the act of scattering grain about the house, and especially upon the stairs and in the passage leading to Mademoiselle Nancy's room, because he was convinced that the *loogaroo* which had already made 'way with three members of your family was planning a fresh outrage. For why? Because, by blue, on each occasion previously the electric light inside the house had died for no apparent reason, and all outside connections by telephone had similarly died. Captain Chenevert, who had made investigation of the deaths, noted this coincidence, also, and remarked upon it. He is now gone to report the failure of your light and telephone to the proper parties.

"But something else, of even greater interest, your butler disclosed. The day before her father's death, the day *Monsieur Derringer* died so strangely, and immediately preceding Madame Derringer's so tragic death, Mademoiselle Nancy exhibited just such signs of illness as she showed today—dullness, listlessness, headache; finally a heavy stupor almost simulating death, from which no one

could rouse her. Never before—and he has known her all her life—had she shown signs of such an illness. Indeed, she was always a most healthy young lady, not subject to the customary feminine ills of headache, biliousness or stomach-sickness. *Alors*, he was of opinion that these sinking-fits of hers were connected in some manner with the advent of the *logaroo*.

"I must admit I think he reasoned wisely. When Doctor Trowbridge and I examined her, your niece showed every sign of anemic coma; this in a lady who has always been most healthy, is deserving of remark; especially since she shows no evidence of cardiac deficiency intervening these strange seizures. You comprehend?"

"I comprehend you've let yourself be fooled by the bestial superstitions of an ignorant savage!" Mr. Goodlowe burst out disgustedly. "If this is a sample of the way you solve your cases, sir, I think we'd better call it quits and——"

"*M'sieu, M'sieu l' Médecin, dépêchez-vous—Ma'mselle est——*" the urgent whisper cut him short as an elderly Negress, deeply wrinkled but still possessing the fine figure and graceful carriage of the West Indian black, appeared at the library door.

"We come—at once, immediately, right away!" de Grandin answered, turning unceremoniously from Mr. Goodlowe and hastening up the stairs.

"Detain him without, my friend," he whispered with a nod toward Goodlowe as we reached the sickroom door. "Should he find her bound, he may ask questions, even become violent, and I shall be too busy to stop my work and slay him."

Accordingly, I blocked the bedroom door as best I could while the little Frenchman and the Negress hastened to the bed.

NANCY GOODLOWE was stirring, but not conscious. Rather, her movements were the writhings of delirium, and, like a patient in delirium, she seemed endowed with supernatural strength; for the strong bandages which bound her wrists had been thrown off, and the surcingle of cotton which held her to the bed was burst asunder.

"*Morbleu*, what in Satan's name is this——" began de Grandin, then, abruptly:

"But, *gloire de Dieu*, what is that?"

He brushed past the bed, leant out the window and pointed toward the patch of smooth-shaven lawn before the loggia red-brick-and-iron summer-house. What seemed to be a jet of vapor rising from a broken steam-pipe was whirling like a dust-swirl above the grass plot, rotating still more swiftly; at length concreting and solidifying. An optical illusion it doubtless was, but I could have sworn the gyrating haze took form and substance as I gazed and became, beneath my very eyes, the image of a *great white snake*.

"Here, damn you, what d'ye mean by this?" Mr. Goodlowe burst past me into the girl's bedroom and snatched furiously at the cotton bindings which half restrained his niece upon the bed. "By gad, sir, I'll teach you to treat gentlewomen this way!" he stormed; then, surprizingly:

"*Ah?*"

Raising furious eyes to de Grandin as the little Frenchman peered out the window, he had caught sight of the ghastly, whirling wreath of vapor on the lawn.

The thing by now had definitely assumed a serpent's form. And it was a moving serpent; a serpent which circumvolved in a giant ring, rearing and swaying its ugly, wedge-shaped head from side to side; a serpent which made

loops and figure-eights upon the moonlit lawn, and described great, flowing triangles which melted into squares and hexagons and undulating, coiling mounds, an ever-changing, never-hastening, never-resting figure of activity.

"Ab?" Mr. Goodlowe repeated, horror and blank incredulity in the querying monosyllable.

We saw his face. The eyes were staring, glassy, void of all expression as the eyes of one new-dead; his jaw hung down and his mouth was open, round and expressionless as the entrance to a small, empty cave. His breath sounded stertorously, like a snore. For a moment he stood thus; then, hands held before him like a sleep-walker, or a person playing blind man's buff, he turned, shambled down the hall and began a slow and halting descent of the stairs.

"*Loogaroo—loogaroo—Ayida Oued-do!*" gibbered the Negro servant, her horror-glazed eyes rolling in a very æstrus of fear as she gazed alternately at the whirling thing upon the lawn, the struggling girl upon the bed, and Jules de Grandin.

"Silence!" cried the Frenchman; then, clearing the space between the window and the bed at a single leap: "Mademoiselle Nancy, awake!" he ordered, seizing the girl's shoulders and shaking her furiously from side to side as a terrier might shake a rat.

For a moment they struggled thus, seemingly engaged in a wrestling bout, but finally the girl's dark eyes opened and she looked him in the face.

De Grandin's little, round blue eyes seemed starting from his head, the veins along his temple swelled and throbbed as he leant abruptly forward till his nose and that of Nancy Goodlowe nearly touched. "Attend me—carefully!" he commanded in a voice which sounded like a hiss.

"You will go back to sleep, a simple, restful, natural sleep, and both your waking and subconscious minds shall be at rest. You will awake when daylight comes, and not before. I, Jules de Grandin, order it. You comprehend? Sleep—sleep—sleep!" he finished in a low and crooning voice, swaying the girl's shoulders to and fro, as one might rock a restless child.

Slowly she sank back on her pillow, composed herself as quietly as a tired little girl might do, and in a moment seemed to fall asleep, all traces of the delirium which had held her in its grip a moment since departed.

"Oh!" Involuntarily the exclamation broke from me. The writhing, twisting serpent on the lawn had vanished, and I could not rightly say whether what remained was a wraith of whirling vapor or a spot of bright moonlight which seemed to move as the shadow of some wind-blown bough swept over it.

"Come, my friend," de Grandin ordered sharply, snatching at my elbow as he dashed from the room. "We must find him."

Mr. Goodlowe had left the house and crossed the intervening lawn by the time we reached the door. As we came up with him he stood a few feet from the place where we had seen the great white snake, staring about him with puzzled, wide, lack-luster eyes.

"Wha—what am I doing here?" he faltered as the Frenchman caught him by the shoulder and administered a gentle shake.

"Do not you remember, *Monsieur?*" de Grandin asked. "Do you not recall the thing you saw out here—the thing which beckoned you to come, and whose summons you obeyed?"

Goodlowe looked vaguely from one of us to the other. "I—I seem to have some

recollection of some one—something—which called me out," he answered in a sleepy, faltering voice, "but who it was or what it was I can't remember."

"No?" de Grandin returned curiously. "*Eb bien*, perhaps it is as well, or better. You are tired, *Monsieur*. I think you would do better if you slept, as we should, also. Tomorrow we shall talk about this case at length."

Docile as a sleepy child, our fiery-tempered host permitted us to lead him to the house and assist him into bed.

De Grandin made a final tour of inspection, noted the light, natural sleep in which Nancy Goodlowe lay, then followed Julius to the room assigned us. Clad in lavender pajamas, mauve dressing-gown and purple kid slippers, he sat beside the window, gazing moodily out upon the moonlit lawn, lighting one vile-smelling French cigarette from the glowing stump of another, muttering unintelligibly to himself from time to time, like one who makes a mental calculation of a puzzling problem in arithmetic.

"For goodness' sake, aren't you ever coming to bed?" I asked crossly. "I'm sleepy, and——"

"Then go to sleep, by all means," he shot back sharply. "Sleep, animal; rest yourself in swinish ease. Me, I am a sentient human being; I have thoughts to think and plans to make. When I have done, then I shall rest. Until that time you will oblige me by not obtruding yourself upon my meditations."

"Oh, all right," I answered, turning on my side and taking him at his word.

GORDON GOODLOWE was in a chastened mood next morning. While he had no clear recollections of the previous evening's events, there was a haunting fear at the back of his mind, a sort of nameless terror which dogged his foot-

steps, yet evaded his memory as fancied images half seen from the tail of the eye dissolve into nothingness when we turn about and seek to see them by direct glance.

Miss Goodlowe remained in bed, apparently suffering from no specific illness, but in a greatly weakened state. "I think she'll be all right, with rest and a restricted diet," I ventured as de Grandin and I left her room, but:

"*Non*, my friend, you have wrong," the little Frenchman told me with a vigorous shake of his head. "Tonight, unless I much mistake my diagnosis, she will have another seizure, and——"

"You'll hypnotize her again?" I interjected.

"By blue, not by any means!" he broke in. "Me, this evening I shall be a spectator at the show, though not, perhaps, an idle one. No, on second thought I am decided I shall be quite active. Yes, certainly."

When Captain Chenevert arrived with assurances that "trouble-shooters" of the electric and telephone companies could find no mechanical reason for the failure of service in the Goodlowe house, and when, by trial, we found both electric light and telephone in perfect working order, de Grandin showed no surprise. Rather, he seemed to take the mystery of alternating failure and function in the service as confirmation of some theory he had formed.

Shortly after noon, accompanied by Julius, the butler, he made a hurried trip in Captain Chenevert's police car, returning before dinner time with a covered tin pail filled with something which splashed as he bore it to the kitchen and put it near the stove, where it would remain warm, but not become really hot.

I passed a rather dismal day. Mr. Goodlowe was in such a state of nervous

fear that he seemed incapable of carrying on a conversation; Miss Goodlowe lay quietly in bed, refusing food, and answering questions with a gentle patience which reminded me of a convalescent child; de Grandin bustled about importantly, now in conference with Captain Chenevert, now with Julius, now delving into some old family records which he found in the library. By dinner time I was in a state where I would have welcomed a game of cribbage as a pastime.

Our host excused himself shortly after dinner, and the young police captain, de Grandin and I were left alone with cigars and liqueurs on the terrace. "You're sure you've got some dope on it?" Chenevert asked suddenly, flinging his cigar away with nervous petulance, then selecting another from the humidor and lighting it with quick, spasmodic puffs.

"None but the feeble-minded are sure, of that I am indubitably sure," de Grandin answered, "but I think I have at least sufficient evidence to support an hypothesis.

"This house, I found by inquiries which I made in the city, was largely built of second-hand materials; the owner wished that weathered bricks be used, and considerable search was necessary to procure materials of a proper age and quality. The brick and iron work of which that little summer-house is built, by example, came from a demolished structure on the outskirts of Newark, a house once used to restrain the criminally insane. You apprehend the significance of that?"

THE young trooper regarded him quizzically a moment, as though seeking to determine whether he were serious. At length: "No, I can't say I do," he confessed.

De Grandin turned interrogatively to

me. "Do you, by any happy chance, see a connection in it?" he demanded.

"No," I answered. "I can't see it makes any difference whether the brick and iron came from an insane asylum or a chicken-coop."

He nodded, a trifle sadly. "One should have anticipated some such answer from you," he replied. Then: "Attend me, carefully, both of you," he ordered. "We must begin with the premise that, though it is incapable of being seen or weighed or measured, a thought is a thing, no less than is a pound of butter, a flitch of bacon or a dozen sacerdotal candles. You follow me? *Bien. Bien*, whether you do or not.

"A madhouse is far from being a pleasant place. There human wreckage—the mentally dead whose bodies unfortunately survive them—is brought to be disposed of, imprisoned, cabined, cribbed, confined. Often, those we call 'criminally insane' are very criminal, indeed, though not medically insane. Their madness consists in their having given themselves, body, soul and spirit, to abysmal and unutterable evilness. Very well. From such there emanates—we do not know quite how, though psychical experiment has proved it to be a fact—an active, potent force of evil, and inanimate things, like stone and wood, brick and iron, are capable of absorbing it. Oh, yes.

"I have seen spirit-manifestations evoked from a chip taken from a rafter in a house where great wickedness had been indulged in; I have seen dreams of old, dead, evil days evoked in sensitive subjects doing no more than sleep in the room where some bit of torture-paraphernalia from the prisons of the Spanish Inquisition in Toledo had been placed all unbeknown to them. Yes. There, then, is our starting-point.

"What then? Last night three people saw a most remarkable manifestation on that lawn yonder. I saw it; the Negro butler's wife beheld it; even Doctor Trowbridge, who most certainly can not be called a psychic, saw it. *Voilà*; that thing was no figment of the fancy, it was there. Of course. Whether Monsieur Goodlowe saw it, in the same sense that we beheld it, we can not say. He has no recollection of it. But certainly he saw something—something which caused him to leave his house and walk across the grass plot exactly as did his brother, his kinsman and his female relative, presumably. Had I not been quick, I think we should have seen another tragedy, there, before our very eyes."

"I say," I interrupted, "just what was it you did last night, de Grandin? I have to admit, however much my better judgment tells me it was an optical illusion, that I saw—or thought I saw—a great snake materialize on the lawn; then, when you hypnotized Miss Goodlowe, the thing seemed to fade away. Did she have any connection with—"

"*Ab bab*," he broke in with a nod. "Has the lens any connection with the burning of the concentrated sunlight? By damn-it, I think yes!"

"How——" I began, but:

"You have seen the working of the *verre ardent*—the how do you call him?—burning-glass? Yes?"

"Of course," Chenevert and I replied in chorus.

"Very good." He nodded solemnly. "Very, exceedingly good. All about us, invisible, impalpable, but all about us, none the less, are spiritual forces, some good, some evil, all emanations of generations of men who have lived and struggled, loved, hated and died long years ago. But this great force is, in the main, so widespread, so lacking in

cohesion, that it can not manifest itself physically, except upon the rarest of occasions. At times it can make itself faintly felt, as sunshine can impart a coat of tan to the skin, but to inflict a quick and powerful burn the sunlight must be bound together in a single intense beam by the aid of the burning-lens. Just so with these spiritual forces, whether they be good or naughty. They are here already, as sunlight is abundant on a sunny day, but it needs the services of a medium to bring these forces into focus so they can become physically apparent. Yes; assuredly.

"Now, not all mediums reside in the stuffy back rooms of darkened houses, eking out precarious livelihoods by the contributions of the credulous who desire to consult the spirits of departed relatives. *Hélas*, no. There are many unconscious mediums who all innocently give force and potency to some evil spirit-entity which but for them would be unable to manifest itself at all. Such mediums are most often neurotic young women. They seem ideally fitted to supply the psychoplasm needed by the spirit for materialization, whether that manifestation be for the harmless purpose of ringing a tambourine, tooting a toy trumpet or—committing bloody murder.

"This, of course, I knew already. Also, I knew that on previous occasions when members of the Goodlowe family had been so tragically killed, Mademoiselle Nancy had suffered from strange seizures such as that she had last night. 'It are a wicked thing—a spirit or an elemental—draining the physical energy from her in the form of psychoplasm with which to make itself material,' I tell me. Accordingly, when I see that serpent forming out of nothingness, I turn at once to Mademoiselle Nancy as its source of power.

"She is unconscious, but her subcon-

scious mind is active; she seeks to burst the bonds I put upon her, to what end? One wonders. But one thing I can do if only I can succeed in making her conscious for one little so small minute. I can hypnotize her—put her in a natural sleep in which the unconscious giving off of physio-psychical power will be halted. And so I wake her, though I have great trouble doing it. I wake her and then I bid her sleep once more. She sleeps, and the building up of that so evil white snake-thing comes abruptly to a halt. *Voilà. Très bien.*"

"What's next?" Chenevert demanded.

"First, a further test of that which summoned Monsieur Goodlowe from the house last night," the little Frenchman answered. "I have taken means which will, I think, insure its harmlessness; but I am curious to see how it goes about its work. That done, we shall destroy the summer-house from which the evil emanation seems to come, and that accomplished, we shall seek for causes of these so strange deaths and for the source of the curse which seems to overhang this family. Logicians reason *a posteriori*; we shall seek to visualize in the same manner, from ultimate effect to primal cause. You understand?"

Captain Chenevert shook his head, but held his peace.

"I'm hanged if I do," I declared.

"Very well, you shall, in time," he promised with a smile, "but you shall not be hanged. You are too good a friend to lose by hanging, dear old silly Trowbridge of my heart."

IT MUST have been near midnight when the Negro butler ran out on the terrace to summon us. "*Mamselle* is restless, *M'sieu l' Médecin*," he announced. "My wife is with her, but——"

"Very good," de Grandin cried. "Is all in readiness?"

"*Oui, M'sieu.*"

"*Bon.* Let us go." He hastened toward the house, and:

"Look upon the lawn, my friends," he bade Chenevert and me. "What is it that you see, if anything?"

We turned toward the plot of grass before the summer-house, and I felt a prickling of my scalp and, despite mid-summer heat, a sudden chill ran down my neck and back. A jet of whitish vapor was rising from the grass, and as we looked, it began to weave and wind and twist, simulating the contortions of a rearing serpent.

"Good God!" cried Captain Chenevert, reaching for his pistol, but:

"Desist!" de Grandin warned. "I have that ready which will prove more efficacious than your shot, *mon capitaine*, and I do not wish that you should make unnecessary noise. It is better that we do our work in silence. Await me here, but on no account go near it!"

In a moment he and Julius returned, each armed with what looked like those large tin atomizers used to spray insecticide on rose bushes.

They charged across the strip of lawn, their tin weapons held before them as soldiers might hold automatic rifles, deployed while still some distance from the whirling mist, then turned and faced each other, de Grandin running in a circle from left to right, the Negro circling toward him from right to left. Each aimed his atomizer at the earth and we heard the *swish-swish* of the things as they worked the plungers furiously. Although I could not tell what the "guns" held, it seemed to me they sprayed some dark-hued liquid on the grass.

"*Fini!*" the little Frenchman cried as he and Julius completed their circuit. "Now—*ha? Ab-ha-ha?*" He seemed to

freeze and stiffen in his tracks as he looked toward the house.

Chenevert and I turned, too, and I heard the captain give a muffled exclamation, even as I caught my breath in surprise. Walking with an undulating, swaying motion which was almost like that of a dance, came Nancy Goodlowe. Her flimsy nightdress fluttered lightly in the faint night breeze. In the moonlight, falling fine as dusted silver powder through the windbreak of Lombardy poplars, she was so wraith-like and ephemeral as to seem a phantom of the imagination. Her arms were raised before her, and bent sharply at the elbows, and again at the wrists, so that her hands thrust forward, for all the world like twin snake-heads, poised to strike. Abruptly she came to a halt, half turned toward the house from which she had come, as though awaiting the advent of a delayed companion, then, apparently reassured, began describing a wide circle on the lawn in a gliding, side-stepping dance. I saw her face distinctly as a moonbeam flashed upon it, a tense drawn face, devoid of all expression as a countenance carved of wood, eyes wide, staring and expressionless, mouth retracted so that a hard, white line of teeth showed behind the soft red line of lips.

And now the drawn, sardonically smiling lips were moving, and a soft contralto chant rose upon the midnight stillness. The words I could not understand. Vaguely, they reminded me of French; yet they were not truly French, resembling that language only as the jargon of a Yorkshireman or the *patois* of our cane-brake Negroes simulated the English of an educated Londoner. One word, or phrase, alone I understood: "*Ayida Oueddo—Ayida Oueddo!*" intermixed with connectives of unintelligible gibberish which meant nothing to me.

"Quick, my friends, seize him, lay hands on him, hold him where he is!" de Grandin's whispered order cut through Nancy Goodlowe's chanting invocation, as he motioned us to turn around.

As we swung round we beheld Gordon Goodlowe. Like a wanderer in a dream he came, the night air stirring through his tousled hair, his eyes fast-set and staring with a look of blank, half-conscious horror. His mouth was partly opened, and from the corners there drooled two little streams of spittle. He was like a paralytic moving numbly in a state of quarter-consciousness, a condemned man marching to the gallows in an anesthesia of dread, volition gone from out his limbs and muscles working only through some reflex process entirely divorced from conscious guidance.

"Do not address him, only hold him fast!" de Grandin ordered sharply. "On no account permit him to overstep the line we drew; the other may not come to him; see you that he goes not to it!"

Obediently, Chenevert and I seized Goodlowe by the elbows and stopped him in his stride. He did not struggle with us, nor, indeed, did he seem aware we held him, but we could feel the dead-weight of his body as he leaned toward the twisting, writhing thing inside the circle which de Grandin and Black Julius had marked upon the lawn.

The mist had now solidified. It had become a great, white snake which turned and slid its folds like melting quicksilver, one upon another, rearing up its dreadful head, opening its fang-barbed mouth and hissing with a low, continuous sibilation like the sound of steam escaping from a broken pipe.

I SHRANK away as the awful thing drew itself into a knot and drove its scale-armored head forward in a sudden lunge

toward us, but terror gave way to astonishment as I saw the driving battering-ram of scale and muscle stopped in mid-air, as though it had collided with an invisible, but impenetrable, barrier. Time and again the monster struck at us, hissing with a sort of venomous fury as each drive fell futilely against the unseen wall which seemed to stand between ourselves and it. Then——

From the little red-brick summer-house there came a sudden spurt of flame. Unseen by us, de Grandin and the butler had drenched the place with gasoline until the very bricks reeked with it. Now, as they poured a fresh supply of petrol out, they set a match to it, and the orange flames leaped upward hungrily.

A startling change came over the imprisoned reptile. No longer did it seek to strike at Chenevert and Goodlowe and me; rather, its efforts seemed directed to regaining the protection of the blazing summer-house. But the invisible barrier which had held it back from us restrained its efforts to retreat. It struck and struck again, helplessly, at the empty air, then began to twist and writhe in a new fashion, contorting on itself, swaying its head, shuddering its coils, as though in unsupported agony. And as the lapping tongues of flame leaped higher, the thing began to shrink and shrivel, as though the fire which burnt the roof and cracked the bricks and bent the iron grilles of the little house with its fierce heat, were consuming it.

It was a fearsome sight. To see a twenty-foot snake burned alive—consumed to crisping ashes—would have been enough to horrify us almost past endurance, but to see that mighty, writhing mass of bone and scale and iron-hard muscle cremated by a fire which blazed a half a hundred feet away—so far away that we could scarcely feel the

least faint breath of heat—that was adding stark impossibility to nauseating horror.

"*Fini—triomphe—achevé—parfait!*" de Grandin cried triumphantly as he and Julius capered round the blazing summer-house like savages dancing round some sacrificial bonfire. "You were strong and cunning, *Monsieur le Revenant*, but Jules de Grandin, he was stronger and more cunning. *Ha*, but he tricked you cleverly, that one; he made a mock of all your wicked, vengeful plans; he caught you in a trap where you thought no trap was; he snared you in a snare from which there was no exit; he burned you in the fire and made you into nothing—he has consumed you utterly and finally!" Abruptly he ceased his frenzied dance and insane chant of triumph, and:

"See to *Mademoiselle, mon brave*," he ordered Julius. "I think that she will rest the clock around when your wife has put her in her bed. Tomorrow we shall see the last act of this tragedy and then—*eh bien*, the curtain always falls upon the finished play, *n'est-ce-pas?*"

CANDLES burned with a soft, faintly shifting light in the tall seven-cupped candelabrum which graced the center of the polished mahogany table in the Goodlowe drawing-room. Full to repletion at the end of an exceptionally good dinner, Jules de Grandin was at once affable and talkative. "What was it you and Julius sprayed on the lawn last night?" I had asked as Gordon Goodlowe, his niece, Captain Chenevert and I found seats in the parlor and Julius, quiet-footed as a cat, brought in coffee and liqueurs before setting the candles alight and drawing the gold-mesh curtains at the tall French windows.

The little Frenchman's small blue eyes twinkled roguishly as he turned his gaze

on me and brushed a wholly imaginary fleck of dust from the sleeve of his immaculate white-linen mess-jacket. "Chicken blood," he answered with an elfin grin.

"*What?*" Chenevert and I demanded in incredulous chorus.

"*Précisément*, your hearing is quite altogether perfect, my friends!" he answered. "Chicken blood—*sang des poulets*, you comprehend?"

"But——" I began, when he checked me with an upraised hand.

"Did you ever stop to think why there are statues of the *blesséd* saints upon the altars of the Catholic church?" he asked.

"Why there are—what the deuce are you driving at?" I demanded.

He drained his cup of brandied coffee almost at a gulp, and patted the needle-sharp ends of his diminutive wheat-blond mustache with affectionate concern. "The old schoolmen knew nothing of what we call 'the new psychology' today," he answered with a chuckle, "but they had as good a working knowledge of it as any of our present-day professors. Consider: In the laboratory we employ rotating mirrors to induce a state of quick hypnosis when we would make experiments; before that we were wont to use gazing-crystals, for very long ago it was found that the person concentrating his attention on a small, bright object was an excellent candidate for hypnotism. Very good, but that is not all. If one stares fixedly at anything, whatever be its size, he soon detects a feeling of detachment stealing over him—I have seen soldiers standing at attention become unconscious and fall fainting to the ground because they focused their gaze upon some object before them, and held it there too long.

"Very well, then. The olden fathers of the Church discovered, not by psycho-

logical formulæ, but empirically, that an image placed upon a shrine gave the kneeling worshipper something on which to concentrate his gaze and induced a state of mild semi-hypnosis which made it possible to exclude extrinsic thoughts. It enabled the worshipper, in fine, to co-ordinate his thought with the wording of his prayer—made the act of praying less like indulging in a conversation with himself. You apprehend? Good. The underlying psychology of the thing the fathers did not know, but they proved by successful experiment that the images fulfilled this important office.

"Similarly: In darkest Africa, where the Voodoo rites of the West Indies had their birth, worshippers of the unclean gods typified by the snake discovered that the blood of fowls, especially chickens, was a potent talisman against their deities, which might otherwise burst the boundaries of control. Every Voodoo rite, whatever its nature, is accompanied by the sacrifice of a fowl, preferably a rooster, and this blood is scattered in a circle *between the worshippers and the altar of their gods*. Why this is we do not know; we only know it is. But upon some ancient day, so long ago that no one knows its date, it was undoubtedly discovered that the serpent-god of the Voodoo men could be controlled by spreading warm chicken blood across his path. This was a secret which the Haitien Blacks brought with them out of Africa.

"Very good. When Mademoiselle Nancy struggled on her bed the night we came, and we beheld something taking shape upon the lawn, something with a serpent's form, which drew Monsieur Goodlowe from the house by some subtle fascination, what was it that Julius' wife cried out? '*Ayida Oueddo!*'"

"Now that, my friends, is the designation of the wife and consort of *Dam-*

ballab Oneddo, the great serpent-god of the Voodoo men. She is a sort of Juno in their pantheon, second in power only to her dreadful husband, who in turn, of course, is their Jove.

"*Alors*, her involuntary cry gave me to think. I felt my way, step by careful step, like a blind man tap-tapping with his stick down some unfamiliar street. If that which we saw materialize on the lawn were indeed the form of *Ayida Oneddo*, then the charms used by the Haitien Voodoo men should prove effective here. It is the logic, *n'est-ce pas?*"

"Accordingly, I procured a plentiful supply of chickens' blood from one who deals in poultry, and had it ready for emergency last night. The 'reason why' I can not tell you; I only know that I applied such knowledge as I had to conditions as I found them. I took the chance; I gambled and I won. *Voilà tout!*"

"But why'd you burn the summer-house?" Chenevert demanded.

"*Pardieu*, we 'sterilized' it," de Grandin answered. "When we had burned it we put an end to those so evil hauntings which had caused three deaths and nearly caused a fourth. Fire kills all things, my friends: microbes, animals, even wicked spirit manifestations. Tear down a haunted house, and the earth, all soaked in evil emanations of the long-dead wicked, will still give forth its exhalations in the form of what we call 'ghosts' because we lack a better name for them. More: incorporate one little portion of that haunted place in some new building, and the new structure may prove similarly haunted. But if you burn the place—*pouf!* The hauntings and the haunters cease, and cease for ever. The wood or brick or iron of which the haunted house was made acts as a base of operations for the spirit manifestation,

but when it is destroyed by fire, or even superheated, it becomes 'cleansed' in the sense the exorcists use the term, and no longer can it harbor old, unclean and sinful things."

Gordon Goodlowe, no longer skeptical, but frankly interested, put in: "Can you account for the apparition which undoubtedly caused these deaths and almost killed me, Doctor?"

De Grandin pursed his lips as he regarded the glowing end of his cigar intently. "Not altogether," he replied. "Vaguely, as the wearer of a too-tight shoe feels the approach of a storm of rain, I have a feeling that your family's connection with the former French possession of Haiti is involved, but why it should be I do not know.

"However"—he bowed ceremoniously to Nancy Goodlowe—"Mademoiselle your niece has it in her power, I believe, to enlighten us."

"I?" the girl asked incredulously.

"*Précisément, Mademoiselle*. Remember how in each former case you were stricken with a so strange illness, then the serpent-thing appeared. I do not know, of course, but I much suspect that the illnesses were caused by the slow withdrawal of the psycho-physical force which we call psychoplasm in order that it might be absorbed by the evil entity which could not otherwise attain physical force and kill your father and your kinsmen. Therefore, it would seem, you have some—all innocent, I assure you—connection with this so queer business. If that be so, you may remember something which will help us."

"Remember?" the girl burst out. "Why, I've absolutely no recollection of anything. I only know that I've been ill, then lapsed into unconsciousness, and when I woke——"

"Memory is of many kinds, *Made-*

moiselle," de Grandin broke in gently. "There are certain ancestral experiences which, though we may have no conscious knowledge of them, are graven deeply on the records of our subconscious memory. Consider: Have you never, in your travels, come upon some old, historic place, and had a sudden feeling of 'Why, I've been here before'? Consciously, and in this life, you have not, of course; yet you are greatly puzzled by the so strange familiarity of a scene which you are sure you have never seen before. Yes, of course. The explanation is presumed that some ancestor of yours underwent a deep emotional experience at that place. Incidents historically ancestral have made a deep impression on the *family memory*, and when proper stimuli are applied, this group memory will work its way up to the surface, as objects long immersed in water and forgotten will rise to the top if the pond is sufficiently agitated. You comprehend?"

"I—I don't think I do," she answered with a puzzled smile. "Do you mean that something which made a marked impression on my great-great-grandmother, for instance, and of which I'd never heard, might be 'remembered' by me if I were taken to the place where it occurred, or——"

"Precisely, exactly; quite so!" he cut in enthusiastically. "You have it, *Made-moiselle*. In each of us there is some vestige of the past; we are the sum of generations long since dead, even as we are the remote ancestors of generations yet unborn. I do not say that we can do it, but with your consent and assistance, I think it possible that we may probe the past tonight, and learn whence came this curse which has so sorely tried your family. Are you willing?"

"Why, yes, of course, if Uncle Gordon says so."

"You won't hurt her in any way?" asked Mr. Goodlowe.

"Not in the slightest, *Monsieur*; upon my honor. Be very sure of that."

"All right, then, I'll agree," our host returned.

NANCY GOODLOWE seated herself in a big wing chair, hands folded demurely in her lap, head lolling back against the tapestry upholstery. Theretofore I had regarded her as a patient more than a woman—two very different things!—and the realization of her really splendid beauty, her smoldering dark eyes, her strong, white teeth, her alluring bosom and captivating turn of long, lithe limb, struck me suddenly as she lay back in her chair with just enough voluptuousness of attitude to make us realize that she knew she was a woman in a group of men, and as such the center of attraction which was not entirely scientific.

De Grandin took his stand before her, thrust his hand into the left-hand pocket of his cummerbund and drew forth the little gold note-pencil which hung upon the chain to the other end of which was fixed his clinical thermometer. "*Made-moiselle*," he ordered softly, "you will be good enough to look at this—at its very tip, if you please. So? Good. Observe it closely."

Deliberately, as one who beats time to a slow andante tune, he wove the little, gleaming pencil back and forth, describing arabesques and intricate, interlacing figures in the air. Nancy Goodlowe watched him languidly from under long, black eyelashes. Gradually, her attention fixed. We saw her eyes follow every motion of the pencil, finally converge toward each other until it seemed she made some sort of grotesque grimace; then the lids were lowered on her purple eyes, and her head, propped against the

chair-back, moved slightly sidewise as the neck muscles relaxed. Her folded hands fell loosely open on her silk-clad knees, and she was, to all appearances, sleeping peacefully. Presently the regular, light heaving of her bosom and the softly sibilated, even breathing, told us she had, indeed, fallen asleep.

The little Frenchman put his pencil in his pocket, crossed the room on tiptoe and stroked her forehead and temples with a quick, light touch. "*Mademoiselle*," he whispered, "can you hear me?"

"I can hear you," answered Nancy Goodlowe in a soft and drowsy voice.

"*Bien, ma belle*; you will please project your mental eye upon the screen of memory. Go back, *Mademoiselle*, until you reach the time when first your family crossed the trail of *Ayida Oueddo*, and tell us what it is you see. You hear?"

"I hear."

"You will obey?"

"I will try."

For something like five minutes we sat there, our eyes intent upon the sleeping girl. She rested easily in the big chair, her lips a little parted, her light, even breathing so faint that we could scarcely hear it, but no sign or token did she give that she had seen a thing of which she might tell.

"Ask her if——" Gordon Goodlowe began, but:

"*S-s-s-st!*" de Grandin cut him short.

"Be quiet, stupid one, she is—*grand Dieu*, observe!"

As though the room had suddenly become chilled, Nancy Goodlowe's breath was visible. Like the steaming vapor seen upon a freezing winter day, a light, halituous cloud, faintly white, tangible as exhaled smoke from a cigarette, was issuing from between the young girl's parted lips.

I felt a sudden shiver coursing down

my spine, one of those causeless fits of nervous cold which, occurring independently of outside stimuli, make us say "some one is walking over my grave." Then, definitely, the room grew colder. The humid, midsummer heat gave way to a chilliness which seemed to affect the soul as well as the body; a dull, biting hardness of cold suggestive of the limitless freezing eternities of interstellar space. I heard de Grandin's small, strong teeth click together like a pair of castanets, but his gaze remained intently on the sleeping girl and the gray-white mist which floated from her mouth. "Psychoplasm!" I heard him mutter, half believably.

The smoke-like cloud hung suspended in the dead-still atmosphere of the room a moment; then gently, as though wafted by a breeze, it eddied slowly toward the farther wall, hung motionless again, and gradually spread out, like the smoke-screen laid by a military airplane, a drifting, gently billowing, but thoroughly opaque curtain, obscuring the wall from ceiling to baseboard.

It is difficult to describe what happened next. Slowly, in the gray-white wreaths of vapor there seemed to generate little points of bluish light, mere tiny specks of phosphorescence scintillant in the still smoke-screen. Gradually, but with ever-quickenning tempo, they thickened and multiplied till they floated like a maze of dancing midges, spinning their luminant dance until they seemed to coalesce into little nebulae of light as large as glowing cigarette-ends, but burning all the while with an intense, blue, eery light. It was as if, in place of the smoke-vapor, the room was cut in twain by a curtain of solid, opaque moonlight.

Gradually the glowing nebulae changed from their spinning movement to a slow, weaving motion. The luminous curtain

was breaking up, forming a definite pattern of highlights and shadows; a picture, as when the acid etches deeply in the copper of a half-tone plate, was taking form before our eyes—we were looking, as through the proscenium of a theater, into another room.

It was a beautiful apartment, regal in its lavishness as though it formed some portion of a royal palace. Walls were spread with Flemish tapestries, chairs and couches were of carven walnut and dull-red mahogany, rare specimens of faience stood on gilt-legged, marble-topped tables. A massive clock, with dial of beaten silver and hands of hammered gold, swung its jeweled pendulum in a case of polished ebony.

Against a chaste white-marble mantel-piece there leaned a woman in a golden gown. She was a charming creature, scarce larger than a child, with small, delicate features of cameo clarity, soft, wavy hair cut rather short and clustering round her neck and ears in a multitude of tiny ringlets. Her eyes were large and dark, her lips full and red; her teeth, as she smiled sadly, were small and white as bits of shell-pearl. There was, too, a peculiar quality to her skin, not dark with sunburn, nor yet with the olive-darkness of the Spaniard or Italian, but rather golden-pink, in perfect complement to the golden tissue of her high-waisted, sleeveless gown. I looked at her in wonder for a moment; then—

"A quadroon!" I classified her, the product of a mixture of two races, a lovely mixed-caste offspring of miscegenation, more beautiful than ninety of each hundred whites, inheriting only the perfection of form and carriage of black ancestors from the Congo.

A door at the farther end of the apartment opened quickly, but soundlessly, and a young man hastened forward. He

was in military dress, the uniform of a French officer of a hundred and fifty years ago, but the shoulders of his scarlet-faced white coat were decorated with knots of yarn instead of the more customary epaulets. He paused before the girl, booted heels together, and bowed stiffly from the waist above the pale-gold hand she gave him with the charming, precise grace I had so often seen in Jules de Grandin. As he raised her fingers to his lips I saw that like hers, his skin was pale mat gold, and in his dark-brown, wavy hair there was the evidence of African descent.

His lips moved swiftly, but no sound came from them, nor did we hear what she replied. With a start I realized we were witnessing a pantomime, a picture charged with action and swift motion, but silent as the cinematograph before the "movies" became vocal.

What they said we could not tell, but that the young man bore some tidings of importance was evident; that he urged the girl to some course was equally apparent, and that she refused, although with great reluctance and distress, was obvious.

The entrance of the room was darkened momentarily as a third actor strode upon the scene. Clothed in white linen, booted and spurred, a heavy riding-whip in his hand, he fairly swaggered through the choicely furnished room. No quadroon this, no slightest hint of Africa was in his straight, dark hair or sunburned features; this was a member of the dominant, inevitably conquering white race, and, by his features, an American or Englishman. As he drew near the girl and the young officer I realized with a start of quick surprize that the latest comer might have been Gordon Goodlowe at thirty, or perhaps at thirty-five.

He looked with mingled anger and

contempt upon the other two a moment, then shot a quick, imperious question at the woman. The girl made answer, wringing her slim hands in a very ecstasy of pleading, but the man turned from her and again addressed the youthful soldier. What answer he received I could not tell, but that it angered him was certain, for without a second's warning he raised his riding-whip and cut the youth across the face with its plaited thong. Blow after blow he rained upon the unresisting boy, and finally, flinging away the scourge, he resorted to his fists, felled the trembling lad to the floor and kicked him as he might have kicked a dog.

I stared in horror at the exhibition of brutality, but even as I looked the picture was obscured, the moving figures faded in a blur of smoky haze, and once again we found ourselves staring at a wall of idly drifting vapor.

A GAIN the little sparkling lights began to dance within the smoke, and now they spun and wove until another scene took form before us. It was a bedroom into which we looked. A tall, four-poster bedstead stood in the foreground, while bureaus and dressing-tables of carved apple-wood were in the corners. Light curtains of some cotton stuff swayed gently at the windows, and across the darkened chamber a shaft of moonlight cut a swath as clear and bright as a spotlight on a darkened stage.

Beside a toilet table stood the girl we'd seen before, more beautiful and winsome in her nightdress of sheer cambric than she had been when clothed in cloth-of-gold. Sadly she regarded her reflection in the oval, gold-framed mirror as she drew a comb of tortoise-shell through her curling, jet-black ringlets; then, as she saw another image in the glass, she straightened in an attitude of panic fear.

Across her creamy shoulders leered the face of the white man who had thrashed the soldier in the scene we had seen before, and now the shadow gave way to the substance as the man himself half walked, half staggered into the room. That he was drunk was evident; that he had drunk until the latent beast was raised in him was also patent as he lurched across the room unsteadily, grasped the trembling girl in his arms and crushed her to him, bruising her protesting lips with kisses which betrayed no trace of love, but were afire with blazing passion.

The girl's slim form bent like a taut bow in his grasp, as she struggled futilely to break away; then, as her groping hands fluttered across the dressing-table's marble top, we saw her slender fingers close upon a slim, thin-bladed dagger. The fine steel, no thicker than a knitting-needle, gleamed in the ray of moonlight as it flashed in an arc, then fleshed itself in the man's back an inch or so beneath the shoulder-blade.

He let her go and fell back with a grimace of mingled rage and pain, a sardonic expression of surprise spreading on his liquor-flushed and sunburned features. Then, like a pouncing beast of prey, he leaped on her.

As a terrier might shake a rat or a savage tom-cat maul a luckless mouse, he shook her, swaying her slim shoulders till her head bobbed giddily and her short hair waved flag-like back and forth. Protesting helplessly, she opened her mouth, and the force with which he shook her drove her teeth together on her tongue so that blood gushed from her mouth in a bright spate. Now, not content with shaking, he beat her with his doubled fists, striking her to the floor in a little, huddled heap, then raising her again so that he might once more knock her down.

The brutal beating lasted till I would have put my hand before my eyes to shut the cruel sight out, but quickly as it started it was done. A soundless cry came from the girl's tormenter, and he raised his hand across his shoulder, attempting to assuage the flow of blood; then, half turning as he grasped at empty air, he fell face-forward to the floor. We saw a wide, red stain upon the linen of his shirt as he lay there twitching with convulsive spasms.

The white-gauze curtain at the chamber window fluttered with a sudden movement not caused by the midnight breeze, and a slim, brown hand was thrust across the sill. Between the parted folds of curtain we caught a glimpse of a scarred countenance, the lash-marked face of the young soldier whom we had seen the white man beat. For a moment the face was silhouetted against the background of the night; then the slim hand opened, letting fall some object at the trembling girl's bare feet. It was the dried wing of a tropic vampire-bat.

ONCE more the scene dissolved in haze, and once again it formed, and now we looked upon a tableau of midnight jungle. Resinous torches, some thrust into the earth, some fastened to the trunks of palm-trees, cast a glow of ruddy light upon the scene. A cloud of heavy smoke ascended from the torches, forming an inky canopy which blotted out the stars. Seated on the ground in a great circle was a vast concourse of Blacks, men and women in macabre silhouette against the flickering torchlight, some beating wildly on small, double-headed drums, others circling in and out in the mazes of a shuffling, grotesque dance. Lewd, lecherous, lascivious, the postures of the dancers melted quickly from one to another, each more instinct with lechery than the one

preceding. Some semi-naked, some nude as at the instant of their birth, they danced, and we knew that something devilish was toward, for though we could not catch the tempo of the drums, we felt the tension of the atmosphere.

Now the drummers ceased to hammer on their tom-toms; now the dancers ceased to pose and shuffle in the blood-red glare of torchlight; now the crowd gave back, and through the aisle of panting, crowding bronze-black bodies strode a figure. Her head was bound about with scarlet cloth, and a wisp of silk of the same color was wrapped about her loins, leaving the remainder of her body starkly naked, save for a heavy coating of white pigment. Straight from her shoulders, to right and left, she held her arms, and in each hand was clutched by the feet a cock, one white, the other black. With slow, gliding steps she paced on white-smearing, slim bare feet between the lines of crouching figures who watched her avidly in hot-eyed, slabbering passion.

Before a low and box-shaped altar she came to pause, her arms straight out before her. Her head bent low as an aged, wrinkle-bitten Negress leaped from the shadows and waved a gleaming butcher-knife twice in the lambent torchlight, decapitating a cockerel at each sweep of the steel. The fowls' heads dropped to earth and the painted priestess lifted high the sacrifices, their wings fluttering, their cut necks spurting blood. Slowly she began to wheel and turn beneath the gory shower, then faster, faster, faster, until it seemed that she was spinning like a top. We saw her face a moment as, all dewed with blood, she turned it toward the altar. It was the girl whom we'd seen twice before.

And now the wrinkled crone who had slain the cocks leaped monkey-nimble to the box-like altar, snatched frenziedly at the strong lock and hasp which held the

cover down, and flung the lid back from the chest. All eyes, save those of the girl who still spun whirlingly before the sanctuary, were intent upon the box. I watched it, too, wondering what fresh obscenity could be disclosed. Then, with a gasping intake of my breath, I saw.

Slowly, very slowly, there reared from the box the head, the neck, an eight-foot length of body of a great white snake! *Ayida Oueddo*, the White Serpent Goddess, the deity of Voodoo rites! *Ayida Oueddo*, the Goddess of Slaughter—this girl was a vowed priestess of her bloody cult!

THE scene obscured once more, then slowly took new form. We stood within a crowded courtroom. Three judges, two in black, one in red, were seated on the dais; flanked by two gendarmes with muskets and fixed bayonets, the golden girl, now clothed in simple white, with a wide straw hat tied underneath her chin with satin ribbons, stood before the court, while the white man she had stabbed stood forward to accuse her.

We saw him hurl his accusation at her, we saw the spectators turn whispering to each other as the evidence was given; we saw her plead in her defense. At last we saw the center judge, the judge all gowned in red, address the girl, and saw her curtsy deeply as she made reply.

We saw the judges' heads, two capped with black, one crowned with red, bow together as they took counsel of each other; then, though we heard no words, we saw the sentence of the court as the red-robed center figure delivered judgment in two syllables:

"*A mort.*"

Sentence of death was passed, and she took it smilingly, curtsying low as though to thank the judges for a courtesy bestowed.

WE LOOKED upon a public square, so hot beneath the tropic noonday sun that a constant flickering of heat-rays arose from off the kidney stones which formed the pavement. The square was lined with crowding men and women, rich townspeople, wealthy planters and their womenfolk, colored men of every shade from ebony to well-creamed coffee; a battalion of white *infanterie de ligne* in spotless uniforms, a company of mulatto *chasseurs* in their distinctive regalia. In the center, where the sun beat mercilessly, stood a scaffold with an X-shaped frame upon it.

The executioner, a burly, great-paunched brute whose sleeveless shirt disclosed gorilla muscles, was attended by two giant Negroes who looked as though they should have been head-butchers in an abattoir.

A rolling, long tattoo of drums was sounded by the troops' field music as they led her from a house which faced the square, a nun upon her left, a black-frocked priest in shovel hat upon her right, head bowed, lips moving in a ceaseless, mumbled prayer. A youthful *sous-lieutenant*, his boyish mouth hard-set with loathing at the job he had to do, marched before; a squad of sweating gendarmes closed the file.

She was dressed in spotless linen, a straight and simple frock of the fashion which one sees in portraits of Empress Josephine, a wide straw hat bedecked with pink-silk roses and tied coquettishly with wide pink ribbons knotted underneath her chin. Satin shoes laced with narrow ribbons of black velvet round the ankles were upon her little feet, and she held a satin sunshade in her hand.

There was something of *opera bouffe* about it all, this gay parade of wealth and fashion and flashing military uniforms

called out to witness one slim girl walk unconcernedly across the public square.

But the thread of comedy snapped quickly as she reached the scaffold's foot. Closing her frivolous parasol, she gave it to the nun, then turned her back upon the executioner while her golden-flecked brown eyes searched the crowd which waited breathless at the margin of the square. At last she found the object which she sought, a tall, broad-shouldered white man in the costume of a planter, who lolled at ease beneath a palm-tree's shade and watched the spectacle through half-closed eyes. Her hand went out, aiming like a pointed weapon, as she hurled a curse at him. We could not hear the words she spoke, but the slow articulation of the syllables enabled us to read her lips:

"As I am crushed this day, so shall you and yours be crushed by my *ouanga*."

Then they stripped the linen garment off her, tore off her hat and little satin shoes, her silken stockings and daintily embroidered lingerie. Stark, utterly birth-naked, they bound her to the planks which formed a six-foot X and broke her fragile bones with a great bar of iron. We could not hear the piteous cries of agony which came each time the executioner beat on her arms and legs with his heavy iron cudgel, we only saw the velvet, gold-hued flesh give way beneath the blows, the slim and sweetly molded limbs go limp and formless as the bones within them broke beneath the flailings of the bar. At last we saw the writhing, childish mouth contort to a scream of final agonized petition: "*Jésus!*" Then the lovely head fell forward between her outstretched arms, and we knew that it was over. Her sufferings were done, and the justice which demanded that the black or mixed-blood who raised hand against a white must die by torment was appeased.

The scene once more dissolved in swirling, hazy clouds of mist.

THE last scene was the shortest. A maddened mob of shouting, blood-drunk blacks swarmed over the great house where first we saw the girl; they smashed the priceless furniture, hacked and chopped the walls and woodwork in wild, insensate rage, finally set the place afire. And from every hilltop, every smiling valley, every fruitful farm and bountiful plantation, rose the flames of devastation and the cries of slaughtered women, men and children. The blacks were in rebellion. Oppression brought its own reward, and those who killed and maimed and tortured and arrogantly wrought the blood and sweat of others into gold were killed and maimed and tortured, hounded, harassed, hunted in their turn. The reign of France upon Saint Domingue was ended, and that century-long saturnalia of savagery, that amazing mixture of Congo jungle and Paris salon called the Republic of Haiti had begun.

THE candlelight burned softly in Pierre's select speakeasy. The *omlette soufflé* (made with Peychaud bitters) had been washed down with a bottle of tart *vin blanc*; now, cigars aglow and liqueurs poured, we waited for de Grandin to begin.

"*Tiens*, but it is simplicity's own self," he informed us. "Does not the whole thing leap all quickly to the eye? But certainly. Your remote kinsman, Monsieur Goodlowe, the one you told us first established family holdings in the Island of Saint Domingue, which now we know as Haiti, undoubtedly found life wearisome in the tropics. Women of his race were rare—they were mostly married or ugly, or both, and, besides, white women pine away and fail beneath the tropic sun. Not

so with the mixed-breeds, however. They, with tropic sunshine in their veins, flourish like the native vegetation in equatorial lands. Accordingly, *Monsieur l'Ancêtre* did as many others did, and took a quarter-blooded beauty for his wife—without benefit of clergy or of wedding ring. Yes, it has been done before and since, my friends.

"Now, consider the condition on that island at that time: There were 40,000 whites, of all classes, 24,000 mulattoes and lesser mixed-bloods, whom the law declared to be free citizens, and over half a million barbarous black slaves. A very devil of a place. The free mulattoes were the greatest problem. Technically free as any Frenchman, they yet were scorned and hated by their white co-citizens, many of whom shared paternal ancestors with them. The *affranchis*—free mulattoes—were imposed upon in every way. They sat apart in church and at the theater; they were forbidden to wear certain cloths and colors decreed by fashion; their very regiments of soldiers wore a distinctive uniform. Moreover, they were made the butt of hatred in the courts. A white man killing a mulatto might be sentenced to the galleys, or be made to pay a fine. In a very flagrant case, he might even suffer the inconvenience of being put to death, but even then his comfort was infringed upon as little as was possible. He was hanged or shot. At any rate, he died with expedition, and without unnecessary delay. The mulatto who so far forgot himself as to kill or even to attempt the life of a white, was prejudged before he entered court, and inevitably perished miserably upon the torture frame, his bones smashed to splinters by the executioner's iron bar. But no; it was not very pleasant to be a mulatto in Saint Domingue those days.

"Very well, let us start from there.

When I beheld those West Indian Negroes in your service, and heard their talk of *loogaroos*, and when I learned an ancestor of yours had settled in Haiti in the olden days, I determined that the whole thing smelled of Voodoo. You know how Julius and I outwitted that white ghost-snake which had killed your relatives; you know my theory of its appearance on your lawn. Very good; we knew *how* it came there; the *why* was something else. But certainly.

"Mademoiselle Nancy was inextricably mixed up in the case. The evil genius resident in the fiber of the haunted summer-house drew strength and power to work material evil to your family from her. Therefore, having rendered the haunting demon powerless, I decided to have Mademoiselle Nancy act as our spirit-guide and open for us the door to yesterday.

"*Bien*. Accordingly, I asked her to 'remember.' There are many kinds of memory, my friends. Oh, yes. We remember, by example, what happened yesterday, or last year, or when we were very young. Ah-ha, but we remember other things, as well, although we do not know it. Take, for example, the common dream of falling through the air. That is a 'memory,' though the dreamer may never have fallen from a height. Ha, but his remote ancestors who dwelt in trees, they fell, or were in peril of falling, daily. To fall in those days meant injury, and injury meant inability to fight with or escape from an enemy. Therefore, not to fall was the greatest care the race had on its mind. Generations of fearing falls, taking care not to fall, produced a mass memory of the unpleasant results of falling. But naturally. Accordingly, one of today remembers in his dreams the horror of falling from the tree-tops.

"Consider further: Though every one has dreamed he fell—and often wakened from such dreams with the sweat of terror on his brow—we never have this memory of falling while we are awake. Why so? Because our waking, conscious, modern personality knows no such danger. For that matter, we never have the sense of fleeing from a savage animal while we wake, but when we sleep—*grand Diable*, how often, in a nightmare, do we seek to flee some monstrous beast, and suffer horrors at our inability to run. Another racial memory—that of our remote cave-dwelling ancestors caught fast in a morass while some saber-toothed tiger or cave-bear hunted them for dinner! The answer, then, is that when we resign our waking, workaday consciousness to sleep we open the sealed doors to yesterday and all the different personalities the sum of which we are rise up to plague us. We suffer hunger, thirst or shipwreck which our ancestors survived, though we, as individuals never knew these things at all.

"*Bien tout*. These naughty dreams come to us unannounced. We can not call them up, we can not bid them stay away. But what if we are put to sleep hypnotically, then bidden to remember some specific incident in our long chain of ancestral memory? May not the subconscious mind walk straight to the cabinet in which that memory is filed and bring it to the light?

"That is the question which I asked myself when I considered sending Mademoiselle Nancy back along the trail of memory. It was only an experiment; but it was successful, as you saw.

"Mademoiselle Nancy is a psychic. Like the best of the professional mediums, she possesses that rare substance called psychoplasm in great abundance. Once she was *en rapport* with the olden

days she did more than tell us of them, she showed them to us.

"Very well. This young lady of mixed blood whom your ancestor had taken for his light o' love, Monsieur Goodlowe, was also a member of the inner circle of the Voodooists. She was a *mamaloï*, or priestess of the serpent-goddess *Ayida Oueddo*, the consort of the great snake-god *Damballah*.

"Voodoo was a species of Freemasonry from which the whites were barred; many mulattoes and even people with smaller degrees of African blood were active in it. When first we saw her, she was talking with a young mulatto soldier. He had evidently come to summon her to attend a meeting of the Voodooists, and she was unwilling. Perhaps she felt such savage orgies were beneath her; possibly she had put them behind her as a sincere Christian. In any event, she was unwilling to obey the summons and fulfil her duty as a priestess. Then came her master, who was also your ancestor.

"You saw how he abused the messenger of Voodoo. Like all the whites, he hated the dark mysteries of the Voodooists—probably his hatred was akin to that which normal men feel for the snake; one part hate, three parts fear. Most white men thus regarded the secret cult which was, at the end, to knit the slaves and free mulattoes into a single force and sweep the white men from the island.

"Perhaps all would have been well, had not your ancestor become intoxicated that night. But drunk he got, and in his drunken fury he abused her.

"She stabbed him in the back, and perhaps, as much to spite him as for any other reason, determined to act as priestess at the altar of *Ayida Oueddo*. But whatever her decision was, the matter was taken from her hands when the mes-

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The Door to Yesterday

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senger reappeared outside her bedroom window and dropped the bat wing at her feet.

"That bat wing, he was to the Voodooist what the signal of distress is to the Master Mason or the fiery cross is to a member of a Scottish clan. It is a summons which could not be denied. By no means; no, indeed.

"We saw her serve *Ayida Oueddo's* altar, we saw her when she had been apprehended, we saw her led to execution. Ha, and did we not also see her single out your ancestor and hurl her dying curse at him? Did not she say: 'As I am crushed this day, so shall you and yours be crushed by my *ouanga*'? But certainly.

"*Ouanga* in their *patois* is a most elastic term. There is no literal translation for it; vaguely, it means the same as 'medicine' when used by the Red Indian, or 'magic' when spoken of by the Black

African, or 'devil-devil' when used by natives of the South Sea islands. Define it accurately we can not; understand it we can. It is the working, as of a charm, through some unknown superphysical agency.

"*Eh bien*, did it not work? I shall say as much. Three of your family died most horribly, with their bones crushed, even as were that poor young girl's on that dreadful day of execution so long ago. Only by the mercy of heaven and the cleverness of Jules de Grandin are you alive tonight, and not all crushed to death, *Monsieur*."

"But——" I began.

"'But' be grilled upon hell's hottest griddle," cut in Jules de Grandin. "I thirst. *Cordieu*, Sahara at its driest is as the rolling billows of the great Atlantic compared to my poor throat, my friend.

"*Garçon, quatre cognacs—tout vite; s'il vous plait!*"