

Weird Tales

ALL STORIES NEW — NO REPRINTS

MARCH, 1946

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The Man in Crescent Terrace

"BUT this is most pleasant, *vraiment*," Jules de Grandin told me as we reached the corner where the black-and-orange sign announced a bus stop. "The *moteur*, he is a convenience. Yes. *W'biz—pouf!* he takes you where you wish to go all quickly, and *sifflement!* he brings you back all soon. But where there is no need for haste—*non*. It is that we grow soft and lazy substituting gasoline for walking-muscle, Friend Trowbridge. Is it not better that we walk on such a lovely evening?"

The brief October dusk had deepened into dark as if a curtain had been drawn across the sky, and in the east a star sprang out and a cluster of little stars blinked after it. A little breeze came up and rustled faintly in the almost-leafless maples, but it seemed to me a faint sound of uneasiness came from them, not the comfortable cradle-song of evening, but a sort of restrained moaning.

And with the sibilation of the wind there came the sound of running footsteps, high heels pounding in a sharp staccato on the sidewalk with a drumming-like panic made audible. The diffused glow of a street lamp showed her to us as she ran, hurrying with the awkward, knock-kneed gait of a woman unused to sprinting, casting fearful looks across her shoulder each few steps, but never slackening her terror-goaded pace.

It was not until she was almost within touching-distance that she saw us, and gave vent to a gasp of relief mingled with fright.

"Help!" she panted, then, almost fiercely, "run—run! He—it's coming. . ."

"*Tenez*, who is it comes, *Mademoiselle?*" de Grandin asked. "Tell us who it is annoys you. I shall take pleasure in tweaking his nose—"

"Run—run, you fool!" the girl broke in hysterically, clutching at my lapel as a drowning person might clutch at a floating plank. "If it catches me—" Her breathless words blurred out and the stiffness seemed to go from her knees as she slumped against me, flaccid as a rag-doll.

I braced her slight weight in my arms, half turning as I did so, and felt the warm stickiness of fresh blood soak through my glove. "De Grandin," I exclaimed, "she's been hurt—bleeding—"

"*Hein?*" he deflected the sharp gaze which he had leveled down the darkened street. "What is it that you say—*mordieu*, but you have right, Friend Trowbridge! We must see to her—*hola, taxi, à moi, tout vite!*" he waved imperatively at the rattle-trap cab that providentially emerged from the tree-arched tunnel of the street.

"Sorry, gents," the driver slowed but did not halt his vehicle, "I'm off duty an' got just enough gas to git back to the garage—"

"*Pardieu*, then you must reassume the duty right away, at once, immediately!" de Grandin broke in. "We are physicians and this lady has been injured. We must convey her to the surgery for treatment, and I have five—*non*, three—dollars to offer as an incentive—"

"I heard you the first time, chief," the cabby interrupted. "For five dollars it's a deal. Hop in. Where to?"

OUR impromptu patient had not regained consciousness when we reached my house, and while de Grandin concluded fiscal arrangements with the chauffeur I carried her up the front steps and into the surgery. She could not have weighed a hundred pounds, for she was slightly, almost boyishly built, and the impression of boyishness was heightened by the way in

By SEABURY QUINN

which her flaxen blond hair was cropped closely at back and sides and combed straight back from her forehead in short

soft waves. Her costume added little to her weight. It was a dress of black watered silk consisting of a sleeveless blouse cut at

*Mummies are to be found in museums;
not running after people in
the street!*



the neckline in the Madame Chiang manner and a pleated skirt that barely reached her knees. She wore no hat, but semi-elbow length gloves of black suede fabric were on her hands and her slim, small, unstockinged feet were shod with black suede sandals criss-crossed with straps of gold. If she had had a handbag it had been lost or thrown away in her panic-stricken flight.

"Ah—so, let us see what is to be done," de Grandin ordered as I laid my pretty burden on the examination table. Deftly he undid the row of tiny jet buttons that fastened the girl's blouse at the shoulder, and with a series of quick, gentle tweaks and twitches drew the garment over her head. She wore neither slip nor bandeau, only the briefest of sheer black-crêpe step-ins; we had only to turn her on her side to inspect her injury.

This was not very extensive, being an incised wound some four inches long beginning just beneath the right scapula and slanting toward the vertebral aponeurosis at an angle of about sixty degrees. At its commencement it was quite deep, striking through the derma to the subcutaneous tissue, but at termination it trailed off to a mere superficial skin wound. It was bleeding freely and its clean-cut edges gaped widely owing to the elasticity of the skin and the retraction of the fibrous tissue. "H'm," de Grandin murmured as he bent above the wound. "From the cleanness of its lips this cut was evidently inflicted by a razor or a knife that had been honed to razor-sharpness. Do not you agree, Friend Trowbridge?"

I looked across his shoulder and nodded.

"*Précisément*. And from the way it slants and from the fact that it is so much deeper at commencement than at termination, one may assume the miscreant who inflicted it stole up behind her, hoping to take her by surprise, but struck a split-second too late. The blow was probably directed with a slicing motion at her neck, but she was already in flight when her assailant struck. *Tiens*, as things are, she had luck with her, this little pretty poor one. A little deeper and the weapon might have struck into the rhomboideus, a little to the right, it might have sliced an artery. As it is—" He wiped the welling blood

away, sponged the wound and surrounding epidermis with alcohol and pinched the gaping lips of the incision together in perfect apposition, then laid a pad of gauze on the closed wound and secured it with a length of adhesive plaster. "*Voilà*," he looked up with an elfin grin. "She are almost good like new now I damn think, Friend Trowbridge. Her gown is still too wet with blood for wearing, but—" he paused a moment, eyes narrowed in thought, then: "Excuse me one small, little second, if you please," he begged and rushed from the surgery.

I could hear him rummaging about upstairs, and wondered what amazing notion might have taken possession of his active, unpredictable French brain, but before I had a chance to call to him he came back with a pleased smile on his lips and a Turkish towel from the linen closet draped across his arm. "Regard me, Friend Trowbridge," he ordered. "See what a fellow of infinite resource I am." He wrapped the soft, tufted fabric about the girl's slim torso, covering her from armpits to knees, and fastened the loose end of the towel with a pair of safety pins. "*Morbleu*, I think perhaps a brilliant *couturier* was lost when I decided to become a physician," he announced as he surveyed his handiwork. "Does she not look *très chic* in my creation? By damn it, I shall say she does!"

"Humph," I admitted, "she's adequately covered, if that's any satisfaction to you."

"I had expected more enthusiastic praise," he told me as he drew the corners of his mouth down, "but—*que voulez-vous?*—the dress-designer like the prophet must expect to be unhonored in his own country. Yes." He nodded gloomily and lifted the girl from the table to an easy chair, taking care to turn her so her weight would not impinge upon her injured shoulder.

HE PASSED a bottle of ammonium carbonate beneath her nostrils, and as the pungent fumes made her nose wrinkle in the beginnings of a sneeze and her pale lids fluttered faintly: "So, *Mademoiselle*, you are all better now? But certainly. Drink this, if you will be so kind." He held a glass of brandy to her lips. "Ah, that is good, *n'est-ce-pas?* *Morbleu*, I think

it is so good that I shall have a small dose of the same!

"And now," with small fists on his hips and arms akimbo he took his stand before her, "will you have the kindness to tell us all about it?"

She cowered back in the chair and we could see a pulse flutter in her throat. Her eyes were almost blank, but fear stared from them like a death's head leering from a window. "Who are—where am I?" she begged piteously. "Where is it? Did you see it?" As her fingers twisted and untwisted themselves in near-hysteria then came in contact with the towel swathed round her. They seemed to feel it unbelievably, as if they had an intelligence separate from the rest of her. Then she looked down, gave a startled, gasping cry and leaped from the chair. "Where am I?" she demanded. "What has happened to me? Why am I dressed in—in this?"

De Grandin pressed her gently back in the chair. "One question and one answer at a time, if you please, *Mademoiselle*. You are in the house of Dr. Samuel Trowbridge. This is he," he bowed in my direction, "and I am Dr. Jules de Grandin. You have been injured, though not seriously, and that is why you were brought here when you swooned in the street. The garment you are wearing is fashioned from a bath towel. I am responsible for it, and thought it quite *chic*, though neither you nor Dr. Trowbridge seem to fancy it, which is a great pity and leaves your taste in dress open to question. You have it on because your gown was disfigured when you were hurt; also it is a little soiled at present. That can and will be remedied shortly.

"Now," his little round blue eyes twinkled and he laughed reassuringly, "I have answered your questions. Will not you be so kind as to answer ours?"

Some of the fear went out of her eyes and she managed to contrive a little smile. People usually smiled back at de Grandin. "I guess I've been seeing too many horror films," she confessed. "I saw the operating table and the bandages and instruments, and smelled the medicines, then when I realized I was dressed in this my first thought was that I'd been kidnaped and—"

De Grandin's shout of laughter drowned her half-ashamed confession. "*Mordieu*, you thought that you were in the house of Monsieur Dracula J. Frankenstein, and that the evil, mad surgeons were about to make a guinea-pig or white rabbit of you, *n'est-ce-pas, Mademoiselle*? I assure you that fear is quite groundless. Dr. Trowbridge is an eminently respectable practitioner, and while I have been accused of many things, human vivisection is not one of them.

"Some three-quarters of an hour ago Dr. Trowbridge and I stood at Colfax and Dorondo Streets, waiting for an omnibus. We observed you coming toward us, running like Atalanta racing from the suitors, and obviously very much afraid. When you reached us you cried out for us to run also, then swooned in Dr. Trowbridge's arms. It was then we saw that you had been injured. *Alors*, we did the proper thing. We bundled you into a taxi and brought you here for treatment. You know why we removed your dress, and why you wear my own so smart creation.

"That puts you in possession of the facts, *Mademoiselle*. It is for you to tell us what transpired before we met. You may speak freely, for we are physicians, and anything you say will be held in strict confidence. Also, if we can, we shall be glad to help you."

She gave him a small grateful smile. "I think you've done a lot to help me already, sir. I am Edina Laurace and I live with my aunt, Mrs. Dorothy Van Artsdalen at 1840 Pennington Parkway. This afternoon I called on some friends living in Clinton Avenue, and walked through Crescent Terrace to Dorondo Street to take a number four bus. I was almost through the Terrace when—" she stopped, and we could see the flutter of a little blue vein at the base of her throat as her heart action quickened—"when I heard someone running."

"*Parbleu*, another runner?" murmured Jules de Grandin. Aloud he ordered: "Proceed, if you please, *Mademoiselle*."

"Naturally, I looked around. It was getting dark, and I was all alone—"

"One understands. And then what was it that you saw?"

"A man was running toward me. Not exactly toward me, but in the same di-

rection I was going. He was a poor-looking man; that is, his clothes were out of press and seemed too loose for him, and his shoes scuffed on the pavement as he ran—you know how a bum's shoes sound—as if they were about two sizes too large? He seemed almost out of breath and scared of something, for every few steps he'd glance back across his shoulder. Then I saw what he was running from, and started to run, too. It was—"her hands went up to her eyes, as if to shut some frightful vision out, and she trembled as if a sudden draft of cold air had blown on her—it was a mummy!"

"A *what*?" I demanded.

"*Comment*?" Jules de Grandin almost barked.

"All right," she answered as a faint flush stained her pale cheeks, "tell me I'm crazy. I still say it was a mummy; one of those things you see in museums, you know. It was tall, almost six feet, and bone-thin. As far as I could make out it was about the color of a tan shoe and seemed to be entirely unclothed. It ran in a peculiar sort of way, not like a man, but sort o' jerkily, like a marionette moved by unseen wires; but it ran fast. The man behind me ran with all his might, but it kept gaining on him without seeming to exert itself at all."

Her recitation seemed to recall her terror, for her breathing quickened as she spoke and she paused to swallow every few words. "At first I thought the mummy had a cane in its hand, but as it came nearer I saw it was a stick about two—maybe three—feet long, tipped with a long, flat spear-head made of gold, or perhaps copper.

"You know how it is when you're frightened that way. You run for all you're worth, yet somehow you have to keep looking back. That's the way I was. I'd run a little way, then feel I *had* to look back. Maybe I couldn't quite convince myself it was a mummy. It was, all right, and it was gaining steadily on the man behind me.

"Just as I reached Dorondo Street I heard an awful cry. Not exactly a scream, and not quite a shout, but a sort of combination of the two, like '*ou-o-o-oh*!' and I looked back just in time to see the mummy slash the man with its spear. It didn't stab him. It chopped him with the edge

of its weapon. That's when he yelled." She paused a moment and let her breath out in a long, quivering sigh. "He didn't fall; not right away. He sort o' staggered, stumbling over his own feet, or tripping over something that wasn't there, then reeled forward a few steps, with his arms spread out as if he reached for something to break his fall. Then he went down upon his face and lay there on the sidewalk perfectly still, with his arms and legs spread out like an X."

"And then?" de Grandin prompted softly as she paused again.

"Then the thing stood over him and began sticking him with its spear. It didn't move fast nor seem in any hurry; it just stood over him and stuck the spear into him again and again, like—like a woman testing a cake with a broomstick, if that means anything to you."

DE GRANDIN nodded grimly. "It does, indeed, *Mademoiselle*. And then?"

"Then I *did* start to run, and presently I saw it coming after me. I kept looking back, like I told you, and for a while I didn't see it; then all at once there it was, moving jerkily, and sort o' weaving back and forth across the sidewalk, almost as if it weren't quite sure which way I'd gone. That gave me an idea. I ran until I came to a dark spot in the road, the point between two street lamps where the light was faintest, and rushed across the street, running on tiptoes. Then I ran quietly as I could down the far side of the road, keeping to the shadows as much as possible. For a time I thought I'd shaken it, for when it came to where I'd crossed the street it seemed to pause and look about. Then it seemed to realize what I'd done and came across to my side. Three times I crossed the street, and each time I gained a few yards on it; but I was getting out of breath and knew I couldn't keep the race up much longer.

"Then I had another idea. From the way the creature ran it seemed to me it must be blind, or almost so, and followed me by sound more than sight. So next time I crossed the street instead of running I hid behind a big tree. Sure enough, when the thing came over it seemed at fault, and

stood there, less than ten feet from me, turning round and round, pointing its spear first one way, then another, like a blind man feeling with his cane for some familiar object.

"It might have missed me altogether if I could have stayed stock-still, but when I got a close-up look at it—it was so terrible I couldn't keep a gasp of terror back. That did it. In an instant it was after me again, and I was dodging round and round the tree.

"You can't imagine how horrible it was. The thing was blind, all right. Once I got a good look at its face—its lips were like tanned leather and I could see the jagged line of its teeth where the dried-up mouth had come a little open, and both its eyes were tightly shut. But blind or not it could hear me, and it was like a dreadful game of blind man's buff, I dodging back to keep the tree between us, then crouching for a sprint to the next tree and doubling and turning around that, and all the time that dreadful thing following, sometimes thrusting at me with its spear, sometimes chopping at me with it, but never hurrying. If it had rushed or sprung or jumped at me it wouldn't have seemed half so terrifying. But it didn't. It just kept after me, seeming to know that sooner or later it would find me.

"I'd managed to get back my breath while we were dodging back and forth around the trees, and finally I made another break for freedom. That gave me a short respite, for when I started running this time I kept on the parking, and my feet made no noise on the short grass, but before I'd run a hundred feet I trod on a dried, curled-up leaf. It didn't make much noise, just the faintest crackling, but that was enough to betray me, and in another second the mummy was after me. D'ye remember that awful story in Grimms' Fairy Tales where the prince is captured by a giant, and manages to blind him, but finds that the charmed ring upon his finger forces him to keep calling, 'Here am I,' each time he eludes his pursuer? That's the way it was with me. The thing that followed me was blind, but any slightest sound was all it needed for direction, and no matter how still I tried to be I couldn't

help making some small noise to betray my position.

"Twice more I halted to play blind man's buff with it around the streetside trees, and the last time it slashed me with its spear. I felt the cut like a switch on my shoulder, it didn't hurt so much as smart, but in a moment I could feel the blood run down my back and knew that I'd been wounded. Then I lost my head completely and rushed straight down the sidewalk, running for my life. That would have been the end of me had it not been for the cat."

"The cat, *Mademoiselle*?" de Grandin asked.

"Yes, sir. It—the mummy—was about a hundred and fifty feet behind me, and gaining every step, when a big black cat came across the sidewalk. I don't know where it came from, but I hope that it has cream for dinner and two nice, fat mice for dessert every day for the rest of its life. You know how cats act sometimes when they see something coming at them—how they sort o' crouch down and stay still, as if they hope whatever it is that threatens 'em won't see 'em if they don't move? That's the way this cat did—at first. But when the mummy was almost on it, it jumped up and arched its back, puffed out its tail and made every hair along its spine stand straight up. Then it let out a miaul almost loud enough to wake the dead.

"That stopped the mummy in its tracks. You know how deceptive a caterwaul can be—how it rises and falls like a banshee's howl, and seems to come from half a dozen places at once? I think that's what must have happened. The mummy was attuned to catch the slightest sound vibration, like a delicate radio instrument, but it couldn't seem to locate the exact place whence the cat's miaul came.

"I glanced back once, and if it hadn't been so horrible it would have seemed ludicrously funny, that murderous blind mummy standing there, swaying back and forth as if the unseen strings that moved it had suddenly come loose, turning its leathery, unseeing face this way and that, and that big black tomcat standing stiff-legged in its path, its back arched up, its tail fluffed out, and its eyes blazing like two little spots of green fire. They might

have stayed that way for two minutes, maybe more. I didn't stop to watch, but kept on running for dear life. The last I saw of them the puss was circling round the mummy, walking slowly and stiff-kneed, the way cats do before they close for a fight, never taking its eyes off the thing, and growling those deep belly-growls that angry cats give. I think the mummy slashed at it with its spear, but I can't be sure of that. I know the cat did not give a scream as it almost certainly would have if it had been struck. Then I saw you and Dr. Trowbridge standing by the bus stop, and" she spread her slim hands in a gesture of finality—"here we are."

"We are, indeed," de Grandin conceded with a smile, "but we cannot remain so. It grows late and *Tante* Dorothee will worry. Come, we will take you to her and tomorrow you may come to have your wound dressed, or if you prefer you may go to your own family physician." He took his chin between his thumb and forefinger and looked thoughtfully at her. "I fear your dress is not yet quite dry, *Mademoiselle*, and from my own experience I know blood-wet garments are most uncomfortable. We shall ride in Dr. Trowbridge's *moteur*—do you greatly mind retaining the garment I devised for you, wearing one of my topcoats above it? No one would notice—"

"Why, of course, sir," the girl smiled up into his eyes. "This is really quite a scrumptious dress; I'm sorry I said horrid things about it."

"*Tiens*, the compliment is much appreciated, *Mademoiselle*, even though it is a bit late," he returned with a bow. "Now, if we are all ready. . . ." He stood aside to let her precede us to the hall.

"Perhaps it would be best if you did not tell *Tante* Dorothee all your adventure," he advised as I drew up before the modest but attractive little house where she lived with her aunt. "She might not understand—"

"You mean she'd never believe me!" the girl broke in with what was more than the suggestion of a giggle. "I don't think I'd believe a person who told me such a story." Her air of gaiety dropped from her and her laughing eyes became serious. "I know it really couldn't have happened," she ad-

mitted. "Mummies just don't run around the streets killing people like that—but all the same, it's so!"

"*Tu parles, ma petite*," de Grandin chuckled. "When you have grown as old as I, which will not be for many years, you'll know as I do that most of the impossible things are quite true. Yes, I say it."

"YOU mean you actually believe that cock and bull yarn she told us," I demanded as we drove home.

"But certainly."

"But it's so utterly fantastic. Mummies, as she herself admitted, don't run about the streets and kill people—"

"Mummies ordinarily do not run about the streets at all," he corrected. "Nevertheless, I believe her."

"Humpf. Next thing, I suppose, you'll be calling Costello in on the case."

"If I am not much more mistaken that I think the good Costello will not need my summons," he returned as we reached my driveway. "Is not that he at our front door?"

"*Hola, mon Lieutenant*," he called as he leaped from the car. "What fortunate breeze has wafted you hither?"

"Good evenin' gentlemen," Detective-Lieutenant Jeremiah Costello answered as he stepped back from the door. "'Tis luck I'm in, fer Mrs. McGinnis wuz just afther tellin' me as how ye'd driv away, wid yer dinner practicly on th' table, an' hadn't said a word about when ye'd come back."

"But now that we are so well met, you will have dinner with us?" asked the Frenchman.

"Thank ye kindly, sor. I've had me supper, an' I'm on duty—"

"*Ah bah*," de Grandin interrupted, "I fear you are deteriorating. Since when have you not been competent to eat two dinners, then smack your lips and look about for more? But even if you have no appetite, you will at least lend us your company and share a cup of coffee, a liqueur and a cigar?"

"Why, yes, sor, I'll be glad o' that," Costello returned. "An' would ye be afther listenin' to me tale o' woe th' while?"

"Assuredly, *mon vieux*. Your shop-talk is invariably interesting."

"Well, sors," Costello told us as he

drained his demi-tasse and took a sip from the glass of old whiskey de Grandin had poured for him, "it's like this way: I wuz about to lave th' office an' call it a day, fer this bein' a lootenant ain't as easy as it wuz when I wuz sergeant, d'ye understand, an' I'd been hard at it since eight o'clock this mornin', when all to onct me tellyphone starts ringin' like a buzz-saw cuttin' through a nail, an' Dogherty o' th' hommyside squad's on th' other end. He an' Schmelz, as fine a lad as never ate a bite o' bacon wid his breakfast eggs, an' fasted all day on Yom Kippur, had been called to take a look into th' killin' o' Louis Westbrook, also known as Looie th' Louse. He wuz a harmless sort o' bum, th' Louse, never doin' much agin th' law except occasionally gettin' drunk an' maybe just a mite disorderly, an' actin' as a stooly fer th' boys sometimes—"

"A stooly?" echoed de Grandin. "And what is that, if you please?"

"Sure, sor, ye know. A stool pigeon."

"Ah, yes, one comprehends. A *dénonciateur*, we use them in the *Sureté*, also."

"Yes, sor. Just so. Well, as I wuz sayin', Looie'd been found dead as a mackerel in Crescent Terrace, an'—"

"*Morbleu*, do you say it? In Crescent Terrace?"

"That same, sor. An', like I says—"

"One moment, if you please. He was dead by a wound inflicted from the rear, possibly in the head, but more likely in the neck, and on his body were numerous deep punctured wounds—"

"Howly Mither! He wuz all o' that, sor. How'd ye guess it?"

"I did not guess, my friend. I knew. Proceed with your description of the homicide."

"Well, sor, like ye said, Looie had been cut down from th' rear, swiped across th' neck wid a sword or sumpin' like that. His spinal column wuz hacked through just about here—" he turned his head and held his finger to his neck above the second cervical vertebra. "I've seen men kilt just so when I was in th' Filippines. They're willin' workers wid th' bolo, those Filippino johnnies, as many a bloody Jap can certify. An' also like ye said, sor, he wuz punctured full o' deep, wide wounds all

up his back an' down his legs. Like a big, wide-bladed knife or sumpin' had been pushed into him.

"Ever see th' victim o' one o' them Comorra torture-killin's—th' *Sfregio* or Death o' th' Seventy Cuts, as they calls it? Well, th' way this pore Joe had been mangled reminded me o' them, on'y—"

"A moment, if you please," de Grandin interrupted. "This Joseph of whom you speak? We were discussing the unhappy demise of Monsieur Louis the Louse; now you introduce a new victim—"

"Arrah, Dr. de Grandin, sor, be aisy," Costello cut in, halfway between annoyance and laughter, "when I say Joe I mean Looie—"

"Ha? It is that they are identical?"

"Yes, sor. Ye might say so."

De Grandin glanced at me with quizzically raised brows then lifted narrow shoulders in the sort of shrug a Frenchman gives when he wants to indicate complete dissociation with the matter. "Say on, my friend," he ordered in a weary voice. "Tell us more of this Monsieur Joseph-Louis and his so tragic dissolution."

"Well, sor, like I wuz tellin' ye, Looie'd done a bit o' stoolin' now an' then, but it wuz mostly small-fry, unimportant stuff, puttin' th' finger on dips an' dope-peddlers, or tippin' th' department off when a pawnbroker acted as a fence; sometimes slippin' us th' office when a loft burglary wuz cookin', an' th' like o' that. We hadn't heard that he'd been mixed up with any of these now black-handers, so when he turns up dead an' all butchered like I said, we're kind o' wondering who kilt him, an' why."

"I have the answer to one part of your question, *mon Lieutenant*," de Grandin informed him with a grave nod.

"An' have ye, now, sor? That's just grand. Would ye be afther tellin' me who done it, just for old times' sake? That is, if it's not a military secret."

"*Mais non. Point du tout*. He was killed by a mummy."

"A—glory be to God!" Costello drained his glass of whiskey at a gulp. "Th' man says he wuz kilt be a mummy! Sure, Dr. de Grandin, sor, ye wuz always a great one for kiddin', but this is business."

De Grandin's little round blue eyes were hard and cold as ice as they looked into Costello's. "I am entirely serious, my friend. I who speak to you say he was slain by a mummy."

"O.K., sor. If ye say so, I s'pose it's so. I've never known ye to give me a bum steer, but sayin' a gink's been kilt be a mummy is pretty close to tryin' to tell me that pigs fly an' tomcats sing grand op'ry. Now, th' question is, 'How're we gonna find this murderin' mummy?' Do they kape him in a museum, or does he run loose in th' streets?"

"*Le bon Dieu* only knows," the little Frenchman answered with a shrug, "but perhaps we can narrow down our search. Tomorrow I shall go to the morgue and inspect the corpse of Monsieur Joseph-Louis. Meantime there is something you can do to aid the search. This Crescent Terrace, as I recall it, is a little street. Secure the names of every householder and compile as complete a *dossier* on each as is possible: what his habits are, whence he comes, how long he has lived there—everything. The smallest little detail is important. There are no unimportant things in such a case as this. You comprehend?"

"I do, sor."

"*Très bon.*" He cast a speculative look at the decanter of whiskey. "There is at least three-quarters of a quart left in the bottle, my friends. Let us do a little serious drinking."

THE street lights were coming on and the afterglow was faint in the west under the first cold stars when we gathered in my study for a council of war next evening. De Grandin tapped a sheaf of neatly typed pages lying on the table before him. "This Monsieur Grafton Loftus is our most likely suspect," he announced. "This is the *dossier* compiled on him by your department, Friend Costello:

No. 18 Crescent Terrace—Loftus, Grafton. Unmarried, about fifty. Born in England. Came to this country from London four years ago. No occupation, maintains fair account in the Clifton Trust Co., periodically replenished by

foreign bank drafts. Pays all bills promptly. Goes out very little, has no intercourse with neighbors. Few visitors. Nothing known of personal habits, hobbies, etc. No pets. Neighbors on each side speak of having heard low, peculiar whistle, no tune, coming from his home at night, sometimes continuing for half hour at a time, have also noted strong smell like that of Chinese incense coming from his house at times.

"Perhaps I am a trifle dull," I said sarcastically, "but I fail to see where anything in that *dossier* gives ground for suspicion. We haven't any personal description of Mr. Loftus. Does he look like a mummy?"

"I would not say so," de Grandin replied. "I took occasion to call on him this afternoon, pretending to ask direction to the house of an entirely mythical Monsieur John Garfield. Monsieur Loftus came to the door—after I had rung his doorbell unremittingly for half an hour—and seemed considerably annoyed. He is a big man, most decidedly stout, bald-headed, with a red face and fat cheeks threatening to engulf his small eyes. His lips are very red, his mouth is small, and pouts like that of a petulant child. Also, he was distressingly uncivil when I asked most courteously for the non-existent Monsieur Garfield's address. I did not like his looks. I do not like him. No. Not at all."

"All the same, there's nothing in what you've told us to indicate he goes around disguised as a mummy and murdering in-offensive bums," I persisted.

"*Ah bah!*" he answered. "You vex me, Friend Trowbridge. Attend me, if you please. When I had seen this Monsieur Loftus I called New Scotland Yard on Transatlantic telephone, and talked with my friend Inspector Grayson, formerly of the British Intelligence. He told me much I wished to know. By example: Monsieur Loftus served with the British troops in Egypt and Mesopotamia during the first World War. While there he foregathered with decidedly unsavory characters, and was three times court-martialed for being absent without leave when native powwows were in progress. Of no importance, you say? Very well, to continue: When he returned

to England he became identified with several malodorous secret societies. The first of these was the Gorgons, ostensibly a nature-worship cult, but actually concerned with diabolism. He appears to have grown tired of these and joined the cult of Lokapala, which comprised as sinister a company of blackguards as could be found anywhere. They were known to have sacrificed animals with revolting cruelties, and were suspected of having indulged in human sacrifice at least on one occasion. The police broke this gang up and Loftus, with several others, was sentenced to a short term in the workhouse.

"We next hear of him as a member of the gang known as Los Leopardos, the Human Leopards, whose headquarters in the Shooter's Hill locality of Blackheath was raided by the police in 1938. Again the estimable Monsieur Loftus served a short term in jail. He was also implicated in the deviltries of Rowley Thorne, whose nemesis our mutual friend John Thunstone is. Now," he swept us with a cold, challenging stare, "you will admit the company he kept was something less than desirable."

"That may be so," I conceded, "but all the same—"

"But all the same he was a member of the Esoteric Society of the Resurrection. You comprehend?"

"I can't say that I do. Was that society one of those half-baked religious organizations?"

"NEITHER half-baked nor religious, in the true sense of the term, my friend. They were drawn from every stratum of society, from every country, every race. Scientists some of them were, men and women who had perverted their knowledge to base ends. Others were true mystics, Indian, Egyptian, Syrian, Druse, Chinese, English, French, Italian, even some Americans. They brought together the wisdom—all the secret, buried knowledge—of the East, and mated—not married—it to the science of the West. The offspring was a dreadful, illegitimate monster. Here, let me read you a transcription of an eyewitness' account of a convocation of the society:

The members of the cult, all robed in flowing white draperies, gathered in the courtyard of the society's headquarters around the replica of an Egyptian tomb with heavy doors like those of an ice box held fast with triple locks and bolts of solid silver. After a brief ceremony of worship four members of the society wearing black and purple draperies came out of the house, led by the Grand Hierophant robed in red vestments. They halted before the tomb and at a sign from the High Priest all members of the congregation stopped their ears with their fingers while the Hierophant and his acolytes mumbled the secret formula while the silver locks and bolts were being unfastened. Then the High Priest cried the Secret Word of Power while his assistants threw incense on the brazier burning before the tomb.

In a moment they emerged bearing a black-painted bier or stretcher on which lay the unwrapped body of an Egyptian mummy. Three times they bore the embalmed corpse around the courtyard that every member of the congregation might look on it and know that it was dead. Then they went back into the tomb.

More incense was burned while everybody knelt on the bare earth and stared fixedly at the entrance of the tomb. Minutes passed, then at the gaping doorway of the tomb appeared the mummy, standing upright and moving slowly and mechanically, like a marionette moved by invisible wires. In its right hand it held a short spear tipped with the tempered copper that only the ancient Egyptians knew how to make.

The Chief Hierophant walked before the mummy, blowing softly on a silver whistle each few steps, and the revived litch seemed to hear and follow the sound of the whistle. Three times the mummy followed the High Priest in a circuit of the courtyard, then priest and living corpse went back into the tomb. The priest came out in a few moments and quickly fastened the silver locks of the tomb door. He was perspiring profusely, although the night was cold.

The strictest silence was enjoined dur-

ing the entire ceremony, and instant dismissal from the society was the penalty decreed for any member making even the slightest sound while the mummy was out of the tomb. Once, it was said, a woman member became hysterical when the mummy emerged from the tumulus, and burst into a fit of weeping. The litch leaped on her in an instant and struck her down with its spear, then hacked her body to ribbons as she lay writhing on the earth. It was only by the shrilling of the High Hierophant's whistle that the thing was finally persuaded to give over its bloody work and lured back to the tomb.

"What do you think from that, *hein*?" he demanded as he finished reading.

"It sounds like the ravings of a hashish-eater, or the recollection of a most unpleasant dream," I volunteered.

There was no hint of impatience in the smile he turned on me. "I agree, Friend Trowbridge. It are assuredly *extra ordinem*—outside things' usual and accepted order—as the lawyers say; but most of us make the mistake of drawing the line of the possible too close. When I read this transcription over the 'phone to our friend Monsieur Manly Wade Wellman this afternoon he agreed it was entirely possible for such things to be.

"Now," once more he swept us with his fixed, unwinking cat-stare, "me, I have evolved an hypothesis: This so odious Loftus, who had been a member of this altogether destestable society, has made use of opportunity to cheat. While others stopped their ears as the Hierophant pronounced the secret invocation—the Word of Power as the witness to the ceremony calls it—he listened and became familiar with it. He anticipated making similar experiments, I have no doubt, but the onset of the war and the bombings of London interfered most seriously with his plans. *Alors*, he came to this country, took up residence in the quietly respectable Crescent Terrace, and proceeded with his so unholy trials. That would account for the incense his neighbors smelled at night, also for the whistlings they heard. Do not you agree?"

"I don't agree," I answered, "but if we

grant your premises I see the logic of your conclusions."

"*Triomphe!*" he exclaimed with a grin. "At last good skeptical Friend Trowbridge agrees with me, even though he qualifies his agreement. We make the progress.

"And now, my friends," he turned from me to Costello, Dogherty and Schmelz, "if we are ready, let us go. The darkness comes and with it—*eh bien*, who shall say what will eventuate?"

CRESCENT TERRACE was a short semilunar byway connecting Clinton Avenue and Dorondo Street built up on the west side with neat houses. There were only twenty of them in the block, and their numbers ran consecutively, since a small park faced the east curb of the street.

We drew up at the far side of the park and walked across its neatly clipped lawns between beds of coleus and scarlet sage. At the sidewalk we halted and scanned the blank-faced houses opposite. "The second building from the end is Number 18," Jules de Grandin whispered. "Do you take station behind yonder clump of shrubs, Friend Costello, and Sergeants Dogherty and Schmelz will form an ambuscade just behind that hedge of hemlock. Friend Trowbridge, it is best that you remain with the Lieutenant, so that we shall have two parties of two each for reserves."

"An' where will you be, sor?" Costello asked.

"Me, I shall be the lure, the bait, the stalking-horse. I shall parade as innocently as an unborn lamb before his lair."

"But we can't let ye take th' risk all by yerself, sor," Costello objected, only to be cut short by de Grandin's sharp:

"*Zut!* You will do exactly as I say, *mon ami*. Me, I have worked this strategy out mathematically and know what I am doing. Also, I was not born yesterday, or even day before. *A bientôt, mes amis.*" He slipped into the shadows silently as a bather letting himself down into dark water. In a moment we saw him emerge from the far side of the park into Clinton Avenue, turn left and enter Crescent Terrace. Somehow, as he strode along the footway with an air of elaborate unconcern, his silver-headed ebony stick tucked be-

neath his left elbow, he reminded me of a drum major strutting before a band, and we heard him humming to himself as if he had not a care in the world.

He had almost traversed the three hundred yards of the short half-moon of the Terrace, walking slower and more slowly as he approached Dorondo Street. "Nothin' doin' yet," breathed Dogherty. "I been lookin' like a tomcat at a mouse-hole, an' don't see nothin'—"

"Zat so?" whispered Costello sharply. "If ye'd kape yer eyes on th' street an' not on Dr. de Grandin, maybe ye'd see more than ye have. What's that yonder in th' doorway o' Number 18, I dunno?"

Dogherty, Schmelz and I turned at his sharp question. We had, as he said, been watching Jules de Grandin, not the street behind him. Now, as we shifted our glances, we saw something stirring in the shadow that obscured the doorway of Number 18. At first it seemed to be no more than a chance ray of light beamed into the vestibule by the shifting of a tree-bough between house and street lamp, but as we kept our eyes glued to it we saw that it was a form—a tall, attenuated, skeletally-thin form moving stealthily in the shadow.

SLOWLY the thing emerged from the gloom of the doorway, and despite the warning I had had, I felt a prickling sensation at the back of my neck just above my collar, and a feeling as of sudden chill ran through my forearms. It was tall, as we had been told, fully six feet from its bare-boned feet to hairless, parchment-covered skull, and the articulation of its skeleton could be seen plainly through the leathery skin that clung to the gaunt, staring bones. The nose was large, high-bridged and haughty, like the beak of a falcon or eagle, and the chin was prominent beneath the brownish sheath of skin that stretched drum-tight across it. The eyes were closed and showed only as twin depressions in the skull-like countenance, but the mummified lips had retracted to show a double line of teeth in a mirthless grin. Its movements were irregular and stiff, like the movements of some monstrous mechanical doll or, as Edina Laurace had expressed it, like a

marionette worked by unseen wires. But once it had emerged from the doorway it moved with shocking quickness. Jerkily, and with exaggeratedly high knee-action, it crossed the lawn, came to the sidewalk, turned on its parchment-soled feet as if on a pivot, and started after de Grandin.

The luckless bum it had pursued the night before had run from it. De Grandin waited till the scraping of its fleshless feet against the flagstones was almost at his elbow, then wheeled to face it, little round blue eyes ablaze, small teeth showing in a grin as mirthless and menacing as the mummy's own. "*Sa-ba, Monsieur le Cadavre,*" he spoke almost pleasantly, "it seems we meet to try conclusions, *hein?* Monsieur Joe-Louis the Louse you killed, but me you shall not kill. Oh, no!"

Glinting like a flash of silver lightning in the street lamp's glow the blade of his sword came ripped from its sheath, and he fell into guard position.

The mummy paid no more attention to his sword than if it had been a straw. It never faltered in its advance, but pressed upon him, broad-bladed spear raised like an axe. Down came the chopping spear-head, up went de Grandin's rapier, and for a moment steel and spear-haft locked in an impasse. Then nimbly as an eel escaping from a gloved hand the Frenchman's weapon disengaged and he leaped back beyond the reach of the spear.

But the mummy came on relentlessly or, more exactly, insensately, with the utter lack of caution of an automaton. The rapier played lightning-like, weaving glittering patterns in the pale light of the street lamps; de Grandin danced as agilely as the shadow of a wind-blown leaf, avoiding heavy slash and devastating lunge, then closed in quickly as a winking eye, thrusting, stabbing, driving with a blade that seemed more quicksilver than steel. Once, twice, three times we saw his rapier pass clear through the litch, its point emerging four full inches from the leather-skinned back, but for all the effect his thrusts had, he might have been driving a pin into a pincushion.

The mummy could not have weighed much more than fifty pounds, and the little Frenchman's devastating thrusts drove it back on its heels like blows from a fist,

rocking it from perpendicular until it leant at an angle of forty degrees to the earth, but it seemed endowed with devilish equilibrium and righted itself like a gyroscope each time he all but forced it off its balance.

Mais c'est l'enfantillage—this is childishness!" we heard de Grandin pant as we closed in and sought a chance to seize his skeleton-like antagonist. "He who fights an imp of satan as if he were human is a fool!

"Stand back, my friends," he called to us as we approached, "this is my task, and I will finish it, by blue!" He dodged back from the chopping of the mummy's spear, fumbling in his pocket with his left hand, then once more drove in savagely, his rapier slipping past the weapon of his adversary to pierce clear through the bony body.

And as the sword hilt struck against the mummy's ribs and swayed it backward, he thrust forward with his left hand. There was a click, a spurt of sparks, and the blue point of a little cone of flame as the wick of his cigarette lighter kindled.

The tiny blue flame touched the mummy's wrinkled skin, a flickering tongue of yellow fire bloomed like a golden blossom from the point of contact, and in an instant the whole bony, bitumen-smeared body of the litch was ablaze. If it had been composed of oil-soaked cotton waste it could not have caught fire more quickly or blazed more fiercely. The flame licked up its wasted torso, seized greedily upon emaciated limbs, burned scrawny neck and scraggy, parchment-covered head as if they had been tinder. The stiffness went from thigh- and shin-bones as they crumbled into ashes, and the blazing torso fell with a horrifying thud to the flagstones, flame crackling through its dryness.

"*Ha*, that was a trick you had not thought of, *Monsieur le Cadavre*!" De Grandin thrust the tip of his sword into the fast-crumbling remnants of the litch, stirring them as he might have stirred a coal-fire with a poker. "You were invulnerable to my steel, for you had no life in you to be let out with a sword, but fire you could not stand against. Oh, no, my old and very naughty one, you could kill poor Monsieur Joe-Louis the Louse, you could frighten poor Mademoiselle Edina, and wound her

most sorely in the shoulder, but ~~me~~ **you** could not overcome, for Jules de Grandin is one devilish clever fellow and more than a match for all the mummies ever made in Egypt. Yes, certainly; of course!

"And now, my friends," he turned to us, "there is unfinished business on the agenda. Let us have some pointed conversation with this so offensive Monsieur Loftus."

A BRASS knocker hung on the door of Number 18 Crescent Terrace, and de Grandin seized its ring and beat a thunderous tattoo. For some time there was no response, but finally a shuffling step came in the hall, and the door opened a few inches. The man who stared at us was big in every way, tall, broad and thick. His fat cheeks hung down like the dewlaps of a hound, his little mouth was red and full-lipped, like that of a spoiled child or wilful woman, and he stared at us through the thick lenses of rimless spectacles with that expression of vague but vast kindness which extreme short-sightedness often confers. "Yes?" he asked in a soft oleaginous voice.

"Monsieur Loftus, one assumes?" de Grandin countered.

The man looked at him searchingly. "Oh, so it's you?" he replied. "You're the man who came here today—"

"*Assurément, Monsieur*, and I have returned with these gentlemen of the police. We would speak with you if you can spare us a few minutes. If you find it inconvenient—*eh bien*, we shall speak with you nevertheless."

"With me? About what?"

"Oh, various matters. The matter of the so abominable mummy you endowed with pseudo-life by means of certain charms you learned as a member of *la Société de la Résurrection Ésotérique*, by example. Also about the death of Monsieur Joe-Louis the Louse which was occasioned yesternight by that same mummy, and of the attack on Mademoiselle Edina Lurace by your utterly detestable mummy-creature—"

The fat face looking at us underwent sudden transformation. The childish, peevish mouth began to twist convulsively and little streams of saliva dribbled from its corners. "You can't do anything to me!" Loftus ex-

claimed. "I deny everything. I never had a mummy; never raised it from the dead; never sent it out to kill—who would believe you if you tried to bring me into court on such a charge? No judge would listen to you; no jury would convict me—"

"Silence, *cochon!*" cried de Grandin sharply. "Go up the stairs and pack a valise. We take you to the *Bureau de Police* all soon."

The fat man stepped back, looking at him with an almost pitying smile. "If you wish to make a fool of yourself—"

"*Allez vous-en!*" the Frenchman pointed to the stairs. "Go pack your things, or we shall take you as you stand. Your execrable mummy we have burned to ashes. For you the fire of the electric chair awaits. Yes."

As Loftus turned to mount the stairs the little Frenchman whispered to Costello: "He has right, by damn it! He could not be convicted in a modern court of law, especially in this country. We might as well charge him with riding on a brooms'ick or turning himself into a wolf."

"Be dad, sor, ye've got sumpin there," Costello admitted gloomily. "We seen th' whole thing wid our own ten eyes; we seen ye fight wid it an' finally make a bonfire out o' it, but if we tried to tell it to a judge he'd have all five o' us in th' bug-house quicker'n ye could say 'Scat!' so he would."

"*Précisément*. For that reason I ask that you will go out on the porch and await me. I have a plan."

"I don't see how ye're goin' to work it, sor—"

"It is not necessary that you see, my friend. Indeed, it is far better that you do not. Be swift and do as I say. In a moment he will be among us; then it will be too late."

WE FILED out the door and waited on the little roofless porch before the house. "If this ain't screwy," Dogherty began but got no further, for a sharp cry, half of protest, half of terror, sounded from the house, and we rushed back into the vestibule. The door had swung to behind us and the lock had snapped, so while Costello and Dogherty beat on it Schmelz and I raced to a window.

"We're coming!" I called as Sergeant Schmelz broke the glass, thrust his hand through the opening and undid the lock. "We're coming, de Grandin!"

Costello and Dogherty forced the front door as Schmelz and I broke through the window, and the four of us charged into the hall together. "Howly Mither!" exclaimed Costello. Loftus lay at the foot of the stairs as oddly and grotesquely lifeless as an over-stuffed scarecrow. His head was bent at an utterly impossible angle, and his arms and legs splayed out from his gross body, unhinged and nastily limp at knees and elbows.

De Grandin stood above him, and from the expression on his face I could not determine whether laughter fought with weeping or weeping with laughter. "*Je suis désolée*—I am completely desolated, my friends!" he told us. "Just as Monsieur Loftus was about to descend the stairs his foot slipped and he fell heavily. *Hélas*, I fear his neck is broken. Indeed, I am quite sure of it. He are completely dead. Is it not deplorable?"

Costello looked at Jules de Grandin, Jules de Grandin looked at Costello, and nothing moved in either of their faces. "Ye wouldn't 'a' helped him be any chancet, would ye, sor?" the Irishman asked at length.

"Helped him, *mon Lieutenant*? Alas, no. He was below me when he fell. I could not possibly have caught him. It is unfortunate, disastrous, most regrettable—but that is how things are. Yes."

"Yes, sor," Costello answered in a toneless, noncommittal voice. "I had a hunch that's how things would turn out."

"Schmelz, Dogherty, why th' divil are ye standin' there gapin' like ye'd never seen a dead corpse before, an' ye both members o' th' hommyside squad? Git busy, ye omadhauns. Tellyphone th' coroner an' tell him we've a customer for him."

"An' now, sor, what's next?" he asked de Grandin.

"*Eh bien*, my old and rare, what should men do when they have finished a good day's work?"

"Sure, Dr. de Grandin, sor, ye'd never be advisin' that we take a wee dhrap o' th' potheen, would ye?"

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