

# Weird Tales

*The Unique Magazine*



Also a Story  
by GASTON  
LEROUX  
AUTHOR OF  
The PHANTOM  
of the OPERA

MARCH  
1930

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# Weird Tales

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FARNSWORTH WRIGHT, Editor.

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# The DRUMS of



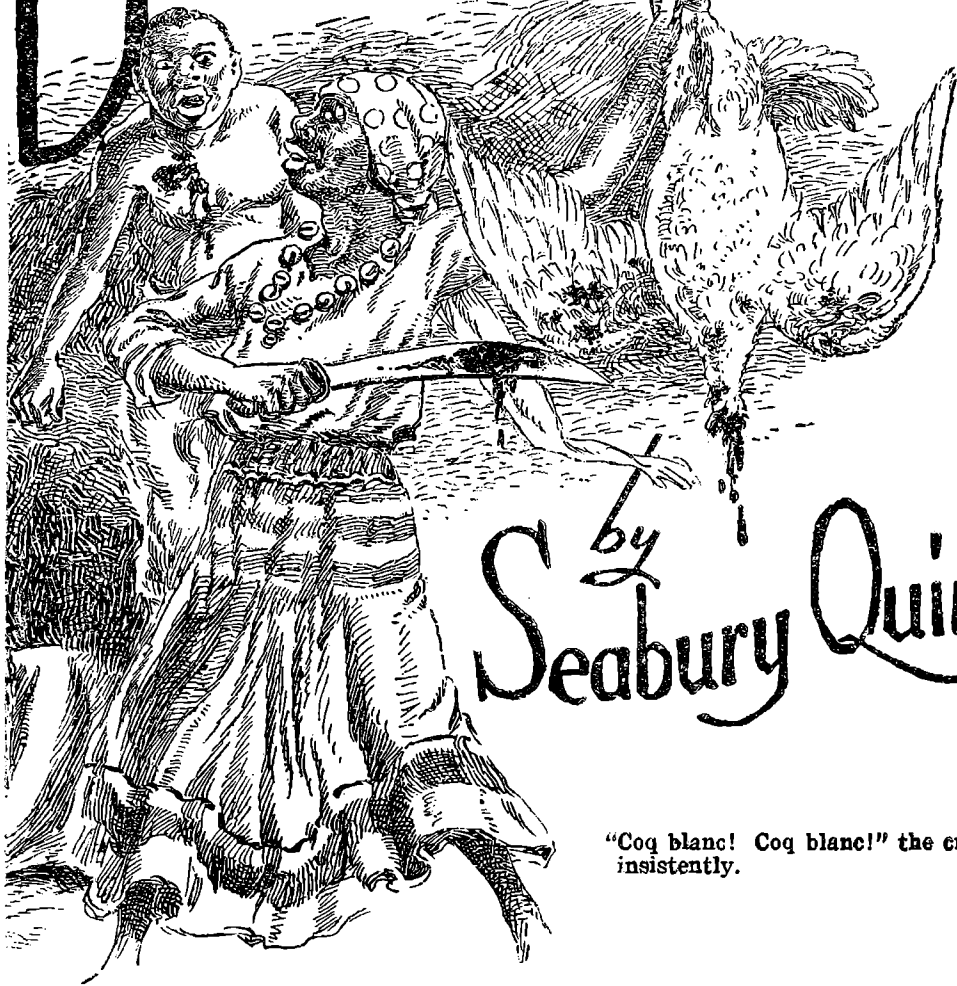
“AND so, good friends, I bid you Happy New Year.” Jules de Grandin replaced his demitasse on the Indian mahogany table beside his easy chair and turned his quick, elfin smile from Detective Sergeant Costello to me.

“Thanks, old chap,” I returned,

taking the humidor which Costello had been eyeing wistfully ever since we adjourned to the drawing-room for coffee and passing it toward him.

The big Irishman selected one of the long, red-and-gold belted Habanas and fondled it between his thick, capable fingers. “Sure, Dr. de Grandin,

# DAMBALLAH



By  
Seabury Quinn

"Coq blanc! Coq blanc!" the cry rose insistently.

sor," he muttered, "'tis meself that wishes th' same to you, an' many more of 'em, too."

"*Eh bien*, my friend," de Grandin bit a morsel of pink peppermint wafer and held it daintily between his teeth as he sipped a second draft of the strong, black coffee, "you do not appear in harmony with the season. Tell me, are you not happy at the New Year?"

"Yeah," Costello returned as he struck a match and set his cigar

alight, "I got lots o' cause to be happy right now, sor. Happy like it wuz me own wake I'm goin' to. To tell ye th' truth, sor," he added, turning serious blue eyes on the little Frenchman, "'tis Jerry Costello that'll be lucky if he ain't back in uniform, poundin' a beat before th' New Year's a month old."

"*Parbleu*, do you tell me?" de Grandin demanded, his smile vanishing. "How comes it?"

Costello puffed moodily at his

cigar. "There's been hell poppin' around the City Hall for th' last couple o' weeks," he returned, "an' they've got to make a example o' someone, so I reckon old Jerry Costello's elected."

"Eh, you are in trouble? Tell me, my friend; I am clever, I can surely help you."

The big detective gazed moodily at the fire. "I only wish ye could, sor," he answered slowly, "but I'm afraid ye can't. There's been more devilment goin' on in town th' last two weeks than I ever seen in a year before, an' there ain't no reason for anny of it. I just can't make head nor tail of it, an' th' mayor an' th' newspapers is ravin' their heads off about police inefficiency. Lookit this, for example: Here's young Mr. Sherwood, just th' slip of a lad he is, right out o' divinity school. First thing he does when he gits ordained is to open a little chapel over in th' East End, workin' night an' day amongst th' colored folks. He gits th' men to lay off th' gin an' razors, an' even bulls some of 'em into going to work instead o' layin' around all day an' lettin' their women support 'em. That's th' kind o' lad he wuz; fine an' good enough to be a priest—God forgive me for sayin' it! An' what happens? Why, just last week they find him in th' little two-by-four room he used for a study wid his head all bashed in an' his Bible torn to shreds an' th' picces layin' all around th' place.

"All right, sor, that's th' first, but it ain't th' last. That same night th' little Boswell gur-rl—as pritty a bit o' wee babyhood as ye ever seen—she disappears. Th' nurse has her out in th' park, ye understand, an' is hurryin' home, for it's turnin' dark, an' right while she's passin' th' soldiers' monument, out pops someone an' swipes her over th' head so hard she's laid up for three days wid concussion o' th' brain.

"We searched high an' low for th' little one; but never hide nor hair o'

her do we find. Rewards are posted, an' th' papers is full of it; but no one steps up to claim th' money. 'Twarn't no ordinary kidnappin', either, for whoever stole her tried his level best to kill th' nurse at th' time, an' would 'a' done it, too, if she hadn't been one o' them old fashioned gur-rls wid long hair piled on top o' her head, so's th' coil of it broke th' force o' the blackjack he hit her wid.

"An' lissen here, sor: 'Twas on th' same night some dirty bums breaks into St. Rose's Church an' steals a crucifix from one o' th' altars—bad cess to 'em!

"Now, crimes is like 'most everything else: they don't happen just because, sor. There's got to be some motive back of 'em. That's what's makin' a monkey out o' me in these cases. Nobody had annything agin th' pore young preacher. He didn't have a relative, much less an enemy, in th' world, as far as we could find out, an' as for money, if he'd 'a' had two nickels to jingle together, he'd 'a' been out givin' one of 'em to some worthless, no-account darky to buy food or coal oil, or sumpin' like that. It couldn't 'a' been an enemy that kilt him, an' it couldn't 'a' been robbery; yet there he wuz, cold an' still, wid his head mashed in like a busted punkin an' his Bible all torn to scraps."

"Ah?" de Grandin sat forward in his chair, his little, round eyes narrowed to slits as he gazed intently at the big policeman. "Say on, my friend; I think, perhaps, I see some sense to these so senseless crimes, after all."

Costello gave him an astonished look as he continued: "We might set pore Mr. Sherwood's murder down to some crazy man, sor, an' we might think Baby Boswell was just kidnaped by someone who wuz holdin' her for ransom, waitin' till her parents gits even more discouraged before he puts in his bid for money; but who th' divil would want to burglarize a

church? An' why didn't they break open th' pore box while they wuz about it, 'stead o' stealin' just one little brass crucifix? I tell ye, sor, there ain't no reason to none of it; an' I can't make head nor tail——"

"Yo're wanted on th' tellyphone, Dr. Trowbridge, sor," announced Nora McGinnis, my household factotum, thrusting her head through the drawing-room door and casting a momentary glance of unqualified approval toward the towering bulk of Sergeant Costello.

"Dr. Trowbridge?" an agitated voice called in response to my curt "Hello?"

"Can you come over to Mrs. Sherbourne's at once, please? One of the guests has fainted, and——"

"All right," I cut in, hanging up the receiver, "I'll be right over.

"Want to come?" I called to de Grandin and Costello. "There's a fainting woman over at Sherbourne's, and they seem to need a licensed practitioner to administer aromatic ammonia. Come along, Sergeant; a drive in the air may cheer you up."

THE old year was drying hard as we drove toward the Sherbourne mansion. A howling wind, straight from the bay, tore through the deserted streets, flinging sheets of razor-sharp sleet against the windshield and overlaying the pavement with a veneer of gleaming, glass-smooth ice. Though our destination was a scant quarter-mile away, we were upward of half an hour covering the course, and I swore softly as I descended from the car, feeling certain that the young woman had long since recovered from her swoon and we had had our freezing drive for nothing.

My apprehensions proved unfounded, however, for a frightened hostess met us in the hall and conducted us to the upper room where her unconscious guest lay upon the snowy counterpane, an eiderdown quilt thrown lightly over her and a

badly demoralized maid struggling ineffectually to force a hastily mixed dose of aromatic spirit between her blanched lips.

"We've tried everything," Mrs. Sherbourne twittered nervously as de Grandin and I entered the room; "aromatic spirit and sal volatile don't seem the least good, and——"

"When did the young *mademoiselle* swoon, and where, if you please?" de Grandin cut in softly, slipping out of his fur-lined greatcoat and taking the unconscious girl's thin, lath-like wrist between his fingers.

"Just before we called you," our hostess replied. "She seemed in the highest spirits all evening, singing, playing the old-fashioned games, dancing—oh, she was having an awfully good time. Just a little while ago, when Bobby Eldridge wanted someone to do the tango with him, she was the first to volunteer. The music had hardly started when she fell over in a heap, and we can't bring her to. It wasn't till all the home-made remedies had failed that I called you, Dr. Trowbridge," she added apologetically.

"U'm," de Grandin consulted his watch, comparing its ticks with the girl's pulsation. "She has eaten unwisely this evening, perhaps?"

"No. She hasn't eaten anything. That's the queer part of it. Everyone was eating and—I'm sorry to say—drinking considerably, too. We have to serve liquor to keep the young people satisfied since prohibition, you know. But Adelaide didn't touch a thing. I asked her if she were unwell, and she assured me she wasn't, but——"

"Precisely, *Madame*," de Grandin dropped the girl's wrist and rose with a business-like gesture. "If you will be so good as to leave us alone a moment, I think we shall revive *Mademoiselle* Adelaide without great difficulty." To me he whispered as our hostess withdrew:

"I think it is another case of fool-

ish pursuit of the slender figure, Friend Trowbridge. This poor one seems half starved, to me, and—*barbe d'un chat*, what is this?" As he broke off he seized my hand and guided it to the unconscious girl's solar plexus.

Beneath the flimsy chiffon of her party frock I felt the hard, unyielding stiffness of a—corset.

"*Morbleu*," de Grandin chuckled. "Not content with starving herself to the thinness of an eel, the poor foolish one must needs encase herself in a corset so tight her breath can not find room to fill her lungs. Come, let us extricate her."

Deftly as though he had served as lady's maid all his life, he undid the fastenings of the girl's frock, laid back the silken folds and leaned above her to unloose the corset-hooks which bound her torso; but:

"*Sacré nom d'un poisson aveugle*, what in damnation's name have we here?" he demanded sharply. From hips to breast the girl was tightly bound in a corselet of some coarse, fibrous substance, irritant as the hair-shirt of a Carmelite nun, and sewn upon the scarifying garment was a crazy patchwork of red, black and checkered cloth, not arranged in orderly or symmetrical design, but seemingly dropped at random, then fastened where it fell.

"S-o-o-o?" the little Frenchman let his breath out slowly between his teeth. "What connection has this one with this devilish business of the monkey which has so puzzled our good friend—"

"Quick, my friend," he ordered, turning sharply to me, "bring up the good Costello, at once, right away, immediately. Do not delay; it is important."

Bewildered, I descended the stairs, hailed the sergeant from my waiting car and led him to the room where de Grandin waited.

"*Très bon*," the little Frenchman nodded as we entered. "Do you stand by the door, *cher sergent*; display

your badge prominently. Now, Friend Trowbridge, let us to work!"

Drawing a tiny gold-handled pocket-knife from his waistcoat, he slit the queer-looking corset lengthwise and drew it from the girl's slim body, inviting my attention to the network of deep, angry scratches inflicted by the raw fiber on her tender white skin as he did so. "Now——" he put a wide-mouthed vial of smelling-salts to her nostrils, waited till her lids fluttered slightly, then seized the half-filled glass of aromatic spirit and held it to her mouth.

The girl half choked as the restorative passed her lips, then put a thin, blue-veined hand up, pushing the glass from her. "I"—she stammered sleepily—"where am—oh, I must have fainted. Did anyone—you mustn't undo my dress—you *mustn't*, I tell you! I won't have——"

"*Mademoiselle*," de Grandin's usually suave voice grated unpleasantly as he cut through her hysterical words, "your gown has already been unloosed. This gentleman"—he indicated Costello with a nod—"is of the police. I have summoned him, and here he remains until you have given satisfactory answers to my questions. Upon your replies depends whether he leaves this house alone or——" He paused significantly, and the girl's dark hazel eyes widened in terror.

"Wha—what do you want?" she faltered.

"Await us in the hall, if you please, my sergeant," de Grandin bade; then, as the door closed behind the big policeman: "First of all, you will please tell us how comes it that you wear this so odious thing." He touched the patchwork-covered corset with the tip of his forefinger, gingerly, as though it had been a venomous reptile.

"It—it was a bet, a silly, foolish wager," she returned. "I wore it to-night just to prove I could stand the irritation a whole evening." She paused, looking questioningly at the Frenchman's stern-set face to note



the effect of her explanation; then, with sudden vehemence: "You've got to believe me," she almost screamed. "It's the truth, the truth, *the truth!*"

"It is a lie, and a very clumsy one, in the bargain," de Grandin shot back. "Come, *Mademoiselle*, the truth, if you please; we are not to be trifled with."

The girl gazed back defiantly. She was thin as almost fleshless bones could make her, yet gracefully built, and her long, oval face had that tantalizing pale olive complexion which in certain types of woman proclaims abundant health as surely as florid coloring does in others. Her deep hazel eyes, tragic with terror, turned questioningly toward the window, then the door beyond which Costello waited, and finally came to rest on de Grandin's glowing blue orbs. "I—won't—tell——" she began with deliberate emphasis; then, "Oh!" The interruption was half cry, half gasp, and came simultaneously with the crashing clatter of broken glass.

Shattered to a dozen fragments, one of the small panes of the bedroom window fell inward on the margin of hardwood floor bordering the Persian rug, and the girl wilted forward as though pushed from behind, then slid back with a slow, twisting motion, one hand fluttering upward toward her breast like a wounded white bird vainly trying to regain its nest.

Two inches below and slightly to the right of the gentle swell of her left bosom the hard, polished haft of a dagger protruded, and on the flimsy chiffon of her frock there spread with terrifying rapidity a ruddy, telltale stain. She was dead before we could ease her back upon the pillows.

"On guard, *Sergent*, close the doors, permit none to enter and none to leave!" de Grandin shouted, leaping to the window and tearing open the sash. "Call the station, have a cordon of police thrown round the house—another murder has been done,

but by the beard of a bullfrog, the guilty one shall not escape!"

The big Irishman took charge with characteristic efficiency. Under his energetic guidance the guests and servants were gathered in the main drawing-room; within five minutes a siren shrieked its strident warning and a police car deposited a squad of uniformed men at the Sherbourne door. Assisted by powerful hand-searchlights brought from the station house, we scoured every inch of the grounds surrounding the mansion, and while a police stenographer stood by with pencil and notebook, Costello interrogated one after another of the horrified merry-makers. Half an hour's work convinced us we were up a blind alley. Not a hint or track of footprint showed on the hard-frozen sleet covering the lawn and encasing the tall poplar tree which stood beside the window through which the deadly missile had been hurled; not a guest at the party, nor a servant in the house, had left the building for a moment since de Grandin's shouted warning rang through the night; nowhere was there even the shadow of a clue at which the finger of suspicion could be pointed.

"Well, I'm damned; I sure am!" Costello ruefully admitted as he completed the investigation and prepared to notify Coroner Martin. "This looks like another one o' them cases wid no reason a-tall for happenin', Dr. de Grandin, sor. Ye can see for yerself how it is, now. Why should annyone want to murder that pore young gur-rl like that, an——" He lapsed into moody silence, drumming silently on the polished top of the telephone table as he waited for central to make his connection with the coroner.

"H'm, one wonders," de Grandin murmured, half to Costello, half to himself, as he snapped the mechanism of his pocket lighter and thrust the tip of an evil-smelling French cigarette into the cone of blue flame. But

from the dancing lights in his small round eyes and the quick, irritable manner in which the ends of his carefully waxed blond mustache twitched, I knew he had already formulated a theory and bided his time to put it into words. "Come, Friend Trowbridge," he urged, tugging at my elbow. "There is nothing more we can accomplish here; besides, I greatly desire a drink. Let us go."

## 2

"**T**IENS, my friend, it seems the old year died in a welter of blood last night," de Grandin remarked the following morning as he pushed back his coffee cup and lighted an after-breakfast cigarette. "Regard this in the morning's news, if you please." He passed a copy of the *Journal* across the table, indicating the article occupying the right-hand column of the front page. Taking the paper, I read:

#### TORTURERS KILL GUARD IN ROBBERY

##### Novice Yeggs Slash Watchman to Learn Safe Combination He Did Not Know

The body of William Lucas, 50-year-old colored night watchman at the Eagle Laundry, 596 Primrose Street, was found early this morning on the company's loading platform. He had been tortured to death because he would not reveal the combination of the firm's safe. The safe had not been opened.

When found, the body had a slash on each hand, one on the sole and instep of each foot, another across the throat under the chin, and a deep knife wound in the back. In a vacant lot behind the laundry detectives found a stained paper bag containing a brace and bit, a glass cutter, a wire cutter, a metal trimmed stiletto sheath and a pair of low shoes.

The attempted safe robbery was so wholly the work of novices that police were able to reconstruct the crime in its entirety. The murderers, police said, left a multitude of clues. At least two men entered the building in Primrose Street before the last truck was parked in the sheds at 9 o'clock last night. The robbers evidently knew that heavy collections were made by drivers on their final routes and that the money could not be banked until after the holiday, hence

there would be a substantial amount in the office safe.

The yeggmen laid out their kit of cheap tools some time after midnight, took off their shoes and tiptoed after the watchman as he made his rounds. They found him in the rear of the building as he was punching the clock in the dynamo room, and forced him to accompany them to the office, where the torture began.

While one of the burglars tortured and questioned Lucas in vain the other turned to the safe and tampered with it. The lifted handles bear the impress of red-stained fingers.

Some time during the torture Lucas died. The coroner's physician will say today whether he died as a result of the slash in his throat, the wound in his back, or whether he bled to death from the many smaller wounds inflicted on different parts of his body.

The murderers dumped the body into a laundry basket and dragged it through the building to the landing platform. A trail of stains led the police along the way. On the loading platform, where the body was abandoned, one of the thugs left a most incriminating clue. The floor bore the mark of a large foot with long, prehensile toes, clearly outlined in crimson. This print definitely establishes the fact that there were at least two robbers, as the low shoes found in the bundle with the burglars' tools were too small to fit the footmark. They must have belonged to the other robber, who also tiptoed in stockinged or bare feet after the unfortunate watchman.

Lucas, police said, was tortured to reveal something he did not know. The combination of the safe had not been entrusted to him.

"Why," I exclaimed, "that's villainous! The idea of torturing that poor fellow! It——"

"Sure, Dr. Trowbridge, sor, 'tis bad enough, th' blessed saints know, but 'tis sumpin' we can sink our teeth into, at anny rate," announced Costello's heavy voice from the doorway. "'Seuse me for sneakin' in on ye like this, gentlemen," he apologized, "but it's crool cold outside this mornin', an' I thought as how ye wouldn't mind if I let meself in unannounced-like, seein' th' door wuz unlocked, annyhow."

"*Bien non*, by no means," de Grandin assured him, motioning to a chair. "Tell me, my friend, is this press account accurate?"

The detective nodded over the rim of the cup of steaming coffee I had poured him. "Yes, sor," he returned. "I wuz in charge at th' laundry, an' checked th' facts up wid th' reporters before they shot their stuff in. They're right this time—for a wonder. Praise be, we've got clear sailin' in a case at last. None o' yer mysterious, no-motive crimes here, sor. Just a case o' plain petermen's wor-rk, an' done be amatoors, in th' bargain. It looks open-an'-shut to me."

He fumbled in his pocket a moment, producing two narrow slips of paper. "I got a couple o' subpenas from th' coroner for you gentlemen," he announced, handing us the summonses to appear at the inquest on the death of Adelaide Truman, "but if ye'd like to run over to th' Eagle Laundry an' look th' place over before ye tell what ye know to Coroner Martin, I'd be happy to take ye. I've got a police car waitin' outside."

"By all means," de Grandin assented eagerly. "This latest case of yours, my friend, it is a bit too obvious. It is altogether possible that someone makes the practical joke at our expense."

**T**HE dead night watchman was not a pretty sight. However inexperienced they might have been as burglars, his assassins had done their murdering with the finesse of veterans. To me the only question was whether the unfortunate man had died from the gaping slash across his throat or the deep incision which pierced his back just under the vertebral extremity of his left scapular. Either would have been almost instantly fatal.

De Grandin gave the body little more than passing notice. Instead he hastened to the office where the atrocity had been committed, and cast a fierce, searching glance about, rushed to the single window and sent the shade sailing upward with a jerk of the cord, finally dropped to his knees

and began examining the floor with the nervous intensity of a terrier seeking the scent of a vanished rat.

I watched him in amazement a moment, then turned to rejoin Costello, but his sudden elated exclamation brought me to a halt. "*Voilà!*" he cried, springing to his feet. "*Triomphe*; I have found it; it is here! *Pardieu*, did I not say so? Assuredly. Behold, my friend, what the good Costello and his fellows failed to see, and would not have recognized, had they done so, was not hidden from Jules de Grandin. By no means. *Regardez-vous!*"

In the palm of his outstretched hand lay a tiny cruciform thing, two burnt matches bound together in the form of a cross with a wisp of scarlet silk.

"Well?" I demanded, for the little man's shining eyes, quivering nostrils and excited manner indicated he placed great importance on his find.

"Well?" he echoed. "*Non*, my friend, you are mistaken; it is not well, or rather it is very well, indeed, for I now begin to understand much. Very damn much, indeed. This so detestable thing"—he indicated the crossed matches in his palm—"it is the key to much which I began dimly to perceive last night when Friend Costello strung together his so strange series of seemingly meaningless and unrelated crimes. Certainly. I now think, at least I believe—"

"All ready, gentlemen?" Sergeant Costello called. "We'll be gittin' over to th' coroner's, if ye're all done. Th' boys are finished wid th' fingerprints an' measurements, an' they'll be comin' from th' morgue for th' pore felly out yonder before long."

**D**E GRANDIN sat wrapped in moody silence as the big police car bore us toward the coroner's. Once or twice he made as though to speak, but appeared to think better of it, and leaned back in his seat with tightly

compressed lips and knitted, thoughtful brows. At last:

"What d'ye think of it all, Dr. de Grandin, sor?" Costello asked tentatively. "Have ye formed anny theory yet?"

"U'm," de Grandin struck a match, carefully shielding its orange flame with his cupped hands as he set his cigarette alight, then expelled a double column of smoke from his nostrils. "I shall not be greatly astonished, *mon vieux*, if the man who slew Mademoiselle Truman last night and the miscreant who did the unfortunate Lucas to death shortly afterward prove one and the same. Yes, I am almost convinced of it, already, though a careful search of the poor dead ones' antecedents must be made before we can be certain."

"Arrah!" Costello looked his incredulity. "D'ye mean th' felly that murdered th' pore gur-rl an' tried to rob th' laundry wuz th' same?"

"*Précisément*. Furthermore, I am disinclined to believe that any robbery was intended at the Eagle Laundry. Rather, I think, it was a carefully calculated murder—an execution, if you please—which took place there. The bloody hand-prints on the safe door, the new and wholly inadequate burglars' tools so left that the police could not help but find them, the very obviousness of it all—it was the camouflage they made, my friend. *Mordieu*, at this very moment the miscreants lie snugly hidden and laugh most execrably at our backs. Have a care, villains, Jules de Grandin has entered the case, and you shall damn laugh on the other side of your mouths before all is done!" He struck his knee with his clenched fist, then continued more quietly: "There is much more to this case than you have seen, my Sergeant. By example, there is that patch-work corset, and the two burned matches——"

"A corset—two burnt matches!"

Costello's tone indicated rapidly waning confidence in de Grandin's sanity.

"Exactly, precisely; quite so. In addition there is the murder of the innocent young clergyman, the stealing away of a helpless little baby, and much more devilment, which as yet we have not seen. Sergeant, my friend, these crimes without reason, as you call them, are crimes with the best—or worst—reason in the world, and this latest killing which you so stubbornly persist in thinking part of an unsuccessful burglary, it too is a link in the chain. These things are but the tail-tip of the serpent. His monstrous body we have yet to glimpse."

"Glory be to God!" ejaculated Costello with more force than piety as he bit off an impressive mouthful of chewing-tobacco and set to masticating it in methodical silence.

## 3

I SAW but little more of Jules de Grandin that day. As soon as his brief testimony before the coroner had been concluded he excused himself and disappeared on some mysterious errand. Dinner was long over and I was preparing to turn in for some much-needed sleep when his quick step sounded in the hall and a moment later he burst into the study, eyes gleaming, mustache fairly on end with excitement. "*Mort d'un bouc vert!*" he exclaimed as he dropped into a chair and seized a cigar from the humidor; "this day I have run back and forth and to and fro like a hound on the trail of a stag, my friend! Yes, I have been most active."

"Find out anything?" I asked.

"Assuredly yes. More than I had hoped; much more," he declared. "Attend me: The poor Mademoiselle Truman whose so tragic death we witnessed, she was not born here. No, she was a native of Martinique.

Her parents, Americans, lived in Fort de France, and she was but the merest babe when Pelée erupted so terribly in 1902, killing nearly every living being in the capital. Both her father and mother perished in the catastrophe, but she was rescued through the heroism of a native *bonne* who fled inland and found such shelter as none but she and her kind could. For the next five years the child dwelt as a native peasant among the blacks, speaking Creole, wearing native clothes, nourished by native food and—*worshipping native gods*.

“Do you know Martinique, my friend? It is most beautiful; lovely as the island where Circe dwelt to change men into swine before destroying them utterly. A curse lies on those lovely islands of the Antilles, my friend, the curse of human bondage and blood drawn by the slave-driver’s lash. Wherever Europe colonized and brought black slaves from Africa she brought also the deadly poison of the jungle Obeah. In North America it was not so. Your negroes grew up beside the whites, a pleasant, loyal, glad-hearted race; but in the islands of the Caribbean they interbred with the savage Indians and grew into fiends incarnate. Yes. Consider how they rose against their masters, exterminating man and woman and tender, helpless babe; how they marched on the European settlements with the bodies of white infants impaled upon their pikes for standards, and slew and slaughtered till even their insatiable blood-lust was slaked.

“Very well. That they had just cause for revolt no one can deny. It is not pleasant, even for a savage, to be stolen from his home and made to serve as slave in distant lands, and the sting of the whip is no less painful to a black back than to a white one; but the dreadful aspects of their revolts, the implacable savagery with which they killed and tortured, that

is something needing explanation. Nor is the explanation far to seek. Beside their bonfires, far back amid the hills, they practised weird rites and made petition to strange and awful gods—dread, bestial gods out of darkest Africa, more savage still than the savages who groveled at their altars. It was from these black and blood-dewed altars that the insurgent slaves drew inspiration for their atrocities.

“Nor is that dread religion—*Vôdunú, Obeah*, or by whatever savage name it may be called—dead by any means. Today the Marines of your country fight ceaselessly to put it down in Haiti; the weak-spined Spanish government, and after it the forces of the Republic, have been powerless to stamp it out from the Cuban uplands; the Danish West Indies and the Dutch colonies turned their faces and declared there was no such thing as Voodoo in their midst; and France has had no better luck in Martinique. No. The white man governs there; he can never hope to rule.

“Now, the aborigines of Martinique were known as the Caribs. A terrible folk they were—and are. Your very English word ‘cannibal’ comes from them, since *caribal* was what Columbus’ sailors said when referring to the abominations of the Caribs when they returned to Spain. There are those who say that the Caribs were rooted out in the war waged on them by the French in 1658. It is, *hélas*, not so. They fled back to the hills, and there they mated with the blacks, producing a race tenfold more terrible than either of its parents. These are those who keen the voodoo chant before black altars in the uplands, who burn the signal fires at night, and, upon occasion, make sacrifices of black goats, or white goats without horns, to their deities. They keep the flame of hatred for the white man undying, and it was because of that the native

nurse-woman risked her life to save poor little Baby Adelaide from the volcano.

"Ha, I see your question forming. 'Why,' you ask, 'should she have risked her life to bear away the offspring of her master; why should she so carefully rear that little girl-child when the holocaust of Pelée's eruption was done?' Ah, my friend, subtle revenge is sweet to the half-breed Carib as to the white man. That child of the dominant and hated *blancs* should be reared as a Carib, taught their language, imbued with their thoughts, finally trained and initiated into their abominable religion and made to serve as priestess at their dreadful sacrificial rites—ah, that, indeed, would be a fit requital for all the woes her ancestors had undergone at the white man's hands. Yes.

"And so it was. For five years—the formative period of her life—poor Mademoiselle Adelaide lives as a Creole. When she was at last so steeped in savage lore that never, while life should last, could she throw away the influence, the 'faithful nurse' returned to Fort de France with her story of having rescued and nurtured the orphaned child of her employers. Relatives in America were located by colonial authorities and the little girl brought here—and with her came her faithful *bonne*, her foster-mother, old Black Toinette of the Caribs."

He rose abruptly, took half a turn across the study floor, then stopped and faced me almost threateningly.

"*And Toinette was a mamaloi of the voodooists!*" he fairly hissed.

"Well?" I demanded, as he continued to stand staring fixedly at me.

"'Well' be everlastingly burned in the lowest subcellar of hell!" he flared back. "It is not well. It is most damnably otherwise, my friend.

"Mademoiselle Adelaide was never allowed to forget that whatever gods

she might pay outward homage to, the *real* gods, the great gods, were Damballah, Legba and Ayida-Wedo. When she was but a little child she astonished her Sunday School teacher by making such an assertion in answer to a catechism question, and when she was a grown young woman, eighteen years of age, her aunt, with whom she lived, surprized her and her aged nurse fantastically dressed and making worship to an obscene thing carved in the likeness of a serpent. The old negress was instantly dismissed; though, in gratitude for her services, she was given a pension; but poor Mademoiselle Adelaide's aunt tells me her niece paid many secret visits to old Toinette's dwelling, and what went on behind the closed doors of that house can better be conjectured than described, I fear.

"Now, attend me: Those who have traveled in Haiti have often been struck by certain oddnesses of dress sometimes exhibited by the peasant women, dresses sewn over with crazy-quilt patterns, not beautiful, but most bizarre. Such patchwork is worn as penance, sometimes, sewn to a corset of irritative substance, as by example, the fiber of certain species of gourds. When so worn it is at once an evidence of penance and purification, like the hair-shirts of certain monastic orders in mediæval times. Now, undoubtedly, for some reason old Toinette ordered Mademoiselle Adelaide to wear that damnable garment of voodoo penance last night. Remember, the old nurse never for an instant lost her dominance over the poor child. No. The constant irritation of the sharp-pronged corset against her tender skin induced a fainting fit. I, who have traveled much and observed much, at once recognized the thing for what it was, and bade her tell us how it came that she wore it. She refused, but one who watched her through the window feared she was

about to speak, and stopped her mouth with blood."

"Well," I cut in, "if this is so, why not go round to this old woman's house and arrest her? She can be made to talk, I suppose."

"Ah bah," he returned. "Do you think I have not considered that? You do me small courtesy, my friend. To the old one's house I went post-haste, only to find that she and her son—a hulking brute with arms as long as those of any ape—had decamped sometime during the night, and none knows where they went."

He paused a moment, drawing at his cigar with short, quick puffs; then: "How high would you say the lowest limb of the tree which grows beside Madame Sherbourne's house is from the ground—the tree from which an evilly disposed one might easily have hurled a dagger and slain Mademoiselle Adelaide?"

"H'm," I made a hasty mental calculation. "All of fifteen feet, I'd say. It's absurd to think anyone climbed it, de Grandin; he couldn't have reached the lowest limb without a ladder, for the trunk was literally glazed with ice, and no one could have swarmed up it. Nothing but an ape could have climbed that tree, thrown a knife and scuttled down again before the police came, at least not without leaving some trace, and——"

"Precisely, exactly, entirely so," he agreed, nodding vigorously. "*Tu parles, mon vieux*—you have said it. No one but an ape—or an ape-man. Did you examine the bloody footprint at the laundry where the ill-fated Lucas met his death?"

"Why, no; but——"

"Of course not; but I did. It might almost have been made by a gorilla, so great and long-toed was it. Only one accustomed to going bare-foot, and much accustomed to using his toes in climbing, could have made that track. It took but a single glance to tell me that the maker of that foot-

print has arms of most extraordinary length. Such an one could have leaped the distance from the earth to catch that tree-limb, and climbed the icy trunk without great trouble. Such an one it was, undoubtedly, who watched outside to see that Mademoiselle Adelaide made no betrayal, and who did the needful when he feared she was about to break beneath my questioning. Yes. Certainly."

"But see here," I expostulated. "Aren't you going pretty far in your assumptions? Because a man has an abnormally long foot is no sign he has unusually long arms like this hypothetical ape-man of yours."

"Do you say so?" he demanded sarcastically. "The great Alphonse Bertillon says otherwise. It was he who fathered the science of anthropometry—the science of measuring man—and it is one of his cardinal rules that the length of a man's foot from calyx to great toe-tip is the exact distance between the inner bend of his elbow and his radius. Here, let us test it!"

Reaching suddenly he snatched off one of my house-slippers, and grasping my ankle bent my right foot upward to the inner side of my left arm. Dubiously I fitted the heel against the inner bend of my elbow, then stared in incredulous amazement. It was as he said. No ruler could have measured my arm from wrist to elbow more accurately than my own foot!

"You see?" he asked with one of his quick smiles. "The *Sûreté Général* long since adopted the Bertillon system, and the *Sûreté Général* makes no mistakes.

"Very well; to proceed with my day's discoveries: Having unearthed the poor *mademoiselle's* unhappy history, I turned my attention to the unfortunate Monsieur Lucas. Here, again, the trail of Africa's step-daughters lay across my path. In his younger days Lucas had been an American soldier, and served with distinction against the Spaniards in '98.

Remaining in Cuba after peace was declared, he married a native woman and moved inland. There he became involved in certain of the less savory native mysteries, and served a term in prison. He moved to Haiti without the formality of divorcing his Cuban wife and found another companion for his joys and sorrows. *Tiens*, I greatly fear the latter far outweighed the former. His wife, an unlettered peasant woman, was but a step removed from savagery. She initiated him into the voodoo religion, and once more he worshiped in the *Houmfort*, or voodoo mystery-house.

"Anon he tired of life in Haiti and came to this country. *But so did others*. My friend, in this very city of Harrisonville, New Jersey, there is a well-organized chapter of votaries of the Snake-Goddess. What they purpose doing I do not know for sure; that it portends no good I am most abominably certain. Lucas, homesick for the days in the Caribbean, perhaps, perhaps for some other reason, sought out these voodooists, and was recognized by some of them. He attended one or more of their meetings, and was there either branded as a traitor, or refused to countenance such inimical schemes as they broached. In any event, he was considered more valuable dead than alive, nor were they slow to carry out his death sentence. Everything points that way—the multiple wounds, the torture before the *coup-de-grâce*, most of all the two crossed matches which we found. They are a sign well recognized wherever voodoo is dominant. On one occasion, as I well know, the sight of such a silly, inconsequential object in the Palace at Port-au-Prince so frightened the president of Haiti that he remained indoors for two whole days! It was a bit of bravado, leaving those matches beside the body of their victim; but then they could not know that anyone here would recognize them; they

could not know that Jules de Grandin would enter the case. No.

"Undoubtlessly the murder of the poor young clergyman was another link in this sinister chain. He labored lovingly among his dusky flock; they loved him. More, they trusted him. Beyond question some of them had heard of the voodoo hell-broth brewing in their midst and had consulted him. He knew too much. He is dead.

"*Alors—*"

The sharp, cachinnating chatter of the telephone bell cut through his low, earnest words. "*Allo?*" he called irritably, snatching up the instrument. "Ah, Sergeant, yes. What? Do you say it? But certainly; right away; immediately; at once.

"Friend Trowbridge," he turned to me, his eyes flashing with anticipation, "it has come. That was the good Costello. He asks that we go to him at once."

"What did he say?" I asked.

"'Dr. de Grandin, sor,'" the little Frenchman's imitation of the big Irishman's excited brogue was a masterpiece of mimicry, "'hell's broke loose over in Paradise Street. Th' nagers are shootin' th' night full o' holes an' two o' me men is hit hard, a'ready. We're nadin' a couple o' good doctors in a hurry, an' we 'specially nade a felly as can be handy wid th' guns. Come a-runnin', sor, if ye plaze.'"

#### 4

GRATELY to my relief, there was no longer need of "a felly who could be handy wid th' guns" when we arrived at that dingy thoroughfare ironically labeled Paradise Street by the city fathers. Reserves from half a dozen precincts and police headquarters, armed with riot paraphernalia, had drawn a cordon round the affected area, and riot guns, tear-gas bombs and automatic rifles had cowed the recalcitrant blacks by the time I drew up at the outer line of policemen



and made our errand known. De Grandin was furious as a hen under a hydrant when he saw the last patrol wagon of arrested rioters drive off. With a pair of heavy French army revolvers holstered to the cartridge belts which crossed his womanishly narrow waist, he marched and counter-marched along the sidewalk, glaring into the darkness as though challenging some disturber of the peace to try conclusions with him.

"Dam' funny thing, this," Costello remarked as he joined us. "I know these here black boys, an', speakin' generally, they're an orderly enough lot o' fellies. 'Course, they shoot craps now an' agin, an' git filled up wid gin an' go on a rampage, 'specially of a Saturday night; but they ain't never give us no serious trouble before.

"Tonight, though, they just broke out like a rash. Kelley, from Number Four, wuz poundin' his beat down th' lower part o' th' street, when he noticed a strange smoke sort o' scuttlin' down th' walk, an' not likin' th' felly's looks, started after 'im. Ye know how it is, Dr. de Grandin, sor, ye've mingled wid th' Paris police yerself. It's just natural for boys, dogs an' policemen to chase annything that runs from 'em, so when this here dinge started to run, so did Kelley.

"Th' felly slips into a doorway, wid Kelley right behind him, when *zingo!* there comes a charge o' buckshot an' Kelley goes down wid enough lead in 'im to sink a ship.

"He sounds his whistle before he goes out, though, an' a couple o' th' boys come a-runnin', an' I'm damned if th' whole street ain't full o' bullets in less time than ye can rightly say 'Jack Robinson,' sor. Th' riot call goes out, an' we round 'em up in pretty good shape, but three o' th' boys is hit bad, Kelley especially. He'll not pound a beat for many a long day, I'm thinkin'."

"H'm," de Grandin took his narrow chin between his thumb and fore-

finger and gazed thoughtfully at the snow-covered pavement, "did Monsieur Kelley, by any happy chance, describe the man he pursued before he was so villainously assaulted?"

"Only partly, sor. 'Twas a shortish sort o' felly, wid extra-ordinary long arms, accordin' to Kelley, an'——"

"A thousand maledictions! I did know it!" de Grandin shouted. "It is the ape-man, Friend Trowbridge; the one who slew Mademoiselle Adelaide, and poor Lucas, the watchman; undoubtedly the one who killed the clergyman, as well. *Nom d'un chameau*, we must find him! He and his twenty-times accursed dam are the keys of this whole so odious business, or Jules de Grandin is a perjured liar!"

"**W**OULD ye be after givin' me an' a couple o' th' boys a lift, Dr. Trowbridge, sor?" Costello asked as de Grandin and I prepared to depart. "Th' doin's here is about over, an' I'd like to git back an' report before I hit th' hay."

With Costello behind me, and two uniformed men standing on the running board, I set out for police headquarters, choosing the wide, unfrequented roadway of Tuscarora Avenue in preference to the busier thoroughfares. Although it was not late the darkened avenue had a curiously deserted aspect as I drove slowly beneath the bare-limbed trees, and the sudden appearance of a hatless man, waving his arms excitedly, stung my startled nerves almost like the detonation of a shot in the quiet night.

"Police!" the stranger cried. "Is that a police car?"

"Well, sor, it is an' it ain't," Costello responded. "There's a load o' bulls ridin' in it; but ye couldn't rightly call it a departmental vehicle. What's on yer mind? I see yer hat ain't."

"My daughter," the other answered, almost sobbing. "My daughter Marrien—she's disappeared!"

"Ouch, has she now?" the detective soothed. "Sure, that's too bad. How long's she been gone—a week, maybe?"

"No—no; now, just a few minutes ago!"

"Arrah, sor, how d'ye know she ain't gone to th' movies, or visitin' a friend, or sumpin'? Don't ye go gittin' \_\_\_\_\_"

"Be quiet!" the distraught man cut in. "I'm Josephus Thorndyke; I think you know me; by name, at least."

We did. Everybody knew the president of the First National Bank of Harrisonville and director of half the city's financial enterprises. Costello's bantering manner dropped from him like a cloak as he jumped from the car. "Tell us about it, sor," he urged deferentially.

"She was complaining of a headache," Thorndyke replied, "and went to her room half an hour or so ago. I went up to ask if I could do anything, and found her door locked. She never did that—never. I knocked and got no answer. I went away, but came back in ten minutes and found her door still locked, though the light was burning. I had a pass key, and when I couldn't get an answer I let myself in. Before I could unlock the door, I had to push the key out; her door was locked on the inside—get that."

"I'm listenin'," Costello assured him. "Go on, sor."

"Her room was empty. She'd undressed, but hadn't changed her clothes—the window was open, and her room was empty. I ran down the back stairs and asked the cook, who'd been in the kitchen all the time, if Miss Marrien had gone through. She hadn't. Then I ran outside and looked on the ground, fearing she might have been seized with faintness and fallen from the window. It's a thirty-foot drop to the ground, and if she'd fallen she'd have been killed or so badly injured that she couldn't

have moved, but there was no sign of her outside. I know she didn't come down the front stairs, for I was reading in the hall, and I've searched the house from top to bottom; but she's not there. There's not a piece of her clothing missing; but she's gone—vanished!"

"U'm, an' did ye call th' precinct, sor?"

"Yes, yes; they told me all the men were out on riot duty, and they'd send someone over in the morning. In the morning! Good God! Do you realize my child's gone—faded into the night, apparently? And they talk of sending someone round tomorrow!"

"Sure, it's lucky ye saw us when ye did," Costello muttered. Then: "This is right in your line, Dr. de Grandin; will ye be after goin' in wid me an' takin' a look around?"

"Assuredly, by all means, yes," the Frenchman agreed. "Lead on, my old one; I follow close behind."

THE tall, hatchet-faced man with the mane of iron-gray hair who had accosted us seemed to take a fresh grip on his self-control as he led the way toward the house. "It may seem queer that I should be so positive about my daughter's not having changed her clothes," he suggested as we filed up the path toward the oblong of orange light which marked the mansion's open door, "but the fact is Marrien and I are nearer to each other than the average father and daughter. Her mother died when she was a wee baby—only three years old—and I've tried to be both father and mother to her since. There isn't a dress or hat, hardly a pair of gloves or hose, in her whole wardrobe that I don't know by sight, for she consulted me before buying anything. I've studied women's magazines and fashion books and even trailed round to dressmaker's salons with her in order to keep posted on such things and be able to discuss clothes in-

telligently with her. She's the speaking image of her sainted mother when I married her thirty years ago, and—she's all I've got to love in the world; all I have to think of or live for!

"Now you understand," he added simply, as he led us to the white-enameled door of a spacious bedroom on the second floor and stood courteously aside to let us enter.

We glanced quickly about the apartment. The scent of gardenias lay heavy in the air; a crimson Spanish shawl, embroidered in brilliant silk, which trailed across the back of a carved Italian chair, was redolent with the perfume. A cheval-glass in a gilded frame reflected the ivory walls and the ormolu dressing-table set with ivory and gold toilet articles. Above the ivory-tiled fireplace where piled beech logs snapped and crackled cheerfully on polished brass fire-dogs, there hung a magnificent life-sized copy of Rossetti's *Beata Beatrix*, the closed eyes and parted, yearning lips of the figure suggesting, somehow, the motherless girl's vague, half-understood longings. On the bed's white counterpane lay a long-skirted evening gown of rose tulle and satin; a pair of tiny silver-kid sandals lay beneath an ivory slipper chair, one standing on its sole, the other lying on its side, as though discarded in extremest haste. A pair of moonlight-gray gossamer silk stockings lay crumpled wrong side out beside the shoes. It was a lovely, girl-woman's room, as expressive of its owner as a Sargent portrait; but empty now, and desolate as a body from which the soul has fled.

Unconsciously, instinctively, de Grandin bowed quickly from the hips in his quaint foreign manner as he entered this atmosphere supercharged with femininity; then, with Gallic practicality, he began a swift appraisal of the place.

The window was open a few inches from the bottom—a cat would have had difficulty in creeping through the

opening—and, as Thorndyke had told us, there was no other exit from the room, save the door by which we entered, for the adjoining bath was without window, light and air coming from a skylight with adjustable side-slats that pierced the ceiling. "U'm; you are positive the door was locked on the inside when you made entrance, *Monsieur*?" de Grandin asked, turning to the distraught father.

"Of course I am. I had to push the key——"

"Be gob, there's a drain-pipe runnin' down th' house widin three feet o' th' windy," Costello interrupted, drawing back from his inspection of the outside walls, "but it's crusted wid ice a quarter-inch thick. 'Twould take a sailor to slip down it an' a gorilla or sumpin' to climb it, I'm thinkin'."

"Ha?" de Grandin paused in his stride across the room and joined the detective at the window. "Let me see—quickly. Yes, you have right, my friend; the most athletic of young women could not have negotiated that descent. Yet——" He paused in silent thought a moment, then shrugged his shoulders impatiently. "Let us proceed," he ordered.

We searched the house from cellar to ridge-pole, questioned the servants, confirmed Thorndyke's assertion that the back stairs could not be descended without the user being seen from the kitchen. At length, with such lame assurances as we could give the prostrated father, we prepared to leave.

"You have, perhaps, a picture of Mademoiselle Marrien for the *sûreté*'s information?" de Grandin asked as we paused by the drawing-room door.

"Yes; here's one," Thorndyke replied, taking a silver-framed portrait from a console table and extending it to the Frenchman. "Be careful of it; it's the only——"

"A-a-ah?" the sharp, rising note of de Grandin's exclamation cut short the caution.

"Good heavens!" I ejaculated.

"Mother o' Moses; would ye look a' that?" Costello added.

As mirrored likeness counterfeits the beholder, or twin resembles twin, the photograph of Marrien Thorn-dyke simulated the fine-cup, delicate features of Adelaide Truman, whose tragic death we had witnessed not twenty-four hours earlier.

Moving nearer the light to examine the picture, de Grandin paused in midstride, his sensitive nostrils contracting as he glanced sharply at a corsage bouquet of pale-lavender orchids occupying a silver vase on a side table. Cautiously, as though approaching some living thing of uncertain temper, he lowered his nose toward the fragile, fluted-edged blossoms, then drew back abruptly. "These flowers, *Monsieur*; they came from where, and when, if you please?" he demanded, regarding Thorndyke with one of his fixed, un-winking stares.

Our host smiled sadly. "We don't know," he returned. "Some unknown admirer sent them to Marrien this evening; they came just before dinner. Queer thing; there was no card or message with them, and nobody saw the messenger who delivered them. The bell rang, and when Parnell answered it, there was an unmarked flower-box waiting in the vestibule, but no sign of any messenger. That struck me as especially odd; those chaps usually hang around in hope of a tip."

The little Frenchman's shrewd eyes had lost their direct, challenging look. He was staring abstractedly toward the drawing-room wall with the expression of one attempting to recall a forgotten bar of music or a half-remembered line of verse. "It is," he muttered to himself, "it is—*parbleu*, but certainly!" Of Thorndyke he demanded:

"You say *Mademoiselle* your daughter went to her chamber complaining of *mal de tête* shortly after dinner?"

"Yes; as a matter of fact we hadn't

quite finished when she excused herself. It struck me as strange at the time, too, for she hardly ever suffers with headache. I think——"

"*Précisément, Monsieur*; so do I. I think this whole business has the odor of deceased fish on it. Sergeant"—he turned to Costello—"your suggestion concerning the difficulty of ascending that drain-pipe was well made."

"How's that, sor? D'ye mean——"

"I mean the yokel finding a rib buried here, a vertebra interred there, and a clavicle hidden elsewhere in the earth would say, 'Behold, I have found some bones,' while the skilled anatomist finding the same things would declare, 'Here we have various parts of a skeleton.' My friends"—he swept us with a quick, challenging stare—"we are come to the door of a most exceedingly dark closet in which there rattles a monstrous skeleton. No matter, Jules de Grandin is here; he will turn the light upon it; he will expose the loathsome thing. *Parbleu*, he will drag it forth and dismember it piece by piece, or may the devil serve him as mince-meat pie at next Thanksgiving dinner!

"*Bon soir, Monsieur*," he bowed to Thorndyke, "I know not the location of your vanished daughter; but I can damnation guess the sort of place where she lies hidden.

"Come, my friends," he motioned Costello and me before him, "there are thoughts to think, plans to make, and afterward, deeds to do. Let us be about them."

ONCE more in my study, he fell to pacing the floor with long, silent strides, soft-footed and impatient as a prisoned panther. "*Cordieu*," he murmured; and, "*Morbleu*, they were clever, those ones. They used the shrewd psychology in baiting their trap. Yes."

"What the dickens are you talking about?" I demanded.

"Of *Mademoiselle* Marrien and her orchids," he replied, pausing in his

restless walk. "Consider, my friend: When Monsieur Thorndyke gave us his daughter's picture and I moved to examine it beneath the light, my nose was assailed by a so faint, but reminiscent, odor. I looked about for its source. Such a smell I have found upon the lips of those drugged that their houses might be robbed—once, even, I discerned it on certain fowls which had been stolen without making outcry. This was in Guiana. I recognized that smell, but at first I could not call it by name. Then I perceived the orchids, and bent to smell them. It was there. I am 'warm,' as the children say when they play their hide-away game. I ask to know concerning the bouquet. What do I learn? That they have come all mysteriously for Mademoiselle Marrien, none knows whence, or by whom brought. Thereupon I see everything, all quickly, like a flash in the dark. Being a woman, Mademoiselle Marrien can not help but thrust her nose into those flowers, even though she knows that orchids possess no perfume. It is a woman's instinctive act. Very good. The ones who sent those orchids traded on this certainty, and dusted the petals of those flowers with a powder made from the seeds of the *datura stramonium*. These seeds are rich in atropin and scopolamin. Taken internally, in sufficient quantity, they cause headache, giddiness, nausea, unconsciousness, finally death. Inhaled in the form of powder, they adhere to the mucous membrane of the nose and throat, and within a short time cause violent headache, even unconsciousness, perhaps. That is sufficient for the miscreants' purposes. They would not slay Mademoiselle Marrien—yet. No, beside the roadway she must tread, the path into the grave would be a thoroughfare of joy."

"You're raving!" I assured him. "Granting your fantastic theory, how did Marrien Thorndyke manage to evaporate from her room and leave the door locked on the inside?"

For a long moment he stared at me: then: "How does the fledgling, which can not fly, manage to leave its nest when the serpent goes ravaging among the tree-tops?" he returned as he pivoted on his heel and departed for bed.

## 5

IT WAS something after five o'clock next evening when my office telephone rang. "Trowbridge, *mon vieux*, come at once, immediately, this instant!" de Grandin's excited voice commanded. "She is found, I have located her!"

"She? Who?"

"Who but Mademoiselle Marrien, *par l'amour d'un bouc?*" he returned. "Come, I await you at police headquarters."

Quickly as possible I made my way to City Hall, wondering, meanwhile, what lay behind the little Frenchman's excited announcement. All day he had been off on some mysterious business of his own, a note beside my plate informing me he could not wait for breakfast, and would not return "until I do arrive."

In the guardroom at headquarters I found him, smoking furiously, talking excitedly, gesturing strenuously; obviously in his element. Beside him were Sergeant Costello, four plain-clothes men and a dozen uniformed patrolmen, armed with an imposing assortment of gas-bombs, riot guns and automatic rifles.

"*Bienvenu, mon brave!*" he greeted. "But now I was telling the good Costello of my cleverness. Wait, you too shall hear: All day I have haunted the neighborhood of Paradise Street, searching, looking, seeking a sign. But an hour since I chanced to spy a conjun store, and——"

"A *what?*" I asked.

"A conjun shop—a place where charms are sold. By example, they had there powdered bones of black cats: they are esteemed most excel-

lent for neutralizing an enemy's curse. They had also preserved bat wings, love potions, medicines warranted to make an uncongenial wife or husband betake himself elsewhere with greatest celerity—all manner of such things they had.

"I engaged the proprietor in talk. I talked of many things, and all the while I looked about me. The street was well paved and cleanly swept before the shop, there was no patch of muddy earth about the neighborhood, yet the fellow's boots and trouser-knees, even his hands, were stained with new, fresh clay. '*Parbleu,*' I say to me, 'this will bear investigating!'

"Forth from that shop I went, and walked quickly up the alley which runs behind it. The rear of the yard was fenced, but, *grâce a Dieu*, the fence contained a knothole, and to it I did glue my eye. Nor was my patience unrewarded. No. Anon I saw the dusky dispenser of charms come from his back door and scuttle across his paved back yard, entering a tiny shed of rough boards which stood near the rear of his lot. There was no chance for his feet to become muddied that way, my friend.

"I wait for him to emerge. My watch counts fifteen minutes, but still he does not come. 'Has he died in there?' I ask me. At last it is no longer to be endured. All silently I leap the fence and cross the yard, then peer into the little house. *Pardieu*, what do I see? A hole, my friend; a great, gaping hole, like the open top of a newly digged well, and leading into it there is a ladder. Nothing less.

"Into that hole I lower myself, and when I reach the bottom I find the end is not yet. No; by no means. From the hole there runs a tunnel through the earth, and Monsieur the Black Man, whom I have followed, is nowhere to be seen. 'Very well,' I tell me, 'where he has gone, I, too, may go.' And so I do.

"That tunnel, my friend, it leads me across the street to the cellar of

an old, long-disused house, a house whose doors have been boarded up and which has apparently been so long unused that even the newest of the many 'For Sale' signs which decorate its façade is quite illegible.

"*Tiens*, I look into that cellar, but I do not long remain to see what is there, for to be surprized in that place is to bid a swift adieu to life, and I have no desire to die. But in the little while I squat there like a toad-frog I hear and see so much that I can guess much more.

"I do not wait, not I; instead I come here with all speed and gather reinforcements. *Voilà*.

"Sergeant, the sun has set, already there is that beginning to commence which needs our early intervention. Friend Trowbridge and I will go first—it is a matter for no gossip where doctors go—do you and several of your men come shortly afterward, and guard the exits to the old, dark house. Anon, let the machine-gunners come, and take position all round the premises. When I whistle, or you hear a shot, come, and come quickly, for there will be great need of you.

"**WE** ARE arrived, my friend," he whispered as he led the way up a particularly malodorous alley and paused before a rickety board fence. "Come, let us mount."

We scaled the creaking barrier and dropped as quietly as possible to a brick-paved yard scarcely larger than an areaway. Guided entirely by memory, for we dared not show a light, de Grandin led the way to a wooden outhouse, paused a moment, then began to descend a flimsy ladder reaching down a ten-foot hole in the earth.

For some distance we crept along a narrow, clay-floored tunnel, and finally came to a halt as the faint, reflected glow of a wavering light reached us. And with the light came the unmistakable aerid odor of crowded, sweating humanity, raw, pungent gin and

another faint, indefinable stench, foul, nauseating, somehow menacing, as though, itself unrecognized, it knocked upon the long-forgotten door of a dim ancestral memory—and fear.

Inch by cautious inch we crept forward until at last we looked through a jagged opening into a low-ceiled, brick-walled cellar, illuminated by the smoke-dimmed rays of a single swinging oil lantern.

About the room in crescent-formation were ranged, four or five deep, eighty or more negroes, men and women. They differed from each other in both kind and degree, heavy-featured, black-skinned full-bloods crouching cheek by jowl with mulattoes, coarsely clothed laborers huddled beside dandified, oily-haired "sheiks," working-women herded in with modishly dressed she-fops of the dance halls and restaurants. Only in the singleness of purpose, the fixed intentness of their concentrated stares, did they seem held together by any sort of bond.

At the far side of the cellar was erected a grotesque parody of an altar. On it were saucers containing meal, salt and whole grains of corn, a bottle of square-face gin, a roughly carved simulacrum of a half-coiled snake, several tin cups, a machete honed to a razor edge and, turned upside down, a heavy, beaten brass crucifix. With a start I recalled Costello's story of the ravished church and the cross which had so strangely disappeared.

But I had no time for reflection, for my attention was quickly drawn to the group before the altar; two men and a woman squatting cross-legged before wide-topped kettle-drums, an aged and unbelievably wrinkled negress arrayed in gaudy, tarnished finery resembling the make-up of a gipsy fortune-teller, and a young white woman, nude save for the short kilt of scarlet cloth belted about her waist, the turban of bandanna tied round her head and the

inane, frivolous bands of crimson ribbon which circled her wrists and ankles.

She was squatted tailor-fashion facing the drums, and swayed slightly from the hips as the musicians kept up a constant thrumming rumble—a sort of sustained, endlessly long-drawn note—by beating lightly and with incredible quickness on the parchment drumheads with the padded drumsticks. There was something curiously unlikelike in the way her hands were folded in her scarlet lap, a sort of tired listlessness wholly out of keeping with the strained, taut look on her face.

The aged negress was whispering to her with cracked, toothless sibilance, and, though I could not catch the words, I knew she urged some act which the girl stubbornly refused, for time and again the old hag wheedled, argued, cajoled, and as often the girl shook her head slightly but doggedly, as though her nerves and body were almost worn to the point of yielding, but her spirit struggled doggedly on.

But each time the crone repeated her request the drummers increased the volume of their racket ever so little, and, it seemed to me, the very persistence of sustained vibration was wearing the girl's resistance down. Certainly she was already in a state bordering on hypnosis, or else bound fast in the thrall of some potent drug; every line of her flaccid, unresisting body, the droop of her bare white shoulders, the very passivity with which she crouched upon the chill, bare earth proclaimed it.

At length the tempo of the drums increased and the volume of the rumble rose till it shook back low yet deafening echoes from the walls. The girl gave one final stubborn headshake, then nodded slowly, indifferently, as though too tired to hold her chin up for another instant. Her head sank forward, as though she napped, and her sloping shoulders drooped

still further. The concentrated thought of the circling audience, the ceaselessly repeated importunities of the hag and the never-ending rumble of the drums had worn down her resistance; her psychic strength was broken, and she was but a mute and helpless tool, a helpless, mindless instrument without conscience or volition.

A quick, sharp order from the aged hag, who now assumed the rôle of priestess or mistress of ceremonies, and the girl rose slowly to her feet, put forth her hand and lifted the hinged top of a small square box reposing underneath the altar. As she turned her profile toward us I felt my heart stand still, for she was the counterpart of Adelaide Truman, the girl from Martinique. More, she was the original of the picture Thorndyke showed us, the missing Marrien!

A frightened squawk sounded as her groping hands explored the opened box. Next instant she straightened to her fullest height, two game cocks, one black, the other red, held firmly by the feet in her outstretched hands. For a moment she swayed, like a reed shaken in the wind, then, with a sinuous, side-stepping, sliding motion, described a narrow circle before the altar.

From its place before the reversed cross the ancient negress snatched the machete, the blade flashed once, twice, in the lantern light, and the fowls beat the air tumultuously with their wings as their heads fell to the earthen floor.

And now the girl whirled and pirouetted frenziedly, the flapping roosters in her hands showering her with blood from their severed necks, so that her white shoulders and breast, even her cheeks and lips, were red as the flaunting cloth of her scanty costume.

The old high priestess snatched the dying cockerels from her hierophant's hands and held their spurting necks above a tin cup, pressing on their

breasts and sides to force the flow of blood as one might press a leather water-bottle. When the last drop of blood was emptied in the cup, the gin bottle was uncorked and its fiery contents mingled with the chickens' gore.

Then followed a sort of impious travesty of communion. From hand to hand the reeking cup was passed, men and women sucking at it eagerly, slopping its ruddy contents on their clothes, smearing their faces with the sanguine mixture.

The drink drove them to frenzy. White eyes rolled madly in black faces, jaws dropped, lips slavered, as they swayed drunkenly from side to side. "*Coq blanc, le coq blanc—the white cock!*" they screamed. A young girl half rose from her seat on the floor, clutched her dress with both hands and ripped the garment down the front, exposing her bronze bosom, then fell to the floor again, rolling over and over, gibbering inarticulately, foaming at the mouth like a rabid she-dog. The drums roared and thundered, men howled and shouted hoarsely, women screamed or groaned in a perfect ecstasy of neuro-religious fervor—the bestial, unreasoning hysteria which sent the Sudanese fanatics fearlessly into Kitchener's shrapnel barrages at Khartoum. "*Coq blanc—coq blanc,*" the cry rose insistently.

The blood-spattered girl ceased her rhythmic whirling a moment and reached once more into the covered box. Again she straightened before the lines of frantic blacks, and in her upstretched hands she held displayed for all to see a trembling white rooster—the *coq blanc* for which they clamored.

Once more the machete flashed in the lantern light, and the poor bird struggled convulsively in its death spasm between her upraised hands, its blood douching her hair, brow and cheeks as she turned her face up to bathe it in the gory cataract.

A pause fell on the crowd as she flung the cockerel's corpse contemptu-



ously behind her and wheeled about until her outstretched finger tips all but touched the altar's edge. So still it was that the labored nasal breathing of the audience rasped gratingly as we lay in our covert, wondering what new obscenity was next.

THE drums halted their sullen muttering and the withered hag began a high-pitched, singsong chant of invocation.

From a door at the farther side of the cellar shambled the vilest thing I had ever seen in human form. Short, hardly more than five feet tall, he was, but with a depth of chest and breadth of shoulder like those of a gorilla. Like a giant ape's, too, were his abnormally long-toed feet and his monstrous arms, which hung so far below his knees that it seemed he might have touched his knuckles to the earth; yet he scarcely stooped an inch to do so. Slope-headed, great-mouthed, half beast, half human he seemed as he advanced with a rolling gait and paused before the altar, then, bending quickly, dragged forth a heavy wooden chest bound round with iron reinforcement. I did not need de Grandin's nudge to call attention to the dozen or more augur-holes piercing the top and ends of the box; I saw them at first glance, and in the same moment my nostrils caught the strengthened odor of that stench which had first appalled me as we crept along the tunnel.

The drums began again, and with their rhythmic mutter came the muted moaning of the audience, a sound half fearful, half eloquent of adoration, but wholly terrifying.

The girl before the altar crouched and genuflected, her head bowed low, her arms uplifted, as though she were a postulant bending to receive the veil which makes her sacrosanct from the world and undis severable bride of the Church. And from the iron-bound chest the hideous ape-man dragged

forth a squirming, white-bellied snake, a loathsome, five-inch-thick reptile with wicked, wedge-shaped head and villainous, unwinking eyes, *and laid it like a garland round the girl's uncovered shoulders!*

Sluggishly, as though but partially aroused from a torpor, the monstrous reptile coiled its length—it was all of fifteen feet—about the bare arms of its holder, slid its twining bulk about her breast and torso, its tail encircling her slender waist, its head protruding underneath her left arm and swinging pendulously from side to side as its evil, changeless eyes glared viciously in the lantern light and its forked, tea-colored tongue flickered lam-bently.

So heavy was the serpent's weight the girl was forced to plant her naked feet apart as she smoothed the dully gleaming scales with her taper finger tips and massaged the white-armored throat gently as slowly, slowly, she forced the horrid face upward, turned it toward her face and—my stomach retched at the sight—*kissed it on the mouth!*

The throng of worshipers went wild. Men and women clung together in strangling embraces and rolled and wallowed on the floor. Some rose erect and tossed their arms aloft, screaming peals of triumphant laughter or unmentionable obscenities. "She has kissed the Queen! She kisses the Queen! The prophecy is fulfilled!" I heard one votary shout, and, mingled with the drums' unceasing roar came cries of "*Ybo, lé, lé; Ybo, c'est l'heure de sang—*"

I almost screamed aloud as de Grandin's elbow struck me in the ribs. The ape-man had left the room, returning with a burlap sack flung across his shoulder, a sack in which something tiny moved and struggled and whimpered with the still, small voice of a little child in fear and pain. He tossed the sack upon the floor and, grinning horribly, turned toward the girl, handling the noisome

reptile with the skill of an adept as he uncoiled it from her white body and placed it, wound into a writhing knot, upon the altar by the desecrated cross.

Into the girl's hands he put the gleaming, razor-edged machete, then turned once more to the struggling, whimpering something in the sack.

"*Le bouc, le bouc sans cornes—le bouc blanc sans cornes*—the goat without horns—the white goat without horns!" howled the congregation frenziedly. "*Le b<sup>r</sup> c sans cornes*—"

"My friend," de Grandin whispered, "I damn think the time is come!"

A crashing double report shattered the atmosphere as his heavy army revolvers bellowed almost in unison. There was a scream from the region of the altar, a yell of apprehension from the congregation, and the sharp tinkle of broken glass as a bullet smashed the chimney of the lantern illuminating the place, plunging us into instant impenetrable darkness.

Sharp as acid, piercing as a knife-thrust, de Grandin's shrill whistle sounded through the dark, followed by the deafening roar of his pistols as he fired point-blank into the milling mass of humanity in the darkened cellar.

A crash like all the thunders of heaven let loose at once roared over us, followed by the tramping of heavy-soled boots on the empty floors of the old house, then the pounding of hurrying feet upon the cellar stairs. Costello, with unerring efficiency, had hurled two hand grenades at the outer door of the house, then charged through the opening thus created, taking no chances of delay while his men battered down the stout oak panels.

"Are ye there, Dr. de Grandin, sor?" he shouted as half a dozen powerful bull's-eye lanterns lighted the place. "Are ye all right, sor?"

A choking, rasping gurgle beside me answered. Turning sharply I saw

the little Frenchman struggling frantically in the coils of the monster snake. With reptilian instinct the thing had crawled from the altar when darkness came, and made for the tunneled exit, encountering de Grandin in its course, and wrapping itself about him.

I snatched the machete from the altar and aimed a blow at the creature's head, but:

"The tail, Friend Trowbridge, strike off its tail!" he gasped.

The keen steel sheared through the reptile's tail, leaving eight inches of it wrapped about a ceiling beam, and with a writhing crash the great, gray-spotted tubular body unloosed its hold upon the Frenchman's trunk and slipped twisting to the earth like a monstrous spring released from its tension.

Half consciously, half instinctively, I realized the wisdom of de Grandin's advice. Had I lopped off the serpent's head, muscular contraction would have tightened its coils about him, and he would inevitably have been crushed to pulp. By striking off its tail I had deprived it of its grip on the ceiling beam, which it used as a fulcrum for its hold, and thereby rendered it impotent to tighten itself about his body.

The little Frenchman's execution had been terrible. Four of the snake-worshipers lay stark and dead upon the floor, four more were nursing dreadful wounds, the rest were huddled together in abject terror and made no resistance as Costello's men applied the handcuffs.

In a crumpled heap before the altar lay Marrien Thorndyke, her eyes fast closed, her respiration so light I had to listen a second time at her blood-smearred breast before I could detect the faintest murmur of her heart.

"An overcoat for her, Friend Costello, if you please, or she will surely take pneumonia," de Grandin ordered. "Wrap her warmly and bear her to the hospital. By damn, I

greatly fear her nerves have had a shock from which they will not soon recover, but she is in better case than if we had not arrived in time. At the worst she will recover from her illness and live; had we not found her, I greatly fear there would not have remained enough for *l'entrepreneur des pompes funèbres* to bury."

"The *entrepreneur des pompes funèbres*—the undertaker?" I demanded. "Do you mean *she* would have been killed?"

"No less," he returned shortly, then:

"*Holà*, my little cabbage, is it hide-and-go-seek you play in there?" he cried as from the rough sack he lifted a tiny morsel of pink, baby flesh and folded it against his bosom. "Ha, my little goatling," he chuckled, "it is better that I find you thus than that you serve as 'the goat without horns' for these abominations. Attend me, Sergeant. Wrap this one warmly and see that she is given milk to drink, then bid Monsieur and Madame Boswell come to police headquarters to see what they shall see. Name of a cannon, but I think the sight of this one will surely stop their eyes from weeping!

"Now"—he turned to survey the cellar with a fierce glance as he reached again for his heavy pistols—"where is that misbegotten *sacré bête*, that ape in half-human shape? Is it possible I missed him with my first shot."

It was not. Stretched on his back, his short, bandy legs and long, monkey-like arms twisted grotesquely, lay the ape-man, a gaping wound in his temple telling eloquently of the accuracy of de Grandin's marksmanship. The creature's shattered head was pillowed in the lap of the aged hag, who bent above him, dropping tears upon his ugly countenance and wailing, "*A-hé, a-hé, mon beau, mon beau brave fils; mort; mort; mort!*"

De Grandin looked uncertainly at the weeping crone a moment, then re-

moved his hat. "Mourn for your Caliban, Sycorax," he bade, not gently, and, turning to Costello:

"Leave her a little while with her dead before you make her arrested, my friend," he begged. "Ill-favored as an ape he was, and wicked as the foul fiend's own self, but he was her son, and to a mother every son is dear, and beautiful, though he be ugly as a pig and vicious as a scorpion."

Costello regarded him in open-eyed amazement. "Dr. de Grandin, sor," he announced at length, "you're sure one hell of a felly."

"*Précisément, exactement*, quite so," the Frenchman agreed with a serious nod of his head.

## 6

"No, no, my friend," Jules de Grandin shook his head in vigorous denial, "it was but the ability to recognize what I did behold which enabled me to lead us to the snake-worshippers' den. When Sergeant Costello mentioned the ravishing away of the blessed cross from the church was when I first began to suspect what now we know to be the facts. Consider, if you please—" he checked the items off upon his fingers:

"First comes the murder of the excellent young clergyman, a murder without motive, it appears, and most cruelly executed. That meant little; a madman might have done it.

"Then we have the stealing of little Baby Boswell; by itself that, too, meant little; again a maniac might be to blame.

"Next comes the stealing of a part of the sanctified furniture from the altar. Once more our hypothetical crazy man may be responsible; but would the same lunatic commit all three crimes, or would three separate madmen decide to act so near together? Possibly, but not likely.

"Considered separately, these are

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## The Drums of Damballah

*(Continued from page 325)*

but three motiveless crimes; viewed as connected links in a chain of misdemeanors, they begin to show some central underlying motivation. 'Let us suppose,' I say to me, 'the same man have done all these things—he have

slain Monsieur Sherwood who is influential for good among the blacks; he have stolen away a baby girl; he have desecrated the sanctuary of a church. What sort of people do so?'

"All quickly I think; all quickly I

remember. In voodoo-ridden Haiti, during the reign of the tyrant Antoine-Simone, he and his daughter Célestine, who were reputed to be *grande mamaloi* of the island—a sort of female pope of the voodooists—those two did actually succeed in hoodwinking Monseigneur the Archbishop of Haiti to bless and almost bury in consecrated ground the carcass of a slaughtered he-goat which they had substituted for the corpse of one of the palace suite. What they desired of the cadaver of a stinking goat which had been blessed with bell, book and candle only God, the Devil and they knew, but the fact remains they wanted it, and but for a fortunate accident would have succeeded in obtaining it.

“This I recalled when the good Costello told of the ravishment of the church, and so I thought, perhaps, I saw one tiny, small gleam of light amid the darkness of these many so strange crimes.

“Then like a confirmation of my theory comes the discovery of the patchwork corset—pure voodoo, that—upon the body of a white girl. ‘Ha,’ I say to me, ‘here are a new angle of this devil’s business.’

“Her murder follows quickly; a murder obviously committed to stop her mouth with blood. We search for the killer; but nowhere can we find him. Only the apes of Tarzan could have gained a vantage-point to hurl the fatal knife, then effect escape from immediately beneath our noses.

“Comes then the killing of Monsieur Lucas, the watchman. When I see his dead corpse all mutilated I tell me, ‘This is no ordinary killing; this is the ritual murder of some most vile secret society.’ And even as I come to that conclusion what do I find but the two burnt matches which mean that voodoo vengeance has been wreaked upon a backslider. *Voilà!* The mystery is a mystery no more. And the so long footprint marked in blood at the murder-scene—*there* is

the track of my ape-man, the one who could have murdered Mademoiselle Adelaide because of his peculiar ability to climb that ice-encrusted tree beside the room where we interviewed her. Yes, the same one have undoubtedly done both murders.

"All quickly I investigate her unhappy past, and likewise that of the murdered watchman. I have told you what I found. Undoubtedly this old nurse of the murdered girl, this old Toinette, is a voodoo *mamaloï*, or high priestess; she have settled here, she have made many unfortunate negroes her dupes; aided by the ape-man, she have planned the supreme revenge upon the white oppressor—she has raised up a white girl to serve the snake-goddess of Obeah, to perform the sacrifice not of a goat, as is done at ordinary ceremonies, but of '*the goat without horns*'—a human infant, and a white one, at that. Thus is explained the kidnaping of little Baby Boswell.

"'Jules de Grandin,' I tell me, 'we must work fast if we are to circumvent this abominable abomination.'

"Then comes the riot when the police are defied with guns, an occurrence without parallel, the good Costello declared. It are most significant. I recall that the bloody massacre which drove the French from Haiti was plotted round a voodoo watch-fire on August 14, 1791, by rebellious slaves led by one Toukman, a voodoo *papaloï*, or priest. Impossible as it seems, a disordered brain had conceived the possibility of waging war against the law here in New Jersey, America. Only alcohol, drugs or religious frenzy, perhaps a mixture of them all, could nurture such an insane plan.

"Quickly on the riot's heels comes the abduction of Mademoiselle Marrien. I see her remarkable resemblance to the dead Mademoiselle Adelaide; I observe the headache-producing powder on the mysteriously delivered orchids; once more the trail of voodoo

cunning lies across my path. Her room was inaccessible to any but an ape; yet she is gone. Ha, but there is an ape-man dodging back and forth between all the happenings in this so mysterious chain of circumstances; once more I think I see his handiwork. Yes, it is unquestionably so.

"'These wicked ones, they will not be denied their triumph,' I tell me. 'Having deprived themselves of the priestess they so carefully trained from childhood, they steal another, as like her in appearance as possible, and by means of drugs and drums, and *le bon Dieu* only knows what sort of foul magic, they break her will in pieces and force her to serve in place of her they slew.

"'I seek a likely place for them to congregate; by great good luck and more than ordinary intelligence, I find it. Forthwith I come to Friend Costello for reinforcements. The rest we know.'

"'But see here, de Grandin,' I asked, 'in the voodoo temple tonight you said something about Marrien Thorndyke being in peril of her life. Would the same thing have applied to Adelaide Truman? D'ye think old Toinette would have risked her life in the Martinique earthquake to save the child, only to have her slaughtered in the end?'

"'*Mais certainement,*' he assented. 'Does not the shepherd repeatedly risk his life for his flock, only that they may at last be driven to the shambles?'

"'But she was a priestess, a being regarded almost as diviné,' I insisted. 'Surely they would not have harmed her after electing her to celebrate their rites. Why——'

"'Why, of a certitude, they would,' he interrupted. 'The sacrifice of the priest or priestess, even of the god's own proxy, is no strange thing in many religions. The priest of Dionysos at Potmice was sacrificed following the performance of his priestly office; the Phrygian priests of

Attis were of old destroyed when they had done serving their god; a man impersonating Osiris, Sun God of Egypt, was first worshipt with all fervor, then ruthlessly slain in commemoration of the murder of Osiris by Set; and among the ancient Aztecs, Chicomecohuatl, the Corn Goddess, was likewise impersonated by a beautiful maiden who afterward was butchered and flayed in public. Yes, there is nothing strange in the slaughter of a venerated priestess by her worshipers, my friend."

"Well, annyway, Dr. de Grandin, sor, ye sure ran th' murtherin' divils down an' settled that ape-felly's hash in tidy order," Costello interrupted. "Good thing ye did, too. He sure deserved killin', but we'd never 'a' convinced a jury he kilt pore little Miss Truman or even the Eagle Laundry's watchman, Lucas."

"*Eh bien*, my friend," de Grandin cast one of his quick, elfin smiles at the big Irishman, "all that which ends well ends satisfactorily, as Monsieur Shakespeare remarks. The motiveless, meaningless crimes which threatened your tranquillity will trouble you no more; neither will the criminals.

"Trowbridge, Costello, good friends"—he filled three glasses with amber cognac and passed us each a bumper—"let us leave off this business as we began it; I bid you Happy New Year."