

VAMPIRE

A stylized illustration of a vampire's face. The face is pale with dark, hollow eyes containing glowing red pupils. The mouth is a simple, slightly open line. The face is framed by dark, shadowy hands or fingers. The background is dark with some light, smoky or ethereal patterns.

by the
author of
"THE SORCERER'S
APPRENTICE"

HANNS HEINZ EWERS

BERSERKER

BOOKS



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

HANNES HEINZ EWERS was born in Düsseldorf, Germany, November 3, 1871.

His varied and stormy literary career began in 1901 with the publication of a volume of rhymed satires entitled *A Book of Fables*, written in collaboration with Theodor Etzel. This attracted considerable attention and led to his association with Ernst von Wolzogen in the formation of a literary vaudeville theatre. In 1901 he founded his own vaudeville organization and, with his troupe of artists, toured Germany, Switzerland, Austria, and Hungary. This enterprise, for a time successful, eventually was abandoned because of its prohibitive expense and the interference of the censor. Later he travelled widely and at the outbreak of the World War was in South America. Unable to return to Germany, he came to the United States, and upon America's entry into the war, was interned here.

Of his books the following have appeared in English translations: *Edgar Allan Poe*, an essay (1926); *The Sorcerer's Apprentice* (1927); *The Ant People* (*Die Ameisen*) (1927); *Alraune* (1929); *Rider of the Night* (1932). Aside from his fiction his writings include numerous volumes of plays, poems, critical essays, fairy tales, and books of travel.



IN THE year in which the whole world went mad he started out—again. He always thought of it as going *again*, never counted how often he had been away before. This time he had stayed home for three years—three years in his old home: Europe.

He knew perfectly well that he was sick; Europe always made him so. After a year there he himself could feel it; after two years his friends noticed it; and after three years any stranger could see it. His nerves—somehow—

But he knew also what could cure him, or at least give him new strength for more years at home: to drink in deeply the torrid heat of the tropics, to breathe the solitude of the deserts, to still his longing in the cool infinity of the oceans.

And he was well again—or almost well—on that day in Antofagasta. Only some little thing had remained in him, something strange, something soft and untamed. Frank Braun smiled about it as he flung out his arms and stretched himself to feel his old strength. Yes, he was well and he wanted to dive into the water, into the midst of the sea lions, and race with them after the schools of herring in the harbor.

This was the day when a streak of lightning flashed across the sky at home, and the whole world rang with a single cry that was taken up and carried over land and under water and through the air: the wild cry of the assassination at Sarajevo.

In Hamburg he had boarded the steamer that was just sailing out into the world. Lying on deck when the boat was out at sea, he felt as if he were borne by the ocean and not by the ship. The ship was only the cradle in which he lay and it was rocked softly by the Almighty Mother. She sang for him and when he closed his eyes he could hear it clearly, the melody and the words. When they got to St. Paul's Riff, in the middle of the ocean, he asked the Captain to stop for a few hours and let him hunt for sharks. The Captain refused at first, but Frank Braun conspired with the chief engineer, who promised that he would make up for the time lost before they reached Montevideo. So they stopped, prepared their hooks and threw them overboard. They caught five sharks and ripped open their bellies in true seaman's fashion, but did not find anything. There is no abundance of human meat in the middle of the Atlantic, at St. Paul's Riff.

In the Straits of Magellan, off Punta Arenas, they met a dirty tramp steamer belonging to the La Plata government. They hailed the Captain and found that he was supposed to take soundings there for his government. He was a Basque from the mountains and seemed to have only a vague idea of what soundings were. So he sailed his steamer aimlessly from one island to the other to pass the time, and when he returned to port he got the Kosmos agent there to copy a few figures for him from a German book. For these the Captain paid in skins and sent the records, carefully sealed up, to Buenos Aires. Not a soul read them there.

They cruised in the Straits of Magellan, over to Terra del Fuego where they hunted otters and foxes, and back to Patagonia to shoot guanacos. They visited the camps of poverty-stricken gold miners and watched the freezing, swearing, half-starved prospectors turn their few hard-earned pennies into drink; they explored the country with Indians, dirty, starving creatures who went naked in spite of the cold and who would sell their wretched lives for a mouthful of brandy.

When the boat lay at anchor in a quiet bay, Frank Braun

would lie on deck, securely wrapped in warm blankets, and look at the blue glaciers that reached deep down into the sea, or watch the water for seals or penguins. He amused himself tossing pieces of bacon or small fishes overboard for the petrels and boobies and albatross that rocked themselves on the water like clumsy giant ducks. He spent the long evenings lying on the skins that were heaped on the floor of his cabin, smoking or playing chess with the Swedish mate.

Sometimes he would reach for his old books and dream with them. He had only a few books with him: *Jacomino of Verona*, *Frater Pacifus*, *St. Bonaventura*, *Jacopone da Todi*. The Swede looked at them contemptuously and yet a little awed. "They never rounded Cape Horn!" he said once. "Are you sure?" Frank Braun countered. "Perhaps Magellan knew Jacopone!"

He bought horses and rode through Patagonia with two Indians, climbed over the Andes and descended at Coronel. There he boarded a small whaler belonging to the Norwegian whaling station and went out harpooning whales. When they had caught two, they made back for port, slowly, at a snail's pace, in this nutshell of a boat that towed the huge whales, one on the port side and one on starboard. In Coronel he left the boat and crossed Chile by train, then turned north through the Spanish-speaking parts. From there he went back over the Andes to Bolivia where he sang and drank with German officers who were drilling the barefooted natives into some semblance of soldiers.

Now he wanted to go back. The Hapag steamer was waiting in the harbor of Antofagasta. He was strong and well—or almost well.

The green water in the bay was so clear that one could see many fathoms down. Frank Braun's boat made its way through a living cloud that rolled and pushed through the water, sparkling and shining like the patina on old silver—schools of herring, hundreds, thousands, hundreds of thousands of herring. The sea lions were chasing them and driving them into the harbor, rounding them up from the ocean in a great semicircle

like trained beaters. One of the lions raised his great trunk above the water and shook his powerful head with the long whiskers, flapping his fin clumsily against the oar of the boat. Yes, that old fellow knows very well that he is free and well protected, that nobody can harm him on the West Coast! He peers curiously into the boat: Who is that man who wants to leave here? Who is foolish enough to leave here—leave this blessed hunting ground of the countless herring? Fool, he thinks, fool! With a powerful stroke of his body he lifts himself further out of the water and splashes back again, throwing himself headlong into the magnificent chase after the rich spoil.

As Frank Braun looked back, he could see the endless nitrate desert, this huge arid stretch of land covering thirty degrees, between the ocean and the mountains. Brown and white and yellow and red. No tree, no bush, not the smallest spear of grass. No trace of green. And the city itself, Antofagasta, parched in the heat of the sun like the desert behind it, like Arequipa, like Mollendo, Iquique and all the other towns. Germans, Englishmen, Chileans, Croats, Syrians digging from the barren soil the stuff that would bring fertility to the soil in their homeland. Pale and parched were all the human beings, just like the desert in which they lived; it was like a single great sigh all along the West Coast: Water! And there was enough of it, of course, right in front of them, a whole huge ocean full!—The sea lion can not understand it.

Flocks of white birds were settling on the cliff all along the waterfront. And down in the water there was the chase going on, the thrilling hunt after the herring. The young sea lions and the females take the center, flanked on either side by the old ones, big, powerful brutes with long mustachios. The circle is drawn closer as they near the shallow water driving the herring toward the piers. Nobody in the town thinks of fishing today—this is a holiday. A few yellow ragamuffins doze on the pier and glance down sleepily into the water. And the sea lions grab, catch, gulp as they dive into the silver cloud. They rear themselves and plunge back into the water, ten, twenty in unison.

Between them appear small heads with clever, almost human eyes: penguins, the birds that became fish. They are jealous because they can not grab more than one fish at a time while the sea lions swallow them by the dozen. A giant old bull lifts himself on to the boards of the pier that creak under his weight. There he sits, panting and wheezing, rocking his head, squinting at the boat through the rays of the glaring sun. This old fellow knows the secret. To become a fish, he thinks, that is the secret! To become a fish as we are! As the birds did, the penguins! To become a fish; oh, man! Back into the sea!—He is certainly laughing now as he watches a clumsy pelican splash into the water—plop—like a heavy ball. The pelican digs his beak into the water and lifts it out again quickly with a fish as his prize. He throws it up into the air, catches it in his beak and flies off clumsily from the waves back to his cliff. How clumsy, the sea lion muses, how plump and blundering! Just to show the pelican how to do it, he dives down from the boards with a mighty splash and comes up in a second, holding his prey between his teeth. Not a herring this time, a different kind of fish, three feet long. He carries the struggling prize crosswise in his mouth, throws it up into the air as the pelican did and catches it. And he repeats this again and again like a juggler! Five, six sea gulls join him now, flying around his head, screeching and hacking into the fish—they want their share. He bites into his fish, swallows half of it and lets the birds have the rest, magnanimously, almost as if he were sorry for them.

And back again, headlong into the chase.

As Frank Braun climbed up the frail gangway to board the Hapag steamer, a tall, fair-haired, blue-eyed officer came forward to meet him and shook hands with him heartily. Frank Braun recognized him at once; he had sailed with him many years ago in the South Seas. "How are you?" he asked. "Fine—since you are here!" the officer answered. "You are the 'Eiermann' again!"

Frank Braun smiled—he had so often been the 'Eiermann.' Eiermann—egg man—was what the officers called the only cabin

passenger. They are always glad in the officers' mess to have a passenger, because that means better food—passenger food—for all, and particularly eggs for breakfast.

"I am glad to hear that!" Frank Braun said. Then he noticed that there were some men and women standing on deck. "But what about these?" he asked. "Aren't they passengers?"

The second officer nodded. "Yes!—but all steerage. We have a whole circus. Going up to Guayaquil."

Then the Captain appeared on deck with the steamship agent and showed them a cable that had just arrived—about the assassination at Sarajevo. "There will be trouble over in Europe!" he said gravely. "Vienna will never stand for that!"

The second officer banged his fist on the rail. "They have swallowed too much already from these dirty hog-raisers! It's time the Austrians gave them a good beating!" And he whistled: "Prinz Eugen, der edle Ritter—"

The circus people made themselves comfortable on deck and put up their small tents next to their cages. They had three lions and a sleek tiger; an old, mangy wolf; a Syrian dancing bear and a couple of hyenas. They had also baboons and long-tailed monkeys, an Angora cat and a great dane, cockatoos and parrots. And they had horses, of course—eighteen horses and a little burro. Then there were the human members of the circus: Madame la Directrice, a stout, fat, flabby woman from Toulouse; two brothers from Maestricht—one an animal trainer, the other a sword-swallower and juggler; two equestriennes and two dancers—one of them pretty. There were clowns and stable boys. And finally there was Louison—little fair-haired, eleven-year-old Louison who walked the tight rope. She was the directrice's stepchild.

Little Louison was soon at home on board ship. She climbed up the masts and explored the engine room with the engineers. She played with the Captain and with the officers on the bridge, with the chef in the kitchen, with the carpenter down in the hold. She knew every sailor and every stoker by name, and

everybody was anxious to do her favors. Whatever her mother needed—and one needs a great deal on board ship, traveling with a circus of more than twenty people and fifty-two animals—Louison begged from the crew.

On Sunday they called at Arequipa; the clowns went ashore with the dancers and the sword-swallower and gave a little show in the plaza. But in the evening there was a gala performance on board to which the Captain had invited all the notables of the town. The bear danced, the clowns slapped each other and the monkeys played soldiers. The fat directrice performed with the parrots, the dancers did their stunts and the sword-swallower swallowed ten swords. Some of the crew liked him best, and others preferred the pretty dancer; but they all agreed that little Louison put on the best show of all. They had stretched a rope across the whole length of the boat, from one mast-head to the other. Bengal flares were lit in the mastheads, a green one forward and a red one aft. The Captain did not like to see port and starboard deprived of their sacred privileges, but he let it go for Louison's sake. His old sailor's heart warmed to Louison as he watched her scamper up the mast. "There, watch her, boys!" he called out to his crew. "That kid can teach you a thing or two!"

Louison was in pink tights, she was laughing and her hair blew in the evening breeze. The man in the masthead gave her the pole which was decorated on both ends with large Chinese lanterns, a red and a green one. She held it in the center, placed her left foot on the rope and pawed it as a pony does the sand. Then she started out.

The sailors stared at her in utter silence, completely fascinated by the young girl's skill. But suddenly the cook's mate laughed out loud, exclaiming in his broad dialect: "Look, she has the green light port and the red starboard!"

Nobody else laughed, and the Captain gave him an angry look. The men beside him hissed him down. But little Louison had understood perfectly. She stopped in mid-air, swaying slightly from side to side, pursing her lips. Carefully lifting the

heavy bamboo pole on the right, lowering it on the left, she turned it inch by inch until the red and the green lights were in their proper places. Then she nodded a gracious little smile to the Captain on his bridge. Blinking at her with his small, shrewd eyes he mumbled into his beard: "*Lütte Deern! Brave lütte Deern!*"—But heavy beads of perspiration stood on his forehead.

Without a word, without a laugh, they all stared up at her, holding their breath, craning their necks, stared at the pink boy who was dancing for them under the starry sky, under the Southern Cross. Slowly, step by step, from the green flare to the red, swaying slightly, Louison seemingly walked on air!

When she arrived at the foremast, a sailor caught her and took the pole from her. Little Louison bowed to her audience, blowing them kisses and thanking them for the furious clapping from sailors' blistered fists, for the hoarse shouting from hundreds of sailors' voices. She started to go back, but the Captain forbade it. "No!" he declared categorically. "I'd rather go myself—I would be less scared!"

Then Louison went around jingling her little cup and they all gave—even the cabin boys had a hidden nickel for her. But the Captain took her into his cabin, searched among his private possessions and gave her a ribbon bearing the name of the ship, *Thuringia*. He found also a silver napkin ring with the Hapag emblem for her. And little Louison kissed him.

They called at Ilo and at Mollendo. It was Wednesday morning when Frank Braun went up on the bridge during the second officer's watch.

"When do we get to Callao?" he asked. "I must go right on to Limal" The officer laughed bitterly. "Callao? We will see Callao in two hours—but you won't get up to Lima today, Doctor!"

That was unexpected. "Why not?" Frank Braun inquired impatiently. "We will stay there for a little while, won't we? I only want to shake hands with a few friends."

The second officer whistled ill-humoredly. "Oh, that isn't it. We have lots of time now. As a matter of fact, we will stay in Callao for weeks! Or perhaps we won't even get into the town." He pointed to the top of the mast. "There, do you see that?" Frank Braun looked up and saw the yellow fever flag flying from the mast.

"What has happened?" he wondered. "Who is sick?"

The officer stepped closer. "The Captain will tell you anyway when you see him—so I guess it's no secret. I don't know who is sick now, but one man is dead. We lowered him into the ocean three hours ago."

"Who?"

"The tall clown."

"What was it?"

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "Yellow fever!"

In Callao they were not allowed in the harbor, nor in Salaverry, nor in Manta. In Guayaquil they were not admitted, nor in Buenaventura. Near Cap Blanco two of the stable boys died, and the next day they had to bury one of the equestriennes. There was no physician on board—and the physicians of the harbor police were careful not to go on board the fever ship. Without mercy or pity they were turned away from port to port.

"These swine!" the second officer complained.

But the Captain said: "They are perfectly right! They have no equipment and they can't have us infect their whole town!"

They crawled northward at a speed of four knots.

Their hope was Panama and the Yankees. But in Panama they were not admitted either because the quarantine station was crowded. If they wanted to drop anchor outside—for six weeks? But the American doctor advised them to go on to California. "You are safe enough!" he called out to them. "No Englishman will want to burn his fingers with you!"

No Englishman? Then they heard that there was war—war with France, with Russia and England!

The Captain laughed. "Is that all?"

"Oh, no!" the Harbor Commissioner answered. "Belgium,

Serbia, Montenegro, Portugal!—And the Japs are coming in soon! Then the Italians, the Roumanians and Greeks—”

They would not believe it, but they were given newspapers, whole bundles of them. “Read it yourself! Germany is done for. There will be peace by the time you get to the Golden Gate—and then Germany will be wiped off the map!”

The Americans offered medical help and supplies, but the Captain refused everything and took on only fresh water and a case with medicines. He left Panama as quickly as possible.

In his cabin they read the newspapers: *New York Herald*, *Times*, *World*, *Tribune*, *Sun* and some local papers from the Canal Zone.

Huge headlines glared into their eyes.

180,000 GERMANS KILLED STORMING LIÈGE FORTS—CROWN
PRINCE COMMITS SUICIDE—SERBIANS BEAT AUSTRIANS, TAKE 80,000
PRISONERS, KILL 150,000! VICTORY OF THE RUSSIANS IN GALICIA,
AUSTRIAN LOSSES MORE THAN 400,000—GREAT NAVAL BATTLE IN
THE NORTH SEA—ENGLISH SINK NINETEEN GERMAN BATTLESHIPS—

The Captain put down the papers and slid them over to the chief engineer. But the engineer pushed them back. “No, I don’t want to read any more.”

“What do you think, Doctor?” the Captain asked.

“Exaggerated, of course!” Frank Braun commented.

The Captain rose angrily. “Exaggerated? Lies, I tell you, dirty lies! All newspaper swindle!”

The second officer appeared in the doorway. “May I see the papers for a minute?”

The Captain gave him the whole bundle. “There, take them away! Out of my sight—quick!” With firm steps he went up the companionway and climbed to the bridge.

Frank Braun went to his cabin and lay down on the bed.

What had happened? What had changed in this last quarter-hour? Was the Captain suddenly different—and the engineer? And he himself, too?

He felt slightly drunk. He wanted to think but he could not.
He reached at random for a book, took up *Jacopone da Todi*
and opened it.

He hummed to himself in a low voice:

Stabat Mater speciosa
Juxta foenum gaudiosa
Dum jacebat parvulus.
Cujus animam gaudentem,
Lactabundam ac ferventem
Pertransivit júbilus.

O quam lacta et beata
Fuit ill' immaculata
Mater unigeniti!
Quae gaudebat et ridebat
Exultabat cum videbat
Nati partum inclyti!

Quis est id qui non gauderet—

He stopped. This was beautiful, yes, surely this was beautiful!
Where had he found these colors, these joyous sparkling rainbow colors—the poor fool of Todi?

But no—why sing the *Speciosa*? Now?—He should be singing the *Dolorosa*!

Do not millions of people sing the *Dolorosa* every single day, whereas scarcely a hundred people have even read the *Speciosa* in all the time since it was written? The *Dolorosa* is the song of the people!

He began:

Stabat mater dolorosa
Juxta crucem lacrimosa
Dum pendebat filius—

He jumped up from his bed. Why should he be thinking of *Jacopone* now, of this poor fool who had been a saint and a lunatic and a poet, all in one? Why should he think of the

Virgin now? Whether it was the *Speciosa* or the *Dolorosa*, what difference did it make now how a poet's mood had seen her centuries ago!

Poet? Ah, there was no art left—not now!

There were only strong fists, and bullets, grenades and torpedoes.

He ran out of his room, down the companionway, across the deck, up another companionway until he stood on the fo'c'sle. Leaning over the rail, he stared into the waves as they parted before the prow of the old ship.

For him, the white foam of the waves once again turned into a dove singing. But the dove did not sing a song of love, as of old, not a song of his bleeding heart. And it did not sing a gay song that cut through the air like the crack of a whip. The white waves were sobbing now, sobbing like the strings of a harp, while the dove sang for him:

—Eia Mater, fons amoris
Me sentire vim adoris
Fac ut tecum sentiam!

Omnes stabulum amantes
Et pastores vigilantes
Pernoctantes sociant.
Per virtutem nati tui
Ora, ut electi tui
Ad patriam veniant!

And his lips whispered: "Ora, O purissima, O dulcissima, ora! Pray, o sweetest, blessed Virgin, pray for your elected ones that they may return to their fatherland! Am I not one of your elected, sweet Virgin Mary? Who, in this age of ours, has loved you as I have? Who sang you songs, who wrote you fairy tales? Dear Virgin; sweet, beloved Virgin; beautiful, divine Virgin, take me home to my father—to my fa-ther- —"

He did not finish the word. The land that his eyes now beheld was Umbria, the land of saints and of sorcerers. Narni and

Terni, Spoleto, Trevi and Perugia, the city of St. Francis and of Jacob. And the sweet shores of Lake Trasimeno—

Was that his fatherland? Were they not at the gates of Vienna already, the people of Assisi and Todi? Had they not always been Guelphs, ancient enemies of the Ghibellines? Had they not always sworn fealty to the King of France? Was not the saint's name, Francis, chosen in honor of France? Did he not preach more eloquently in the language of the Parisian Court and did he not prefer it to that of Virgil and Dante?

Frank Braun loved St. Francis who talked with the birds and who sang the beautiful song to his "sister," the sun. But he loved equally well the Hohenstauphen Emperor whom St. Francis damned to hell. Yes, he loved this Frederick II., the father of Enzo and Manfred, who shaped the fate of the world with a blunt German fist, whose mind transcended his age and who wrote the impudent book to the crusaders in Palermo: "*De Tribus Impostoribus*"—three imposters—Moses, Jesus, Mohammed.

Frank Braun thought: "All three at once! Only a Swabian Emperor could have disposed of them so summarily!"

What was his country, really?

His home was Europe, that was certain. He was at home in Vienna and in Berlin, in Munich and on the Rhine. But he was no less at home in Brittany, in Provence, and in Paris. And in Italy—oh, everywhere! In Andalusia also, in Madrid and in Stockholm, in Budapest and Zurich and Antwerp. In—

What was his country?

Was he a German—he? Because he happened to have been born somewhere on the Rhine? Did he not know many other languages and speak them more often than German?

International? No. He had never felt that. But he had felt that above all the nations there was another, nobler and greater. The "nation of culture" he had called it—and every one who could rise above the masses belonged to it. And this nation was no myth; it really existed because Frank Braun had found its

citizens everywhere, all over the world. It was there, beyond a doubt—

So near, one could have touched it with one's hands—only yesterday!

And today? Gone, disappeared, as if it had never existed. There were only Germans now, Russians, Frenchmen, Englishmen—and they were all killing one another.

But, why?

For the sake of their countries?

Frank Braun laughed bitterly. That was not the way Jacopone had meant it when he wrote his plea to the Virgin! The country he had had in mind was not the Todi that was just then sending forty thousand men on foot and on horse against the neighboring city of Perugia. It was not Umbria whose counts and cities made war against each other—for Guelph—for Ghibeline! And it certainly was not Italy in which Pope and Emperor and King and cities and duchies were fighting one another! Italy was not even a country, only a geographical fiction, a murderous ocean in which the larger fish devoured the smaller! No, poor Jacopone's homeland was the peace and stillness of the blessed Virgin's womb.

And this other one, the Hohenstauphe Frederick—what was his fatherland? What was the fatherland of this Christian who sneered at the Jewish and Arabian prophets as he sneered at the Christian? What was the country of this German whose court was in Palermo, whose chancellor was a poet from Pisa, whose best friend was a Jew from Jaffa, and whose wise counsellors were Saracens? No, this Emperor did not believe in a fatherland any more than he believed in religion.

Fatherland? This ship was Frank Braun's fatherland now! German officers and engineers—but Chinese stokers in the engine room. And the passengers, the circus people—Frenchmen, Flemings, Spaniards, Basques, Bretons. All of them closely welded together; outcasts, unclean, trembling under the whip of the yellow demon!

The night before last the riding master had died and the

hunchbacked stable boy. Last night, just before they reached Panama, the sword-swallower died. Whom would the sea claim today?

Frank Braun turned and looked down on the deck where the circus people were camped. The lion trainer was lying before one of his cages, and not far from him lay the fat directrice. Little Louison crouched on the stairs, and for once the child did not play. With a grave face, she nervously fingered the beads of her rosary.

Not her, not little Louison! Dearest Virgin, don't take Louison!

None of the circus people died that day. But the yellow fever claimed three coolies and a German sailor.

They called at Corinto and were sent off. At La Libertad they were chased away, as they were in Salvador and San José de Guatemala—

Three more of the crew died. Two Chinese died and two Spanish stable boys. The red-haired clown died and the old dancer. And the third officer died, the tall, fair-haired boy from Rostock.

The Chinese refused to touch the corpses and to sew them into canvas bags. So the boatswain did it with the cook's mate. Three days later they were dead.

On the latitude of Tehuantepec, Moses the cabin boy succumbed, and two hours later the directrice breathed her last. She had made a will in Louison's favor and had given it to the Captain. If the little girl should also die, then whoever was left of her troupe was to get everything: the animals, the circus tent, the wardrobe, the cases and boxes and what little cash they had.

The directrice did not die easily. She yelled and screamed, fighting against death, and kept asking for a priest.

On the same day an English cruiser caught up with the *Thuringia*, fired two blind shots over their bow and ordered them to heave to and let down their gangway. When they had stopped, the cruiser's launch came alongside and an officer climbed aboard the German steamer.

"Where is the Captain?" the officer asked.

The German stood right in front of him. "Here!" he said. "What do you want?"

"You are my prisoner!" the Englishman declared. "You will come with me on board the *Glasgow*. I am taking command of your ship. Haul down that German flag!"

"Is that all?" the Captain answered slowly. "You can go to hell!"

"What?" the officer stared. "What? You refuse to obey my orders?"

"I refuse."

The Englishman blew his whistle and six sailors sprang up the gangway. "Arrest him!" he ordered.

"Don't touch me!" the Captain said. "You would regret it." He was so sure of himself, and he spoke so calmly and convincingly, that the men hesitated. "We have yellow fever on board," he continued. "Eighteen dead so far, crew and passengers. Two corpses still on board—" He pointed to the yellow fever flag on the mast and beckoned to his first officer: "Show this gentleman the ship's log."

"This is all rot!" the Englishman exclaimed. But nevertheless he sent back to the cruiser for his physician.

The first officer brought the log, but the Englishman dismissed it with a contemptuous gesture. "I can't read German. Besides—you can write anything you like in there."

When the physician arrived, the German showed him the bags in which the corpses were sewn up.

"Open the bags!" the Englishman ordered.

"Open them yourself!" the Captain replied. The second officer grinned when he heard this.

The physician ordered the English sailors to proceed and they expertly ripped open the seams and pulled the canvas apart with their knives. Then the Englishman bent over the horrible mass that had once been the directrice. After a short glance at the horrible sight, he went back and talked to his officer in a low voice.

"Do you want to see my patients?" the Captain asked. "I have about nine or more—unless some of them have died in the meantime."

The physician did not answer and the officer merely shrugged his shoulders. Finally he turned to the Captain: "I will report to my superior officer for further orders. In the meantime you stay here. I am leaving the six men here as a guard." He saluted perfunctorily and turned to go down the gangway.

But the German skipper stepped in his way. "One moment, sir. You had better take your men along, otherwise I will have them sewn up with my corpses and thrown overboard. And tell your Captain that I am not taking orders from him. I will wait exactly ten minutes from the time you get back on board, do you understand? That will give you time to speak to your commander and make a report. Then I will get up steam."

The Englishman swallowed a curse. He spat overboard, cleared his throat and said as quietly as he could: "Be reasonable, man! Our guns will blow up your old barge as soon as a mouthful of smoke comes out of your smokestacks!"

But the Captain was unperturbed. "Tell that to your grandmother! I have passengers on board—Spaniards, Belgians, Dutch, Frenchmen! Go ahead and shoot if you think that would be brave!"

The officer did not answer again, but beckoned to his men to follow him. It was obvious that the sailors were relieved to get off the fever ship.

The *Thuringia* waited as the Captain had promised, and after ten minutes he started his engines. He stood on the bridge beside the helmsman and made him turn around and go as closely as possible by the cruiser before he pointed the ship north again.

The *Glasgow* fired once off the bow of the *Thuringia* and once more. Then she fired to hit, but the shot went wild and splashed into the ocean far away from the ship.

The *Thuringia* answered with her flag. Three times the German flag sent a defiant greeting to the Union Jack. But they kept on going without stopping a minute, heading slowly north

at a snail's pace. And the Captain cast a long, loving look at his black-white-and-red flag with the iron cross.

The English cruiser soon disappeared to the south. Her commander had taken the wiser course—a fever ship is like a boomerang.

Some one died every day and every night. The second equestrienne died, three stable boys and the last of the clowns. Then the second engineer, a steward, a Chinese and two German sailors. And more were taken sick all the time.

They called at four Mexican ports but were driven away.

One morning the lion trainer sent for the Captain. He felt he was going to die and he wanted the Captain to look after his animals.

"Don't let them starve!" he begged. "Please have them fed! Or kill them if there is nobody left who can or who wants to look after them."

The Captain promised, but the Fleming was not satisfied. "Swear it, Captain," he insisted, "please swear it to me!"

"Isn't it enough if I give you my word of honor?" the Captain protested. "As an officer of the German Navy?"

"Yes, yes!" the man moaned. "Yes, certainly, of course! But please, Captain, please swear it just the same—"

The Captain raised his right hand. "By what shall I swear?"

"By—by our Lord!" the sick man whispered.

So the Captain said solemnly: "I swear to you by our Lord that I will look after your lions."

"And after the tiger, too!" the Fleming reminded him.

"Surely," the Captain confirmed. "I will look after the tiger and all the other animals on board. I swear it to you!—Are you satisfied?"

The lion trainer sobbed. Then he grasped the Captain's right hand and pressed a fervent kiss on it. The Captain shrank back involuntarily, but let him have his hand.

When he got back to the companionway that led to his cabin, he looked thoughtfully at his fingers and then called up to his

steward: "Get my bath ready—and throw that antiseptic stuff in the water!" He walked up a few stairs and suddenly turned back. "Now it is all the same," he murmured.

He stepped into the tent of the circus people, where he found the pretty dancer crouching on the floor. She had both her arms around the fair-haired child that was asleep in her lap. The child was pale and miserably thin, shaking with fever. "How is it?" he asked. "A little better since this morning?"

The Spanish dancer shook her head without speaking.

"This can't go on, *Señorita*," the Captain said sternly. "You are still well and you must think of your own health. I will tell my steward to get a cabin ready for you tonight."

The girl looked at him with her large eyes. "Yes, Captain," she said slowly, "yes, if I can take Louison along."

"The little girl is sick," the Captain grumbled, trying to make his voice harsh, but not succeeding. "You are well and therefore you must be separated from her. You will get sick, too, if you keep holding her in your arms all the time. You must look out for yourself."

The dancer smiled. "Are you looking out for yourself, Captain? Why do you come down here to see us, the only one on board this ship?"

"Don't be stupid, *Señorita*!" the Captain rebuked her sternly. "That is entirely different. I have my duty. Get up and come with me."

But the girl did not move. "You are married, Captain. You have a wife over in Germany and five children—you told Louison about it. You have four boys and a little fair-haired girl, a slim, blue-eyed girl, just like Louison. But I—I have nobody in this world. And I also have my duty."

"Nonsense!" the Captain scolded her. "You are talking nonsense. You—" He checked himself as he saw that Louison was awake. She recognized him and stretched out her thin little arms for him. "Captain," she stammered, "dear Captain—"

He bent down and took the little girl in his arms. He felt her pulse and patted her softly on the cheek whispering to himself:

"Lütte Deern!" Then he pulled back the tent flap and called for his steward.

The steward came running to receive his orders. "This young lady is moving to a cabin on the foredeck. Tell the chief steward to give her one of the cabins here in front, No. 12 or No. 14. And take her up to my cabin first, she is to have the bath you fixed for me, do you understand?"

"Yes, sir!" the man clicked his heels.

The Captain dropped the tent flap, put the little girl softly down on the mattress and knelt before her. When he turned around to reach for a glass he noticed that the dancer was still in the tent. "What are you doing still here?" he hissed at her. "Don't you see I am staying!"

"Oh, Captain," she said, "you are so good——"

"Nonsense!" the skipper barked. "Get yourself out of here, Señorita!"

So she picked up her shawl and left the tent.

In the evening Frank Braun passed by her, as she was standing in front of her cabin looking over toward the tent. "She has sapphire eyes!" he thought.

She stopped him. "Doctor! Please go over and look into the tent. The Captain is in there with Louison. Tell me how she is."

He nodded and went below. He heard a voice from the cages and walked over to investigate. The Fleming was standing before the cages talking to the lions who were rubbing their manes against the bars. He had pushed great chunks of meat into the cages and now he watched them and tenderly stroked their tawny heads.

Softly, very softly, came his whispered words: "Farewell, Allah! Farewell, Mahmud! The Captain will look after you. He has promised me, he has sworn it! Farewell, Abdullah!"

Like a sing-song, he repeated the words, over and over—

Frank Braun walked over to the tent, put his ear against the flap and listened. He could not hear any sound, so he quickly pulled back the flap and stepped inside.

Little Louison lay on her blankets, breathing softly, her little fingers tightly clasped around the Captain's great hands. The Captain sat on the floor without moving; with his right hand he cooled the hot, feverish forehead of the child. He turned around when he heard Frank Braun come in and his face took on an angry look at the intrusion. But before he could say anything, Frank Braun whispered quickly: "Never mind, Captain, never mind!" and left the tent.

"Louison is still alive," he told the dancer when he got back to her cabin.

But in the morning she was dead.

The lion trainer did not die until two days later, together with the last of the stable boys. Then Death rested for a while, but only to strike more savagely when they got to San Francisco. There, too, they were not admitted to the quarantine island but were assigned a place two and a half miles outside the harbor. They were told to cast anchor and stay there for three weeks—three weeks from the last death on board their steamer.

But doctors were sent out to them every day and they were supplied with everything they needed.

And it seemed as if for that very reason the yellow demon wanted to show his fangs once more; in the first night he felled four Chinese and three German sailors. Two of the latter had sewn up the last corpses and the third had had the bunk next to them. Now for the first time the crew became afraid. They put their heads together and whispered.

The carpenter was their spokesman. The crew did not refuse to sew up the corpses, oh, no! The men wanted to show the Captain that they would stand by him loyally to the end, particularly in such a crisis. But they demanded that lots be cast: whoever drew it, should sew up the corpses.

The Captain shook his head. "The man I order will sew them up!" he decided. "I am the Captain of this boat; I alone decide and not the lot!" That was the answer he gave the carpenter.

"Why don't you let them have their way about it?" Frank Braun asked. "Now they will refuse altogether, just to spite you!"

And then you will insist on having your own way—and it will be a nice mess! Mutiny on board—that's about all we need to finish us!"

"Do you think so?" the Captain laughed. "I will show you how to handle the boys from the Waterkant."

He sent his steward for the officers and for the chief engineer; together with them he went below and the four men carried the corpses up, depositing them on the deck one by one. Then the Captain sent for canvas, for pieces of iron, large needles and strong yarn. He and the second officer squatted on their haunches like tailors before one of the corpses, each on one end. The chief engineer and the first officer proceeded similarly with the next corpse. They rolled the canvas around the dead bodies, put pieces of iron into it and sewed up the canvas silently and expertly, without exchanging a single word.

One by one the sailors edged closer, shifting from one foot to the other and shamefacedly twisting their caps in their hands as they watched. Frank Braun stood in their midst and looked on at the strange scene.

Without really meaning to, he suddenly found himself advancing from the group of sailors and sitting down before the repulsive corpse of a Chinese. He took up a needle—

"I am a goddamn fool to do this," he thought. "Why am I doing it, anyway? And what a mess I will make of it!"

In an instant, the carpenter had joined him; he took up the canvas and with three quick twists rolled up the corpse in it.

"Get away, there!" the Captain called over to them. "Nobody is to touch a corpse without my orders! We four here will do the sewing and nobody else!"

The carpenter got up and slunk away to join his comrades. But Frank Braun said: "You may order your men about, Captain, but not me. I am doing what I consider right."

But he thought: "It is not right at all. It is unbelievably stupid!"

Why had he said it? This would have been such a good opportunity to get out of it decently.

"All right," the Captain nodded. "Sew if you like to, Doctor. But pull the strings tight." It sounded like a death sentence.

He continued to sew, laboriously, clumsily, hating it. He took out his handkerchief and held it between his teeth to cover his nose. His Chinese stank.

The others finished much sooner than he and the second officer came over to help him. They placed the corpses in the large lifeboat, swung out the davits and lowered it into the sea. They rowed a few hundred feet away from the ship and there they buried their dead. They took their caps off and the Captain mumbled something that was supposed to be a prayer.

It was not very solemn, but they were so used to it by now. . . .

Early the next morning, the second officer knocked at Frank Braun's door. "Come out, Doctor," he called. "I must show you something."

They went on deck and the officer pointed to something in the water.

"Look," he smiled. "Do you see him floating there? That's YOURS!"

"Who?" Frank Braun asked.

"Why, your Chinese, of course!"

"Mine?" Frank Braun spat over the rail. "Why should it be mine?"

"It must be yours!" the officer explained. "The iron piece with which you so thoughtfully provided him for his last trip was not heavy enough. I forgot to warn you. So he came up again and now he is floating around out there."

"What do you want to do?" Frank Braun wondered. "Fish him out again? Weigh him down a little better?"

"No!" the officer protested. "Not I! If you should care to! He will eventually depart from the sunshine and withdraw to his fishes all by himself, without your kind assistance." He suddenly grew serious and added: "The purser is sick!"

"Any one else?"

"No, no one else."

Frank Braun thought: "The purser?!" The purser had not helped them sew up the corpses, not he. He was the one who had most carefully avoided any contact with the dead or sick. And it was he whom the yellow beast had clawed now.

All that day and all night Frank Braun was beset by a strange uneasiness; He could not stand it alone in his cabin with his books; something drove him out of its confines and up on deck. There he spent most of the day and of the night, pacing to and fro, climbing up to the Captain's bridge and down again. The water fascinated him and he stared at it from wherever he happened to halt, on the bow or aft.

And always the Chinese drifted by. First in the scorching sun and then in the moonlight.

"He is coming to get me," Frank Braun thought. "The fever demon has crept into the yellow corpse. He wants to get me under his canvas shroud."

Involuntarily, his lips mumbled: "Stabat mater dolorosa—"

"Speciosa, Speciosa!" he corrected himself. And yet the word that his lips kept forming was "Dolorosa!"

A picture of the crucifixion arose before his mind and he could not dismiss it, could not escape from its relentless grip.

The Crucifixion of Colmar—

Many times he had stood there, before the terrible crucifixion of Matthias Grünewald. He never wanted to go there, but something always made him. Whenever he was in Freiburg or Strassburg, something made him take the train to Colmar.

Once he had looked at it with a beautiful woman. "It is the most terrifying thing that art ever created," he had told her. "You must see it!"

She saw it. She turned pale, then white, and finally her face assumed a sickly greenish color like the putrefying flesh of the Messiah. She wept, vomited, then fainted.

"It is terrible," she whispered, "frightful—"

He took her out into the courtyard of the cloister and made her sit down on a stone bench under the linden-trees.

But he himself had to go back and stare again at the dead Man on the cross.

Death, decay, putrefaction—and yet life! There was life in it, life triumphing even over the hideousness of decaying flesh!

—That was the way it seemed now—and yet it was different!

The waves were rocking the canvas shroud, rocking it gently up and down, up and down. Was the Chinese trying to break his bonds? The seams had been so poorly sewn—

Frank Braun was sure now that he could see the Chinese—through the canvas. It was swelling up, the horrid putrefying mass was fermenting, it stank—and the water spat out this repellent corpse. A gruesome spectacle of decay and putrefaction—a rotting cadaver—and yet it had life—life—like the magnificent Christ of Colmar!

Only, what was there about this—what was it that made it seem different?

Kung-Li was grinning in the moonlight—

That was it! Here was no victory, no triumph over decay! No ultimate casting off of a rotted shell of flesh, here was not the gesture of one reaching out and up through pus and putrefaction—

No prophet, no Messiah—

Here was something that felt at home in this annihilation, that was satisfied and rolled like an eel in the slime of putrefaction.

But something that, nevertheless, was stretching out its arms—
“Holy Virgin,” he stammered, “Sweet Mother of God—”

They had lain at anchor six days before the Golden Gate when the purser died.

The second officer had a large sheet tacked to the wall of his cabin with twenty-one marks on it—one for each day of the three weeks. Every evening, at midnight, he crossed one out. Six had been crossed out already, but now he had to make six new ones. He was quite desperate that day.

And again two days later when the kitchen boy died.

"We will never get out of here!" he despaired. "There are still four men sick—and God knows how many more will come down with it—"

In his off watches he spent most of his time with the little assistant purser, whispering and making plans. The two had an idea: Just as soon as the steamer was cleared by the Harbor Police, they were going to drive straight to the railway station and get a train for New York. There they planned to take a Dutch or Swedish steamer across to Europe. In six weeks they could be in Kiel, they calculated.

If they could only get to Germany—

Another five days—and again one man died. And then the three quarantine weeks started all over again.

The second officer sat in his cabin and wept like a child. "We will never get out of here, never!"

But the assistant purser was more resourceful. He did not say much, but he went about mysteriously before each visit of the Harbor Physician. He now had the duties of the purser and it was his job to go down the gangway and talk to the men.

Late one night there was a knock on Frank Braun's door and the second officer with the little assistant came in on tiptoes.

"Pst," they said. "Don't make any noise!"

They closed the door carefully behind them like two conspirators.

"We have found a way to clear out of here!" the purser whispered. "I bribed a sailor from the physician's launch. He is coming for us tomorrow with a boat!"

"Fine!" Frank Braun said.

"But—" the second officer spoke up. "You have to help us. You see, we don't want to just clear out like deserters. You must talk to the Captain. If you talk to him, he will let us go."

Frank Braun was doubtful. "Do you think so? He will get into trouble when the authorities find out."

"But they won't find out! They can't! They have not asked for our ship's list yet, so they don't know who is on board and who

isn't. Just talk to the Captain—he can't refuse you. And if he lets you go, he must let us go, too."

"All right, all right," Frank Braun acceded. "I will try."

He went to see the Captain and pretended that the whole idea was his own and that the other two had only joined him. The Captain was not very amenable to the plan. Why was he in such a hurry? He would get there soon enough, what difference did it make whether he was killed in October or December?

That seemed so true—and Frank Braun did not know what to answer. Did he really want to get to Germany at all?

But in any case he felt certain of one thing—he wanted to quit the ship.

If only he had a little enthusiasm, a little—love for his country! If he could feel only a little as those other two did!

But there was nothing in him, nothing at all. He could think only: "The Captain is perfectly right. It is always soon enough to get one's self killed."

At last he thought of something. "Captain," he said. "If *you* had a chance to sail for Germany today, would *you* wait until tomorrow?"

The Captain looked at him firmly. "No, sir, not I! I certainly would not wait!"

"Well—" Frank Braun shrugged his shoulders.

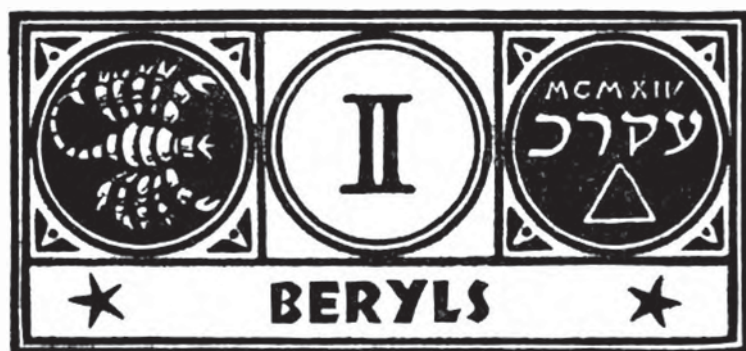
So the Captain grudgingly gave him permission to go.

As soon as the moon had gone down the boat cast off. They rowed across the harbor without being stopped. A taxicab was waiting at the pier to take them to the station, but there they had hours to wait for their train.

When at last their train rolled out of San Francisco the second officer exclaimed: "Now we are free at last!"

And the purser rejoiced: "To Germany! Hurrah for our Emperor!"

Frank Braun was silent—



WHILE they were crossing the continent, the decision grew in Frank Braun to go to Germany with the other two. Slowly and gradually he made up his mind, but in the end he was firmly convinced that this, after all, was the best thing for him to do.

His reasons were of course entirely different from those of his companions. They had only the one thought in their mind: Germany! They saw their fatherland attacked by an enemy ten times superior in number, they saw it on the verge of unavoidable defeat unless it could hurl back its enemy by exerting its last ounce of strength. And they were part of this strength, these two men. They did not look upon it as a duty they had to perform—it was merely their instinct of self-preservation that motivated them, as a tiny particle of this immense unit that was Germany. Their country was fighting and defending itself to the last drop of blood and it must either win or perish—and so must they. It never occurred to them that any German could feel otherwise; they took it for granted that Frank Braun felt exactly as they did, that with every breath, with every beat of his heart he was echoing their all-consuming thought: Fatherland—Germany.

He did not feel anything of the sort. He realized, of course, that individuals were unimportant in a time like this, and he saw how they willingly effaced and submerged themselves in the mass—with millions of others to be welded by the intense heat

of patriotic fervor into an instrument for Germany's defense. And he saw how from this giant crucible there had emerged suddenly, over night, a new being: young, powerful, titanic—the People.

But he did not belong to it. All that he was he owed to his constant struggle against the others—fighting against them the lone battle of the individual—fighting against people everywhere, mostly his own, but always against the Masses, the Nation, the Herd.

To be part of it, to be one with the crowd might mean new life for millions of people who were nothing in themselves, who were created only in this hour of need when they became an atom in the huge body of a unified nation and thus breathed, lived, fought with it.

But he wanted none of this—for him it would mean the loss of everything he stood for. It would reduce him to a mere speck of dust like millions of others, to a tiny, miserable scrap of flesh on the bleeding body of the nation.

What was life for the others—would mean death for him.

To efface himself, to be submerged in the mass—never!

Their souls rejoiced in that which they called Fatherland, and their exultance gave courage to their bodies and lent them strength and endurance, gave them the will to win. His soul heard the message that had wrought this change in them and he saw how all the others responded—every one of them. But he remained cool and reserved and refused to become infected by their intoxication. His soul heard the call but did not heed it.

His body—oh, yes, his body might join them, his legs and arms and his brain. A pair of thighs that knew how to guide a horse, an eye that was sharp enough to find its mark, a fist that had often wielded a sword. After all, it did not matter why he came—so long as he did come!

They could probably use him. War was nothing new to him, he had been in four or five of them. They had been small wars, of course, ridiculous revolutions in Mexico, Haiti, Venezuela and Peru—but it was good practice just the same. Here, as there,

people were shooting with deadly bullets and hacking their enemies to pieces with long knives. This new war was different in one respect, however: in Europe, the great slaughtering was to be handled scientifically now, by experts, instead of by the crude, childish amateurs in murder whose inefficient attempts he had witnessed.

Yes, he wanted to be there, but not out of patriotism—purely out of adventure lust. He had been in the South Seas, dreaming life away in Samoa, while the Italians were stealing Tripoli. He had heard of the Balkan war in Kashmir, but only after it was all over. He had already missed two opportunities and this time he wanted to be there.

It seemed to him, however, as if he were going to a war between utterly strange nations, between people that meant nothing to him. Just as at the time in El Paso when he matched silver dollars with the Texan cowboy: heads or tails? For Villa or Huerta? The only difference was that this time he had no choice of sides.

That was the only nice thing about it—this certainty that he would fight for Germany and not against it. But this decision was prompted by hardly more than a feeling of cleanliness, a matter of upbringing and inheritance, just as he would refuse to wear any one else's shirt so long as his own was still whole in the seams.

It happened just as they were pulling out of Salt Lake City. The man sat before Frank Braun, three or four seats away. He sat there and spat—spat regularly every two minutes into the large brass cuspidor. But he did not use the one that stood beside his seat; he spat in a great arc into the next one, two chairs away, over toward where Frank Braun sat. Not once did he miss; with deadly precision he always hit it exactly in the center.

"A marvelous spitter!" the second officer commented.

"That fellow should be a submarine!" the purser added. "And his spit a torpedo. And the spittoon an English cruiser."

Frank Braun stared at the stranger. He had not been sitting

there before, he must have just got on. Or perhaps he had come in from another car.

As Frank Braun looked at him, he was struck by the man's resemblance to his uncle, the old Sanitätsrat ten Brinken; in fact, the man looked exactly like him. He was short and very ugly, with a smooth shaven chin and heavy tearbags under his eyes. He had thick lips and a large, fleshy nose. His left eyelid drooped, almost covering his eye, but his right eye was wide open and looked at the world with an ugly sneer.

The only difference was that Frank Braun's uncle did not spit—no, that he certainly did not do.

It could not be the Sanitätsrat; of course not. Besides, the Sanitätsrat was dead, dead as a doornail. He had hung himself three years ago—thank God!

The second officer got to his feet. "I am going to the dining car," he explained. "I have seen many Dagoes spit in my life, and some were pretty good at it, but I'll be damned if I ever saw one spit as black as this man! I wouldn't even mind that so much, but the regularity of it makes me nervous. I count up to a hundred and fifteen and—plop—it goes into the spittoon! The man never moves—and I count all over again!"

"Counting seems to be your special hobby!" the purser laughed. "Do you want to start a new list, as you did in the quarantine days?"

"You can do the counting yourself now!" the officer called back.

The uncle sat there, still, silent, immovable as a piece of stone. He did not read, he did not smoke, he did not move. He spat.

Frank Braun now counted the intervals and got as far as a hundred and twenty-three. The next time he counted two more, and then four less. It must be exactly two minutes, he thought. And he counted again.

He counted five times, ten times, fourteen times—

The man rose to go. He looked over to Frank Braun with a quick, fleeting glance, and a slimy, putrid leer dripped from his thick lips.

In that moment Frank Braun thought—no—he was convinced, that this must be his Uncle Jacob.

And yet—the man also resembled the dead Chinese who had floated around the fever ship.

Or perhaps the Chinese was his uncle, was His Excellency, the Geheime Sanitätsrat Jacob ten Brinken—Frank Braun held his head.

The purser exclaimed: "Thank God, that swine is gone!"

Frank Braun looked up—yes, the man had gone; he was just passing through the door into the next car.

"Funny," he remarked, "that man looked very much like my uncle."

"Your uncle can't be much of a beauty, then!" the purser ventured.

Frank Braun said slowly: "A beauty—no, one could have hardly called him that. Hardly. I am going to follow him."

"Whom?"

"The man. The spitter." Slowly and heavily Frank Braun rose from his seat. His voice sounded parched as he said: "He looked exactly like the Chinese!"

"He looked like whom?" the purser exclaimed incredulously.

"Like the Chinese. The Chinese, you know, the one who died of the fever and whom I sewed into the canvas bag. The one who came up the next day and floated around the boat."

"Say, Doctor, it must be the heat in here!" the other man remarked. "First you said he looked like your uncle and now he resembles the Chinese? Or perhaps the dead Chinese was your uncle? Congratulations, Doctor! Anyway, go and have a high-ball, with lots of ice in it, that will do you good!"

Frank Braun stared at him. "He really looked like both of them," he stammered. "I must follow him."

"All right," the purser laughed, "but then you won't mind if I take your seat until you come back—the sun is shining right in my face here. And give my regards to your Chinese spitting uncle!"

Frank Braun barely listened. He thought: "This is broad day-

light. It is one o'clock in the afternoon and a hot, bright summer day. We are in the middle of the United States—in a Pullman car of the Union Pacific, between Salt Lake City and Denver. It is broad daylight—"

The ugly man was standing in the next car—he seemed to have been waiting, and now he turned around, grinned and walked on. Frank Braun followed him through seven, eight cars, to the first.

The car was empty. The man walked right up to the chair at the foremost end of the car, turned it around and sat down. Then he spat—into the center of the large brass cuspidor beside him. Frank Braun took another chair halfway down the car and stared across at him.

He began to count again—a hundred and nineteen—a hundred and twenty—a hundred and—the cuspidor did not seem to contain any water; there was no splash when the man spat into it. Only a faint, slightly metallic noise, like a chirping or whistling, or rather a squeak. Very black it came through the air, right into the brightly polished spittoon—ping—ping—

Frank Braun could not take his eyes off the spittoon, and strained his ears.

Something was scraping in there, something pushed and rubbed against the metal. It seemed to be racing around inside the cuspidor, very fast, going round and round.

A hundred and eighteen—nineteen—twenty—and the man pursed his fat lips and the black blob came flying through the air, black as ink, and right into the round hole of the metal spittoon on which the sun shone brightly, making it sparkle like pure gold.

Ping—ping—and at once it started to scrape again, started to race around inside the spittoon. The thing that the man was spitting had life.

Frank Braun leaned forward in his chair and stared at the cuspidor. Now he could see it clearly: a little black head lifted itself out over the round hole, small pointed ears were pricked up and tiny green eyes peered over at him. It lifted itself onto the

rim, dropped back and finally jumped up again. For a short moment it sat on the bright gold in the sunlight. Then it jumped out and disappeared under the chairs.

Frank Braun drew a deep sigh of relief. So that was it: a poor little mouse had been hiding in the cuspidor and must have been terrified by the hail of black missiles. So that was the explanation! But the little mouse escaped, thank God!

Yet there was another squeak, and more scraping inside the spittoon. Frank Braun thought: "There must be more in there, a whole nest of them, perhaps." They came out, large and small ones, one by one, sat on the sunlit piece of gold, peeked into the world and jumped down and disappeared.

Another one, and another, still more—many more—

Again the ugly man pursed his lips—but no, he did not purse them, he blew them up like a lead funnel and spat something black. And this black thing moved in the air, and even before it landed in the spittoon, it squeaked. Frank Braun heard it quite clearly. It squeaked—and again after two minutes, and again after another two minutes.

The man was spitting black mice.

Strangely enough, this did not seem at all unusual to Frank Braun. He remembered a man he had seen once in the Circus Busch in Berlin, and a second time in Madrid in the Teatro Romeo. The man had taken a large bowl filled with water in which swam little fishes, tadpoles and frogs. He raised it to his lips and drained it with all its contents. Then he leaned back, puffed up his cheeks and blew—and a pretty fountain came out of his mouth. The fishes he had swallowed came spraying through the air, golden, silver, green ones, salamanders, frogs, tadpoles—even a few fat leeches. They all thrashed around on the floor and the attendants hurried to gather them up and put them into an aquarium where they all swam about merrily—it must have been a relief to be there after the dark belly of the magician.

Perhaps the ugly man in the car did the same thing. He, perhaps, had a well-filled mousetrap in his pocket, or even a whole

cigar box full of them. Probably he stuffed the little creatures into his mouth, quickly, when no one was looking, and spat them out afterwards. Or else he had swallowed a few dozen mice a little while ago and was spewing them forth now from the depth of his belly, one by one.

It was a trick, just a common, ordinary magician's trick!

And his grin, that sneering grin of his! Now he got up, slowly and heavily, formed his slimy lips into a funnel and blew up his belly and his cheeks. They burst out of his mouth like firecrackers—mice, mice, hundreds of black mice. They jumped on the chairs, whistled, squeaked, screeched, raced about the car, ran everywhere and then disappeared.

Always that ugly sneering grin! And he looked exactly like the old Sanitätsrat!

"Uncle Jacob!" Frank Braun whispered.

Suddenly he fell forward as something forced him down on his knees. Holding on to the chair with his left hand and supporting himself on the floor with his right, he managed to regain his balance. There was a dull thud and the shrill shriek of the train whistle.

The train stopped—something had happened. He jumped up and ran into the next car. There was great excitement among the passengers; they were opening windows to look outside, or trying to force their way to the rear of the car.

"What has happened?" he called.

No one knew. He forced his way through the car, surging along with the crowd. He could not see anything in the next car either, nor in the third.

But then he saw what had happened—it was nothing unusual. The guard at one of the crossings had been asleep and the bars had not been let down. By a silly coincidence, the horses of a farm wagon had shied and had rushed right into the train. The horses were lying near the track, horribly mutilated, and the wagon was smashed into pieces. One of the horses was dead already and a merciful passenger had just put the second out of its misery with his revolver. Nothing had happened to the

driver, however. He had been thrown clear over the train and had landed on the other side of the track. He was rubbing his legs and arms, feeling himself all over to see whether anything was broken. He had come off with hardly a scratch.

Nothing had happened to the train, either, except for a few scratches on the paint of one car. A windowpane was smashed where the pole of the cart had gone through.

Just this one windowpane was smashed—and something that had been behind it. The blond head of a passenger now red with blood.

The passenger was the little purser's assistant who had taken Frank Braun's seat. He was dead.

They carried the body to the baggage car in front and left it there.

The delay lasted not more than ten minutes, then the whistle blew. But they had to wait a few minutes more before they could proceed, to let another train pass, coming in the opposite direction. Frank Braun looked at it as it passed by—

There, at a window, sprawling on his seat, sat the ugly man who looked like Uncle Jacob. He spat out the window—and a little black mouse hurried across the tracks—

The ferry ploughed its way slowly across the Hudson, a huge turtle with great rounded shell, crawling quietly and noiselessly across the water. Frank Braun sat on the upper deck and looked back at the peaks and crags of Manhattan as they glowed in the dull light of the November sun.

The second officer sat beside him. "So you still insist that you are going?" Frank Braun asked him. The officer only nodded and said curtly, almost contemptuously: "I am going!"

Frank Braun took a newspaper out of his pocket. "Here, read this! The *Bergensfjord* was brought into Kirkall with five hundred and sixty German prisoners. This is their last catch."

The officer shrugged his shoulders. "I am going just the same."

"That isn't all," Frank Braun continued. "The *Potsdam* brought the Englishmen more than three thousand prisoners,

the *Hellig Olav* eight hundred. The *Nieuw Amsterdam* delivered almost two thousand prisoners to the French at Brest, the *Frederick VIII* brought——"

"I know," the officer interrupted him. "The *King Haakon* brought almost a thousand men to Dover, the *United States* twice as many to Falmouth. I know. I know also how many prisoners the Italian boats delivered to the English in Gibraltar. Altogether twenty thousand or more. I am going just the same." He was silent for a moment and looked down the river toward the open sea. "Perhaps I will have better luck. They say that the *Noordam* got through."

"They say!" Frank Braun exclaimed impatiently. "They say! And tomorrow you can read the gleeful reports in the *World* that she is in Hull or Cherbourg!"

The other man did not answer. Silently they crossed the mighty river on which steamers, tugs and ferries scurried to and fro like giant water bugs. When they approached the Hoboken side the officer became more talkative. "Here I always feel as if I were practically home, with so many Germans around and everybody speaking German!"

They passed by the long piers of the Bremer Lloyd and the Hapag where the mighty boats of the Germans, the largest in the world, were housed. But no smoke came out of their smokestacks and there was no life on board. The second officer stopped and pointed to the *Vaterland* whose huge bulk towered high above the houses. "There, look at them, these are our boats!"

"Wait till THEY sail again!" Frank Braun smiled.

But the officer shook his head. "Try it on somebody else, Doctor! There will be enough Germans on board the *Ryndam*. Go make them a speech!"

"I shall do that!" Frank Braun nodded, biting his lips. "I certainly shall, you can depend on that. I will make them a speech!"

When they came to the pier of the Holland Line, they found the spacious hall crowded with fair-haired men, women and children. The women and children cried, but the men were

laughing and singing. Frank Braun and his companion pushed their way through the crowd to the gangplank.

"How many passengers on board?" Frank Braun asked the purser of the *Ryndam* who stood beside the gangplank.

"Don't know exactly," the Dutchman grumbled. "Two and a half thousand, probably more. Capacity crowd—cabin and steerage."

"Germans?"

The Dutchman laughed. "What else?—Austrians and Hungarians. Not half a dozen neutrals. Are you going, too?"

Frank Braun said that he was not. "Do you think you will get them all across safely?"

"Oh, yes; everybody will get there all right, don't worry! We guarantee that. They will all get across—exactly as far as Falmouth! The English will be pleased. We bring them good fresh meat and all for nothing!"

Without an instant's hesitation, Frank Braun mounted the gangplank. Clapping his hands and waving his newspaper in the air, he shouted as loud as he could: "Attention, attention! Everybody!"

People began to look at him. "Quiet!" some one commanded. And another man called: "Listen! He has a late edition! Let him read it!" And they repeated: "Quiet! Listen! Read the cable!" They all gathered around the gangplank, crowding as close to him as they could, both in the hall and up on deck of the steamer.

Frank Braun began quickly, but at first he stammered and faltered. "Louder!" people yelled. "I can't understand a word!" a fat man shouted from the deck. "Is it something about Kluck?"

"Don't sail, men!" Frank Braun cried. "Don't sail on this Goddamn Dutch boat. Not one of you will get to Germany, not a single one! They are shipping you right into the enemy's hands, just like so many herring! You are prisoners as soon as you get past Sandy Hook—and you are paying your good money for it, too! It's all right as long as you are on the ocean, but over there

you'll be put into concentration camps!—Do you know what that is—concentration camps?"

A broad-shouldered heavily bearded seaman who stood right in front of Frank Braun began to laugh. "We don't care! Anyway, it will be better than loafing around here, with no work and nothing to eat! You, sir, you may be able to wait here—but what about me? And what about all the others? Are we to stay here to become beggars, or thieves or criminals? I had rather remain honest and become a prisoner of war in an English camp!"

"You don't know what you are talking about, man!" Frank Braun thundered. "Here in this country everybody at least has a chance—over there he hasn't even that! Here everybody can try to work for himself and for the Fatherland, but in a prison camp he has to work for England. You don't know what it is like in prison camps—you don't know and nobody here does! But I know! I know them well—from the Boer War! Men, women, children herded together like flies, all diseased and infecting each other. Many get in—but few come out whole!—Don't go on board this ship, men, stay where you are!"

A tall man with a military mustache leaned across the rail. "*Kameraden!*" he cried, "*Kameraden!* What this gentleman here is telling us may all be true! But I am an officer and so are many others here, either in the regular force or in the reserve corps, all members of our magnificent army! Men, over there our brothers and fathers and friends are fighting for life and death, giving their blood for their children and wives, for the honor of our Fatherland! Are you going to stay behind like cowards?—Just this morning I saw the Consul General and talked to him about the very things that this gentleman here was telling us. I asked him what we should do, and the Consul General, the representative of our people, told me that it was the duty of every German citizen to return home by the quickest and best possible way to offer his services to the cause of the Fatherland! You all know it, too—didn't many of you get the money for the trip from the Consul himself? 'Will we get through?' I

asked the Consul. And he answered: "That rests in the hands of God! Act as your conscience prompts you and do your duty! *Kameraden!* The fact that we all came here shows that we are willing to do our duty! Whatever may happen—we will have done our duty, our proud duty as Germans and as men!"

Frantic cheers and applause followed the ringing words of the German officer. "Germany forever!" people shouted, "Hurrah for the Emperor!"

Frank Braun drummed with his fingers on the railing of the gangplank, waiting impatiently until the crowd would quiet down. Then he began again: "Men," he cried, "men, you are insane—" but he could not make himself heard over the din of the hall.

Shouts and yells, cries and sobs mingled with the shrill blasts from the steam whistle. And above the tumult rose the strains of the song that the crowd never stopped singing, that they started over and over again, one verse after another:

"Lieb Vaterland—magst ruhig sein—"

The hawsers were loosened and with a great rattling noise the anchor chain was hoisted. Sailors pulled up the gangplank and closed the rail. Slowly, the *Ryndam* started to move.

Suddenly Frank Braun was left alone in the great hall as all those who had stayed ashore hurried to the front of the pier where they could see the steamer pass, where they might catch a last glimpse of their loved ones. They waved their handkerchiefs singing and shouting: "*Auf Wiedersehen!*" The ship's band played the usual farewell song: "*Muss i denn, muss i denn zum Städtle hinaus—Städtle hinaus—*"

Frank Braun looked down the Hudson after the *Ryndam* and his lips mumbled: "There she goes, there she goes—" And yet he was ashamed that he was not on board, too.

Then he remembered an old song from the *Bewerland*:

In einem Pisspott kam er geschwommen
Hochzeitlich geputzt hinab den Rhein—
Und als er nach Rotterdam gekommen,
Da sprach er: "Juffräuken, willst du mich frein?"

He laughed bitterly. The old song come true again! Here they were all decked out in their bridal garb, all of them, just like the mouse hero in the song. And all of them were going to their beloved bride whose name was Fatherland! Going to Rotterdam like the he-mouse, and the only difference was that the mouse-hero had been luckier because *he* got to the city in spite of his strange vehicle, while they, the two thousand rats, would never get there; their pot, their damned Dutch pot, was already a giant rat trap.

He started as someone put a hand lightly on his shoulder. It was Tewes, an editor of the *Deutscher Herold*.

"Doctor," the newspaper man cackled hoarsely, "this was a failure, so to speak!"

Frank Braun nodded silently.

"I could have told you that before," the man continued. "I have been on the pier every time a boat sailed, I have watched seventeen boats sail since August. It is always the same, it's simply no use!"

He waited, and when no answer was forthcoming, he continued: "Anyway, you speak well! You have the material in you, and you have the name, too. You must help us—for the German cause!"

"What have I got to do with it?" Frank Braun said morosely.

"Come, come!" the editor appeased him. "We need you, Doctor! You cut a good figure—and you know how to speak! You will soon learn all the little tricks. Phrases, nice fat phrases as the Major dished them out a while ago—that is what the crowds want! Words that everybody knows, that every child can learn by heart! Any Vereins-Speaker in Germany knows how to do that. You will see how that packs them in! But then there is something that these phrasemakers can't do, something the Major can not do, either: a clever thought, now and then, you know, something new once in a while—for the better class people! Because they are just as important to us as the masses, believe me! And they have to have something better now and then to keep from vomiting, what with all the talk about the

Black-White-and-Red and the Nation's Plight, about German Culture, Kaiser and Reich, about Bismarck's Heirloom and all the rest of it."

Taking Frank Braun's arm, he walked up and down with him, talking incessantly. Frank Braun had to help—it was his duty. He could not desert them in such a time. Didn't he know how everything German was being dragged into the mud here every single day, didn't he see all the abuse to which they were exposed in this country? Therefore the Germans here would have to unite to defend themselves. The Committee for German Propaganda had been definitely formed now and Frank Braun would have to join it!

Frank Braun heard what the man said, but the voice seemed to come from far away, as if the man were not talking to him at all but to someone else.

"Yes—yes—" he said lightly.

The newspaper man grew more insistent. "You won't get away from me like this," he smiled. "Not from me! You will have to make a try, at least! If it is a failure—all right! But if it is a success, we will send you throughout the country! It will be no pleasure, I must warn you, but you simply have to do it, you have to!"

He interrupted himself for a moment and took hold of a button on Frank Braun's coat.

"Tell me, Doctor," he asked. "Would you go over to Germany if you had a reasonable chance of getting there safely?"

Frank Braun thought: "Just what I asked the Captain!"

But the editor did not wait for an answer. "There, you see! And now look here: You can do more for Germany, ten times more, ten thousand times more than if you were over there lying in a trench! All right then, you will try it, won't you, Doctor?—On Sunday, at the German Day in Baltimore!"

Frank Braun nodded mechanically: "Yes, yes——"

The man pulled out his notebook: "Your address, please? And your telephone number?" He closed the book and put it back in his pocket. He seemed very well satisfied with himself. "So,

it is settled—you will hear from me, Doctor, I will give you all the details some other time. I will telephone you tomorrow." He turned to go, but came back quickly. "I almost forgot—there is a lady here waiting for you; she wants to talk to you. An old friend of yours."

"What is her name?"

"Mrs. van Ness," Tewes answered. "Come along now, please!" He tried to pull Frank Braun away with him.

"I don't know her, I have never heard that name before!" Frank Braun protested.

"But she knows you, Doctor, don't worry!" the newspaper man insisted. "It was she who gave me the idea of getting you for our cause. But please come along now, I am in a hurry! I have to get back to the office!"

He pulled Frank Braun to the other end of the hall where a lady was waiting for them. She was of medium height, a slim figure dressed in deep mourning, with a long *crêpe* veil hiding her face.

"Here he is," Tewes said. And he introduced: "Mrs. van Ness." Then he turned quickly to go. "And now you must excuse me—I really can't stay." He walked away, hurrying over to the exit with long, rapid strides.

The lady pushed back her veil and Frank Braun saw that she had reddish-blond hair and sparkling green eyes. "Oh, no!" he thought. "Not black! She should never wear black!"

Then he recognized her: It was Lotte Levi.

"It is you, Lotte——" he used the formal *Sie*.

She smiled: "'*Sie*'? Still '*Sie*'?"

"Well then, '*Du*,' Lotte," he corrected himself.—"'*Du*'—if you prefer. When did we last see each other?"

"In Venice, six years ago! I met you in St. Marks Square and you said: 'Lotte Levi, the Phenician! Red hair, green eyes and thin black lines over them. Slim as Baaltis—and her nails dyed with henna. Boarding school desires—yet knows every sin and is longing for new ones. Tiergarten—thoroughbred—should wear Belladonna in her hair.'"

"Do you remember so well what I said?" he asked.

She nodded. "Very well. What you said and what I said. And what happened. I had you for one day and one night."

"You are in mourning?" he interrupted quickly.

She noticed that he was trying to direct the conversation into less dangerous channels, and only smiled—a slow, inscrutable smile. "Why? Do you think that I would let you go now?"

"You, too?" he laughed, and his laugh sounded almost relieved. "Just now that editor got hold of me. Do you think that anybody can take me and do with me what he pleases?"

She became serious. "Yes, I do think that. Anybody can take you—anybody who cares and wants to. Sometimes I think that you are not even a human being, only a stringed instrument that, strangely enough, looks alive. Anything can take you and play on you—people, things, thoughts! You, Frank Braun, you are always only a puppet in your melodramas!"

"And do you want to pull the strings again, Lotte?" he scoffed. "You must remember, however, that I have at least one will of my own."

"What is that?"

"The will to run away!"

She nodded. "Oh, yes—perhaps the best thing about you! For yourself—and for others, too. It keeps you young!"

"As you do, Lotte!" he remarked.

She sighed. "Do you think so? I am thirty now.—Anyway, I know that I have never in my life looked better than I do now. Not even when I was fifteen and when you se—or rather, when I forced you to seduce me—was I as beautiful as I am now. And not when I had you again at nineteen, nor the last time in Venice. Yes, I know that I am beautiful now and therefore——"

"Our love affair is old, Lotte!" he interrupted her.

She looked at him quietly. "Our friendship, you mean! Yes, quite old—sixteen years now! But our love affair—let me count! One afternoon in Berlin—then our Easter trips a few years later—makes five days. And again Venice, one day and one night.—Altogether one week, therefore, on the outside."

She never took her glance from him, but he did not return it and his eyes roamed through the spacious hall. Finally she said with a little sigh: "It seems we are the last ones. Let us go."

They walked silently for a few paces. Then she began again: "Aren't you wondering why I am in mourning?"

"Oh, yes," he said. "Has your father died?—Or your mother?"

"Father died three years ago," she replied. "He had a stroke. The Geheime Kommerzienrat Levi had a beautiful funeral, quite magnificent and very Christian, after mother's heart. She moved away from Berlin afterwards and now she is living on her estate in Thuringia with her father, the old Baron Kühbeck."

"Three years ago—" he mused. "And you are still in mourning?"

"Not for father. Shortly before he died I married an American—cotton—a business friend of father's. He was very rich. He died six weeks ago."

"I—I am so—" he tried. It was no use, he could not bring himself to say it.

"Never mind, my friend!" she said. And they walked another few steps in silence.

"The last time I saw you," he began again, "you told me that you were engaged to a Count or something. In Venice, wasn't it?"

A gleam of joy flashed across her face. "Oh, you remember! Yes, mother had set her heart on it, but father didn't want me to. I believe he would have preferred me to marry you!"

"And you?"

"I?" she laughed. "I? I, too, of course—you know that very well. But you had gone—the next day! And at that time I was still a little proud—or stupid, whichever you prefer. Instead of going after you I cried my heart out as I had done before. Then the American came—and father grew insistent, just as mother had been with her handsome Count! One or the other—I didn't care! So I counted it off on the buttons of father's waistcoat—and became Mrs. van Ness."

When they had reached the street, she beckoned to her chauffeur. The car pulled up and Frank Braun opened the door.

"I will see you again, I hope!" he said.

She laughed gayly. "No," she said, "no! Not this time!—Get into the car!" When he hesitated, she raised her voice: "Get into the car!"

"Lotte," he protested, and his voice was very soft, "Lotte, haven't we two crossed swords often enough?"

"And didn't you always win? Why don't you say it!—But now I know you, Frank Braun, know you better than you know me, even better than you know yourself!"

"And therefore you think that today you will win, Lotte?"

"Today—yes!" She spoke very firmly. "Now, in this hour! Look here, what good would it do for you to go away? I would be in your apartment tomorrow. And the next day—and again—and you would give in some day—you know you would!"

He bit his lips.

"Why don't you admit it!" she insisted.

"Perhaps," he swallowed.

"Certainly!" she corrected. "And because you realize it—that is why I am stronger than you are—now! Get in!"

He got into the car and she followed him. She sat down beside him and closed the door. Then she dropped her veil.

"Home," she ordered.



AND yet it was no victory for Lotte Levi.

Not that he was playing a Joseph's part in these weeks with her—far from it! He always did what she wanted, and was obedient and docile like a good child. "Kiss me," she said, and he kissed her.

But he was always tired.

He sat at the table with her and forgot to eat. "Please eat!" she said—and he took a few morsels. "Won't you drink your wine!" she asked—and then he emptied his glass.

She sat on the sofa beside him and held his hand in hers. "Now talk to me," she said, "tell me something." He spoke, quietly and listlessly, like an unwound watch. But suddenly he stopped. "What is it?" she asked. But he did not know, he had simply forgotten what he had just been saying.

She looked at him intently, studying his face.

"You were saying something," she whispered. "Try to think."

He obeyed immediately and tried very hard to think. But he could not remember. "I don't know, dear——"

He hesitated—he could not even think of her name.

She noticed it. "Don't you know who I am?"

Now he remembered. "Why, yes, of course! Lotte Levi!"

She shook her head gravely. Her face was very serious.

But he laughed at her. "It is really nothing. I am only a little tired—now and then—just lately."

"Are you sleepy?" she asked.

No, he was not sleepy. Not now, and not at those other times when he had felt so tired. Yes, it was strange—he was tired but he did not feel sleepy. Sometimes it was just the opposite. He would wake up from a long, deep sleep—at night, or in the daytime—and feel more tired and weary than at any other time.

What could be the matter then? He jumped up and paced up and down the room, walking briskly and stretching his arms. He felt his muscles—no, there was nothing wrong, he was strong and well as ever. He stepped before the mirror and smiled at himself. But the next instant he stumbled. He felt dizzy, but it was only his body that was affected while his brain remained perfectly clear.

Supporting himself on the chair, he looked into the mirror, examining his face, studying his features carefully—he could not find anything strange there—not a thing. His face was just as he had known it for years; nothing was changed.

And yet there must be something—but what could it be?

He went back to the sofa. "You are sick," Lotte said.

He shrugged his shoulders. "Nonsense, Lotte!"

"No, it isn't nonsense!" She heaved a little sigh. "Frank Braun, I won't be your mistress tonight. Not tonight, and not tomorrow—and perhaps not for quite some time. You are sick and so I will be your mother."

Now he should crack a joke, he felt; a nasty, cynical joke that would deal her love an ugly blow. Now he should say something cruel and stinging.

But his voice was soft and it did not sting. He said—and it sounded like a sob—: "Lotte, you—you—I need something. There is something I need—badly. Oh, how I am longing for it!"

"For what?" she asked.

"I don't know," he confessed in a listless, desperate voice.

"I shall find it, my dear boy."

Frank Braun sat in his hotel room in Baltimore while the editor of the *Herold* stood before him correcting his manuscript.

"No, no, that won't do," Tewes remarked. "Here, in this place you should be more concise! Just a short, strong phrase. Why not use the slogan: 'German Loyalty forever!' That'll get them!"

"But we have that three times already!" Frank Braun protested.

"So much the better!" the newspaper man cried impatiently. "Then maybe they'll take it in!"

The streets of Baltimore were gayly flag-bedecked. From every window and every balcony flew the Stars and Stripes, and enormous flags had been stretched high across the streets, from one house front to the other. A huge throng crowded every inch of space.

"Why are there no black-white-and-red flags for the German Day?" Frank Braun wondered.

"German Day?" Tewes laughed. "Baltimore is celebrating the anniversary of the Star-Spangled Banner—it is a hundred years old today. The Flag Day celebration is going to last a whole week and the German Day is just a small part of it."

The parade had now begun and was passing under the windows of Frank Braun's room. There were hundreds of decorated floats, with women dressed as Amazons in Roman chariots, with enormous beer barrels, with houses, cardboard dragons, pianos and every conceivable piece of tomfoolery. It was like the Cologne Carnival, only tasteless, crude and unspeakably silly.

"Why did I ever get mixed up in this!" Frank Braun thought.

Tewes handed the manuscript back to him and gave him an encouraging slap on the shoulder. "Now it will be all right. Just read it over a few more times. And come along, we haven't much time left."

They got into their car and drove through the city, out toward the ocean, until they came to a spacious amusement park with merry-go-rounds, swings, sideshows and beer gardens.

"But this is an amusement park! Am I to speak here?"

"Why, of course!" the editor confirmed.

He led Frank Braun through the crowd and up to an orchestra platform in the rear of the field where the committee sat—two dozen fat, perspiring men in frock coats. The singing society with a few hundred of the lesser dignitaries occupied the space behind the platform. The new arrivals were given places of honor in the front row and Frank Braun was introduced to two or three members of the committee. "You are just in time," one of the men said. "The show is starting right away."

Frank Braun looked at the crowd of men, women and children that packed the enormous field. People, masses of people as far as the eye could reach.

"How many are there, do you think?" he asked. "Six thousand, perhaps?"

Tewes smiled. "Six thousand? There are at least forty thousand in this crowd!"

And here he was to speak? Here? Before a few hundred people, yes, all right; even before a thousand, perhaps two thousand—But before this giant throng? And in the open air—to forty thousand people? He reached for his manuscript—he had completely forgotten his speech! Then he smiled—what did it matter! No one would be able to understand a single word, anyway!"

Three times a gavel pounded on an iron anvil. Pastor Hufner wielded it, the Chairman of the German Day.

His deep, powerful voice rang out sonorously over the park like great church bells. He spoke only a few words and then said the Lord's Prayer in which the thousands joined him.

"One can understand him," Frank Braun thought. "He certainly can make himself heard!"

Then the pastor introduced the first speaker, a Congressman from Missouri.

"Listen carefully," Tewes whispered. "Here is a real speaker for the crowd—he knows all the tricks. Try to copy his technique!"

The American held his audience spellbound. He cajoled them with cheap flattery, he appealed to them with demagogic phrases

calculated to win over the German voting cattle. And the mainstays of his speech were jokes. Fat, crude, age-old jokes—but the crowd laughed and howled its appreciation. Pacing with quick strides along the edge of the platform, and wildly gesticulating with his long arms, he spat out a sentence in a loud, droning voice—but it did not sound like the ringing bells of the pastor's voice, it sounded more like the sharp strokes of a hammer. Then he would pause, a long-drawn-out pause, longer even than his sentence. And again, with full lungs, ten, twelve howling words. And another pause.

"So this is how one does it!" Frank Braun thought. He tried to read his manuscript but he could not make out a single word. It was all blurred over by a huge blotch of black—the black masses of people in the field below whose nearness almost crushed him with their oppressive weight. Nothing but the thousands of people as far as the eye could see, and far behind them the tall, bare trees of the park and the giant Ferris wheel.

"I can not do it!" Frantically he looked for an avenue of escape—could he not get up quietly and disappear, hiding himself behind the songsters?

But Tewes held him by his coat sleeve.

Again the hammer voice spat out a few words—and once again. It brought forth hand clapping and cheers from the black herd below. Then there was a pause, until once more the hammer rose and came down with a heavy bang—another joke, broad, juicy, older than all the others. Everybody knew it—so they all laughed.

The American wiped the perspiration from his forehead and waved his handkerchief to the crowd, bowing repeatedly to acknowledge their loud applause.

"Now it's your turn!" the newspaper man called.

Frank Braun trembled with fear. "No, No!" he whispered. "Tell—"

Again the gavel pounded on the anvil, the iron anvil. And the pastor's bell-like voice rang far out over the field. What was he

saying? A guest—a German from their Fatherland—a celebrated man—a famous personality—a demi-god—a. . . .

Of whom was this man talking? Of him, of Frank Braun? That was the way one might introduce Bismarck, Goethe, Beethoven—

"Bravo!" Tewes said. "That's what I call an introduction!"

Frank Braun hissed. "It is nonsense! Not a single person here even knows my name, not a single one!"

"Of course not!" the editor smiled. "Of course they don't know your name, they don't know any name! Why should they? But that's just why they'll swallow anything the pastor says! He is simply marvelous!"

The pastor walked over to Frank Braun and pulled him up by his hand.

"And here he is, my German brethren, here he is, himself!"

Now Frank Braun stood before the cheering crowd, he alone facing forty thousand people. He trembled with excitement, blushing in deep embarrassment. He bit his lips, swallowed hard, tried to clear his throat—

Pang—pang—the gavel again pounded for attention and the crowd lapsed into silence. All of a sudden there was a breathless stillness—forty thousand people were waiting for his words.

The color left Frank Braun's face. He turned pale, a ghostly, ashen pale and stood there as if rooted, unable to move, unable to stir a limb.

"Why don't you start!" the editor whispered.

He did not understand. He was to speak? He? What in God's name should he say?

"Read it off!" a voice whispered in his ear. "Look at your manuscript!"

Yes, the manuscript was in his hand. He felt it, his fingers were clasped tightly around it. He raised his hand, unfolded the sheets and looked at them, but he did it instinctively, without knowing what he was about.

There was something concerning the terrible times in it—concerning home and the blight of war. Of heroes it told—of

death and of dying. And it also exhorted them to give—give—give—for their brethren in the Fatherland—give—

He failed to comprehend what he was reading, he could not grasp the meaning of the words. One word arrested his eye and slowly sank into his consciousness—

“Weeping”—the word was—“weeping”—

“Start, for God’s sake!” some one whispered.

His arm dropped to his side and he closed his eyes. He crumpled up the paper, threw it away, and deeply inhaling the air into his lungs he suddenly shouted down at them:

“Speak to you!—I am to speak to you who are laughing in these days?

“—You should weep, you men and women, weep—weep!”

Something carried him, lifted him high into the air. It bore him along in rapid flight to the summit of snow-capped mountains and made him sing out into the black valleys below. He sang of Germany and her magnificent fight, sang of the glory of victory and of a hero’s death. He sang—sang of the endless dying and of the plight at home, of the gigantic will that had become action and had turned into a roaring, surging flame.

He sang—

He felt nothing—he saw nothing—he did not even know that he existed.

He only heard a voice. He—he was that voice!

Then suddenly it was over.

The voice had stopped and there was a great silence.

That surprised him. Just now somebody had been talking here. Had he been talking? He?

He shivered. He felt hot. He was on the earth, he was standing on something made of boards. And he had talked—just now—about something.

Yes, he must have talked, that was certain.

And now there was a sob like a sob from down in the field. And some one in the rear was crying. What had happened?

They were all crying—all of them. Forty thousand people were crying. But why?

He was still standing there without moving, without stirring a limb. But he felt terribly hot.

Now there were shouts from below—clapping—cheers—

"Bow!" Tewes called over to him.

He nodded clumsily and stood helpless in the roaring applause around him.

The gentlemen of the committee came up to him and shook his hands. The pastor held his right hand and Tewes his left.

"It was like rockets—" the editor said, "like rockets shooting up to heaven!"

The pastor congratulated him. "It was very beautiful what you said, my friend, about the tears they should weep, that would turn to pearls and jewels and gold and money, and which they should give—today—to help those at home."

"Did I say that?" Frank Braun mumbled.

Again the pastor wielded his gavel.—Now Frank Braun could understand every word of what he said. He asked them to file past the orchestra platform and give their offering for Germany, no matter how small.

Someone handed Frank Braun a coat.

"Put it on," the man said, "you are all wet."

Frank Braun felt his clothes—it was true, he was soaking wet. Not only his shirt and underwear, but also his waistcoat, his jacket and trousers.

"That's better than a Turkish bath!" the newspaper man laughed. "You must have lost at least four pounds!"

Frank Braun thanked the gentleman and put on the coat.

A big sheet was brought and four men took hold of it and waited at the foot of the stairs leading to the platform, with the pastor and Frank Braun beside them.

A band started to play and the men's chorus sang—a hundred and twenty male voices.

The crowd filed past the musicians' stand—thousands of people forming an endless procession.

"May I go now?" Frank Braun asked.

"No, I should say not!" Tewes cried. "You are necessary here—now comes the most important part of it all."

The people dropped money and jewelry into the sheet—coins, bills, rings, buckles, watches. Some people gave full wallets, others took the pins out of their neckties, the earrings from their ears. Frank Braun saw a little girl who dropped her ball into the sheet, and a servant maid who took a golden buckle off her dress.

And everybody wanted to shake hands with him—ten people, a hundred—a thousand—

At first he returned their clasp, but soon his hand began to ache.

"Don't return their clasp," Tewes advised him. "Just hold out your fingers.

The sheet was full—another was brought and again the coins rained into it—and watches and rings.

And still Frank Braun shook hands, blistered, dirty, work-worn hands. And—very rarely—a clean and soft hand.

His hand began to swell, but he still held it out to the people.

He thought: "Would you otherwise have shaken hands with a single one of these people? Not one!"

But he forced himself not to think of this. "Over in Germany men are lying in the trenches. And all you have to do is to shake hands—and with Germans, too, whose hands are as German as yours!"

But that did not help. The performance disgusted him, just the same.

"Why are you doing it then?" he thought. "What do you have to do with it?"

And still the coins were tinkling into the sheet—

"This is your money," the pastor smiled. You are bringing in all this money! It will probably come to a hundred thousand dollars—counting the cash alone!"

Frank Braun was pleased, and yet he could not help thinking: "What have I to do with it?"

Now he offered his left hand—until it also began to ache and swell. So he changed—right—left—

And more people were coming all the time—more—

Finally he closed his eyes—

He did what Lotte wanted, blindly, with no will of his own. He did not live at her house, but he was always there. Sometimes, but not more than once a day, he would go home to change his clothes or get something from his apartment. He spent the days lying on her sofas and chairs, reading or talking to her. And often he just sat perfectly still without doing anything, merely looking into space—not even dreaming.

He was her child—in the daytime. She nursed him.

At night he was her lover. He lay beside her in her bed and let her kiss him, and kissed her. He looked well and his body was strong and powerful. He smiled when he saw their reflection in the tall mirror. Her body was white, very white with but a few spots of color—her red hair, and the red buds of her young breasts. And a little red that she had put on here and there—henna on her nails, and a tiny bit of rouge on her lips, nostrils and ear lobes. His body was tanned—it still showed the effect of the tropical sun.

He lifted her up in his arms and she seemed fragile enough to break in his hands. He was strong.

And yet he felt: "Under your brown skin you are paler, much paler than she is. She is stronger than you are—she has the strength, not you."

And at times he felt: "I am the woman. She is my husband!"

She watched him constantly, day and night. Even in her embraces he felt that he was being watched.

"Can't you forget?" he asked her. "Now?"

"Forget what?"

"Yourself! Me! Everything!"

"Yes, I will," she answered, kissing him. "When you are well again, Frank Braun!"

She had him examined by the best physicians in town, four,

five times. She made them go over his heart, his lungs, kidneys, everything.

The doctors said he was perfectly well and that there was absolutely nothing wrong with him. This tired feeling, this apathy was only a nervous condition—

He should eat well and stop smoking so many cigarettes.

Lotte van Ness shook her head.

"I shall find it," she insisted.

That night he ran through the streets.

He had waked in the wide bed beside her—but something was different. For once he wasn't tired—he felt fresh and buoyant! He was conscious of an uneasiness, however, of a feeling of fear—and he knew that he was afraid of the woman by his side.

For a moment he sat on the edge of the bed. Then hastily he reached for his clothes—he must get away, at once!

His lips were sticky. He wiped them on his shirt sleeve and noticed blood. Was it from his throat, his lungs? Then he was sick, after all!

But he was feeling so fresh and young just now!

He went over to the mirror and put on his waistcoat and jacket. He heard a faint sound from the bed behind him, a sobbing sound—but it was so soft, so very soft. She must be crying in her sleep, he thought.

He did not go back and he did not kiss her. He hurried out of the room, took the elevator down and opened the front door.

The night air felt invigorating and he breathed deeply. He could not think; he could only feel: I have been sick and now I am suddenly well again. And he knew that all this had something to do with the woman—with Lotte van Ness.

She held him firmly in her grip and he was withering in her arms. He was her doll, her toy.

Had she not always been like this? When he first knew her she had been a child of fifteen—but her senses were full grown and yearning for all the dark sins of this world. As long as he could remember her desires had been those of a wise—and very

experienced—woman of the world; even when she was still a child, innocent and untouched. And now she was Lotte van Ness and thirty years old—but her senses were still waiting and yearning—and she had kept her child's soul and her child's breasts.

He was her food and she was sucking him dry—but she did it like a sweet little girl, utterly contented and happy with her piece of candy.

He was that candy.

He liked that thought—it made him smile. He was a nice candy, to be sure, sweet and yet a little bitter. Not like ordinary candy—a real treat for a spoiled little girl. And more than that, he was a magic candy, the kind he had always wished for as a boy: a candy you could suck and lick for hours while it got smaller and smaller, and that suddenly becomes its original size again. He was that kind of candy; he was almost all gone, vanished in the kisses of this woman—and now he had become whole again and had jumped out of Lottekin's little mouth. He was again deeply breathing the night air, exulting in his newly won freedom as he hurried down the streets and across Broadway.—

He got up early the next morning, had his bath and put on his kimono. Then he rang for tea.

While he was waiting he took up the receiver and called her. "I am well, Lotte!" he cried. "I am well again!"

"I know it!" she answered.

That made him angry. How could she know?—"You! Clever! Why don't you tell me what you know!"

He heard her say: "Last night—" but then she stopped.

"Last night? I ran away—yes! I ran away from you! Is that what made you think—?"

Slowly she answered: "No, not that. I knew it—before.—Oh, never mind!"

"Come, Lotte, tell me!" he insisted.

"No! No!—This is none of your business!—I am sorry, but I learnt that from you!"

"All right, never mind!" he called. "But you must tell me just

the same. Come over, Lotte. We will go for a drive up the Hudson."

"I can't come!" she sobbed. "I—I am sick. And I don't want you to come to see me—not today—not this week. Wait till I call you."

"Lotte," he cried, "Lotte!"

There was no answer.

His old manservant brought the tea and the morning papers and put them down silently, mechanically, idiotically.

"Why don't you ask where I have been!" Frank Braun thought. "Why don't you ask if I am now going to sleep home again!" But the old servant did not ask. He walked silently through the room and took up his duster.

"Get out of here!" Frank Braun cried impatiently.

Then he had his fruit, his tea and toast, read the papers and smoked his first cigarette.

There was a knock and the servant announced Mr. Tewes.

"Have him come in!" Frank Braun ordered. He was glad to see a visitor—somebody he could talk to.

"Doctor!" the newspaper man called from the door. "Everything is settled. Here is your itinerary. You are starting in three days. We will begin up north, in New England. Your first stop is Boston. Then we take the Middle West—Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Chicago—twenty-eight cities all together. That will be enough for the first trip. I am starting ahead of you, to-day, to make all the arrangements. I believe that everything has been prepared as carefully as possible—but I must admit, Doctor, we were quite afraid you would desert us at the last moment."

"Desert you?" Frank Braun laughed. "I did not promise anything, did I?"

"*You* didn't, Doctor!"

"Who did then?"

"Mrs. van Ness," the editor replied in a business-like tone.

Frank Braun was furious. "Mrs. van Ness? Has she promised your committee that I would go? And she probably also hinted

that I was not very dependable and that I might back out at the last minute?"

"Yes, we heard that you were sick."

"From whom, please?" Frank Braun was trying to control his anger.

"From Mrs. van Ness!"

Frank Braun drummed with his fingers on the table. "Mrs. van Ness! And the lady presumably told you also that I was well now?"

Tewes imitated his tone. "Yes, the lady told us that. The lady—Mrs. van Ness—just telephoned to let me know that everything was all right and that you would go on the tour."

Frank Braun rose from his chair and faced the editor. "Just a minute!" he cried. "Whether I am making speeches for your committee or not—whether I am going on this damned trip or not—what concern is this of Mrs. van Ness? And if I and this lady—yes, what the devil has this to do with you and your committee?"

The editor laughed. "Come now, Doctor, don't be a child! Look here—since the beginning of the war about thirty committees have been formed for all kinds of patriotic purposes—and if the war lasts another year, we will have three hundred. And the Allies, believe me, have three times as many. Do you think that all these committees can work just for the fun of it? They need backing—money! OUR backing, or at least three quarters of it, is Mrs. van Ness. And if the interest of our committee in your speech-making happens to coincide with the interest that this lady takes in you personally—so much the better for us; it only makes her checks bigger.—Do you understand now?"

Understand? Why, of course, Frank Braun understood the gentlemen of the committee. He knew the cost of advertising in this country, he knew that all the associations and committees were continually going around rattling their cups—money—money! One has to drop many thousands into the cup to take in the millions—the dream millions that were to help Germany.

But she? Lotte Levi? What did she have to do with it? It was all right for her to give a little money, write checks—yes, why not! She was so rich, she could afford it. And if she gave thousands as he would give pennies, it was still all right and hardly worth mentioning.

But this was different. She had suggested him to the committee and she had sent Tewes after him. And the committee—probably on her advice—had sent him to Baltimore.

They had sent him there to try him out—yes, that must have been the reason.

And now they were sending him on this speaking tour—on her money. Or rather—*she* was sending him through the committee. Not that they were paying him for it—but they provided him with the opportunity to speak and—even forced him into it!

But why? What did she get out of it—she, Lotte Levi?

He could not understand it. Brushing back his hair, he turned to Tewes with a resolute gesture: "I am going—in spite of it!"

The editor whistled. "In spite of it?—What do you mean, in spite of what?!—Of course you are going!"

Frank Braun spoke in Boston and Buffalo, in Rochester and Albany. He spoke in Columbus and Milwaukee—in fact, he spoke every day, and sometimes twice a day. He addressed people in assembly halls, in theatres and fire halls—and twice he even spoke from the pulpit. The public crowded to his lectures, not because they had any idea who he was, but because Tewes had seen to it that his lectures were well advertised.

Frank Braun had to see newspaper men every day and shake hands constantly. He always said the same things—in the morning to the reporters, at night to the public, and afterwards to the notables whom Tewes brought around for him to meet. Every day was the same—he boarded a train, undressed and went to sleep. In the morning he arrived at a hotel that looked exactly like the one he had been to the day before, had an identical room, took his bath in the same kind of tub and found always the self-same black Bible on his night table. In the morn-

ing he read the papers—invariably they had his picture with the same phrases about him. It was all like a machine.

But suddenly a little cog stopped working somewhere within him. He hardly noticed it, but Tewes who was watching him constantly, detected it at once. He led Frank Braun away from the stage that night as soon as the applause had died down, and made him go to bed at once, without letting him talk to anyone. From then on, Tewes himself saw the reporters and talked to the crowd that came to see Frank Braun after his lectures in the dressing room. He also had champagne brought for Frank Braun every evening, just before he had to go on.

"What is wrong?" Frank Braun wondered.

"You must take care of yourself. You are getting tired again. You are sick—and I am responsible for you."

"Responsible to whom?" Frank Braun laughed. "To your committee? They don't give a damn whether I am tired or not!"

"No, of course not! But I have an extra job. Pays me twenty dollars a day."

"An extra job?" Frank Braun asked. "You? What is it? And who gave you the job?"

"It is perfectly all right," Tewes told him calmly. "I am to look after you—and Mrs. van Ness is paying for it. That's all."

Again? Frank Braun was ready to explode, but Tewes hushed him quickly: "Not now!" he said calmly. "Someone at the door. It's the doctor."

Frank Braun shouted: "Throw him out! I don't want to see a doctor, do you hear me!"

The newspaper man shrugged his shoulders. "All right, I will send him away. I have done my duty."

Frank Braun spoke badly that night. He said exactly the same things he had said every night, his voice rose and fell as usual, he came to the same pauses, and everything went just as always. But something was lacking—the something that had gripped the crowd and made them sit up and take notice. As he stood on the stage, he felt as if there were an endless desert between him and the crowd, as if the footlights had become a high wall

separating him from them. He could not get himself across to-night. He stood on the stage and spoke, but he felt alone and indifferent—and very tired.

"No more blood!" the editor said. He wired that same night and cancelled the remaining two or three lectures. "But tomorrow you must do it just once more, Doctor! Pull yourself together, please!"

He brought Frank Braun to his train, saw that his bed was comfortable and wished him a good rest.

Frank Braun fell sound asleep as soon as he was in bed and did not wake until daylight, just as the train was pulling into Philadelphia. But he was feeling more tired than ever.

This time it was to be a debate in the great auditorium of the Academy of Music. The house was crowded to the last inch of space and people were standing in line far out into the street. Tewes took him in by the stage entrance and led him to his dressing room, pressing a slip of paper into his hand. "Here, read this! It will remind you of what this is all about today!—You seem to have completely forgotten!"

Frank Braun looked at the slip. He had not forgotten, he had remembered to read it all in the manuscript and then again in the galley proofs. There was his picture and his name, and the usual phrases about his alleged fame. And on the other side was the picture of a beautiful woman—Miss Maud Livingstone. The most famous actress in the world, the program called her, the intimate friend and best interpreter of G. B. Shaw, the—

Yes, he remembered it perfectly. She would speak for England and he for Germany. First she, then he, and then she again. It was to be a jousting match, a cock fight—

Tewes took a champagne bottle from the cooler and poured out a glass for Frank Braun. "Drink, Doctor! Overcome your apathy! Just for tonight!"

Frank Braun poured the champagne down like water but it left him just as tired and indifferent as before. He looked coldly at Tewes who was shifting nervously from one foot to the other, as he tried to talk against the blank wall of Frank Braun's

indifference. What he said fell on empty ears, as if he were talking to a wax figure.

"There are five thousand people here tonight! The best society of the Quaker City! Three quarters of them are pro-English—Have another drink!—And your opponent tonight is a woman, mind you—a lady, don't forget that! That isn't as easy as it was against Chesterton in Cleveland, or against Hillis in Cincinnati!—You are fighting against a woman—in America! You can't let me down tonight, Doctor! Everybody told me I was a fool to accept this challenge for you—and yet I did!—Have another!—I had such confidence in you. You must win tonight, Doctor, you must! And what if she is a woman!—Have just one more!—Nine chances out of ten are against you—but damn it, you can do it if you want to, and you must do it!"

Frank Braun merely nodded; he was bored. He rose from his chair, went to the mirror to adjust his tie and said calmly: "Perhaps I will do it—perhaps I won't! Probably I won't."

"For God's sake——" the editor began again.

"Never mind," Frank Braun interrupted him. "I know myself now and I realize that it is not I that does the speaking, it is something within me!—And if that thing doesn't do it——"

"If what doesn't do it?" Tewes cried in despair. "What is it that does the talking within you?"

"My dear man," Frank Braun smiled. "I don't know that any more than you do."

He turned and left the room. Backstage he saw an elderly gentleman with a lady in evening dress. The lady was tall and heavy, with broad hips and mighty breasts.

"Is that Miss Livingstone?" he asked Tewes who had followed him.

"This—no, of course not! This is Madame Lachmann! Don't you know her?"

Yes, he knew her—Eva Lachmann, the greatest singer of two continents. He had heard her in the Dresden opera, in Berlin and New York.

Tewes introduced them and they shook hands. "I am giving

a concert here tomorrow," the diva said, "but I came one day earlier especially to hear your debate. You have courage, Doctor—to speak against a woman in this country!"

She looked at him with her big, dark eyes. "Why is there no fire in them?" he thought.

"Good luck!" she wished him. "I will kiss my rabbit's foot for you!"

A shrill bell summoned them to the stage. "Come," the newspaper-man urged. "Come up on the stage! Aren't you going in, Madame Lachmann?"

"Couldn't get a seat!" she smiled. "Even when I sing it is hardly so crowded. We are glad to have a few chairs back here in the wings."

The journalist pulled Frank Braun up onto the great stage. The curtain had not yet gone up. There were twelve rows of people sitting in a semi-circle in the rear of the stage, and in front, before the footlights were three small tables and three chairs.

"That gentleman there is the umpire," Tewes explained. "The best man in the city! A Scotchman, Judge of the Supreme Court—cost us one hundred dollars!"

He introduced Frank Braun to him. From the other side of the stage came the actress with her manager. The two speakers were introduced to each other and shook hands.

The Scotchman took up the program and read aloud:

"Will the victory of the Central Powers or that of the Allies bring more progress to the world, and especially to America?"

The English woman laughed. "One thing is certain: Nothing on earth will ever bring progress to this world!"

Frank Braun looked up. "She is clever," he thought. He gave her a searching glance, studying her face. And he could feel her eyes measuring him critically.

She looked very distinguished in her lavender dress. Her gray eyes were sharp and clever. She had regular features and a noble profile. She wore no make-up and no wig. Her fair, curly hair was combed back in a simple knot. It was a little gray at

the temples. This was no ordinary actress—this was a great woman.

"She is shrewd," Tewes whispered. "She knows her public!"

Another signal, and the curtain rose.

The Scotch Judge introduced the speakers with a few witty remarks. He did not know anything about them, except what he had read in the program—but the audience did not know any more. He chatted amiably—and people clapped and enjoyed it. He spoke of a murderous Europe where people were killing one another, while in this magnificent, civilized country opponents fought each other with weapons of the brain. He told them a long story about the fame of the two speakers—and about his own—and closed with the "Star-Spangled Banner." Now the proper atmosphere pervaded the hall.

He gave the floor to the woman.

She spoke modestly and simply. In the beginning she made some resounding remarks about this magnificent country and then told a clever joke. She showed her marvelous teeth and enunciated slowly and clearly, emphasizing every word—she spoke simply and winningly.

"Yes, she knows the crowd," Frank Braun thought. "She can make them follow her. She is holding them firmly in that small, nervous hand of hers."

He would not hold them today—not he. He looked at the audience—they listened breathlessly; every eye was fixed on this supple woman—no one looked at him.

He rose from his chair, quietly and softly, and with two long steps he stood in the first wing. He smiled with pleasure because he was so sure that no one had noticed.

No one—with one exception—Tewes.

Tewes had followed him. "Where are you going?" he demanded. "Running away to hide yourself? This is—"

"Cowardly. Yes. I don't care."

Tewes took hold of Frank Braun's coat sleeve and talked to him, begged him, scolded him—the words came like hail. Cow-

ardice—betrayal—worse than desertion—he should be ashamed of himself! Rotten cowardice!

Frank Braun listened patiently but did not answer.

The editor worked himself up into a great pitch of excitement, but finally he stopped when he realized that it was no use.

"All right," he said finally. "Go, if you want to! It will be better for me, anyway!"

"Why for you?"

Tewes showed him a wire. "Here, read this! This is in answer to my report of this morning!"

Frank Braun read: "Cancel tonight also. Bring him back at once. Van Ness."

The journalist said: "I did not cancel it—in spite of this wire—for the sake of our cause. It would have cost me my job—and I can use the money. So you see why it is better for me if you do not speak tonight."

Frank Braun crumpled up the telegram. "She shall not have her way!" he hissed. "I shall speak!" Then he turned to Tewes. "You just go on and don't worry. I will be on the stage in time."

He went backstage and hurried to his dressing room. He drank the rest of the champagne, went back into the wings and paced nervously up and down.

He made a supreme effort, gritting his teeth, clasp ing his hands, passing his fingers across his face. "I must do it—I must—" he whispered.

But he could not force it. He remained empty, quite empty.

He felt inside as if a simoon had struck him, leaving everything parched and dry and nowhere a blade of green grass.

He was feverish, he trembled—he felt tears mount in his eyes, his knees were giving way—

He stumbled and supported himself on a back drop—

A noise startled him—they were applauding out in front, clapping and cheering. Desperate, hopeless, he stared into space with vacant eyes like someone going to be hanged.

Something drew him forward—he stumbled a step or two and looked up—into the dark eyes of the diva.

"What is the matter with you?" she asked.

He groaned: "I don't know." Then suddenly, abruptly: "May I kiss you?"

He did not wait for her answer but grasped her and pulled her to his body like a wild animal. Forcing down her arms he pressed his chest against her mighty breasts. Then he gripped her head and kissed her.

He felt how her lips were opening. He closed his eyes and drank, drank this mad kiss.

A noise behind him, clapping and cheering. He tore himself loose and hurried over to his side behind the stage. Again he heard the bell of the umpire, felt the sudden silence of the crowd and heard the words of the Judge who was giving him the floor. Now he was back in front, now he stepped out on the stage and went over to his table.

But the crowd did not want him. A few began clapping again—and soon they all joined in. They were acclaiming again, and again, the woman.

Frank Braun stood before his table, smiling nervously, trembling, brushing back his hair, and waiting.

Once more the umpire rose from his chair and asked for silence. Again the crowd obeyed but they hissed and shouted as soon as Frank Braun opened his mouth. And then they began again to clap for the woman.

He understood that they did not want to hear him, but he only smiled.

Finally Miss Livingstone waved her hand and silenced them. She begged them—on his behalf. She said that it was unjust and that they should be fair in this country of liberty and justice—they should let him speak.

The audience frantically cheered her.

"How clever she is," he thought. "And how sure of her victory!"

Now the crowd was silent and he could begin.

He spoke easily, more so than ever before. He did not make jokes nor flattering remarks about this magnificent country. He

spoke skillfully and fluently, fully conscious of every word and its effect. He spoke just as well as she—

And he was even more sure of himself.

Because he felt that it would come. Perhaps now—or in the next sentence—or in the sentence after that. But it would come—

The thing that she did not have. The thing that he had lost today and that he had found again in the kiss of a great woman. The thing that tamed the thousand-headed beast down in the auditorium until it became docile as a lamb, eating out of his hands and licking its master's whip—

The thing that gave him power with which to beat his thought into the beast's brain, and his belief of the moment into the beast's chest.

Now he took up a word, two or three—a sentence—a subtle, sharp, pointed sentence and cracked it over their heads like a whip. And again—and again—and the iron gates were thrown wide open as he beat against them with his magic whip.

The beast of the five thousand heads had only one great soul, after all. And this soul was high and lofty as a dome—and he stepped into it through the iron gates that flew open before him. Intoxicated by the whirl of his whip—mesmerized by the flaming torch that he carried. He threw his torch into the depth of the dome and a mighty flame rose up and surged heavenward.

Now everything was blurred—his eyes alone drank in this ocean of flaming red. Blood, he thought, blood. He walked through a sea of flame—shouting, smiling—like a prophet.

That remained with him—that alone. He did not hear his own words nor the tumult of the crowd when he ended. He did not hear the remarks of the Judge nor the nervous closing sentences of the English woman. Nor the cheering and stamping at the close—the applause that was for him alone—and for his cause. He saw only the flames and blood.

He was standing in the wings with the diva. "Are you staying at the Ritz, too?" she asked.

He nodded.

"You will have supper with me, won't you?" she continued. "And——" He reached for her hand and kissed it. "Yes," he said, "I will."

He held her glance—and now her eyes were burning warmly. They were burning softly, and secretively, too—they made him think of a fireplace.

He desired her, just as he felt that she desired him—and his eyes told her so. Hers answered: "Tonight!"

She took his arm, and pressed it silently.

Then she smiled. "I drink a glass of Bordeaux before I go on. Some people must have Chartreuse, or beer, or something else. But you—?! I only hope you will always find such a good-natured lamb as I am!"

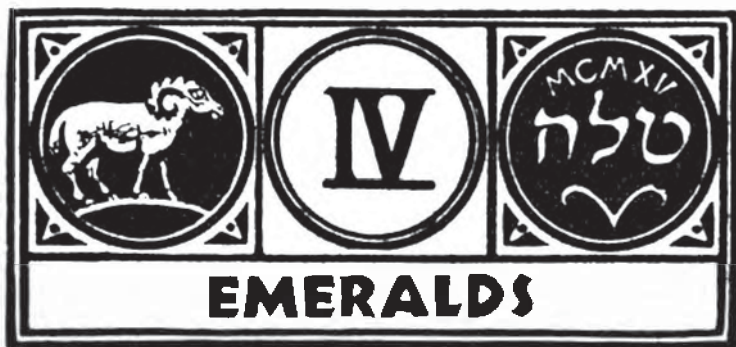
The old gentleman laughed, and Tewes and the others joined him. Tewes joked: "He had champagne—a whole bottle of it! But that does not seem to do him a bit of good!"

Frank Braun bowed: "Beautiful lady—isn't your kiss better than champagne?"

She pursed her lips: "Don't, please—that isn't your line!" She pulled him aside into the wings and whispered: "Do you think I don't know what you wanted!—Here!" She showed him her handkerchief—it was red with blood stains.

He stared at it. That—was that what he had wanted?

"You ruined my lips!" she smiled. "But I will pay you back—tonight!"



FRANK BRAUN soon found himself completely tied up with the German work in New York. Early in the morning his secretary brought him the mail. Then he had to dictate letters and articles for newspapers and magazines and see his visitors—an endless stream through his office all day long. In the evening he had to address meetings, either in the city or in the country, wherever he was needed.

Everything that fellow-workers did not like to handle was referred to him—everything that was ticklish or difficult, the dangerous jobs which might be counter to the letter of the law. Certainly it was a place which Frank Braun could fill. He held no office, he wasn't a business man or manufacturer; he remained free and independent and had only his own skin to think of. It was dangerous, yes—but was it less dangerous over there at the front? Besides, there was less hazard in it for him than for any of the others. He was not a German-American as most of them were, therefore his sole duty, his sole loyalty was to Germany. And he had good friends on both sides; they could help him in a pinch.

"Nothing can happen to you!" Tewes often said. "Not to you! They wouldn't let you down!"

"Why not?" Frank Braun replied. "Who would help me?"

"Who?—Young Hunston and Ralph Oakman and the Chut-

nams and Poates! All of them and the whole Newport set! And Marion de Fox and old Marlborough and Susan Pierpont!—You know them all, you have met them in Paris or in Yokohama or God knows where! Of course, they don't know anything definite about you, they just know that you are somebody and that you have some kind of a name. But that is enough!—The whole crowd would have something to say in court—you wouldn't get more than two years where I'd get life! And you wouldn't have to serve the two years either!—It would be marvelous publicity for you!”

It had all developed slowly and gradually, and no one had arranged it so; it had simply happened, and stayed that way—and in the end he liked it. Day and night his door was watched by detectives. Some private detective agency, working for England, employed these poor fellows who were mighty glad to have a job that netted them a few dollars. Frank Braun struck up an acquaintance with them, bought them cigars and asked them in for a drink—first one, then another. He soon had them where he wanted them. They ceased to follow him everywhere and were content to have him write down for them every day what he did and where he went. Thus they saved the fare which, however, they charged to their company: trolley, subway, bus and many taxis—it was a neat profit. Their reports were always accurate and correct—except when he had something to do that he wished to keep to himself. But that happened rarely. They could even report to their company many details about Frank Braun's visitors—he told them everything that was harmless. Thus they became his friends and helpers, always willing to oblige. They watched his door like faithful dogs and could be depended upon to warn him of any danger.

But in the privacy of his home the eternal request was: passports, passports, and again passports. The Germans had become more careful; members of the reserve corps were no longer sent by the thousands into English or French prison camps. They were sent over one by one, and the men chosen were mostly officers or people whose presence might be valuable over there.

They were well equipped with documents of all kinds and all they needed was luck. American documents were the cheapest and the least useful; one could easily buy them, genuine or falsified, whichever one wanted. There was no lack of American papers but Frank Braun preferred not to use them because the English detected them too easily. Besides, the American authorities had jurisdiction over such cases and made much of this alleged disrespect for the American Law.

Russian papers were particularly effective, and anyone who knew a smattering of a Slavic language traveled on a Russian or Serbian passport. Others used Swiss, Dutch, Scandinavian, Spanish or Italian documents—and of course there was a large choice of South American passports. Frank Braun selected the nationality most suited to the bearer according to his age, profession and general appearance. Then he trained his men, taught them the national anthem of their adopted country and put them through regular examinations to prepare them for inspection by the British officials. Some were caught despite these precautions—but hundreds got across, one by one.

They also sent him fanatics who wanted to organize strikes in munition factories, in shipyards and on steamers carrying death-dealing freight across the ocean.

They sent him everybody they could not handle—inventors, men with fantastic, mad schemes; lunatics, swindlers, cheaters, paid informers.

These men had invented submarines that made the trip across the Atlantic and back in a week—on paper. They brought him plans of torpedoes, of strange, marvelous torpedoes—and they would let him have it so cheaply! They were patriots and loved their Fatherland—all they wanted was a trifle on account, a trifle of a few million dollars. They had machine guns that mowed down whole regiments, gigantic guns that could level any fortress in an instant. And huge airplanes.

"But how shall I get them across?" Frank Braun asked.

Well, that was his business. They were inventors, not shipping

agents. Where there is a will—it was easy, of course, if he only wanted to! But he was not interested, that was the trouble.

A man with red hair and small piercing eyes came who had invented a huge gyroscope—two or three immense, powerful motors which could easily be installed in any German mine. The man proceeded slowly, explaining his idea step by step. Did Frank Braun see the elevated, over there at the corner? Two whole blocks away—and yet the walls vibrated when a train passed! That was the ideal! His giant gyroscopes would create a quake that would crumble whole cities—a tremendous earthquake when and where desired! His motors would send out powerful waves that were harmless, or at least fairly harmless, until they clashed against each other—then there would be an earthquake—here! He drew lines on a piece of paper—one line, then another and another—and Paris lay in ruins.

The red-haired man was not quite sure of himself. "Perhaps there is a mistake in it, somewhere," he said. "But I have worked it out carefully and I have gone over it again and again for thirty nights. I can't find the flaw."

He looked at Frank Braun questioningly.

"I don't know," Frank Braun answered.

The man took his papers and looked at the drawings, the calculations—pages and pages of queer figures and symbols.

"Doctor," he whispered shyly, "do you believe in it?"

"Yes, I do!" Frank Braun assured him. "This is great—and beautiful—I believe it. With or without flaws—I believe in it!"

The red-haired man folded up his papers. "It is terrible. It is frightful. And perhaps I have made a mistake. Then it won't work."

"Leave the papers here," Frank Braun said. "I'll have somebody go over them."

The man refused. Frank Braun offered him money—but he would not take it. "No, thanks," he said, "it isn't for the money. I have my living—twelve dollars a week. If my calculations are correct the Fatherland can have them—free. But I want to go over them once more—perhaps there is a mistake somewhere."

"And if the calculations are correct?" Frank Braun asked.

"Then I will bring them back to you. Or—or—I will hang myself."

He went without leaving his name or address. He never came back.

The other kind came, too; the swashbucklers who wanted to conquer Canada with twelve sabres and six guns. The men who would blow up buildings and bridges or drop bombs from airplanes over munition factories. Some were honest and offered their services in a genuine desire to help Germany's cause, willing to make any sacrifice, even that of their lives. But there were others, too; cowardly adventurers and agents, who offered their help in an attempt to trap him.

Frank Braun did not see Eva Lachmann again. He called her up but she was not at home, so he left his name and telephone number with the maid. He waited but the diva did not call him. He saw her only on the stage. He sent a bouquet of orchids into her dressing room and enclosed his card with a brief message on it. The usher came back in a few minutes.

"Any answer?" Frank Braun asked.

The fellow grinned impudently. "There was no answer, she said. She threw your flowers into a corner."

"Moods," Frank Braun thought, "just an actress." But he was hurt, none the less. What could be the reason? Had he offended her. He could find no explanation.

One day Lotte came. Without removing her coat she sat down beside him. When he wanted to speak she put her hand over his lips—a small hand in a fine, soft kid glove that smelled of Jicky.

"Don't ask!" she said. "I have thought it all out and I want you—just as I wanted you before—even this way."

He repeated: "Even this way! What do you mean?—Are you jealous, Lotte? And who told you?"

No, she had not heard about the singer. But now he had to

tell her everything, in detail. She listened quietly, breathing softly.

"How did you leave her?" she asked, looking at him with the sharp, searching glance of a clever physician. "Did you kiss her—when you left?"

He laughed. "Oh, no! I ran away, Lottel! I woke up while she was asleep—and fled. Just as I ran away from you!"

"Have you seen her since?" she asked.

No, though he had called her up and sent her flowers.—"I am sure of one thing: she wanted me that night.—But now she seems to have changed her mind."

Mrs. van Ness' head dropped back against the cushion. She sighed, a little bitterly; and yet there was pity in her voice when she said: "I can imaginel"

He did not understand her. "What do you mean?"

She looked at him, and there was warmth in her eyes and a great love. She took off her glove and put her little hand into his.

"You do not need any other woman," she said. "No other woman—do you see? I will stay with you—in spite of it!"

He gripped her hand firmly.

"What are you talking about?" he asked impatiently.

"Don't you know?"

He became angry. "No, of course not. I have no idea. Why don't you explain?"

He felt the pulse in her finger tips; felt the beat of her blood as it circulated in her hand, beating softly and warmly against his skin—in soft, quick, tiny ripples.

"You don't know?" she repeated. "Good—good!" Then suddenly she said: "Are you tired of late?"

Her pulse held him entranced—flowing through him and filling him with a sense of delicious ecstasy. She noticed it and clasped his hand more firmly.

"Tired?" he answered. "Oh, no—not now—not when your blood beats warmly against my flesh." He whispered: "As if it wanted to enter. . . ."

She insisted: "But at other times—are you tired at other times? Tell me, dear."

He closed his eyes and abandoned himself to the warmth of her touch. Then he murmured:—"Oh, yes—sometimes—every now and then."

And Lotte Levi said: "I will cure you! Today! And—over and over again! I am your wine—drink!"

She lay on her cushions in a dark red kimono. His kimono was purple. He sat before her with crossed legs, smoking small Japanese pipes—dozens of them. One puff—just one—and then a click as he knocked out the ashes on the edge of the bronze ash tray. And again—click—and again.

Her jewelry lay spread out before her—rings and necklaces, brooches, bracelets and earrings. Tiaras, gold and enamel boxes, loose stones, pearls, pendants.

"Come, my friend," she said, "let me find a ring for you. Tomorrow you are to speak at the Cort Theatre—this may bring you luck. Give me your hand."

Amongst her rings she found an Indian one, set with a large aquamarine. For a moment she hesitated; then she put it aside again.

"This one?" she mused. "No, not this one. It is light green but it does not sting as your eyes do. If it had a tinge of yellow instead of the blue——" She picked up another ring, with a beryl. "Take this one. It is as much your stone as any other."

"No," he said. "It should be a topaz. I was born in November."

She smiled. "You are mistaken!—The stones are ruled by the sign of the zodiac and only the second half of your month is under the sign of Sagittarius to which the topaz belongs. You were born in the first week and therefore your constellation is the scorpion. You sting." Suddenly she trembled, and her face was very serious when she put the ring on his finger. "It always comes true," she whispered, "in every single case—strange."

"What comes true?" he questioned.

"Oh, nothing—nothing. The scorpion stings—just as you do."

He looked at her in astonishment: "I sting?"

She patted his fingers. "Yes, yes, you do! You must do it because it is written in the stars." Among her cameos she found a small one with a scorpion engraved on it. "Put this in your pocket. Don't lose it. It will make you strong."

He noticed that a small letter "J" was engraved under the scorpion. "What does that mean?"

"It means Joseph," she said. "That is you." His eyes asked and she answered: "Yes, Joseph, the strongest of the twelve brethren. The one who helps his people—in a strange country—as you, in America, are helping your people. Take it!"

He laughed: "Joseph—I? Did I resist your charms so well?"

She did not laugh with him but stared into space absent-mindedly and remained silent for a long while. Then she said slowly: "Again it is true. It always is wherever you are concerned." She raised the cameo to her lips and kissed it. "I was not giving you a single thought when I had it cut. You see, the stone of Joseph's tribe is the shoham which we call beryl—but the beryl is also the stone of November, the stone of the scorpion; and so I had the sign of Joseph engraved on it together with the scorpion." She gave him the cameo and continued: "Keep it and guard it—guard it well. I had it cut in Venice—this one and the other eleven—when you ran away from me for the third time."

Mocking, he asked: "Was I very chaste? Did I leave my cloak behind?"

She stared at him. "Not your cloak—but you forgot your belt. Do you want to see it? And chaste? Oh, I don't know if you aren't chaste—even in your wildest sins!" She dug her fingers into the pile of gold and precious stones before her and picked up a few emeralds—brilliant emeralds set in bracelets and rings. "Chaste means—not to be conscious! You never are!"

"Oh, no, I am very conscious," he said.

She shook her head. "No. You never know what you do! Your nerves, your senses are doing it—and your brain knows

nothing about it. You flee from yourself before your brain becomes aware of what is happening. This is what keeps you young." She laughed softly. "You do not beget, you do not create. You are passive like soil, like woman, like a mother's womb. Everything impregnates you, in love or in hate, with your consent and without it. You are like the earth."

"The earth is an old whore," he countered.

"She nodded. "Yes—just as you are. And yet she is ever chaste with each new day—just as you are!"

"Then you are the sun," he said, and it sounded solemn and yet ridiculous. "Shine, warm, fertilize!"

She held up the emeralds, weighing them in her hands. "The sun," she began, "the sun? No. The moon perhaps. The moon causes ebb and flood—she makes the blood of the earth go round. And this is what you need, you child of the earth."

She held the green stones up to him. "Look, how brilliant they are! I bought them in Colombo, from Mohammed Bachir of whom you had told me. Mr. Sidney van Ness paid for them; my husband. For these stones I slept with him that night." She watched him from the corner of her eye and noticed the slight quiver of his nostrils. "Does that pain you? Does it? Yes, I sold myself to him—time and again. Oh, he was a trusting soul—he thought he was kissing his wife and never dreamed he was holding a harlot in his arms. But you shall know—you! I have been your mistress—your wife—from the beginning of time. And yet I slept with him—a harlot—rich and respected—still a harlot! Again and again—for jewels and gold. You made me that way—you! Did you want to——? Oh, no, you never want anything—you just let things happen. It may hurt you, it may make you suffer—and yet—it excites you. Like the blows of a whip in a woman's hands. Isn't that right? Perhaps you will see it as a poem some day—perhaps as a joke—or just as an aphorism. And that is all you want. That's why you can go through a sea of torment, oblivious, you—the chaste one!

She dropped the stones and tore off her kimono.

"Now help me with my jewels. Pick out the emeralds only. They are my stones.

He put rings on her fingers and green bracelets on her naked arms, fastened large pendants in her ears and clasped a necklace tightly around her throat. And in her red hair he fastened a sparkling emerald tiara.

"Give me the toe rings, too," she ordered, "and my anklets." He took off her slippers, put green bands on her ankles, and rings—one for each toe.

"Bring the decanter," she said, "the large one with the *crème de menthel*"

He fetched the decanter and filled their glasses. "Drink!" She smiled. "This is green—like dew-covered meadows on a morning in June. June is my month—when the sign of the Cancer rules. Green—fill them again and drink! Green—as the stone of my month, the emerald. Its name is *bâreketh*—it is the first stone in the second row of my breastplate and it is also the stone of my old tribe: the stone of the priests, Levi's stone."

She set down her glass and reached for a large box of wrought gold, studded with star sapphires. From it she brought forth a strange looking square plate, one span high and one span wide. The plate was made of old gold, heavily alloyed with silver and copper. A gold ring was attached to each corner of the plate and small gold chainlets were fastened to the upper rings. One of the chains seemed old, but the other one evidently had been added only a few years ago. There were also two new narrow silk ribbons of a greenish hue attached to the end of the golden chains; two other such ribbons were fastened to the lower rings.

The plate was studded with twelve stones of different colors, arranged in four rows, three stones to a row. Each stone was marked in Hebrew characters with the name of one of the children of Jacob. "This is the onyx, the *yahalom*," she explained, "the July stone of the Sign of Leo; it is Zebulun's jewel. Reuben has the *odem* which we call carnelian, protected by the Virgo. Benjamin received *yashpneh*, the jasper, and his sign, Aries; Gad the Gemini and *shebô*, the agate. Simeon holds the Libra

and his stone is the chrysolite or pitdah.—Yes, my father often showed it to me—on the *circel* of many a holiday. That was his way of celebrating.”

He looked up. “Your father? I did not know he was interested in anything Jewish.”

She laughed. “No, he was not—certainly not. But I am—because you taught me to—and because I was born under the sign of the Cancer, the animal that walks backward into the past. But my father—no! This plate was the only thing Jewish that interested him—and this only on account of the stones, not for what it means to Jerusalem. Because this plate, you see, is holy.”

She picked up the plate and held it against her breast under the emerald necklaces, and made him tie the ribbons over her shoulders and on her back. Then she pulled down her chemise: curious, like two white kittens, her little breasts pecked across the multicolored stones.

“Holy,” she laughed, “—provided it is genuine! And perhaps it is genuine, who knows? This plate has been in my father’s family for many hundreds of years—it has travelled with them all over Europe. What would the East Side say if they knew what I have here: *Choshen Hammishpath*! Just think of it: there are two million Jews living here and not one of them knows anything about it!”

“What is it, really?” Frank Braun asked.

She drummed with her pink nails on the plate. “It is something holy,” she repeated, “something very holy! It is the breastplate of the High-Priest!—How do I look in it?”

“Your sacred treasure does not seem to make you feel very holy,” he answered.

“No.” She laughed; “it doesn’t. I am of the priests’ tribe, and you know—priests amongst themselves! But perhaps,”—she became abruptly serious and the bright ring of her voice assumed a deep note—“perhaps it is even more than that! I have studied all I could find out about the breastplate of the High-Priest—and none of the descriptions seems to fit my plate. The Midrasch

Bensidbar Rabba mentions it and Flavius Josephus describes it. But my plate is different." She took his hand and pulled him down to her. Her voice dropped to a soft whisper. "Look at it—look! It is smaller, much more insignificant. Not as costly—oh, not nearly as costly! My own stone, the bâreketh, is only a poor feldspar which the Egyptians knew under the name of uat—but it is green as the emerald. And Judah's stone, the nophek, is no ruby—look at it, this one here: it is only a cheap granate! And here is a brown agate instead of Issachar's sapphire, and here a malachite instead of the beryl. And that means, my friend: my breastplate is not that of the Second Temple. It is not that of the High-Priest: it is the old one, the original itself, the one which the Bible mentions, the breastplate of my ancestor: Aaron!"

There was a strange thrall in her whispered words. "And if so," he asked quickly, "what of it? What difference does it make which breastplate it is?"

She took his head in both her hands and pulled him close so that her emerald eyes glowed into his: "What difference does it make? Oh, an infinite one! Because then, you see, then my breastplate—and only mine—has the Urim and the Thummim!"

He laughed out loud. "Oh, is that it! And you, Lotte, you know what that is? Since the time of St. Augustine thousands of learned doctors have racked their brains trying to find that out—but nobody has discovered it!"

"Stop!" she cried. "Stop! Of course I don't know it—no more than anyone else. But isn't it there just the same? Who will solve John's Revelation? And yet it is there in thousands of languages! Whether I know it or not—does not matter—because the marvel is here, here on my breast—right here, in Aaron's breastplate!"

He shrugged his shoulders and scoffed: "Provided—it is genuine!"

She laughed with him, threw herself back on the colored cushions, raised her left knee and put her right leg over it. Then she

rocked her little foot, up and down, so that the anklets tinkled softly and the emerald rings sparkled on her toes.

"Provided it is genuine—yes! But the very fact that I don't know it, and that nobody can possibly know it—that's just what makes this thing so valuable to me. Thus I believe—at times, whenever I am in the mood—that it is really Aaron's wondrous plate; and then—then it *is* the genuine plate for me! Do you want to know the history of it? It is written in my brain and nobody else knows it. After Aaron's death the plate reposed in the original temple, performing miracles and delivering oracles—until Baal became stronger than Jehovah. The children of Israel went to Babylon as captive slaves and with them went all the treasures of the ruined temple—except this small plate which remained behind, hidden from the enemy, buried under the ruins of the temple by the hand of one of my pious forebears. Israel returned and built the Second Temple. They fashioned a new breastplate, larger, more glittering, more precious than this. But later, the original plate was found in the débris and a great feast of thanks was held. For many centuries afterwards, the breastplate was jealously guarded in the Holy of Holies within the Temple. There it lay until Titus laid waste Jerusalem and carried away the treasures of the Temple with him to Rome. The breastplate was then kept in the Temple of Concordia in Rome which had been built by Vespasian—Josephus tells that. Later Rome was conquered by Genseric, the Vandal king, who took the treasures with him to Africa. And when the power of the red-haired robber king was shattered, Belisarius brought the rich spoils to Byzantium and Emperor Justinian exhibited the Jewish treasures in a sanctuary of the Hagia Sophia. Finally, the treasures were sent back to Jerusalem to repose in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.—I read all this in Prokopius, in his book about the Vandal war."

"Still a long road from there to Manhattan," Frank Braun said.

She nodded. "Very long—winding back and forth, just like the road of the Jews! Khusru the Second, the Persian King, con-

quered Jerusalem and brought all the treasures the Temple harbored to Ktesiphon, the richest city the world ever beheld. But my plate did not stay there long. Omar, the Arabian, smashed the realm of the Sassanidae, took the capital and incalculable loot. His booty on that one single day is said to have been more than a thousand millions! My poor stones, of course, did not count for much in such spoil. This is the last record I can find in history about the plate. A strange enough career, I believe. Just think, my plate was taken by worshipers of the great Baal, by Romans, by children of Wotan, by Arians and Anastasians. The fire worshipers of Zarthustra had it and finally the wild desert tribes of Moham-med. But again and again it was restored to the Jewish people. And now listen carefully: Omar's sons divided the realm and the treasures. This small plate was holy to the Moslem just as it was to the Jew—so one of them, probably a prince or a great warrior, may have taken it to Egypt whence it had come. From there, another probably took it along on an expedition through Africa. It came to Spain with Tarik and lay hidden in the treasure vaults of the Omajads and Nasserides, until finally, when the Alhambra fell, it came into the possession of the Catholic Majesties Isabella and Ferdinand—although they surely cared little about the poor stones even if they knew the meaning of the breastplate. Some hidalgo, probably, got it from them, and he, or his children after him, may have sold it to a Jewish physician—to a Sephardim who was a master of the great art of medicine and who probably saved many a Christian life—for which he was rewarded by being driven penniless out of the country, instead of having to serve as a torch in the next auto-da-fé. But he must have taken Aaron's plate with him, perhaps to Amsterdam or Hamburg! And somehow one of my great-grandfathers acquired it, a German Jew, because my father's people are Ashkenazim. And it reached Yankee soil for the first time with a woman who is half German and half Jew. May it show its power here—may it help you and me and everything

that is Jewish—and everything that is German! And it will—I know it will!”

Her voice had risen—a firm, clear ring of confidence in it. She drew herself up, lifted the plate with both her hands to her lips and kissed it fervently.

He jeered: “Like a prophet! But don’t forget, they were men and you——”

She cried: “And Deborah? Deborah?—A woman just as I am! Her hands dripped with blood and her heart was full of rancor against the enemies of her people. Just as mine is!”

His lips curled: “You!” he said, “You? Mixed blood—Lotte Levil”

“That’s just why!” she retorted. “In this way I can feel both for my father’s people tortured in Russia, and my mother’s people fighting for survival against the whole world!”

He was well aware how earnest she was—and it was just that earnestness which irritated him. “Sentimental bosh!” he said, contemptuously, “Sentimentalities of education and inheritance!”

“No!” she cried, “No! There was nothing Jewish in my father who was baptized long before I was born. Nothing Jewish except his name and his nose. What I could have inherited from him would have been hate and not love of the Jews. And education? In the Tiergarten in Berlin? You ought to know—because it was you who first told me that I was Jewish! You, who awakened everything that is Jewish in me—you, who made me into a Jewess!”

“Perhaps I have also made you into a German?” he mocked.

But she remained calm. “No, the war has done that! I am what I am: a half-breed. But I have my Fatherland, my people—two peoples if you like!”

He filled their glasses. “Drink, Lotte, drink! To your Fatherland!”

She raised her glass: “And to yours!”

“I don’t believe I have one,” he said shrugging his shoulders. “Whatever I may say or do for it—it is only a game, Lotte. It is

work, exercise, adventure! But belief—and love of country? No—decidedly not!”

“You have lost it,” she said. “Or perhaps you have never had it. I will help you find it.”

“It may be a long search, Lottel” he smiled.

She insisted: “And yet you must find it. With me!” And again her voice brought him under her strange spell.

He filled his tiny pipe, lit it, drew a quick puff and knocked it out on the bronze ash tray. Then he began: “I will not find it, I will never find it! You are right, Lotte—I have never known what people call Fatherland. But I have searched for it, I have been fervently searching for it this last year. I have searched for it with my brain and with my heart, just as every German has done the world over. And now I know: I can never find something that does not exist. Many clever people have been searching for it, all through the ages—and no one has ever found it. Only fools believe in a country that doesn’t exist.”

He passed his hand across his forehead, rubbing it hard as if he were brushing away something unpleasant. “You are right,” he said. “I am throwing myself away. All this makes me stupid and childish. I have to make an end of it.”

“Of what?” she asked.

“My work. My so-called patriotic work.”

She reached for his hand and all the triumph was gone from her voice when she said quietly: “No, my dear friend, you will go on with it—and you will do even more than you have done before. You serve a thought and a belief—and you are needed. You are a tool; you must work.”

He sighed. “It will kill me!”

“You? No, it will never kill you! But me, perhaps!” She did not wait for his question. “Oh, you will understand it all some day. It isn’t money—oh, no! I am giving more, and a much more precious thing to make you strong for your work!” Again she forestalled his question. “I won’t tell you, I won’t!—But I will tell you why I am doing it.”

She ran her hand over his fair hair and softly patted his moist

forehead. "Listen, dear boy. I am your bride, your mother, your mistress—and now, in this time, I am your sister, too. I am also your prophet. I want to make you strong and great—and I can do it if I make you German. I know that this will lift you up—high, high above yourself even!"

"All right, try it!" he said defiantly. "Try it, if you like—and if you can."

But he could not shake her confidence. "I can do it, I alone can do it. I can make you German!" Her hand trembled; she pulled it away from his forehead and touched the stones on the plate. With a strange, almost oracular voice, she said: "I have the sign!"

His eyes asked: "You?"

She nodded. "Yes, I! Oh, it is nothing secret, nothing occult. Many people know my secret—probably millions of people have known it for more than three thousand years! But, no one has understood its meaning—no Jew and no German. I found it—I alone!"

Again she looked at the breastplate, passing a caressing hand over it. "The twelve tribes were camping in the desert, each tribe by itself and yet all were united in battle against a world of enemies—just as the Germans now, the Bavarians and Saxons and Prussians and Austrians. And just as the colors of each tribe are carried before their regiments, black and white, green and white, black and yellow, blue and white—thus each tribe of Israel had its own flag. A red banner waved over the tents of Reuben's children and a sky blue flag over the tents of Judah. White was Zebulun's color and black Issachar's. But all the tribal flags consisted of one color—and only one of the tribes, only one, had a multicolored flag."

"Which one?" he asked.

"Wait," she said, "wait!" When the Promised Land had been conquered and was divided up among the tribes in twelve equal parts, the tribe of Joseph, the greatest of the brethren, received two shares—one for each of his sons, Ephraim and Manasseh. Therefore one of the tribes had to go without its share, and that

was my tribe: Levi. It was made the tribe of priests, it was placed above the others and it was to serve as a link between the children of Israel. And it was this tribe, Levi's tribe, which carried a tricolor flag in the desert. Do you know what the colors of this flag were? Black, white and red!"

"That isn't so!" he cried.

"It *is* so! I will show it to you in Sephar Midrash Rabba—oh, in dozens of old documents! Black, white and red is Levi's proud banner—my banner—and yours! Many people have known it and read about it throughout the centuries, but no one could interpret its meaning: I found it, I was the first to see it, I alone—because my heart beats against Aaron's breastplate which holds the Urim and the Thummim."

She held out her glass to him and he filled it with liquid emerald. She jumped up and stretched out her naked arm. "Black, white and red was the flag that waved in the desert high above the other banners of Israel! What would Bismarck have said if he had known that! Bismarck who chose these colors for the new nation instead of black, red and gold? And what would his great contemporary have said, Lord Beaconsfield, the Jew Disraeli! He, who was the first to say that the world belonged to two peoples, to both together, closely united—the Germanic and the Jewish. In my veins flows the blood of both—I am a German and a Jewess. And I found the interpretation of the message which my tribe has given to our age—long live my German—long live my Jewish people! May Levi's proud banner lead them, both united, through the desert—into the Promised Land—which means the conquest of the world! I give you—you and my own life—to this cause!"

She drained her glass and flung it against the wall. She stood erect with outstretched arms—wild, half naked, ecstatic—a superb, motionless figure.

"Deborah," he whispered hoarsely, "Deborah!"

Then she trembled and her knees gave way. Her arms dropped and she fell back onto her cushions. She lay there with closed eyes, breathing heavily, her body quivering.

And her sweet breasts sobbed over Aaron's age-old stones.

At dawn he walked across Madison Square—where Broadway joins Fifth Avenue for a few blocks. Slowly, step by step, Frank Braun fought his way through the ice-cold blizzard. His feet sank deeply into the white surface as he staggered through the drifts, hugging the walls of the buildings to escape the full force of the wind. As he turned a corner to walk across to Gramercy Park he noticed that some one was walking in front of him. A man in a black rubber raglan that shed the snow. His soft felt hat was pressed down low over his forehead and he limped along with dragging steps—almost fell several times. The man was not drunk, he was stumbling as he tried to make his way through the sleet. Frank Braun caught up with him and asked if he could help. But the man only laughed—no, he did not laugh, he grunted—a slimy, swabbing noise. It sounded in Frank Braun's ears like the noise of a fisherman's knife as it rips open cod—smooth and soft and yet grating and tearing. It was a repulsive sound and Frank Braun recognized it at once—that was the way his uncle laughed—and the man in the Pullman car. He looked around—were there black mice running across the snow?

No—nothing. Frank Braun stopped and waited for the man to pass him. The man did not spit—but as he passed, he grunted again. And now in the flickering light of a street lamp, Frank Braun could see the man's face. He was a Chinese—a stout, well-fed Chinese. Now he was holding to the fence, reeling to and fro as on the rail of a tossing boat. Then he turned away and staggered across the street, over to Second Avenue and south toward Chinatown.

Frank Braun followed him with his eyes. He did not spit—the white carpet remained unstained. But further down the street, from far away, he could hear the man's repulsive grunt, the blizzard carrying the sound back to him in broken fragments.

There were no cars on the street, no carriages, busses or street cars. Empty and deserted—except for the icy howling of the wind

which grew more violent every minute. It whipped up the flakes, spat the icy pellets at him from every side, chased them up and down the stone walls, tore at lamp-posts, fences, benches and trees. And—for seconds only—formed fantastic images here and there around the park, tearing them down immediately afterwards—creating and destroying at the same time.

In a bare bush behind the snow-covered fence one such figure loomed up like a huge animal. Like a bear, like the polar bear depicted daily in newspaper cartoons as the symbol of Russia's devastating power. And over on the other side, leaning against a lamp-post, stood some one in a snow coat like a forgotten sentry on a winter night. Something protruded from underneath the coat—something black and pointed like a bayonet. Then a new gust of wind came from the West Side and blew life into these figures risen out of the snow—they stormed across the square and broke against the creaking iron fence. But new ones filled their ranks, rising from the ground, shining and white, to storm against the fence in an endless charge. They rushed toward him, against him, through him—new snow armies that kept rising from the ground in countless numbers. Now they caught him, knocked him to the ground, turned him around like a clumsy plank and pinned him to the white earth. Painfully he got to his knees and crept away, slipping and pushing himself forward with all his strength. And again the armies swept over his body—thousands, hundreds of thousands of white riders. The storm pursued, roared, pelted—

There, behind him—the iron fence broke—

Just to get across—a matter of thirty feet—across the street. There was his club—there he could get warm. Could drink hot toddy. Could play poker.



HIS secretary put the revolver in the traveling bag.

"No," Frank Braun said, "leave it here. I won't need it." He hesitated, holding the weapon in his hand. "Wait—I might be able to use it as a gift. It would make a fine present down there." Again he hesitated. "But not this one. It is a German army pistol—and they shan't say of us that we smuggle arms across the Rio Grande. Since the Yankees themselves supply the Mexicans with all their arms, I, too, can bring them American products. There—down in that drawer—are enough Smith & Wessons—take half a dozen. And don't forget the cartridges—five boxes for each gun."

"Shall I call your friends now?" Rossius asked. "You'll want to say good-bye to them!"

Frank Braun nodded. "Yes, call them!—Did you ask them to come?"

"Oh, yes, all three of them are waiting outside!" The secretary laughed. "What a touching scene it will be!" He went to the window, pulled back the curtains and waved to some one outside. He was a young Austrian, slim and bright eyed, and in spite of his youth—he was only twenty-three—capable and intelligent. Sometimes, when girls were on his mind, he was distracted and a bit careless, but he could pull himself together when necessary and handle the most delicate situations—and that was what was

needed in this position. Ernst Rossius had run away from college and had roamed over three continents as newspaper man and interpreter, as steward, trimmer and stevedore. Now he was stranded in the United States like countless others. He had come to Frank Braun one day seeking a job.

"Recommendations?" Frank Braun asked. This was always his first question with every visitor; then he would take the letters and pretend to read them while the other man talked. That gave him time to form his own judgment.

"Here!" the young man had said quickly. He reached into his pocket and produced a sheaf of papers. They were lyrical poems. Each was signed and bore a date.

"Nice recommendations you have—good God!" Frank Braun said disapprovingly. But he read them. It was bad poetry, the thoughts immature and influenced by other writers. And yet here and there—a cadence—a word only—spelled an individuality.

"What can you do?" Frank Braun asked.

"Everything—or nothing, depending on how you look at it. I can do everything—and nothing properly.

Frank Braun liked the answer. "All right," he smiled. "Stay if you like!"

And so he had stayed.

The detectives came in; they were aghast when they saw the open trunks. Usually, when Frank Braun went away for two or three days, he took only a suitcase. In the beginning, before he had made friends with the detectives, one of them had always followed him on his trips; but later they were merely told where he was going and where he would speak. So they had stayed in New York, accepting his own report and pocketing the fat traveling expenses.

But this time it looked different. "How long are you going to be away?" the tall one asked suspiciously.

"A month. Maybe six weeks."

Oh, that long? But why? Where was he going?

He needed a rest, he said, that was all. He must be alone, he

wanted to work undisturbed. He was going to the country, to the seashore.

But they did not believe a word of it. Oh, they knew what he was going to do—they knew it better than he thought they did! He was going to Canada, of course, to blow up the Welland Canal or some railroad bridge. The newspapers were full of these things. The attempts had failed several times—but they knew these Germans—they would try again and again, until—

The short, fat one lifted up the leather bag—heavy, very heavy. "Dynamite?" he asked with awe.

They begged and pleaded with him. He should spare himself, for God's sake! The Kaiser would get along without him! He was a fool to risk his life like this. And if those damned Canadians should catch him he would be put before a firing squad—as a spy! They would never forgive themselves that they had not warned him and protected him better. They were so fond of him—

"And of your good job!" he laughed.

Then a messenger boy came and brought a great bunch of red roses with a note—from Ivy Jefferson, from little fair-haired Ivy Jefferson with whom Frank Braun had been flirting for some months. He knew her parents—her mother was as important a figure on Fifth Avenue as her father in Wall Street.

He took the roses out of the box—they smelled fresh and sweet like the young flesh on Ivy's neck.—Frank Braun smiled—the roses were a good sign. Ivy had become genuinely attached to him—and more than that, she had won over her mother and father, too, who did whatever this spoilt child of eighteen wanted. But behind them stood a score and more of other families; this was excellent protection—just in case something should go amiss down there. They all stood behind him—against their better judgment—forced over to his side by his one weapon:—Ivy.

Her coming-out party in February—everybody who belonged had been there, the *crème de la crème*. Several years ago, in London, old Mr. Jefferson had casually invited him to it: "You

must come to her *début*!" And Frank Braun had answered in the same way: "Why, of course, I shall certainly come!"

And now here in New York, one morning, Tewes brought him the newspapers emblazoned with Ivy's picture. Ivy Jefferson makes her bow to society—yes, that was much more important than all the battles in Poland or France.

"Didn't you say once that you know the Jeffersons?" the newspaper man asked. "Have you called on them yet?" Frank Braun said he had not. "Well then you must go there today, at once!" He rushed Frank Braun down to Wall Street, to Mr. Jefferson's office in the Jefferson bank.

Tewes waited outside, pacing up and down with long strides until Frank Braun came out. "Well, what is it?" he asked. "Has he invited you?"

"Yes, he has," Frank Braun answered, "but he did not enjoy doing it, I can assure you!"

"I believe you!" The newspaper man chortled. "Only Allies will be present—ammunition people and loan brokers! You will be the only German—I am positive!" He rubbed his hands in glee. "I can imagine the face old man Jefferson made! Sweet and sore and embarrassed—and yet polite. He knew it would be wrong, whatever he did. If he had not invited you, his dear spouse would have given him hell for his tactlessness and cowardice—and now that he has asked you, she will blame him for exactly the same reasons!" He lighted a long cigar and blew smoke in heavy clouds. "But now comes the main thing, Doctor: You must flirt with the Jefferson girl for all you are worth. Outshine all her beaux! Because that kid holds many strings in her hand—or will hold them some day even if she doesn't know it yet! Today she probably doesn't care either way—British or German! You must win her over to our side! That girl can be very useful to us—or to you—some day. You see——"

He talked on and on. He explained in quick sentences, how the Jefferson bank worked, openly and behind the scenes, and that the financial wizard—and his wife—would do everything to please their little daughter.

"How do you know all this?" Frank Braun asked.

Tewes stopped and waved his long arms.

"Do you think I have been a political newspaper man in New York for the past twenty-three years for nothing? In Europe you must know the authorities—here you have to know families!"

Frank Braun got his invitation. He went for Tewes' sake, and more so because Lotte van Ness urged him to go. "He is right," she said, "he is perfectly right. Flirt with the girl, show what you can do. Take her—give her her first kisses."

"Kisses without emotion!" he objected.

"Nonsense! What does that matter? Kisses are kisses—whether genuine or not."

It was not hard to compete against the men there—a few decrepit French bankers and diplomats who were quite amusing but did not count—even their English was impossible. Then Italian artists—painters and singers—but all second-class, loud-mannered and yet servile. And many Englishmen, of course, well educated, but cold and without any sense of humor. They were entertaining, polite and obliging, but always with that offending air of: "How good of me to come and honor you—trash!"

And there were, naturally, many Americans—tall young boys with splendid figures, sons of the best families—what a contrast to the hollow-checked, narrow-chested, flat-footed millions which the subway spits out from the bowels of the earth day-in, day-out! They were Harvard, Yale and Princeton men, who rowed and boxed, rode horseback and drove speedboats, played baseball and football and polo and who were equally as good at hockey as at tennis. And who unquestionably wore their tailcoats as easily as their polo shirts.

There were no Jews—not a single one. The Kaiser might ask Mr. Ballin for breakfast and the King of England Sir Ernest Cassel—but this was an American house, one of the best! Not even the wealthiest Jew could ever have crossed this threshold—it was easier to think of the Czar of Russia having tea with Baron Günzburg and playing bridge with Mr. Mandelbaum than

of a Jew being admitted here. Even Frank Braun was a near-outcast here—he, the German.

Ivy Jefferson stood beside her parents with a large bouquet of white orchids in her arms, receiving the visitors. She shook hands with over four hundred people and spoke a few words to each one. Frank Braun came late, bowed to her and shook hands. He remembered having heard from her father that she understood German—so he spoke to her in his own language. Her father noticed it—he made a long face and looked meaningly at his wife. Then he gave Frank Braun a very reproachful look and greeted him with marked coolness, in English. Frank Braun answered politely but curtly and turned again to Ivy. He said, smiling, in a loud voice: "Shall I speak English? Your father is terribly embarrassed because some one speaks German in his house." Little Ivy answered in German, in slow and clumsy German, but yet in German: "This is my day; speak German!" "Thank you!" Frank Braun said and turned aside. But she held him back intentionally, so every one should notice it. She was grown up now, she had been "in society" for an hour and was now independent of every one, and particularly of her parents. She had to prove it—and this was her first opportunity.

Just to say something, she continued: "Everybody has told me something nice about how I look—you haven't said a word! How do you like me?"

He measured her in the tenth of a second. "Very much!" he said slowly. "Very much! Only—your maid isn't very good."

"Why?" she asked.

"You have a pimple—there on your shoulder—just a tiny one. "What are 'mouches' for?"

He noticed how she blushed under her make-up and powder. Her eyes showed offense and hurt—then she glanced furtively at her shoulder and bit her lower lip—

"Oh!" she whispered.

She turned sharply and left him standing there. And she offered her slim hand to the next comer.

He moved away and lost himself in the crowd. Thinking the

episode over, he wondered for an instant if it had been wise—then he nodded to himself in satisfaction. He thought: "Yes, it was good. She has shaken hands with two hundred men—and they all said the same thing. She will remember me."

He sat at a table in the Gothic dining room, drank a little and talked with indifferent people. Then he went to the winter garden with them and from there into the ball room. He stood on one side all by himself and watched the crowd.

They danced well, these American boys! They danced smoothly back and forth, making always the same steps, dispassionately, unemotionally, infinitely bored—but gracefully and tirelessly, for hours.

Frank Braun stood and waited.

She danced past him twice, five times, many times—and she looked over at him without a sign of recognition. Now and then she would sit down for a few minutes and it seemed to him then that her eyes were beckoning to him—inviting at first, then indignant, then commanding. Why didn't he ask her to dance? He just stood quietly and motionlessly, eyes on the dancers, and waited.

It was not a pose with him—far from it! He just did not care. He thought: "She will come!"

Again she danced past him—and just then the music stopped. She returned with her partner, brushed Frank Braun's shoulder, stopped and turned to him.

"Here, look!" she said.

There was a tiny black spot on her shoulder.

"That's nice of you!" he nodded.

She introduced her tall young partner and the men shook hands and offered each other cigarettes. Then she took Frank Braun's arm and sent the other on his way.

"Don't you dance?" she asked.

"No."

"I am a bit tired. I would like a sherbet. Won't you come with me?"

Now was his opportunity—now! But he could think of nothing

to say and so remained silent. He thought: "If Tewes saw me now!—Ass! he would say, fool!"

Once more she tried to start a conversation. "Do you mind if we speak English when we are alone? It's so much easier for me."

He nodded. "Just as you like."

Again a pause. He brought her an ice and they sat down at a little table almost hidden in a corner. And again she began: "This is the way I thought you were—very reserved. Sometimes this way—and sometimes otherwise."

"Thought?" he asked. "When have you thought about it?"

"Yesterday!" she laughed. "Father and mother quarreled about you. You are dangerous. You are a conspirator."

"Oh, no," he said, "I am really quite harmless."

She shook her head. "No," she cried, "you are not. Mother's secretary comes from Vienna—she knows about you. Mother asked her all about you. Then she warned me."

He looked up: "And?"

She smiled: "That's why I am sitting here!"

He did not answer but kept looking at her steadily for a long time, without listening to her chatter. She had dark blond hair combed back in long waves. Her eyebrows seemed a little too heavy—but she had beautiful gray eyes and a small, well-shaped nose. There was a nervous quiver in her nostrils. Her mouth was small and her upper lip well curved. Her neck was slightly long, her shoulders sloped too much and were not full enough—and her chest was too flat, much too flat. And yet she was pretty—so very young—an early blossom.

"Why do you keep staring at me?" she cried. "Why don't you say something?"

His eyes met hers and she was silent now—as he was.

"What do you want?" she finally asked.

He did not take his eyes from her. "I came here—for your sake."

She started to laugh but broke off sharply.

"For your sake—" he repeated.

Some one came and asked her to dance. So he said—though it sounded like a question: "I am leaving."

She rose and gave him her hand. Then she said: "Come for tea—on—on—the day after tomorrow!"

Again he looked at the roses—American Beauties—each stem three feet long.

He inhaled their scent—then he laid them down on the table, reached for her note and opened the envelope.

He had gone to Ivy Jefferson's for tea. He had been alone with her—except once when her mother had come in for a few minutes. No, he had not made love to Ivy, decidedly not. He had not been nice to her, he had not flattered her.

But his green eyes could be intriguing—sometimes, when he happened to have his day—and it had been his day that time. With light fingers he had stroked her hand and her arm.

They became friends. He came there twice a week, or even three times. They went to the opera together and he rode horseback with her. "I go there much too often," he thought; "she takes up too much of my time." But she said: "You don't come often enough! You are my beau—and you should come every day."

She had to have a beau—like every New York society woman—that was understood. But she, Ivy Jefferson, took a German—in these days. Her father did not approve of it, and her mother even less so. But they accustomed themselves to it. And Mrs. Alice Jefferson—her beau was the English Consul General—told every one that she thought it very smart and very courageous. Really, very courageous!

More than that, they became genuinely fond of him. They did not pretend—they really liked him and got used to him; Ivy's will had done that. Once her mother had tried to speak seriously to her about it.

"Why a German?" she asked.

"Shall I have an Italian?" her daughter retorted. "Make myself ridiculous?"

No, of course not, not a Dago! But there were so many Eng-

lishmen, Canadians, Frenchmen, Belgians and Russians. It was out of the question, however, that it be an American. Ivy had inherited that from her mother—the instinctive, suspicious disrespect for the men of her country—an attitude she shared with many society women.

Frank Braun read Ivy's letter—three pages in her bold handwriting. It was mean of him to go away, she said, very mean indeed! Why wasn't he coming with them to Newport instead? And he must not imagine that she would not find out where he was going! She would find out—even if it should cost her fifty thousand dollars!

That alarmed him, and he sat down at once to write to her. If she took one single step to trace him, she would never see him again! He had his reasons—and if she were clever she would understand that. He thanked her for the roses—he would take them along. He would be back soon.

He slipped his note into an envelope and wrote the address. Then he called his secretary who brought the detectives in with him—they were now evidently in a much more tractable mood.

"What did I tell you!" Ernst Rossius said to them. "Roses—and a little note."

The short, fat one came over to Frank Braun: "I hope you'll enjoy yourself, Doctor! And please—may I have a rose as a souvenir—I'd like to take it to my wife!"

Frank Braun divided the bunch of roses into three equal parts and gave them to the three rogues.

"Have you a wife, too?" he asked the thin one.

"No," the man answered, "but I have a girl!" The secretary quickly handed a check to Frank Braun. "Sign it, please!" he said. "Three hundred dollars for the men." Frank Braun signed the check and gave it to one of the men. Then he shook three hands, said three times: "So long!"

"That was cheap!" he admitted as soon as the men had gone. "How did you do it?"

Rossius laughed. "It is a pity that you gave all the roses away. You might have left me a few—for my fiancée."

"Still the same one?"

"No—a new one—since last week!—There, the roses—that did the trick. I told the men a nice story about an affair you were having—very secretly of course! And that you were going on a little honeymoon with the young lady. They appreciated that—and the roses confirmed their belief. And the hundred dollars each——"

Frank Braun stayed in Torreon, in the state of Chihuahua. In Monterey he had separated from his companion who was to go South to Vera Cruz to join General Carranza. They had decided it would be better to separate and that each one work alone. If they remained together and went first to Villa and then to Carranza, or the other way around—both Mexicans in turn would have received them with suspicion.

He waited. Pancho Villa would come, tomorrow, or the day after—from Durango. Perhaps he would come next week, or the week after that—but he would come. He had ordered all his men to assemble here—from all parts of the country he had convoked his men, from wherever his name spelled power: it was to be a great review of his armiea. And they all came, captains and generals, with small and large detachments. They camped in the city and outside in the suburbs, in Gomez, Palacio and Lerdo.

Frank Braun rode through the camp, making friends and chatting with the soldiers the whole day long. He had brought all sorts of gadgets with him from New York—cigars that exploded, trick matches that would not burn and similar clever toys. He gave them away to the officers. Oh, he knew his Mexicans! They enjoyed these silly presents like children, they laughed like school boys—these men whose dirty fingers were sticky with shed blood.

It was easy to sound them out. They were all for Villa, of course—he was the strong man. But nobody had any definite idea as to what would happen. Anarchy was rampant here as it was everywhere in this country.

On only one issue, one single issue, they all agreed. Every

soldier, from the general down to the last muleteer, every smallest fruit peddler and bootblack, every lawyer and politician; and every woman, from the educated señora down to the harlots in the brothels—

That was the hate, the deep seated, inborn hatred against the Gringo.

The American was to blame for everything, from beginning to end. From him came the money and the weapons with which powerful Diaz was overthrown; through him fell Madero and Gutierrez and Huerta. And the Carranza men against whom they were fighting also had American money and shot Yankee bullets.

And they, themselves, the Villistas? Well, of course, they, too! That was just the trouble! They were killing their own brothers everywhere! Nobody benefited by it—except one—the Gringo, the American. And they must have no peace or rest, they must keep on fighting each other because Wall Street wished it—and Washington.

They were all firmly convinced of that. If only some one would come and lead them—they would be united instantly, all of them, Villistas and Zapatistas, Carranzistas and Diaz men—all of them, from Sonora to Yucatan. Their only hope, their last chance, for this country that was being torn to pieces and slowly bleeding to death, was an outside war, war against the unscrupulous Gringo who had within a few years made their beautiful, rich, fertile country the most desolate spot on earth.

Why was all this? Why was their enemy, the Yankee, doing this? They knew the answer and they never tired of telling it to Frank Braun. The Americans wanted their country, they wanted to steal the oil fields, just as they had stolen California, New Mexico, Texas and Arizona. But they were too cowardly to go right out and take it. They cleverly incited the Mexicans against each other, let them kill their brothers off year after year. And then, when in the whole country scarcely a man would be left to carry a rifle—then the brave Yankee would appear on the

scene. Then he would "pacify" the country! He would take whatever he liked! That was Gringo policy!

They poured down their agave brandy in large tumblers, beat their fists on the table, spat and shouted and raged. And then—one man, and another, and more—would break down and sob. Yes, it would be better if the Gringos came to finish it all! Soon everything would be over anyway. They groaned like wounded bulls, waiting to be put out of their misery by the merciful thrust of the puntillero's dagger.

But in New York the newspapers carried huge headlines: "GERMANS TRYING TO INCITE MEXICO AGAINST THE UNITED STATES" Germans? Good God, no! This country was incited by one only—by the Yankee!

The following Sunday Villa rode into town. The city was decorated for the occasion; torn rugs and colored bed-clothes hung from the windows and balconies. There were even a few flags.

People stayed in their houses except for the wenches who leaned out of windows or stood in doorways. They shriekingly returned the bawdy jokes of the incoming troops. The soldiers did not march in formation; they rode or ran through the streets in any way they pleased. Their clothes were in rags and tatters and they carried a strange assortment of weapons—but all of them wore the huge pointed Mexican sombrero.

Frank Braun stood on his little balcony, looking down at the soldiers and waiting for the arrival of the Generalissimo who had not yet passed by. There was a knock at the door of his room. "Come in!" he called and turned around.

A tall, hawk-nosed officer entered; and it struck Frank Braun that this officer, at least, was clean-shaven.

"I am sorry to disturb you," the officer said politely, "but I must arrest you."

"Who are you?"

"I am the General's aide. I am sorry—but you will have to come with me."

"Who gave the order?"

"I, myself," the officer replied. "You are a stranger and you come from the United States. You have no identification papers. We must investigate. Please follow me."

Frank Braun looked at the man carefully. He wore high new leather puttees and three revolvers stuck out from his belt, but he carried a smart riding crop in his hand. He wore no coat and no waistcoat and his blue shirt was damp and dusty. It was open at the neck, revealing a piece of white ribbon with a blue stripe.

"Arbekampfes?" Frank Braun asked.

The stranger was startled. "Nobody ever asked me that question in Mexico!" He stepped over to the window and turned back into the room for a better look at Frank Braun. "Are you also——?" he continued. "No—no—you are a German!"

Frank Braun nodded. "Yes, I am. And you can go on with your examination right here if you like! Won't you sit down, please?"

They sat down and talked—and quickly understood each other. Frank Braun told the officer that he knew Villa and that he had been with the General in Sonora four years ago when they were riding against Maitorena. What he wanted here? Oh, just to see what the feeling was in this country. The feeling about what? For Villa or Carranza—or for whom? No, he was not interested in that at all, Frank Braun explained, he was interested in one thing only: how they felt about Washington—whether for or against——"

"You hate the Yankees?" the aide retorted.

"Should I love them? Because their bullets mow down my people?"

Slowly the officer said: "I am from New York——"

"From Hester Street?" Frank Braun asked.

"You know your New York!" the Jew laughed. "Not exactly from Hester Street—but not very far from it." He fell pensive. "I am an American citizen—I still am. And I was one, body and soul—as a child, as a boy and a youth. I firmly believed in equal-

ity and liberty—in that great symbol in New York Bay. I did not care for anything that did not fly the Stars and Stripes—until——”

He stopped and Frank Braun repeated: “Until?”

“Until I realized that all this is a damned lie! You see, sir, I was born a soldier—it was my greatest dream. My father did not like it, but my mother approved—she said that I had Maccabean blood in me. I had to learn the tailoring profession, but finally, when I was twenty, my mother got me permission to enroll with the Seventy-first Regiment. That is no regular military corps, just a volunteer regiment, a national guard unit where they drill a few nights a month. But still, there were uniforms and rifles and sabres. It smacked a little of soldiering! There were posters all over the town, and on every street corner they distributed the propaganda leaflets of the recruiting bureau declaring that it was the duty of every patriotic citizen, etc. I was a patriot to the marrow of my bones. And it was my duty—so I applied.”

He laughed bitterly and his riding crop whirled through the air. “They examined me—and the doctor said I was a magnificent fellow who some day would be the pride of the regiment. But two days later came a report that I was unfit for military duty—physically unfit. I wept the whole night—and next morning I ran to see our old physician and had myself examined again. The doctor said that in all New York they couldn’t find anybody healthier than I. I saved my weekly pay and went to the leading physicians in town. They examined me thoroughly—for hours. I assembled a whole collection of affidavits from the doctors and sent them in to the regiment. And again there came a report—unfit for military duty! They did not want me—they refused to have me—because I am a Jew! Not even as a common soldier would they take a Jew!”

He jumped up and held his arm under Frank Braun’s nose. “There, feel that!” he cried. Frank Braun felt it—the muscles were hard and firm as steel. Then the Jew lifted his right leg. “Feel that—there was never a stronger pair of thighs to grip a horse!” Again Frank Braun obliged him, felt the leg and tried

to pinch it. But it was impossible—this leg was as if hewn from rock.

"Every Goddamn flat-footed salesman limps through the streets of New York in a khaki uniform," he shouted, "but they did not want me—because I am circumcised! I was—unfit for military duty!"

He dropped heavily into his chair and whistled a few bars from the Star-Spangled Banner. "They taught me in school that America is the most liberal and the most marvelous country in the world. They probably thought that every Jew should be happy and grateful for all eternity as long as an ocean lay between him and the nagaikas of the Czar's soldiers. But my fathers kille does not come from Russia—we are from Galicia. His brother was a rabbi—he made a little money in oil near Drohobytsch. So he moved to Vienna—and all his children went to college. They all had a much better education than I did. One is an engineer, one a student at the university and two others—two of them—are lieutenants! Now all four of them are fighting at the front, against the murderers of our people. That is better than to stay in the New York ghetto—where all you can do, is to fight with your mouth!"

Again his riding crop whirled through the air. "I read the New York papers which a friend of mine sends down to me sometimes. Every day they are preaching it—just as they used to in school—that America is the land of the free, that it is freer than any other country in the world! Germany and Austria are enslaved and reactionary, the most backward countries in the world. But over there my cousins are officers—and here I wasn't good enough to be a common private!"

He swallowed hard and breathed deeply, the riding crop bent double in his hands. Then he quickly jumped to his feet and offered his hand to Frank Braun.

"You know my chief?" he cried. "Finel I will come for you this afternoon and take you over to see him. And then we can continue our little chat—if you like."

Frank Braun heartily returned the clasp of this strong hand. "Your name?" he asked.

The Jew laughed. "De Piedraperla—how do you like that? My parents' name in New York is Pearlstone—and my cousins abroad are called Perlstein. But call me Perlstein—I prefer it!" He opened the door, but turned back again.

"With all this I forgot to ask you what you really want here," he said. "But if your mission is to work against the Yankees, you can save yourself the trouble! Down here everybody dreams day and night of nothing but their hate for the Gringos who are ruining Mexico!"

Frank Braun stayed at the inn all afternoon waiting for the General's aide. At last, in the evening, he had his horse saddled and rode into camp to ask for Villa's quarters. The General lived in a hacienda a short distance from the town and Frank Braun had no difficulty finding it, as the neglected garden of the hacienda swarmed with soldiers who sat and sprawled on the ground smoking innumerable cigarettes.

He asked for Villa's aide, Colonel Piedraperla, but none of the soldiers knew the name or could give him any information. Like curious children, they crowded around his horse, eager to help.

What did the officer look like, they asked.

Slim, tall, smoothly shaven, elegant looking, very tanned, black hair and dark eyes—

They guessed various names but could not find it.

"He has a nose like this," Frank Braun said and drew with his fingers a sweeping curve in the air.

Now they laughed and hopped about in great excitement. Oh, yes, him! Why, yes, they knew him very well, the man with the large nose! It was Don Benjamino, of course! And they all shouted and yelled together: "Don Benjamino!"

"So, Benjamin is his name," Frank Braun thought—"Benjamin Perlstein."

A sweat-covered bay mare came cantering up through the bushes. The rider reigned her in, jumped down and threw the

reins to a soldier. "Oh, here you are!" he cried. "I have just come from your fonda, I thought you would get tired waiting. You must forgive me, but we were very busy this afternoon."

He took Frank Braun's arm and led him to the house.

"The General is in a bad mood today," he said, "in a very bad mood—in fact, he is furious. The dancer is disturbing his peace of mind!" He laughed and gave a sleeping soldier on the stairs a vigorous kick with his boot. "Yes, a Spanish dancer—a wild cat! She has turned all our heads, Pancho Villa's and mine, and all the others. She never grants her favors to any one—she is cold as the ice water they serve you in New York."

Frank Braun looked up in surprise. "Well, frankly speaking—none of you look as though you would bother much about asking a girl's permission."

"That's true, it is not the fashion here!" the Colonel answered. "But she gets away with it—the devil knows how! We are all jealous of each other—and so every one is her protector. If you had come a week ago you would have seen a welt on my cheek—that was Dolores' signature; she who calls herself 'Goyita.' I put my arms around her—and she got hold of my own whip. Villa and Perez Domingo and all the others roared with laughter! But I am not the only one—she has dealt out other blows in this camp! The soldiers call her 'La Pegona'—The Beater—they would all go through hell for her!"

Now they were inside the building and walked across a spacious patio in which a few dying plants stood on marble pedestals. They stopped before a yellow curtain hanging in front of a high opening that served as a door. A few soldiers on guard at the entrance snapped into salute as the Colonel approached. Don Benjamin pulled back the curtains and called a few words into the completely darkened room.

From the back of the room he was answered by a curse and an almost unintelligible scowl.

The Jew dropped the curtains. "Come along," he said, "it is better to leave him alone today. He has invited you for tomorrow, for the jaripeo in the arena and for supper here after-

wards. He will be in a better mood then—you will have an easier time with him."

Colonel Perlstein whistled for the horses. "Shall we take a little canter before the sun sets?" he suggested.

They mounted their horses and trotted them slowly through the hacienda gardens. They stopped at the gate and the General's aide called a few officers and gave them orders.

Suddenly a strange dizziness took hold of Frank Braun. He heard the Colonel's voice, every word and every syllable—but it seemed like a strange, unknown tongue. And at the same time he seemed bereft of all sense of feeling. His thighs no longer gripped the Mexican wooden saddle—they gripped the air. His hands no longer held the reins that dropped slack to the horse's neck. Every ounce of blood seemed to have left his body. Slowly he slumped forward.

An officer sprang to his assistance and held him up. And as soon as he felt this human touch, this grip of a strong hand around his wrist, it was all over. He could hold the reins again and sit back in the saddle.

"What happened?" the Colonel asked. "Why, man—you are pale as a ghost!"

Frank Braun shook his head—it was nothing—just a slight dizziness—he was all right now.

But the Jew was not satisfied. "I think we'd better go home. What did you eat today?"

No, that wasn't it; his stomach was always all right.

"Unless you have eaten poison! Then the best stomach won't help you! And many things are possible down here—in these times."

Frank Braun smiled and told the Colonel not to worry; it was just a nervous weakness from which he had been suffering for many months.

"Maybe so," the officer said, "and maybe not. Now you are under my protection and you must let me take care of you."

He helped Frank Braun off his horse, took him up the stone

stairs into the fonda and into his room. "Lie down on your bed," he said, "and rest a few hours. I will come back later to see how you are."

He left and through the open door Frank Braun heard him shouting for the innkeeper and calling in a soldier from the street. He spoke Spanish to the soldier, mixing a few Indian words with it. "A Yaqui," Frank Braun thought.

"You," the Colonel ordered, "stay here. You stand here in the kitchen every time something is cooked for the gentleman up there. The stranger, you know, the tall one! Do you know him?"

"Yes," the Indian replied, "the stranger with the fair hair."

"That's the one," Perlstein continued. "You see that nothing gets into the food that should not be in it, do you understand! You have the innkeeper cook double portions—and you taste it yourself and eat half of every dish!"

"Yes, Colonel!" the Yaqui cried. He was evidently delighted with this duty.

Then the Colonel turned to the innkeeper. "You heard what I told this soldier?—You are responsible to me!—If anything happens you go before a firing squad! So look out!" He did not wait for an answer, but went quickly out into the street and mounted his horse.

Then there was excited chatter in the patio. Frank Braun got to his feet and closed the door.

He was not tired, no. Only empty, empty—oh, so empty! The same feeling he had had that time in Philadelphia when he was to speak against Miss Livingstone. That time when he kissed Eva Lachmann.

That time—and again that other time when he went home with Lotte from the opera—and again when he—

It happened often now, very often. Sometimes it was just a faint attack, sometimes it was worse—but it had never gripped him as fiercely as today.

He consoled himself with the thought that in the intervals between these attacks he was completely well for many weeks

at a time. So well that he could not even imagine how it felt when this emptiness took hold of him.

Then he remembered that Lotte van Ness had given him an envelope—when he said farewell to her. There were powders in it, she had told him, in case he should have a severe attack. A little strychnine—and he should take it only if it was absolutely necessary—

Where had he put them? He searched in his pockets and found the envelope in his wallet. He opened it, took one of the little paper packages and emptied the white powder on his tongue, washing it down with a drink of water.

And now he would rest—

The envelope felt heavy and he emptied its contents. Four powders, a sheet of note paper, and a very small pen knife in a fine leather sheath carefully wrapped in cotton. He read the note. It contained a few words in Lotte's quick, oddly bold handwriting; "Please take this little knife. Carry it, for my sake, in the left breast pocket of your shirt. It is brand new and very clean—and the blade is bright and unstained. Do not use it unless you have to. Bring it back to me—the way it is. It will mean nothing to you, but to me—everything!"

He took the knife out of its case. It was made of platinum and had the symbol of Scorpion engraved on one side, and the symbol of Cancer on the other. He opened its single blade—a magnificent thin steel blade that shone in the last rays of the evening sun. It had a very sharp point and its edge was as keen as that of a razor.

"Why did she give it to me?" he thought. And yet—wrapped carefully in cotton and in the soft leather sheath—he placed it in the small breast pocket of his shirt. On the left side, over his heart.



IT WAS the General's nameday, the day of his patron saint, St. Francis of Carracioli. On this Monday the army was Pancho Villa's guest—also the whole population of the city. Every one was invited to come to the bull ring; it was a great feast for the people. And this time it was not only the national jaripeo—it was enlarged and embellished through the showmanship of the Spanish Goyita.

The large amphitheatre had suffered little in the fighting and only the part of the grandstands exposed to the sun, on the east side, had been shot to pieces. But Villa's men had worked on it feverishly during the past few weeks and huge additional stands had been built to accommodate many more thousands of people. The boxes on the shady side had remained intact and were decorated for the occasion with large banners in Mexico's colors, green, white and red.

The Dictator's box was still empty; Frank Braun and a few generals sat in the adjoining one. The stands around the huge circular arena held more than fifty rows of seats, all packed with expectant humanity. Many could not find seats and had to stand wherever they could find room. The whole eastern side of the stands was reserved for the soldiers who had come fully armed—a wild and ferocious throng clad in rags and tatters. Despite the hot sun, many of the soldiers wore the colorful manta, the

heavy Mexican blanket. Thirty different tribes were represented, almost all pure Indian. The reddish-brown faces shaded by the wide brims of their huge pointed sombreros; the dark eyes and the broad rows of sparkling white teeth, furnished a vivid contrast. The seats on both sides of the soldiers were filled with thousands of harlots who had arrayed themselves for the occasion in their most vividly colored shawls. To be let loose for so many hours, in the middle of the day—what a treat! Flesh, flesh for the avid eyes of the soldateska. On the shady side, in the boxes and in the reserved seats below, sat the officers and the elite of the town. The ladies let their large long-fringed silk shawls hang down over the balustrade.

There was no noise, no yelling or shouting. Everything was quiet and every one stared and listened in breathless expectation—great games in the old arena, for the first time in so many years!

Now the bodyguard marched in, twenty tall, powerful men, Yaqui Indians, the best soldiers in Mexico. They had rifles, pistols, sabres and machetes; cartridge belts were slung around their waists and crosswise over their chests—each man armed to the teeth with as many weapons as he could carry.

A bugler blew a signal, badly out of tune; it rang out over the spacious amphitheatre to announce that he was coming, the Generalissimo, the Dictator, the Potentate—Francisco Villa.

He whom they affectionately called Paco and Pancho, Frasco and Curro, and Paquito, Frasquito, Panchito and Currito—pet names to avoid the stiff, formal Francisco. He of whom every one knew that he had begun to steal when he was four years old, that he had burned his first house at eight, and that he had made his *début* as a robber when he was twelve. That at fourteen he had been put into prison for the first time for rape, and that he had escaped and committed his first murder when he was fifteen. Pancho Villa, who could neither read nor write and who had to copy his own signature laboriously from a sample, and who nevertheless became the Great and the Mighty. With a corn silo he had started—and now he laid waste whole

cities. A lame goatherd who had testified against him, had been his first victim—and now he slaughtered hundreds in a single day. It was said of him—shudderingly, and yet with great admiration—that in Durango he had lined up one hundred and twenty-three captured Huerta officers in a row, their hands tied behind their backs. That he had walked down the row of doomed men, put his revolver against their temples and shot them one by one. He alone had shot one hundred and twenty-three men—and it had taken him less than half a minute for each.

Who else in the whole country could do that—who else in the whole world?

He alone, Pancho Villa—

People did not applaud when he entered. They did not stand up or cheer. They just looked at him spellbound, staring silently in undisguised adoration.

Frank Braun thought: "They are right. He may be cruel and brutal, he may be a thousand times a murderer, a human slaughterer and executioner. He may be a robber and a thief and a drunkard, and rape and arson may be his pastimes. Yes, it is all true and he does not try to hide it. But he is great in everything he does because he is far above all those around him. He is great and mighty—for the children of this country."

The Dictator sat down close to the balustrade. He did not shake hands or greet anyone, he merely glanced indifferently at the throng of spectators.

Again there was a hoarse bugle call—and a small gate on the east side flew open. On a black mare, the *alguacil* in old Spanish costume with Velasquez hat and sword, rode into the arena. He reined in his horse in front of the General's box, took his hat off and asked with a stiff gesture for permission to begin the games.

As Pancho Villa turned to reach for the clumsy old key that Don Benjamino held out to him, he noticed a soldier with a little basket on his arm standing beside the Colonel. Villa felt his stubby chin—then he returned the key to his aide, beckoned the soldier to come over and settled back comfortably in his chair.

The soldier unpacked his basket, taking out first a tolerably clean napkin which he put around the General's shoulder, then a brass basin with a semi-circular opening for the neck, and a small pitcher with water. He poured water into the basin, added soap and began to work up a lather.

Ah—the Generalissimo was getting a shave!

Colonel Perlstein came over to the partition between the two boxes and shook hands across it with Frank Braun. "Usually he shaves every Saturday," he said in a low voice, "but he was in such a bad mood yesterday that he kicked the man out of the room. So I brought the barber today.—You will see, the General gets more friendly as soon as he is freshly shaved."

The soldier put his basin against the Dictator's neck and began to lather him—without any haste, thoroughly, with a good professional flourish. The General held still—but suddenly he sat up and the soldier cleverly withdrew his basin just in time.

"Thirsty," Pancho Villa said.

A large tumbler was filled with yellow agave brandy and handed to him. He took a gulp, rinsed his mouth and spat the stuff over the balustrade. Then he took a second gulp, leaned back and half closed his eyes. When the barber came near with his basin, the General quickly sat up, pouted his fat lips and splashed the pulque right into the man's face. He roared with laughter, clapped his hands and enjoyed his joke like a school boy. The soldier calmly wiped his face and grinned—and every one near joined in the merriment; not in a servile way, but frankly and gayly, sincerely: it was a good joke, really, a capital joke.

And now the General really drank—three large tumblers of dirty pulque. Then he leaned back in his chair and closed his eyes. The barber wielded his shaving brush and lathered as if he had to shave a whole regiment. Then he stropped his razor—

In the arena, the black town scribe sat on his mare, hat in hand, waiting for the General to be finished. In the rear of the circus, under the eastern stands, the bulls were waiting and the

horses, the riders and the torreadores—and the immense crowd of people that thronged the huge amphitheatre listened and waited in quiet expectation. There was not a sound anywhere—everybody looked and listened and waited.

Pancho Villa was getting a shave.

Now he was finished. A quick alcohol rub, a towel to dry his face, and powder—bluish white powder in clouds. And two more glasses of agave brandy. Then he threw the key into the sand.

The thin-legged *alguacil* in his black velvet costume slid carefully off his horse, picked up the key, climbed into the saddle and slid down again on the other side. The people laughed at the old joke: the town scribe must always pretend that he can not ride.

The Colonel beckoned to Frank Braun and introduced him to Villa. The General recognized him at once; wasn't he the German who had been with him when they had fled from Hermosillo to Ures? The one who had given him the beautiful cigarette case? The case was gone now, some one had stolen it. If he could only lay his hands on that dirty thief!

Frank Braun thought: "How stupid that I hadn't thought of it! Why didn't I bring him another from New York!" It was an ugly silver cigarette case that an American had given him to pay a poker debt. But Villa had liked it because it bore the picture of two naked women on it, done in cheap enamel.

Again the gate opened and the performers solemnly marched into the arena. At the same moment a band started to play from behind the boxes, making a blurred noise.

Colonel Perlstein said: "Generally they play only the Marseillaise, the General's favorite song—but this is in your honor!"

Frank Braun listened attentively, trying to recognize a melody. "This?" he replied. "But this is the Spanish Royal March, isn't it?"

"Of course," the officer cried. "But it is the only German com-

position that the band can play." He looked up expectantly and so Frank Braun asked: "What do you mean, German?"

The Colonel smiled a self-satisfied smile. "Don't you know who composed that?—I know! It was a Prussian King: Frederick the Great!"

Frank Braun looked surprised but Don Benjamino nodded emphatically. "Yes, it is really true—ask about it when you get back to Europe. And believe me, the Prussian King will soon take the place in Villa's head that the Marats and Robespierres have held thus far!"

The performers in their colorful costumes paraded slowly around the arena; first came the town scribe in his black velvet suit, and behind him, mounted on heavy, clumsy horses, a few *picadors* with long spears and round felt hats that looked like the basin of the General's barber. Next followed a group of performers on foot, led by a man in a white costume who took the part of Don Tancredo. There were two *espadas* and half a dozen *bandilleros*, all clad in the traditional blue, green, pink and purple costume of the Spanish bullfighter, covered with gold and silver embroidery, and carrying the colored cloth over their left arms. Only one of the men was dressed in dark colors—the *puntillero* whose duty it was to kill the dying bull with his dagger. Behind the bullfighters four Mexicans in huge sombreros, long leather-fringed trousers and spurs with enormous rowels, rode into the arena on splendid horses. They were covered with silver spangles—their clothes as well as the horses' harness. A little distance behind them rode a fifth man who was dressed still more richly, still more elaborately—his hat was even bigger and the silver rowels of his spurs more immense than those of the others. He was mounted on a snow white Arabian thoroughbred from Andalusia—a magnificent steed.

"This is Vasquez Cabrera," the General's aide called over. "Watch him!"

Last came the *chulos*, a gang of rough looking fellows in red jackets and red caps who drove the gayly decorated quadriga drawn by four mules in red, green and white harness. Their job

was to remove the carcasses of the horses and bulls that would be killed in the arena.

But the parade was not yet over. Some paces behind the men, all by herself, walked a slim woman.

"This is the Goyita," Don Benjamino cried, "Dolores Echevarria, La Pegonal!"

She wore the costume of a Texas cowboy. It looked quite genuine, but for a short leather skirt instead of the sheepskin trousers. A brown shawl was wound tightly over her face.

"Why the mask?" Frank Braun asked.

Colonel Perlstein smiled. "She is whiter than snow and she does not want to ruin her complexion in the sun! Every one here finds it perfectly natural."

The long procession turned into the center of the arena and stopped before the Dictator's box, the performers doffing their hats stiffly. But when the Spanish girl passed below, Villa clapped with gusto.

Now the performers paraded slowly past the grandstand, bowing to the shouts of the multitude. Then they returned to the center of the arena, continued on to the east gate and withdrew.

The *chulos* rolled a white wooden bucket into the ring and placed it bottom up. Don Tancredo, a dazzling white figure, his costume old Spanish like that of the *alguacil* except for the color, and even his face covered with chalk, made a majestic entrance. He climbed upon the tub, and there, arms folded, he stood like a statue hewn from marble.

The first bull was let into the arena. He came on in a ferocious charge, his horns lowered. But the usual thing happened: inches before the motionless white figure, the beast came to a sudden stop. He lifted his head, sniffed. No, it was not alive! He swung his head around, glowering at the hushed spectators, swishing his tail and pawing the sand angrily.

This was the regular procedure, the way every bullfight in Mexico must begin. On this occasion something special happened—in honor of the Dictator and to the vast delight of his subjects. Don Tancredo leaned forward, caught the bull by the

tail, and gave him a kick in the rump. The startled animal wheeled around, facing this suddenly alive adversary. He retreated a few steps, setting himself for the attack. With not a moment to spare, Don Tancredo jumped down from his pedestal which, an instant later, was thrown high in the air by the bull's horns. Again the bull stopped short—ah, the thing that had so strangely come to life was running away! Furiously he gave chase, but Don Tancredo doubled back on his tracks like a jack rabbit, and reached the fence. Holding on to the planks, he drew himself up and sat astride them just as the powerful beast crashed his vicious horns against the wooden boards.

"Caramba!" Pancho Villa laughed. "He almost got him!"

The crowd cheered frantically.

Two bullfights followed. A few *picadors* were thrown from their horses and the bulls' horns slit open the bellies of half a dozen horses, tearing out their guts. Then followed the performance of the *bandilleros* who used only firecrackers today, also in honor of the Dictator. The firecrackers were attached to short *banderillas* and went off as soon as the hooks gripped the flesh of the bulls which were made still more ferocious by the detonations and the flames. And finally came the *espadas* who performed bravely, in approved style, with sure, well-aimed thrusts.

"They are all amateurs!" the Colonel explained.

"Soldiers?" Frank Braun asked. "Indians?"

"Oh, no! Not a single one!" the officer answered. "There isn't a single Indian amongst them. This is not their line—that takes Spanish blood. But wait, it will be the Indians' turn in a minute; they haven't so much style, but they have muscles and nerve."

He waved his handkerchief and the bugler blew the familiar hoarse signal.

The *jaripeo* began. Four Mexican vaqueros showed their skill in lassoing wild bronchos from the *llanos* and riding them until they were tamed.

After this preliminary exhibition the Mexicans drove the tired

bronchos out of the arena, mounted their thoroughbreds again and chased raw mustangs around the ring. Now the others fell back and the Arabian mare of Vasquez Cabrera alone galloped into the arena. How he rode her! His spurs never touched her sides; he pressed the tips of his shoes inward and the heels out. The reins lay slack on the pommel and he merely called out some strange word to her or clicked with his tongue. The white mare cantered up to one of the mustangs, keeping abreast of him, while her rider leaned over, gripped the brown mane, and suddenly swung himself onto the broncho's bare back. He rode him without reins, without whip—only by the iron pressure of his thighs. The Andalusian thoroughbred led the pace and Vasquez followed, keeping his mount close to the green, white and red boards. Then he swung back to his own horse, and still again back to the sweating mustang—back and forth while the horses kept galloping round and round the arena at a mad pace, like little toy horses in a game. Vasquez whistled and his white horse turned instantly and trotted to the center of the ring. Now he rode the mustang away from the planks, up and down the middle of the arena—the wild horse obeyed, trembling with fear, worn out, responding to the slightest pressure of these iron thighs.

Vasquez jumped down and waved his hat as the crowd shouted and cheered. The thick-set, bow-legged man walked clumsily over the sand in his leather chaps.

"He is no joy to behold on foot!" the Colonel laughed. "He belongs on a horse."

The Andalusian thoroughbred trotted up to the mustang which stood with heaving sides, trembling and snorting. She neighed, as if to calm him down, and led him out of the arena through the gate—all alone, unassisted. Then she trotted back to her master, rubbed her head against him and sniffed his pockets until she had received her well-earned reward: thick chunks of delicious sugar cane.

And now came Vasquez's great feat, which no one in all Mexico could duplicate.

A huge, powerful bull with yellow spots on his dirty white hide was let into the arena and instantly turned in a vicious charge against the riders, who cleverly evaded him. The horses themselves seemed to be taking part in this game, unafraid of the deadly horns, trusting to their superior speed. They quietly stood and waited, pawing the sand, and letting the bull come close; then, at the last moment, they quickly wheeled and sped away. Sometimes the riders jumped their horses in a high leap over the attacking bull, but not once did his horns touch the body of a horse.

Now Vasquez waved to his men and they rode away to the center of the ring, turning against the bull and surrounding him from all sides. He attacked them left and right, roaring, charging ferociously, only to thrust his horns into empty air. He tossed about the sand in his impotent rage against these enemies who so cleverly eluded him. Now the riders began to shout at him and their yells were taken up by the thousands of spectators. As the bull raised his head, surprised at this noise, looking around the arena, one of the Mexicans rode up to him and dealt him a blow with his long whip. The bull leaped forward and buried his sharp horns in the sand. On all sides the whips whirled through the air, hissing and cracking and crashing.

And now—suddenly—the courage of the beast broke; he fled, ran through the arena. But after him chased the storm of whips, whizzing, swishing, cracking, whirring through the air. Now they were chasing the bull along the planks as they had been chasing the horses before—*hoy! hoy!* and *correl correl!*

Again the four riders fell back and again the Arabian mare alone galloped up to the bull. She was a few hundred yards behind him, galloping at full pace, her head stretched forward—one straight line from the nostrils to the tip of her magnificent tail. Her legs were stretched out so that her sides seemed to be touching the sand that she kicked up with her hoofs. Vasquez sat in the saddle with his legs dangling, but with his head and chest bent forward.

The mare gained swiftly on the bull. Now her nostrils were

close to his tail, now her neck was against his thighs—now her body was parallel with his. With a sudden jerk, Vasquez lifted himself in the saddle, turned, bent back—both his hands reached out and held fast.

The thoroughbred shot ahead as her master gripped the bull. He had caught the bull's tail and he held on to it—just for an instant, but long enough to wheel the powerful beast around, throw it down and out into the arena.

The bull fell, turned over and rolled in the sand—this bull that weighed more than seven hundred pounds had been forced down, by its tail, forced down by two human hands!

That was Vasquez Cabrera's masterpiece.

"Is he a Yaqui?" Frank Braun asked, trying to make himself heard above the shouts and the tumultuous applause of the enthusiastic throng.

"No, the Yaquis can't do that, they are a mountain people," Don Benjamino answered. "Vasquez is a Maya from Yucatan. He does not belong here, he just came up from the South for the occasion. Three weeks ago he worked with his men in Jalapa, before Carranza. He does not perform often—only a few times a year—and at very high prices. But he works everywhere—before friends and enemies—whoever is willing to pay his price; he is the only man whom nobody in all Mexico would harm."

Again he waved his handkerchief and the band played for a second time the Spanish Royal March. And to the strains of this march, La Goyita strode into the ring.

Frank Braun had often seen performances, on farms and ranches in Texas and Coahila, that were similar to what La Goyita did. He had seen it done in a more refined way, more elaborately, but less colorfully, and cheapened, on many vaudeville stages: the rope-throwing of the cowboys and vaqueros. But it looked so much gayer here in this colorful rodeo, although her fringed leather skirt smacked of vaudeville, and although the ugly brown veil made her head appear like a large wooden egg. She went through the whole school, throwing circles, ovals and spirals, drawing figures in the air and in the sand. Then

she swung her arms over her head and threw the whirring rope about her like a cloak.

She made one of the Mexicans ride through the arena and threw her lasso at a distance of a hundred and fifty feet, tearing him from the saddle. She let another man stand at a considerable distance from her and tied him securely and expertly by throwing her rope around his legs, wrists, arms, chest and throat—she tied him from a distance with nothing but a single rope.

Finally she performed with the *bola*—that was new in this part of the country. It is the weapon of the Argentine gauchos—three short ropes, tied together on one end, with heavy lead balls attached to the free ends. She ordered a couple of mustangs and bulls driven into the circus and threw her *bola* three times as far as the *vaqueros* could throw their lassos. The *bola* whizzed through the air like a rocket, caught the galloping animals by the legs and threw them. The *vaqueros* rode over to the victims, unfastened the *bola* and felt the bones of the frightened animals to see whether anything had been broken. No—the animals were unharmed—that was the trick. But the *vaqueros* gravely shook their heads; the lasso seemed safer. The *bola* could be thrown further, that was true—but they had their fleet horses to bring them close enough.

Next a gray wolf was let into the arena and came running directly up to the Goyita. He jumped through hoops which she held before him. It was a large and beautiful animal, slim and fleet, with a sleek, well groomed skin, and Frank Braun wondered where she could have got him, as American wolves were not nearly as big.—An unsaddled horse was brought. She carefully powdered the soles of her boots and jumped upon the bare back of the horse. She galloped several times around the arena with the wolf following her, and then stood up on the horse's back and jumped through open and paper covered hoops held up before her, while the wolf wove figure eights between the horse's hoofs. Finally, still standing on the bare back of the galloping horse, she skipped a rope.

All this was the ordinary performance of the equestrienne—but now she herself took up one of the hoops, held it high in the air and whistled to her wolf. He took a short start and jumped in one magnificent high leap over the horse, over the dancer and through the hoop.

She repeated this twice—then the wolf jumped up to her and stood with her on the horse's back. Enthusiastic applause followed her as she rode out of the arena.

"Doesn't she dance?" Frank Braun asked.

"Here, in the sand?" Perlstein retorted. "No, she will dance tonight in the General's quarters! But now comes the main attraction—Villa's gift to his army."

The performers had left the arena and a group of *chulos* came into the empty ring to sprinkle water on the sand and level it out. There was another bugle call when they had finished, and the quadriga of mules was driven into the arena. They brought in a heavy cage mounted on a platform on small wooden wheels; it was covered on all sides with heavy canvas. The *chulos* placed it exactly in the center of the arena and one of the attendants reached under the canvas—one could see that he was pulling back a bolt. Then the men jumped aside quickly and hurried their mules over to the east gate.

There was the breathless pause of expectation in the great amphitheatre—what was in the cage? It must be something dangerous—and Frank Braun noticed that all around the arena soldiers were posted ten yards apart, aiming their rifles over the red boards at the covered cage.

Nothing stirred behind the canvas—not a sound—for a few long minutes everything was still.

Slowly, painfully slowly, the canvas moved. It was not the wind—no, something pushed and stirred beneath it. A yellow paw appeared, and behind it a round whiskered head—oh, a tiger, a tiger!

The animal crept slowly out from under the canvas, lifting it carefully and deliberately, walking forward step by step.

What an animal! Who of all the thousands in the rodeo had ever seen anything like it?

They did not shout—not even the women screamed. They opened their eyes and mouths wide, and stared—fascinated by the wild dazzling beauty of the beast.

Again a bugle call—and a black bull rushed into the arena. He galloped into the center of the ring, heading straight for the heavy cage which he knocked over with a single thrust of his powerful horns. The tiger leaped aside with one spring—then crouched down, ready for the attack.

Now the bull caught sight of his opponent and again lowered his horns menacingly—it looked as if he were going to rush at the tiger instantly. But he hesitated, lifted his head slowly and pawed the ground with his forelegs, throwing up the sand behind him.

The two beasts were facing each other.

Both were creatures of attack; the strength of one lay in the leap, that of the other in the thrust. But the bull was the one the crowd knew; he was their symbol of strength and courage—and he had to begin the attack.

Both seemed to be measuring each other's strength—the big cat quietly, crouching and waiting—the bull impatiently, nervously. Whenever the bull stamped the ground, raising and lowering his head, the tiger answered with a warning, ominous snarl—a deep, dark, fearful sound.

They stood eye to eye—uncertain what to do—waiting.

"The bull is scared!" the Dictator hissed. But the crowd still waited; there was not a sound in the amphitheatre—there was only the oppressive, almost suffocating silence.

Suddenly the black bull wavered—slowly he turned his head and walked away, step by step, never taking his eyes off the tiger. But when he was a safe distance off, he raised his horns and trotted over to the fence.

One shout, one tremendous shout of ten thousand voices rose up: "*Al fuego el toro!*"

The General's aide waved his handkerchief. The gates of the

arena were opened and two white cows with tinkling bells were let in. Scarcely noticing the tiger they made straight for the bull. One on each side, they led him gently back to the stable.

The Indians roared with laughter. Their anger at the cowardly bull was gone—they saw only this amusing picture. "*Las mujeres!*" they screamed. "He likes petticoats!" Jokes were bandied between them and the women, who screamed and howled with delight. Now it was they who held the stage—fat cows leading the strong bull to the stable.

Afternoon shadows had begun to fall over the arena. No one was paying any attention to the tiger who now slowly got to his feet, turned around and quietly lay down again.

Once more Colonel Perlstein took out his handkerchief. "I thought so!" he cried gayly. "The cowboys picked out a splendid bull—he was the most peaceful one in the whole herd; besides, he was blind in one eye, lazy and a coward. He played his rôle beautifully—better than I could have possibly expected!" He waved and a bugle signal answered.

"But now watch!" he continued, "Now we will have a different kind of bull!"

Again the gate was opened and a magnificent bull stepped into the arena. He walked in slowly, then stopped, lifting his head and blinking as he accustomed his eyes to the light.

On the side where the women sat a piece of colored cloth fell over the balustrade and down into the arena. A soldier jumped across the plank to pick it up, but the bull roared as soon as he saw him, as if he were saying: "This place is mine!" He rushed toward the intruder who quickly climbed back with the cloth. But this bull did not crash against the planks in a clumsy attack; he lifted his horns in the midst of his charge, and in flight scaled in a high leap the six foot fence. Then he ran around in the narrow corridor, chasing every one before him—soldiers, bullfighters, cowboys, who had to run for their lives. The chase went around the arena in the narrow corridor of planks until, under the Dictator's box, one of the bullfighters

closed a door which shut off the corridor and at the time opened a new gate into the arena. The bull rushed out into the circus and stood again on the sand which he claimed as his domain.

But now he noticed the tiger in the center of the huge arena. He did not run or rush at his opponent. He walked forward calmly, step by step, his head half lowered to the ground, his eyes on the tiger, his sharp horns pointing straight forward. Ten feet from the big cat he stopped.

Again the tiger crouched, ready for the charge—again the two beasts eyed each other suspiciously. Now the bull took aim, walked back a few steps for a start and charged at the tiger. But the cat seemed to have foreseen this and jumped aside, immediately crouching down again—and then leaped forward. In the next instant the tiger sat on the bull's back, its powerful claws thrust deeply into the bull's body. But this lasted only for an instant—the next second the two beasts were again apart. There was too much power on both sides—and the cat had apparently miscalculated the distance. Even the strong claws could not maintain their grip on the bull's back, although they tore deeply into the flesh, making the red blood gush forth in a torrent.

The bull, having shaken off his enemy, whisked around to face him and, shaking his enormous head, roared with pain. He again rushed at the cat which had not expected this new attack to be carried out with such lightning speed. The tiger bounded aside, barely escaping the full force of the powerful horns, but did not leap far enough—the bull's left horn caught him glancingly above the left hind leg. And so much power was behind the thrust that it knocked the beast down and rolled it over in the sand. Instantly regaining his balance, the toro wheeled in the fraction of a second, and attacked again. But this time the tiger was ready; taking a quick start, he leaped and hung on to the bull, sinking his powerful claws deeply into his adversary's neck. The bull shook him off with a few quick jerks, plunged forward without an instant's hesitation, ran his

horns into the tiger before the huge cat had actually touched the ground and threw him skyward like a ball. Then he lowered his powerful head and charged again. The sharp weapons caught the cat's thigh and once more sent him sailing through the air.

Now the tiger's fate was sealed. Whenever he dropped to the ground, the bull caught him on his terrible horns and flung him high. Several times the tiger tried to regain his feet and crawl to safety—in vain. Cornered, he fought on, and often his claws gored. But the pain seemed to make the proud bull only stronger and wilder—his attacks grew ever more vicious as he thrust his daggers deeper and deeper, lifting the cat and pushing it over toward the fence. And there he made his final attack—with both his horns he nailed the dying tiger to the boards.

Then he tore himself loose and trotted slowly to the center of the arena. In the last rays of the sinking sun, he rested from his victory, panting, bellowing triumphantly, wrapped in the red cloak of his blood.

The crowd tumulted, almost insane in frenzied enthusiasm. In honor of the bull, they threw their hats into the ring, their coats, wraps and shawls. They stood on the benches, stamping their feet, waving their arms and shouting: "*Bravo el toro! Bravo el toro!*"

One man screamed: "*Viva el toro!*"

The crowd took it up, ten thousand shrieking in unison: "*Viva el toro! Viva el toro!*"

Pancho Villa had also jumped to his feet and shouted with the rest. All at once he yelled into the arena: "*Viva La Goyita!*"

"Why does he cheer the dancer?" Frank Braun asked.

The Colonel whispered: "Because it is she who—" he interrupted himself as the General beckoned him to his side. Pancho Villa reached into a big leather pouch that hung at the left side of his belt, next to his sabre hilt, opened it and took out a fistful of gold coins, all new shining American twenty-dollar pieces.

"Take this, Colonel!" the Dictator said, "count out a hundred and send them to La Goyital!"

The Colonel did so, tied the money in his handkerchief and sent three soldiers with it to the Spanish dancer.

For the last time that afternoon the gates on the east side opened. Several cows came into the arena. Tinkling bells were tied to their necks and all were decorated with ribbons and garlands of flowers; behind them, the *chulos* drove their quadriga of mules into the arena. The bull cast a quick glance at the four mules in their bright colored harness and their red-bloused drivers, and turned contemptuously away—no, that was no job for him! The *chulos* tied the tiger's tail to their ropes and whipped up their mules, shouting and gesticulating. The mules dragged the dead beast around the arena at a fast gallop.

In the meantime, the cows surrounded the blood-bedecked victor, pushing and crowding close to him. One, a beautiful snowy white animal, put her pink snout against his neck and gently, tenderly almost, licked the red blood. He lifted his head over hers and licked her, just once, shyly and quickly, between her eyes and her forehead. And for a third time the musicians struck up the Royal March of the Prussian King—but this time in honor of the proud, victorious bull.

Now the crowd did not make bawdy jokes about women and cows and petticoats. They watched reverently, in silence and admiration.

That was the last number in the great games given in honor of General Villa at Torreon. But when the bull and his cows had disappeared behind the gates, one more shout rose from the stands, a wild, ringing shout in which the whole crowd joined.

"Viva Villa!"

About ten o'clock that night, Colonel Perlstein knocked at Frank Braun's door with the silver handle of his riding crop.

"Come along, Doctor," he urged. "It is time now!"

The horses were already saddled and waiting in front of the fonda. "The party is in full swing in Villa's gardens!" the Jew laughed as they were riding over to the General's quarters. "They have eaten all the food and drunk all the pulque they want. Now the champagne corks are popping and Villa drinks with his Generals in the patio; they are waiting for La Goyita."

They rode through the streets of the suburbs. Everything was brightly lighted and from every house came the shouts of soldiers and the shrill voices of women. "The men were paid today—their wages for three months. The money just got off the printing press, it arrived yesterday with the champagne."

"American money?"

"No, not this time," the Colonel said. "Our own! Here, take some!"

He pulled a roll of bills from his pocket and handed them to Frank Braun—there were five hundred bills of one hundred pesos each. The banknotes were made of the cheapest paper, poorly printed, with the childish signature: Francesco Villa. Frank Braun handed back the roll, but the Colonel refused it.

"No, no, keep it!" he said. "From tomorrow on it will be legal currency—you can't use anything else. Otherwise, it has of course no value whatsoever—it is just paper of which we can print as much as we like: Villa money!"

"But do the people take it?"

"They've got to take it. Didn't the people take assignats? That is where Villa got the idea—from his book about the French Revolution. We copy it in all details; Madero started that—then Carranza followed his example, and all the others—but Villa most of all. Zapata is the only one who doesn't do it—he plugs along in his own fashion. He probably doesn't know there ever was such a thing as the French Revolution."

In the gardens, the soldiers lay on the ground. They drank and gambled, smoked and sang, told bawdy stories, crept behind the bushes with their harlots, emitting obscene howls, shameless and brutal. Now and then one would hear the whining sound

of a badly tuned arpa and would see them dance with clumsy steps their national jarabe tapatio. Or the women alone would dance the mitote, the warrior's dance. In one place they were gambling for a wench who stood by and laughed. They dealt out the dirty cards: *Siete y media*. In another place on an old drum they rolled dice for a woman. In front of some house they were taking chances in a lottery—another woman the prize. Oh, yes, it was truly a feast—Villa's great feast.

Frank Braun and the Colonel dismounted at the hacienda and walked through the house into the patio, the open, square courtyard which the Mexicans with naïve taste had decorated as a ball room. Mattresses wrapped in colored cloth were spread on the floor of the colonnades, with a few wicker chairs and old rocking chairs arranged between. Garlands of leaves with red, yellow and blue paper flowers were strung between the pillars. Carbide lamps were hung high up on the walls casting a bright glaring light on the scene, almost obliterating a few Chinese lanterns that had been hung under the balconies.

Here Villa was drinking with his generals and colonels—and with painted, half-naked women. It was exactly the same picture as outside in the gardens—here, too, the men stood and sat and squatted on the floor, smoking, drinking, singing, making lewd remarks, pinching the women on their buttocks or reaching for their breasts. To be sure, their uniforms were not quite so ragged and they all wore new leather puttees of American make. Nor were they quite drunk enough simply to throw themselves on the floor with the harlots; only occasionally a man would slap a woman on her rear and she would follow him laughingly into the house. Perhaps the girls were slightly fresher and better merchandise than the flesh that was offered to the privates. But the main thing was that here they drank champagne—Goulet, Röderer, Montebello—cooled on ice as it should be. This was how one could tell they were gentlemen.

"Haven't you anything you could give the General for a birthday present?" the Colonel asked in a low voice. "It would flatter him." Frank Braun felt in his pockets; but they were

empty. There was the little knife in his shirt pocket—but what good was that to Villa, for whom every knife had to have at least the length of a good machete! Damn it, why had he not thought of something!

Then he remembered the revolvers that his secretary had packed for him. "I will ride back for them," he said.

"Don't bother," the Colonel said. "I will send one of my Yaquis. You can trust him. Give him your room key—and tell him what to get."

Frank Braun tried to give detailed instructions—then he decided it would be better to have the whole bag brought over. He described where the bag was—on a broken chair, at the foot of the bed.

The Colonel nodded, beckoned one of the soldiers and gave him the key.

"Come along with me," he said then. "We will have a glass of wine in my room in the meantime."

Frank Braun quickly looked back to see whether the General had noticed them. But Villa sat on his chair with a glass in his hand while a peddler squatted on the floor before him, displaying jewelry from a big wooden box—necklaces, ear rings, bracelets—and broad gold rings with flashy stones—for the General's fat fingers.

There was a knock on the door and the Yaqui soldier came in with the leather bag. The pistols were at the bottom. On top Frank Braun found a heavy black leather case with silver corners—what was in that?

He opened it and remembered: silver toilet articles—a present some gentlemen in Cleveland had given him after a lecture there.

So his secretary had packed the damned thing? How lucky—he could not possibly have found a better present for the General. Leaving the revolvers in the bag, he took the case and also stuffed his pockets with the silly five-and-ten store articles.

When he got back to the patio, the peddler had already closed

his deal with the General and squatted in a corner, straightening out his wares. The Dictator played with the gold trinkets, looking grandly at his fat fingers on which he now wore three heavy rings, set with imitation diamonds.

Frank Braun walked over to him, shook hands, wished him a happy nameday and gave him his present. Villa did not thank him—he was much too curious to find out what was in the case. He opened it cautiously and took out all the shiny things, one by one. There were three razors with Solingen steel blades and ivory handles, soap cups and brushes. Everything could be taken apart and put together again—that pleased the General very much. But the main attractions were the small manicure instruments—little files and knives, scissors, small sticks, powder boxes, tiny spoons—an endless store of wonders. The officers crowded close, staring.

Don Benjamino bent down to the General: "La Goyita is here, General."

"Let her come in," Pancho Villa cried. Then he turned to Frank Braun and offered him a cigarette. "Thank you, caballero, thank you!—Bring us wine, I want to drink with him!" He offered the full glass to Frank Braun. "Drink, Aleman, drink! If you want women, pick one out yourself. If you want a horse, say so and Don Benjamino will give you the best horse we have!"

He beckoned to a soldier to bring him a basket and some brown paper. He packed the case away carefully but hesitated whether to send it to his room; finally he ordered the Indian to squat down beside him with the case between his legs. Perhaps he would feel like looking at it again.

A space was cleared in the center of the patio and the marble floor was swept clean. The men crowded into the space between the pillars, some of the officers sitting on the few available chairs while the rest lay or squatted on the floor. The women had to stand in the rear against the walls.

A hurdy-gurdy man pushed his instrument into the patio and immediately started to play. La Goyita followed close on his heels.

She stepped into the center of the patio without bowing to her audience, without greeting any one. She wore a Spanish costume; her hair was coiled high with a shell comb to hold her black lace mantilla that fell down over her shoulders. Over her left ear she wore a bunch of red hibiscus blossoms and, another one between her breasts.

She had great, beautiful eyes of deep blue.

"Well, how do you like her?" Perlstein asked.

Frank Braun looked at her. He knew her—why, certainly. Where had he seen her before?

Then he remembered. Wasn't she—why, yes, of course—she was the dancer who had nursed little Louison on the *Thuringial*! Now he knew also where Pancho Villa had got the tiger—from the fever ship!

He caught her eye. She recognized him at once but did not answer his nod; neither he nor any one else existed for her. She waited for the hand organ to give her the rhythm and then she began.

Playing with her little fan, she danced a *madrileña*—dignified, stately, a little stiff and tedious. It seemed ridiculous—a *madrileña*, here, of all places!

But this was just what the audience liked—they showered her with applause.

Then she took up her castanets and danced a rich *petenera*; but again very tame, graceful and delicate, just like the well-bred señoritas in Toledo and Saragossa.

Now she took off her mantilla and pulled out the comb, putting both on the chair beside her accompanist, the organ grinder. Frank Braun saw that all her implements were lying on the chair—shawls, shoes—and a riding crop with them.

"La Pegona," he thought.

She put on a gray felt hat with a stiff brim, a pert Cordoba hat such as the men wear in Andalusia. And she took a large manton, a long-fringed silk shawl, in green and yellow and with large, red flowers on it. Then she returned to the center of the floor.

She was dancing a tango now—but not a wild, lascivious tango of the kind harlots dance before their clay huts in the suburbs of Buenos Aires; not a gypsy tango as the Andalusian wenches dance in their cuadros, swinging their buttocks and lifting up their long trains. No, it was a very mild dance—ad usum Delphini!

She threw her hat on the floor, took up a white manton and danced the *seguidilla* and then the *soleares*. And finally she danced a *malagueña* with a beautiful shawl of darkest purple.

Family dancing, Frank Braun thought. That was exactly how young ladies danced in Granada, in Jaën and Sevilla.

But the officers liked it, crowded around her and offered her their glasses. She shook her head and did not touch their champagne.

"The rumbal" Pancho Villa cried. "Dance the rumbal" the officers echoed.

"No!" La Goyita said. Not a single word more.

She took off her high-heeled shoes and put on *alpargatas*, peasant shoes of canvas made with hemp soles. This time she did not put on a mantilla, nor a comb or veil—and she did not use her castanets.

And thus she danced the fast Arragonese *jota*—oh, yes, now there was life in it—now she showed her slim legs in this fast peasant dance.

The officers could not get enough, they wanted more and more. And after every dance they demanded the rumba.

But the woman remained firm. She put on her high-heeled shoes and danced the *faruca*, lithesome like a gypsy, swinging her hips, twisting her stomach—ah, now it was no longer society dancing! Then she danced the *garrotin*, stamping and drumming the beat with her feet, imitating alternately the bull-fighter and the inviting provoking gestures of the wench as she lifts and drops her skirts.

"The rumbal" the officers shouted, excited and provoked by this dancing. "The rumbal"

"No!"

Putting on a skirt with a long train, she danced the *flamenco* of the Gaditanian harlots and the fast sensuous *lopateo* and *por alegrías*. She also danced the vulgar *mariana*, swinging her hips, throwing her buttocks, twisting and rolling her stomach, while the motions of her hands invited with shameless gestures.

Villa called to her: "Dance it for me, dance the rumbal" He could not bear to see all the officers standing around her while he sat apart by himself. He struggled with himself to overcome his impulse to jump up and join them—because still, he had to prove that he was different. He did not care about the officers—but he wanted to impress the dancer.

"Dance the rumba for me," he cried, "for me alone!"

Abruptly, La Goyita leaped to her feet and walked over to the General. She drew one more puff from her cigarette and threw it away. Holding her manton with both hands, she thrust up her head. "No, not for you and not for any one else! You are drunk tonight—all of you!"

She turned sharply on her heels and walked away like a princess—and nobody dared to hold her back.

Pancho Villa was fuming with rage; still he laughed because he alone at least had stood back and had not thrown himself at her like the others.

"You are like a bunch of dogs," he shouted, "running after a bitch in heat!"

They all laughed heartily at the joke and only one man answered him—the limping hunchbacked General Alvaro Gomu-cio. "That's only half the truth, Pancho Villal" he cried. "La Goyita isn't in heat!"

Again they roared with laughter, filled their glasses and rinsed their hoarse throats with champagne.

An officer stepped into the patio, walked up to Villa and saluted.

"Gonzalez is outside," he reported. "He brought the prisoners from Bonanza."

"Bring them in!" the General commanded.

Don Benjamino muttered beneath his breath: "Poor devils, I wouldn't like to be in their skins!"

A detachment of officers and soldiers marched in, pushing the prisoners before them, covered with grime from head to foot.

There were nine prisoners, six men and three women.

"Priests and nuns!" the Colonel whispered to Frank Braun. "Look—the rags of these women were nuns' habits once. And the men—do you see their tonsures? Now watch—now we will be playing French Revolution."

"What do you mean?" the German asked.

"In our book," Perlstein continued, "in the book about the great revolution which the General must have had read to him at least a dozen times, it says that the Jacobines hated priests. It also says in the book that they burned convents and raped nuns. And that they strung up every male priest on lampposts. We have no lampposts—but we can string them up just as well as the French did!"

He told Frank Braun that several days ago the General had given orders to pillage the convent of the Sisters of the Good Shepherd at Bonanza; there had been a rumor that a few priests had escaped and were being hidden by the nuns at this convent.

"I can see the priests," Frank Braun said, "but where are the nuns?"

Colonel Perlstein laughed. "Oh, it was just a small convent—there couldn't have been more than a dozen sisters there. How many are here? Three? Then the other nine are soldiers' wenches today! We don't waste time. You see, every troop has orders to seize and bring to headquarters every one who doesn't put up armed resistance or try to escape. But it is very strange—the nuns who are not too dilapidated, who are still tolerably appetizing, always do. All we get here are the old fossils."

"Isn't the General jealous?" Frank Braun asked. "Isn't he furious that his boys bring him only the tough meat and eat the tender morsels themselves?"

"Oh, no, decidedly not. He knows that the nuns would have passed through twenty hands anyway before he would get them

—there would be little difference then between them and our own strumpets. And you see, there is something peculiar about these nuns. Formerly, the General himself pillaged many a convent—and he knows what to expect. He lost his fancy for that kind of stuff long ago—they are no good in bed. I believe he would exchange all the nuns in the world for one kiss from La Goyita.”

Gonzalez made his report. He had brought the priests, he said, but the seventh, an old man about eighty years old, had broken down on the road half dead. So they had left him there. Four of the nuns had put up armed resistance, five had tried to escape—they had had to be shot down.

“I hope you hit them in the bull’s-eye!” Villa roared and his officers howled with laughter at this marvelous joke.

Then he bellowed at the priests: “You are spies, you swine, you’re spies of General Carranza!”

One of the men tried to speak; but only a few broken words came painfully from his trembling lips.

Pancho Villa cut him short: “*Fusila á esos carajos!*”

He waved his hand, took up his glass and had it filled.

Then he shouted at the nuns: “Can you dance the rumba?” The old sisters stared at him—what was it he was asking? But he hardly looked at them and hissed contemptuously: “Take them away!”

“So this is the way they conduct a court-martial here!” Frank Braun thought. “Put the swine before a firing squad! That’s all—and out they go. The Jacobines couldn’t have done it more expertly. Why bother with a hearing, with judges and witnesses and lawyers? They have tansures, they are priests—kill them!”

He walked over to Colonel Perlstein. “Keep them here for a minute, will you please!” he asked.

“What do you want?” the Colonel queried.

Frank Braun repeated: “Just for a minute, please!”

He looked over at the General for an instant. Villa seemed ugly beyond description. He was covered with hair from his neck down and he had long hairy arms like an ape. His wild,

blinking eyes seemed to mistrust even themselves. He had a bashed-in nose. Now he bared his teeth, grinding them with a scraping noise—like a tiger—

The General tapped the soldier who squatted beside him and asked for the leather case. He opened it and his clumsy hands played with the little mirrors and spoons—

Frank Braun thought: "No, this is no tiger! It is a gorilla who plays at being a tiger."

He walked over to Villa. "General," he said, "you promised me a horse. I have a good one and I don't need another one just now. Will you grant me another favor?"

"What do you want?" the Dictator asked.

"Release the priests for me." The General frowned and Frank Braun quickly explained. "Not for nothing, General! I'll give you a revolver for each!" He turned around and asked the aide to send for his bag.

"And I'll give you five boxes of cartridges with each weapon—two hundred and fifty rounds!"

"This is a very bad bargain for you," the General said. "They are not worth a single shot, all of them together."

The bag was brought and Frank Braun took out a box with trick matches that would not burn and gave it to the General. Then he found a cigar case with fire-cracker cigars and a few similar toys.

Pancho Villa forgot everything else. He made Frank Braun explain the childish toys to him while the officers were told to stand on the other side of the patio so they could not look on. Then he himself tried the toys, one by one, called his officers over and beckoned to the women. He showed them his treasures, slapping his knees gleefully when they were fooled.

And again Frank Braun repeated his request: "Do I get the priests, General!"

"Where are the weapons?" the Dictator snapped.

Frank Braun took them out of the bag, put them on the floor and arranged the boxes with cartridges beside them. The Ge-

neral took up one of the revolvers, examined it with an expert's eye and loaded it. "Call, the Holy Fathers now!" he ordered.

The priests and nuns were brought before the General, lined up in a row. "I have a good mind to try these revolvers on you," he laughed. He raised the gun, aimed for an instant at the head of the first priest, then suddenly lifted the barrel and shot into the air.

The old nuns screamed, fell to their knees and prayed aloud. The priests followed their example.

"Shut up, swine!" the General bellowed. "You aren't worth the powder! Get up, priests—this man here has bought your freedom. You are free!"

He turned to his aide. "Don Benjamino, see to it that nothing happens to them! Write them passports for their trip to the United States."

But he had not yet had enough. He called one of the priests to him and gave him a cigar. The priest took it, turning it around in his trembling hands.

"Smoke!" the Dictator commanded. The priest hastily lit the cigar and drew a few careful puffs.

"Smoke harder!" Pancho Villa cried.

The old man had drawn five or six puffs before the firecracker went off with a sharp crack. Frightened, he dropped the cigar to the floor.

Pancho Villa howled with laughter. "Go now, go, black-coat! And when you get to Spain, tell your brothers: That is the kind of cigars they smoke at General Villa's."

Colonel Perlstein ordered them led out, but before they had crossed the threshold, the Dictator jumped to his feet. "Not the nuns," he shouted, "not them! He has bought the priests, a revolver for each. But he hasn't bought the old hags—they'll have to swing!"

Frank Braun cried: "I'll buy them, too, General!"

"Have you any more revolvers?" Villa shouted, "and enough cartridges?"

The bag was empty. He had brought only six guns—and all the trinkets were given away. There were only a few books left.

"Here, my new leather bag—" he cried.

"No," the General cried. "Give the bag to Captain Gonzalez who will get your priests safely across to the Yankees. I want revolvers for the nuns, the same as for the priests! And if you haven't any more, they'll swing."

Suddenly, Frank Braun noticed La Goyita standing near the General.

She pushed aside the officers who stood in her way, drawing herself up to her full height before the Dictator. "I'll buy the nuns!" she said.

Pancho Villa yelled at her: "You?—If you give me the weight of these stuffed pigs in gold, you won't get them."

La Goyita quietly said: "I'll dance the rumba."

The General jumped to his feet. "The rumba?—The nuns are free! Captain Gonzalez—you are to see that they get through safely and unharmed."

The dancer walked over to the nuns, kissed them and gave them some gold. Then she came back and stood beside the General.

"Please get me a glass of wine, General," she said.

Pancho Villa ordered champagne brought for her and she drained the glass in three quick draughts.

"Another, please!"

Frank Braun gave her his full glass; she thanked him with a brief glance and drank the wine.

"Clear the floor for me," she said. "I am going to dress."

She took her shawls, shoes, castanets and all her other things in her arms and went into one of the rooms that opened from the patio.

The officers again cleared the place in the center and had it swept clean of bottles, dirt and paper. Then they all filled their glasses to the brim and waited.

An officer with a heavy mustache stood beside Frank Braun

looking at him as if he wanted something and did not dare to ask for it.

"What is it?" the German asked.

The Mexican pointed eagerly to the leather bag. "May I have it?" he asked, "The General——"

"Are you Captain Gonzalez?"

The officer nodded and Frank Braun reached into the bag, took out the books, and walked over to the door with the Mexican officer.

"Promise me——" he began.

The captain cut him short. "Don't worry, I'll give them all the food and drink they want—tonight! And I'll get them to the border safely—you can depend on me."

He proudly stroked the beautiful leather bag. "Come with me!" he called to the nuns and priests.

Frank Braun spoke to them and gave them "Villa money" and American dollar bills. Then he remembered the books in his hands.

Perhaps—for the trip——

He looked at them again—no, that wasn't reading matter for the trip! One of the books was *Jacopone da Todi*; the other, a thin volume, contained the poems of St. Francis and his pupils.

"Who can read Latin?" he asked. One of the men could, the priest who had had to smoke the cigar. Frank Braun gave him the verses of the saint of Assisi. "Are any of you Italian?"

No, they were all Spaniards. But the old Mother Superior had lived in Rome and could read both Latin and Italian. So he gave her the sweet songs of the man from Todi.

"Don't forget, Mother," he said, "don't forget: this is the saint who created the Mater Dolorosa and also the Mater Speciosa! The Virgin truly was a Dolorosa for you tonight—she brought you great sorrow! And yet she became—the Speciosa! And remember also: 'Dolores' is the name of the woman who bought you your freedom—Dolores Echevarria."

Suddenly the hand organ blared forth, recalling Frank Braun to the patio. "Travel with God!" he cried.

He hurried back to his chair beside Villa. The dancer had not yet come in, but the hand organ was playing the sensuous rhythm of the rumba.

"Congratulations!" the Colonel whispered to him. "You did that very nicely! But let me tell you—half a year ago Villa wouldn't have released the priests and the nuns! Not for your dressing case, not for your revolvers, nor for your firecracker cigars or the other junk from the New York five-and-ten store! Not even for the rumba of the Goyita!"

He gave Frank Braun a full glass. "Don't drink yet—wait till she comes! The French Revolution is going out of fashion with us—that's the reason. The General is beginning to wonder at times if it is really necessary to kill everybody who wears a clerical habit! Did you hear him utter any juicy curse, any really bad swearword? Nothing—not a word! But only half a year ago he spat out curses with every sentence. All that has changed since we are reading the Prussian King. Unfortunately I am not well educated and I don't know whether everything is true that our Spanish book tells us about Frederick the Great. But according to the book, he was a thorough atheist—and that impressed Villa. For it says in the book that, nevertheless, he did not interfere with the followers of any religion and that he let the people live as they liked. In the beginning the General couldn't see that at all—but it seems that gradually he is beginning to understand it. You see, when we read a book, we read it over and over a dozen times at least! The General has to imitate somebody—and I believe the day is not far off when in his country, too, anybody will live as he pleases."

He stopped as the Goyita stepped into the patio.

She wore a white muslin skirt reaching down to the calves of her legs and a blouse of the same material, cut like a man's shirt but unfastened in front. A blue silk shawl was wound tightly around her waist and she wore a blue silk kerchief around her throat. Another blue kerchief was tied across her forehead, covering her hair, with a knot in the back from which the two loose ends hung down over the nape of her neck. Her

costume was that of a peasant girl—as known to the vaudeville stage, of course. Waving a little basket in her hand, she made a few studied gestures supposedly indicating that she was coming from work in the fields and that it was very hot. Why the heat should make her feel like dancing was not made very clear—she decided upon it without any plausible explanation. She threw her basket away, drew off the kerchief at her neck, and fanned herself with it, pretending to wipe off the perspiration. Then she threw it after the basket. The Goyita went through this little prologue without much enthusiasm, and with rather stiff gestures, but the audience understood the meaning: it is very hot—and therefore she is lightly dressed—only in skirt and blouse. And: she is going to dance.

She stepped into the center of the floor, looked at her organ grinder and waited for the beat.

Suddenly, the General waved his hand and all the officers rose with him.

"Viva La Goyita!" they cried, draining their glasses and holding them high over their heads.

Colonel Perlstein walked over to her and handed her a full cup. She raised it to her lips and drained it to the last drop. *"Viva Villa!"*

Then she returned the glass, glanced quickly around the patio and stamped her foot angrily: "Send the women away, General!"

He could understand that! Of course, she wouldn't dance the rumba before them, not before these harlots!

So the women had to go.

And then she began.

Slowly, step by step. Languorously stretching and weaving, but supple and lithesome in her movements. Gradually, her movements became faster, her body swayed and undulated. Ripples passed along her arms, down her whole body, from her neck to the tips of her feet, as if snakes were twisting themselves quickly down her body. And—in sharp contrast were the movements of her shoulders, abrupt, fast, strangely angular.

This was not a dance of the hips or of the stomach, not a dance in which she kicked her legs and waved her arms or made provoking gestures with her head and hands. Of course, all this was in it, too; she rolled out her stomach and drew it in, twisted her hips, lifted her arms and legs in the gestures of one suffering from the tiring heat and seeking coolness—but it was only to her shoulders that she drew the eyes of her audience. To her shoulders and to her breasts.

She was dancing faster now, more wildly, whirling, her hands firmly planted on her hips. Her shoulders jerked, flew back and forth, shot out and bent back—one—the other—and again both. Then—only for a short instant—her unfastened blouse opened, showing a narrow strip of white skin, down to her waist.

Now not only her shoulders were working; now it was her whole chest. The stretching became a quick jerking, the weaving and swaying a fast heaving—it seemed as if she were dancing with her lungs now. And throughout there was this rapid twitching, this jerking—more wildly, more madly—and now—

Suddenly it jumped out—out of her shirt at a quick backward twist of her left shoulder—one of her young breasts. There it was—peering out for an instant—whiter, more shining than her white shirt—and disappeared again, quickly as it had come.

"Ah!" the officers exclaimed, "Ah! Oh!"

She danced on. Always this twisting and twitching of her shoulders, this heaving of her chest—and these undulations down her body. And this stretching that became a rapid twisting—this wild jerking that dissolved into a gentle, languorous swaying.

The officers' eyes were glued on her every instant, waiting, eagerly and hungrily, for the fleeting moment when they would again spy one of her white breasts.

"The other one!" they cried hoarsely. "*Sácalá!*"

That was the game—it always looked as if one of her breasts would gleam out of the blouse that yet covered them, again and again.

"*Sácalá!*" they shouted and yelled.

As if by command—the right breast peeped out of the shirt. It smiled and sparkled—cool as marble—and hid itself quickly behind the thin cloth.

Pancho Villa shot up from his chair, bending forward heavily so that he almost dropped to the floor. His protruding eyes nearly popped from their sockets and the saliva dripped from his open mouth.

"Las dos!" he shouted, "Both!"

His men shouted after him: *"Las dos! Las dos!"*

Their lecherous lust, the lust of bulls in heat, filled the wide space like dense fog. It crept into their noses and mouths, clawed at their bestial brains. These brutal warriors who had thousands of harlots at their elbows waiting for a smile that would be a command, these robbers and bandits who stole half grown children from their mothers and dragged nuns out of cells into their beds, for whom the flesh of woman was as cheap as their dirty pulque—these men trembled in reverent excitement at the sight of these two breasts. Their clumsy hot hands twitched after these snowy globes; their dark eyes leered at this white quarry that peeped out and quickly hid itself; their tongues hung out like those of bulls, panting for the sweet draught from those white buds. Their nostrils drank in the scent of cherry blossoms; their ugly ears were strained for the dancing music of these white kittens that played hide-and-seek with them—

One—quick, quick—and another—quick, quick—

The lame General Alvaro Gumucio embraced a pillar with both his arms, holding on to it with all his strength, as if he were afraid of fainting. Pancho Villa dug his knees into the shoulder of the soldier who squatted before him, weighing down upon him with the whole weight of his huge bulk, almost squashing him—

"Las dos!" the Dictator whispered, *"Las dos!"*

Colonel Perlstein still controlled his expression. There was a smile on his face, critical and slightly mocking—but it seemed frozen. And he gripped the handle of his riding crop pressing it so that the white of his knuckles showed.

And now Frank Braun, too, was drawn into the red fog. He felt as if he were breathing hot lava, as if he were choking in this ardor that clouded his senses. Distantly—far away—somewhere in the clouds behind the endless flaming desert, there lured white coolness.

White, very white—somewhere in an immense distance—there was shade and snow—innocence and purity. And—amidst marble and swans and clammy cold winding-sheets—there was rest, release from this torrid torment. There was—somehow in the clouds on which the moon was shining—hidden in the mystery of glowing whiteness—delivery from the torpor; there was the Infinite Well-Being.

Then he saw—flying past him like a falling star in a November night—a small red strip on her chest, between her breasts. A tiny wound, less than an inch long—and a single drop of blood oozed from it—

Something whipped him into action—something pulled him forward—

But he forced it down, claspng the arm of his chair with both hands, holding on to it with all his strength.

One—quick as a flash—and another—again—quick—

Pancho Villa clasped his fingers together: "*Las dos!*" he prayed, "*Las dos!*"

Suddenly, with a jerk, she stopped as the music broke off. Drawing herself up to her full height—her proud head far back—her dark blue eyes triumphantly on her slaves. For an instant she stood there, then she threw back her arms and with a wild shudder pulled back her shoulders—and her young breasts came out, both together.

No one laughed, no one said a word. Deep, breathless silence.

Were they weeping? Were they down on their knees?—All of them?

La Goyita walked away and sat down on her chair beside the organ grinder, carelessly throwing a kerchief over her shoulders.

No one applauded, no one dared move. The men seemed to be

frozen to stone, transfixed to the spot where they had been sitting and standing, mesmerized, hypnotized, for minutes after the dance was over.

Frank Braun thought: "She has learned from the animal trainer. And she has surpassed her master! She knows how to tame the beast and make it lick her hand!"

She got up, walked slowly across the patio and sat down beside Pancho Villa. "Give me a drink, please," she said quietly. "I am thirsty." Colonel Perlstein filled a glass for her. "This is your feast today, General—to your health!"

That roused Pancho Villa. He reached into the basket that the soldier was still holding between his knees and took out the black dressing case which he handed her without a word. She opened it and smiled: "What shall I do with that? Shave myself?"

He was embarrassed, like a schoolboy, as he took back the dressing case. Then he proffered her the watches, bracelets and earrings that he had bought from the peddler, dropped them in her lap. He pulled the diamond rings from his fat fingers and added them to the pile. Colonel Perlstein took pins and necklaces from his pockets and gave them to her, adding fat rolls of Villa money. All the officers came up one by one and filled her lap with jewelry and gold. The General again opened the pouch on his belt and took his hands out full of gold coins which he dropped into her lap. He laughed, pleased at the pretty sound of tinkling gold.

She called to the organ grinder to bring her bag, carelessly dropping the presents into it.

"Thank you!" she said. She said it just once and it had to do for all.

But it seemed as if the officers had to be grateful to her for accepting their presents. They crowded around her, trying to show their best side, well behaved like children at a family party.

"Can these be robbers?" Frank Braun thought. "Murderers and incendiaries?—They are lambs!"

The beautiful shepherdess led them gently by the purple silk ribbon of her eyes.

"Drink!" she smiled at them, "drink! Be merry! This is the General's nameday!"

Obediently they drank. Nobody thought of calling back the women—oh, no! The Goyita was here who had danced the rumba for them! She sat among them and drank and smoked with them, she, La Goyita——

Frank Braun clicked his glass against hers: "Who is left from the circus?" he asked.

"This one here!" she answered, pointing at the organ grinder. "He is the only one left. He was one of the stable boys. Now he is almost blind."

"Blind?" Frank Braun asked. "From the fever?"

"I don't know," she said. "He had to stay a long time in the hospital in San Francisco—and when he came out he was that way. Now he travels around with me." She looked at him for a long while with her sapphire blue eyes—he felt as if he were bathing in cool blue water, as if she were cleansing him of the heat and dirt. "You have helped my priests," she continued, "you are good, just as the Captain was. Just as all the Germans were on the terrible fever ship."

"What became of the animals?" he interrupted her.

"The Captain helped me to sell them in San Francisco. And the tents, the cages and everything. I got a lot of money for them—much more than we thought. I used the money to have masses read for the soul of the Directrice. And for Louison's—and for all the others. I could not sell the tiger and the wolf, because they were both sick. But I nursed them back to health—I was more successful with them than with poor little Louison." She spoke calmly, as if she were speaking of times long gone by. "The tiger was nasty and ugly—he tried to claw me and he was treacherous and mean. So I sold him to the General—I am glad the bull killed him. But the wolf is grateful—he is my faithful companion." She told him about the Captain of the *Thuringia*, about the officers and the crew. She spoke

about her performances in California and Texas, in Sonora and Chihuahua. And how she had finally come to General Villa.

Every one listened quietly. Frank Braun kept his eyes on her every instant—but it was not her blue eyes that arrested his glance. It was like an obsession: he stared at her neck, praying that the kerchief would move, because underneath there was the small wound with the drop of blood—

Finally she got to her feet. "This is your day, General Villa. I will dance again for you!"

She called to her organ grinder—but he had fallen asleep on his chair.

"Let him sleep," she said, "don't wake him. Who will grind the organ for me?"

All the officers hurried across the patio, but tall Dominguez was the first to take hold of the crank.

She took off her light blouse before all these men, perfectly calmly. So sure, so dominantly sure was she of her power.

Frank Braun looked sharply—where was the tiny wound?

Her neck and her bosom were white, sparkling white. Nowhere the tiniest red mark.

He must have been dreaming.

She tied a yellow *manton* around her body, hips, breasts and shoulders. Then she stepped into the center of the floor and danced a short simple *olé*.

She took the flowers from her hair, distributing them amongst the officers, giving the largest and most beautiful one to Pancho Villa. Then she said: "I will dance one more—a *sevilliana*—and that will be the last. The one that they dance in Chipiona—before their Madonna."

She danced lightly and serenely, bowing and swaying, singing the naïve, simple *copla*:

Morena, Morena eres,
Bendita tu, Morenural
Que me tienes en la cama
Sin frio ni calentura!

"Who is the Morena?" the General asked. "The brown one of whom you are singing?"

"Who that is? Why—that is the Virgin—the brown Virgin of Chipional"

Again the officers raised their glasses and drank to La Goyita.

General Villa cried: "I don't want any more wine. Bring me mescal brandy!"

Frank Braun gripped the Colonel's arm. "Have you any mescal?" he asked. "I have been asking everybody in town for it. And I couldn't get even the tiniest button!"

Perlstein laughed. "We can't either! The General is crazy for mescal—just as everybody is down here. We have given strict orders that all the mescal found must be delivered to headquarters—but nobody finds any and so we don't get it! What we call mescal brandy has nothing in common with mescal except the name—about one button to a hundred quarts of strong alcohol."

The dancer softly touched Frank Braun's arm. "What is it you want?" she asked.

"Mescal buttons!" he answered. "It is a small fruit, of a cactus variety. The Indians call it *peyote*—"

She said: "I will get them for you!"

He looked at her in astonishment. "You? Where will you get them?"

"I don't know," she answered, "but I will find them!"

Then she left. She nodded lightly, greeting every one with a smile, but without shaking hands.

The organ grinder followed her, wheeling his instrument.

Slowly the women came back into the courtyard. First a few stole back, then the others followed. And soon the patio was loud and noisy again.

Then the dice were brought out and the cards—there was shouting and singing.

The saint had gone—and the quiet church turned once more into a brothel.

Large bottles were brought, heavy round bottles from which the men poured a pungent smelling liquid into the glasses, mixing it with wine. There were no corks in the bottles—but brown, dried-up, shrivelled things that looked like small roots.

Colonel Perlstein showed him one.

"What is that?" Frank Braun could not guess.

"Dried fingers of Yankees whom we shot at Nacol!"

"Is that the General's brilliant joke?"

"No, Colonel Gurmucio invented it; he insists that the brandy tastes better this way." He took Frank Braun's arm. "Come, Doctor, we had better go now. What will happen here won't be enjoyable."

They rode slowly back to the city. "What do you want with the mescal?" the Jew asked. Frank Braun answered: "It just came to my mind the other day. I haven't had any for a long time—not for ten years or more. And I thought it might help when I get those attacks of dizziness."

Colonel Perlstein shrugged his shoulders. "I don't believe in that stuff. But you are right, all the Indians swear by it!"

With his riding crop he pointed to a few completely charred ruins. "There used to be a big building here," he said. "The American consulate. It was torn down and not one stone was left in place."

"And the Consul?"

"He was lucky. Some one hid him and helped him to escape—the mob would have beaten him to death if he had been caught. So they had to vent their rage on the stones. I think the Yankees are standing an awful lot of abuse from us!"

"Yes, everything!" Frank Braun nodded. "If you kill every American in Mexico, and the Consuls first of all—President Wilson will not lift a finger."

"But, why?" the officer asked.

"Oh," Frank Braun said impatiently, "you know that yourself! Because the Mexicans are to kill each other without interference from outside! And furthermore, because England wants it. You see, Colonel, the President and the whole Government,

and the whole wealthy ruling class in the United States, are making a great deal of money by doing what London wants them to do! What you get in the way of weapons and ammunition is just enough to make you dangerous to one another. The Yankee doesn't make any money selling you these firearms—on the contrary; but he makes one bloody million after the other on the war supplies that he is sending over to Europe—against Germany and Austria, and for Russia and the Allies. The war would have been over long ago if the Americans did not send war material to the Allies—more every single day than you get in years. This is America's big business—and as long as this is flourishing there must be peace with you! Because, Colonel, if America were forced to go to war against you they themselves would need their weapons and their ammunition; in which case the shipments of munitions to Europe would be stopped instantly. But that would mean that Germany would win the war. No, the Americans will wait until you have exhausted your strength by fighting each other, and then they will finish you. They will call it: pacifying the country and restoring order. But as long as the war is going on in Europe, you will be left alone, and you are perfectly free to burn down consulates and kill as many Americans as you like! The war that you need in order to unite the factions in your country, the outside war—only one thing can bring you that war!"

"What is that?" Perlstein asked.

"Only one thing—" Frank Braun repeated. "If Mexican troops would march into Texas or California."

Colonel Perlstein did not answer. He became quiet and thoughtful and they rode through the streets of the city without another word. When they arrived at the fonda, Frank Braun dismounted and had his horse led into the stable. Then he held out his hand to Perlstein.

"Good night."

The Colonel took Frank Braun's hand, clasping it heartily. He whistled softly to himself, stroking the neck of his horse with his riding crop.

Then he said slowly: "I am an American. I was born in New York. I would be with them now, I would be riding today behind the Star-Spangled Banner if they had accepted me. They did not want me—they kicked me out like a leper."

He dealt his horse a quick blow and the frightened animal curveted aside. He reined it in quickly, turned around and rode off at a slow trot.

Suddenly he stopped, and turning in the saddle called back through the night in a clear voice:

"I will get Pancho Villa across the frontier!"



ERNST ROSSIOUS met him at the station.

"How are the detectives?" Frank Braun asked.

"Fine, thank you," the secretary said. "They will be glad to see you back, Doctor—dead or alive!" He stepped back, staring at his superior. "Really—more dead than alive! You look——"

"Never mind, say it!"

"Like sour beer!" the secretary burst out.

Frank Braun thought: "If it is nothing worse!" He had been forced to stop on the way, spending three days in bed in a St. Louis hotel. But the rest had not done him any good; he still felt just as tired, just as worn out and empty as before.

Lotte van Ness was not nearly as worried as Rossious. Frank Braun thought: "She only pretends, because she doesn't want to scare me. That's silly, because there are mirrors, after all! Besides, it doesn't scare me at all."

That night he lay on the sofa with his head in her lap while she took his hands in hers and stroked his forehead softly. He told her about Mexico and about Pancho Villa.

She asked: "His name was Colonel Perlstein, you say?"

He smiled. It was a fixed idea of hers that the Jews would help Germany. And she believed that this Jew Perlstein would lead the Mexicans into Texas, and in that case the English and

Italians, the Russians and French would get no more war supplies; and then Germany must win the war.

"And if Villa burns down ten Yankee cities," Frank Braun thought, "it won't really help."

But he did not say it; he let her dream.

He felt quieter and stronger, his brain cleared when her slim hands touched him; he softly kissed the tips of her fingers.

"Where is your little knife?" she asked. He gave it to her and after a moment's hesitation she opened it quickly.

"It is clean!" she cried gayly. But in the same breath she sighed: "Poor boy!"

"What is that thing supposed to be?" he asked. "Is it a magic mirror? Does it get spots when I am unfaithful to you?"

She nodded. "Yes—it gets spots. But it is not a magic mirror—its spots are perfectly natural. Any knife would do me the same service." She put it back in his pocket. "Keep it; some day it will be bloody!"

She got to her feet quickly, sealing his lips with a kiss. "Come, dear, dinner is ready!"

They ate in silence. He reached for her hand across the table—he felt at home now, quiet and peaceful.

And he also felt as if he had never held another woman in his arms.

Only her—Lotte Levi.

She had made herself beautiful for him—he had not noticed it before. She looked radiant and exciting—she had never been so beautiful before.

Once she asked: "Are you glad to be back?"

He nodded.

She dropped raisins in the champagne glasses; the raisins filled with air and floated like little silver fishes on the golden wine. They fished them out with their tongues, held them between their lips and munched them—from each other's lips.

"Come!" she said.

He sat up in the big bed, rubbing the sleep from his eyes. The

sun shone warmly through the yellow curtains—what time could it be?

He closed his eyes, trying to think, trying to remember the stray thoughts of this night. But he could remember only the dream he had had.

He had dreamed of the dancer, the Goyita—Dolores Echevarria. He had dreamed of her as she danced the rumba, of her neck and her breasts, of the tiny red wound with the single drop of blood——

No—that was not true. He had not seen her in his dream, he had not seen her eyes and he had not seen her dance——

He was adding that now, he was day-dreaming.

He had dreamed only of her gleaming white breasts and of the small blood-red scar——

He laughed and opened his eyes wide. "And it hadn't even been there!"

He looked around—there was a dark red spot on the white pillow, a little blurred.

Had he seen that while he was half asleep? Was that what had caused him this dream?

He jumped out of bed—where was Lotte? Her clothes lay scattered around the room, on the sofa, on chairs and on the rugs—her shoes and stockings, corset and dress.

He took a bath, dressed and went into the dining room. The maid brought him tea and asked him to wait, Madame was dressing. So he had breakfast alone and it tasted better than it had for weeks.

Had he really been sick and tired? He—yesterday? He could not imagine how he had felt yesterday—he was feeling so well and fresh now.

He went into her library and read the titles of the books piled over her desk.

Sancti Petris Epiphanius Episcopi Cypri Ad Diodorum Tyri Episcopum, quae erant in veste Aaronis. Ah, that was about her breastplate. "She takes it seriously," he thought. There was Franciscus Rueus' curious book and the treatise on precious

stones by Bishop Marbod of Rennes. He also saw the *Hortus Sanitatis* of Johann of Cuba, the *Grand Lapidaire* of Jean de Mandevilles, and the famous *Speculum Lapidum* of Camillus Leonardus. On a chair by the desk lay Cardano's book and the works of Konrad von Megenberg. On the shelves he saw Josephus Gonellus, De Boot, Volmar, Finot, Kunz, Morales and many other authors—all the men who had written about precious stones.

On the other side of the library, there were whole shelves full of volumes dealing with prophecies, secret revelations of the future, horoscopes. There was Albertus Magnus, of course, *The Sorcerers' Book* of Ragiel, Plotinus, Jamblichos, Dionysios the Areopagite, Paracelsus, Eliphas Levi. He noticed the surprising number of Gnostics, but there were also representatives of the Indian, Babylonian, Talmud-Jewish and Alexandrian school, as well as Christian Mystics. And in all the books there were bent corners, reading marks, pencil notations on the margin.

"What is she looking for?" he wondered.

He did not wait for Lotte. His secretary telephoned and asked him to come home to speak to a man who was waiting for him. He drove to Twenty-third Street and shook hands with the detectives before the door. Then he talked to a man from the committee and gave him a short report. In the evening he met Ivy Jefferson and her mother at the Claremont on the Hudson; Mrs. Jefferson's beau, the English Consul General, was also there.

"You look splendid!" Mrs. Jefferson said. "Sparkling like champagne!"

He smiled. He must have changed considerably in the past twenty-four hours. Only yesterday he had looked like sour beer.

"Thank you!" he said. "And you also seem——"

"It must have been marvelous on the West Coast!" she interrupted him. "It is a shame that we haven't been there for so long. I hope you accomplished your work in California!"

"Califor——"

He felt Ivy's foot on his. "Of course you did! You sent us such pretty postcards—from Los Angeles and San Diego."

He returned the slight pressure of her foot. "Yes, of course! Everything went beautifully. California is a lovely place—"

As they were leaving, he saw Eva Lachmann step out of her car, accompanied by two women. She gave him a quick glance which he failed to understand, and brushed past him. But then she changed her mind, turned around and looked at Ivy Jefferson with a mocking smile, measuring her from head to foot.

"Do you know her?" Ivy asked. He nodded.

The car drove up and he helped Mrs. Jefferson in. Then he turned and offered his hand to Ivy.

"No," she said. "Mother is driving with her beau. I have my new car here. I wanted to show it to you."

She climbed into her big new Packard, took the wheel and asked him to sit beside her. Then she followed her mother's limousine.

"You were in Mexico," she said.

"So you spied on me!"

"No, I didn't at all. It was the easiest thing in the world to find out."

"How?"

She smiled. "Didn't you send those few letters for me to your secretary? With the pretty heading: 'Somewhere'? He put the envelope into another envelope and sent the letters to me just as you had ordered. But I called him up from Newport and asked him to telephone me every time a letter came for me. And the next time——"

"You told him that you were coming to town!" he finished her sentence. "And asked him to luncheon—where?"

"At Delmonico's, of course. He was to bring me the letter. He did—and three minutes later I knew where you were."

"And what else did he tell you?"

"Nothing else! Unfortunately! I could not get any more out of him—and I really flirted very nicely—with your kind permission.

He made a slip in the beginning, but afterwards he was a bitter disappointment. I told every one that you were in California."

He whistled. "Why didn't you tell them where I was? It is no secret. I just wanted to see a bullfight again—that was all."

"And you needed almost ten weeks for that?" Ivy persisted.

"Certainly!" he said calmly. "I had to wait until there was one."

She leaned over to him. "You are lying!"

"To you?" He pretended to be hurt, trying an indignant tone. But she laughed at him. "Of course, to me!—You went there as an agent for your country. The newspapers are full of stories about how the Germans are working down there against us."

"Child," he said—and this time his voice was serious—"your newspapers are full of lies. The Germans in Mexico are glad to be left with whole skins; the revolutions which Wall Street financed, have reduced them all to beggars. The one who has been stirring up Mexico, and who is doing it still—is the Yankee."

She countered in a superior tone: "Against himself?"

"Yes, that is what it amounts to in the end."

He said no more because he felt he could not convince her.

The belief in astrology was the only thing that Lotte van Ness had acquired in America. Her library, her studies, her research, her struggling through all those musty volumes, was European—German and Jewish. But every day she went to one of the many charlatans who sold her empty phrases for large sums. It was the thing to do in fashionable New York society.

Lotte van Ness had hundreds of horoscopes—each one more stupid and childish than the others. She would glance quickly through them and tear them up.

And yet she would go again, order new ones—

One day Frank Braun said to her: "There is one man, the only person in New York who can really cast a horoscope. I met him on the street yesterday; he is a friend of mine whom I knew in Europe. He is the only one who is not a charlatan and

who knows something about it. But he will tell you from the beginning that it is all nonsense."

"Take me there, please," she asked.

Lotte van Ness called for him the next morning.

"Well, what is the name of your magician?"

"Baron Otto von Kachele, University Professor, M.D. and Ph.D."

"University Professor?" she mused.

"Yes, in Southern Germany—in Heidelberg, I believe, or in Freiburg; but that was before my time. When I first met him he was a physician in a resort in Thuringia."

Frank Braun told her the story of the man while they were driving through New York. And he thought that he could tell her hundreds of similar stories—all different in the middle, but identical in the beginning and in the ending. The beginning: a promising career at home, good family, golden youth, work and joy. Then the storm that drove them over to America. And the ending: miserable defeat, slow starvation in this monster city, a gradual decline to lower and lower levels.

This man was a scholar, a magister and doctor. Already as a student he had written for scientific journals. Then he took his doctor's degree, was soon made an associate professor and finally professor. He was well off and married a fair-haired young girl who adored him and took care of him. His path seemed smooth and straight.

Suddenly he lost his chair at the university and had to leave town over night. Something had happened—there were whisperings but no one mentioned anything aloud. People wanted to give him every possible opportunity to make a new start. He moved to a summer resort, continued his research and acquired a world-wide reputation as Egyptologist and Assyriologist. He spent his money on rare antiques, but as a physician he acquired in a short time an enormous practice which enabled him to indulge in every possible luxury. Only—he did not care for any luxury. He did not drink, did not smoke, did not gamble or

travel—he never looked at a woman, not even his own. He was not interested in anything but his hieroglyphs. He spared neither time nor money on his Egyptian research on which he worked day and night.

Then he was arrested and tried—he had raped one of his patients in his office. At first he denied it—but later, when he was behind bars he admitted everything and stopped trying to defend himself. He was granted every possible facility, was allowed all the books he wanted and was permitted to do research work—so he wrote a monumental work on Assyrian horoscopes. The authorities even went so far as to permit him to resume his profession. He settled in another city and in a short time he had again a splendid practice.

It lasted two years—then the district attorney received a new complaint. It was exactly as before: he had abused a woman while she was under ether. Young? Beautiful? Oh no—she was more than sixty and very ugly.

The district attorney was a friend of his and wanted to save him. He had a warrant sworn out—for the next morning. And that evening he went to the inn and talked about it.

All the notables were sitting around, the Judge, the physicians—all friends of Dr. Kachele.

What next? Prison for many years? Or an insane asylum for life?

One of the men went to see Dr. Kachele the same night and told him. The professor was perfectly reasonable and not at all insane. But when the talk came around to what he had done, he merely shook his head: "I don't know anything about it."

That same night his friends helped him to get away and two days later he was on the ocean.

And now he had been in New York for many years. The money which his wife brought with her when she followed him, had been used up a long time ago, and his antiques had to be sold far below their value. His escapades in Europe were no obstacle here—no one knew anything about them. But he could not begin as a practitioner again—he would have had to take

new examinations. Thousands of German physicians had done that, and it would have been easy for him as for all the others. But he did not speak English. He read hieroglyphs, cuneiform writing and runes fluently, he understood Phœnician, Ethiopian and Coptic—but his English was terrible. And—he was afraid of himself. What had happened to him three times before, might it not happen again any day? He was afraid of practicing medicine—afraid of the demon that slumbered within him.

So he plodded along, still writing erudite papers for scientific journals, still a corresponding member of every possible learned society. But in order to make a living, he had to take whatever the moment offered. He invented a new gold mixture for dental fillings and sold it to a dentist who had it patented and made twenty thousand dollars on it—Dr. Kachele himself received fifty dollars as his share.

But even that was a rare stroke of luck. For a living the erudite Baron made urine analyses, day in, day out—for doctors and quacks—at a dollar each.

Frank Braun and Løtte walked down the steps from the street—seventeen steps into the basement where Dr. Kachele had his laboratory. The poor professor was sitting on a backless chair among tumblers and retorts and flasks and test tubes and vials that shone in an unnatural ultra-violet light like poisoned moonlight; he was bent forward, his hands on his knees, as if asleep. He had an ugly hollow-cheeked face, and his gray unkempt beard and dirty grizzled hair added to the picture of decay. From behind steel-rimmed glasses his near-sighted yellow eyes peered at the intruders.

“—Halloh!” Frank Braun called out to him, “how are you?”

The Professor jumped up and held out both hands. “Nice of you to drop in, I am glad to see you.—I found out what you asked me the other day; I wrote it all down for you.” He hurried across the room and took up a manuscript from a table in the rear.

“Here,” he cried, “here you have it all! Your Voodoo priestess, the Mamaloi, must be a human personification of the Coptic

Berzelia! And Berzelia—much further back, of course—is the wife of Moloch and was called Basileia by the Greeks. I assure you we have a straight line—no, not straight, a very crooked line as a matter of fact—from the Babylonian goddess Labartu down to the child sacrifices in the Haitian Voodoo cult! And the strange inversion, that the blood-drinking Astarte herself gives her blood when——”

Frank Braun cut him short: “Thank you very much, Professor, you will tell me about that later. Today I want something else from you. This lady——”

He introduced Mrs. van Ness. Kachele turned around and looked at her; he had not noticed that there was a woman in his cellar. He shook hands without greeting her, greatly disappointed that he had been interrupted in his lecture.

“Come now,” Frank Braun placated him, “don’t be angry, Professor! I told Mrs. van Ness that you are the only man alive who can cast a horoscope—strictly scientifically.”

“What?” the little man cried. “Scientifically? To examine old horoscopes *is* science, but to make new ones is always a fake! Aren’t there enough fools in New York who get rich by casting horoscopes for still bigger fools? Why do you come to me? You have the wrong address—right next door lives one of these magicians—you can see the limousines in front of his door all day long.—I can mix you a toothpaste if you want, or give you something for eczema—or I’ll analyze your urine! That is honest work! But——”

“Don’t get excited, Baron, it isn’t worth it! You don’t have to do it, if you don’t want to!”

“No, I don’t want to!” the Professor shouted.

“All right, all right!” Frank Braun pacified him, adding quickly: “This is a big laboratory—a pity you have no daylight.—Do you live here, Professor?”

“No,” he snarled. “I have a room on Fortieth Street.”

“One room for you and your wife? How is she?”

“Rotten,” the Professor hissed.

“Is she sick?”

Dr. von Kachele shrugged his shoulders. "That doesn't surprise you, does it? Considering the life we lead."

Now Frank Braun had him where he wanted him. He said slowly and with emphasis: "Your wife is sick—undernourished probably—just as you are! And you have the courage to refuse work that would bring you money? False professional pride?"

The professor drew his head into his coat collar and then poked it out like a turtle. "Money, you say?—How much money?"

"How long would it take?"

The Professor thought for a moment. "If I am permitted to work thoroughly and to look up old charts—" He took out his handkerchief, cleaned his glasses and wiped the perspiration from his brow. "It will take three months at least," he continued, "perhaps four, if I am to do it properly."

"I'll pay you ten dollars a day for four months." Mrs. van Ness said.

Dr. Kachele made a rapid calculation in his mind. "But—that—that would be—more than twelve hundred dollars—" he stammered.

She nodded. "Do you accept?"

"Yes!" he cried. Then he began hesitatingly and clumsily: "Doctor—I have known you for ten years—but—we never had any business dealings—" He cleared his throat, tried to work up his courage and began again. "You see, I have been cheated of my reward so often in this country—" his voice broke, it became hoarse and very bitter—"always—always!"

Lotte van Ness took out her check book, wrote, and handed him the long slip of paper. "Here, Herr Professor. And please don't begin until you have cashed it."

He nodded mechanically, without comprehending. He folded the check and put it carefully away in his wallet. Then he took a pencil from the table and walked over to the whitewashed wall. He drew a big clumsy circle and the twelve Houses in it.

"Does the lady know what a horoscope is?" he inquired.

Frank Braun laughed. "I hope so. She must have had a hundred—from your competitors."

"They are just as good as the one I am going to make for you from the stars. Whether I just sit down and tell you something that I make up in five minutes—or whether I find out for you by laborious methods from old Assyrian rules what the stars indicated at the hour of your birth—it amounts to the same thing in the end! It all depends on you, Madam! Do as Alexander the Great did, or Jesus of Nazareth—then your horoscope will come true whether it is prepared by me or by the cheapest fortune teller in Coney Island."

He had regained his equilibrium. "Will you listen to me, please?" he pleaded. "For a quarter of an hour, only? I must tell you what you will get for your money! Sit down, please, sit down!"

He drew up a couple of rickety chairs and for Lotte he found one that was whole. His yellow eyes shone with joy at being allowed to talk. To talk, to lecture about something in which he was interested—it was the joy of the savant in having others partake of his knowledge.

He explained the horoscope in detail, beginning with the age-old laws of the Assyrian astrologers, and going on to the developments added by the Babylonians, Phœnicians, Egyptians, Ethiopians. He mentioned the rôle which astrology played in the life of the Arabs, Greeks, Arameans and Persians, and the strange interpretation of the Alexandrine school. He told at great length, and yet clearly, why horoscopes were generally correct in the early ages of history.

"At that time, everybody believed in the eternal laws written in the stars. The principles of this science? A nomad probably created them, somewhere in the desert. Then they were there and became sacred and conventionalized in the course of centuries, just as the alphabet or the numerical system. In those bygone ages people believed so firmly in the message of the stars that the historians, led by Herodotus, wrote their history by it. You will often find the passage in Herodotus' books: 'The

history of these people as handed down by their tradition, is this:—But that is wrong: in the stars it is written differently.' And then he proceeds to tell the history of the people as it is written in the stars—not as he had heard it on his travels.

"But many thousands of years ago, man learned to calculate the position of the stars, for the past as well as for the future. Man was not interested in the present, he was interested in what had been, and more so, in what would be. The story of Christ stands written in the heavens, in all its details, and one can read it there now just as easily as one did thousands of years before His birth. Is it not engraved in clearly legible cuneiform on the large stone in the Berlin museum? All one has to do is to calculate the position of the stars for a particular year.

"And once or twice in a century there comes a strange and unusual constellation: it was one of these that changed the whole world in the fourth century B.C. Some one will come out of the West: a young hero on a white charger. He will conquer huge realms and the gates of the cities will be opened to him, and armies will flee before him like chaff before the wind. And he came—Alexander, the Macedonian, who fulfilled what the stars had prophesied. A Russian by the name of Murajeff checked up the dates and found them correct to the last detail. Why? Because the prophecy was known all over the Orient, and because people believed in it, because people had been waiting for the conqueror for many years. That was the reason why cities opened their gates to him, why the huge armies of the Persian King fled before a handful of Greeks. Alexander played his rôle as the emissary of the stars by fulfilling as well as he could all that had been prophesied by the astrologers. He knew these prophecies as every one else did. And therefore he took the trouble to make the pilgrimage to the temple of Ammon, and also to cut the Gordian knot. The only flaw was that Alexander remembered a little too late his rôle as the hero who had been promised to mankind; we know now that he was a man in his fifties and no longer a youth when he marched his army against Persia. Perhaps he made up his face to deceive the peo-

ple—but whatever he may have done, he succeeded in hiding his age. In the history books all over the world he is still described as the young, smiling, radiant hero!

"Because it is written in the stars—and the stars are right, not reality."

"The other prophecy of tremendous importance was about the Messiah. The people of Judah were feverishly excited in those years because the time predicted in the stars had arrived—and now He was there, the prophet of God was in their midst. He appeared—but He was not the only one; there were several like Him. Johannes went into the desert and baptized with water just as Jesus did! And Josephus, the so-called Christ of the Jews, who appeared on the scene a little later, led exactly the same life as Jesus.

"Why? Because—*thus it was written in the stars.*

"Again and again it is mentioned in the Bible that Christ did this or that—*so that there be fulfilled what has been written.* Written where? In the stars!

"Their belief in the stars was so strong that the Alexandrian school did exactly what Herodotus had done: they corrected the story of the Apostles to conform to what the stars had prophesied. And thus the strange story of the presentation of the twelve-year-old Jesus in the Temple found its way, centuries later, into the Gospel of St. Luke, just as the story of the flight to Egypt appeared a few hundred years later in the Gospel of Matthew.

"The story is written in the stars—it can be read there again. The evangelist did not take it down? He probably forgot—so it had to be filled in later."

The Professor warmed to his subject. He gesticulated with his short arms and rocked back and forth on his broken chair. He spoke of the Aztec and Inca prophecies that were used to such advantage by Cortez and Pizarro; he quoted examples from late Roman history and from the Middle Ages to prove how horoscopes had always proven true—as long as people did what had been written. He went on talking, without stopping for

breath, intent to make full use of this unusual opportunity, gushing on like a waterfall.

Frank Braun put his hand on Dr. Kachele's shoulder. "I have to interrupt you, Professor," he apologized, "but I have an appointment——"

"But the goddess Labartu?" the Professor pleaded. "I haven't told you yet how the Phœnician Astarte——"

"Some other time," Frank Braun said, "some other time! I really can't stay any longer today."

"Will you have luncheon with me, Doctor?" Lotte van Ness asked while she adjusted her hat. "You can tell me all about it then."

"Tell you about it?" he wondered. "But are you interested?"

She smiled. "Yes, I think so. I will tell the Doctor all about it afterwards."

Professor von Kachele went to look for his hat and found it at last in the wastepaper basket.

They drove off together in Lotte's car, stopping at Tiffany's where she got out and came back after a few minutes with a little box in her hand. She opened it, took out a narrow golden chain from which a small crystal was suspended, and showed it to the Professor. "I had this made—do you know what it is supposed to mean?"

Dr. Kachele looked at the crystal. "You had a griffon engraved on it," he said slowly. "A griffon—have you a baby?"

Frank Braun laughed. "A baby? No, I should say not! What made you think so?"

The Professor explained, again in his lecture tone, with his finger on his nose: "This is a Venetian superstition from the Trecento and was probably brought over from Syria by the Crusaders. This thing is supposed to bring ample milk to women!"

Lotte Levi nodded as she put the chain around her neck. "You are right, Professor!"

Frank Braun stared at her. "You, Lotte—you need milk?"

"Yes," she said quietly, "milk. For my child. Lots of milk—red milk."

"Nonsense," Frank Braun thought. "Foolish nonsense!"

But he could not get rid of the thought. Again and again his eyes wandered to the beryl which Lotte had given him. And he remembered the old stones in her breastplate.

The next day he again descended into Kachele's cave.

"Tell me, Professor," he asked, "is it possible that precious stones actually have the strange properties which superstitious people have ascribed to them throughout the ages? What I mean is, do you know of any actual case? Do you consider it really possible?"

Professor Kachele coughed. "Why not? Every child knows the strange properties of minerals—have you never picked up iron nails with a magnet, or dropped sodium or potassium into a washbasin to watch it burn? All children play with mercury which is always in a liquid state, or set fire to magnesium because it burns with a brighter flame than daylight. Aren't these marvelous properties? Practically every mineral has its marvels—small or great, only we know so little about them. All metals oxidize except gold which does not combine with oxygen. Think of the emanation of radium, or consider iridium which does not dissolve in any acid, not even in aqua regia. And what about Iceland spar with its double refraction, what about tourmalin which becomes electric through heating, and topaz which can be electrified through rubbing! Hornblende does not burn, meerschaum is hygroscopic and turns into a jelly when dissolved—there are marvels wherever you look."

"But what about their supposed healing properties?" Frank Braun demanded.

The Professor laughed. "Doctor, you must know that as well as I do! Have you never taken sodium sulphate which is much more effective than castor oil? Have you never had anything to do with carbolic acid, and don't you know its disinfecting properties? Just think—what would medicine do without minerals?"

Caustic potash, caustic soda, silver nitrate, all have a caustic effect; millions of people use mercury, and many more millions eat iron. Karlsbad, Vichy and all the other mineral waters are used for thousands of diseases. And there are still physicians—and good ones at that—who are firmly convinced that one can cure all the diseases in the world with iodine and arsenic!

"But then," Frank Braun said hesitatingly, "then it would be quite possible that——"

"That some of the strange properties which our ancestors ascribed to precious stones are true? Of course they are! Much of it is pure imagination, and some of it is childish, but a great deal is true. And you know, Doctor, after all, our so-called 'exact' science is often also childish. It is fool-proof only until we discover something to prove that it isn't."

Young Rossius stepped over to Frank Braun's bed. "It's noon, Doctor! Wouldn't you like to get up? Your man is waiting with your tea."

Frank Braun nodded sleepily. They brought breakfast to his bed, and he ate and drank silently, trying to think. It had been like this for some time, that he could never remember in the morning what had happened the night before.

"I typed your lecture," the secretary said. "I woke up early, had a bath and worked on the typewriter. I asked Fred to make me some tea—with your kind permission."

Frank Braun slowly asked: "Did you take your bath here?"

"Of course! Don't you remember that I slept here last night? On the sofa in the front room?"

Yes, he remembered now. He had come back late at night and had found Rossius waiting. There was the speech he had to make today—about—what was it about, anyway?

Never mind, he would remember it later. But that was why he had asked his secretary to wait for him. After he had come home, he had dictated for an hour and a half, pacing the room. Yes, and then he had asked the young man to stay right here to type the speech in the morning. Now he had it all straight.

"You scared me last night, Doctor!" the secretary smiled.

"I scared you?" Frank Braun asked. "Why?"

"You are a sleep walker!"

Frank Braun jumped out of bed. "Nonsense!"

"No, it isn't nonsense! You came into the room and did something at your bureau. Something fell down—that woke me, and so I switched on the light. That didn't wake you, however. You stood there in your pajamas with your eyes wide open—you were fumbling with something on your bureau."

"What did I do?"

"Nothing in particular, I suppose. You just picked up a few things, scissors, combs—then you pulled something out of your pajama pocket and put it back again. You also opened your razor and closed it."

"Was that all? And how do you know that I wasn't wide awake?"

"No, you weren't awake," Rossius insisted. "I called you and you did not hear me. So I got out of bed and walked over to you, but you did not see me although your eyes were wide open. Then I took your arm and led you back. You were quite gentle and did not protest when I put you back to bed. Two minutes later you closed your eyes and were fast asleep."

"That was most sensible, at any rate," Frank Braun growled as he took his robe and went into the bathroom.

He came back after a little while, very tired and not a bit rested.

"Have we much to do, Rossius?" he asked. Then, without waiting for an answer, he continued. "Come, let's play a game of chess."

He stretched out on the sofa, supporting his elbows on the cushions, and glanced through the papers, now and then looking at the chess board and making a move.

Then he asked Rossius to read the speech and corrected a passage here and there. But gradually he stopped listening and just dreamed.

Abruptly he jumped up. "Bring me the blue dossier, Rossius,

will you please? The one in which we keep the anonymous papers—you know, threats and such things."

"It is gone," the secretary said. "The other day you told me to destroy it all. So I burned it—with everything that was in it. I did it while I was waiting for you."

"Did I tell you to do that?" Frank Braun cried. "That was stupid of me, very stupid! Do you remember the letter we got a few days after I returned from Mexico? You know the one—that was written so mysteriously, warning me of a conspiracy against me?"

Rossius nodded. "Yes, Doctor, I do. You thought a mad woman must have written it and that it was just pure drivel. As I remember, the letter said that even if the men in this country were asleep, the women were wide awake, and that they would find ways and means—and that they had found them already—to put a stop to your activities and those of your kind."

"Yes, that's the letter," Frank Braun nodded slowly. "Perhaps it was only the crazy outburst of an old maid who believed all the lies in the English papers like so many million others, and who now sees a vile murderer in every German! Perhaps! But perhaps there was something to it. You know, Rossius, I almost think I am afraid."

The secretary laughed. "You, Doctor? You, afraid? If you are, I never noticed it before."

"Neither did I—" Frank Braun shrugged his shoulders. "At least not when I am awake. But I believe—I am afraid—when I sleep."

He was silent for a time, then he continued, slowly and deliberately. "I dream in my sleep. Formerly I used to dream only when I was awake—and then I was really thinking, or day-dreaming. Now it is real childish dreaming. I dream when I am fast asleep and it is always the same; I dream of a wound on a woman's breast and of red, dripping blood. I don't like these dreams."

He paced the room with quick, nervous steps. "And this sleepwalking last night—who knows, it may not have been the

first time! Am I a neurasthenic adolescent, an anaemic school-girl, a hysteric matron in her menopause or a moonstruck woman who is having her period?—No, damn it! It is fear, I tell you, plain, common fear—of—of—something!"

He stopped pacing and lit himself a cigarette. "And this fear must have a reason. I am sick—you know that—and I have been sick ever since I came to this goddamn city. I am not sick now, not at this moment—but just a minute ago I was—and perhaps I will be again tomorrow. It is a strange disease and nobody knows anything about it—I least of all. Seven—no, eight, physicians examined me from head to toe, on Mrs. van Ness' instructions. They could not find a thing. A little nervous weakness, they say—that is just a phrase. I shouldn't smoke so much—but I know that myself without asking a specialist. No, that kind of science isn't going to help me!"

He was silent again, thinking. After a pause he continued. "It is a tiredness that has no reason. A physical weakness, sometimes a dizziness that passes quickly—all without any apparent cause. But my real symptom is this feeling of absolute emptiness. It feels as if I did not have a drop of blood in my body, as if the blood in my veins were decomposing—as if something were sucking me dry. Just as children make a hole in an orange and suck it until all the juice has been drained: I am the orange!"

He threw himself down on the sofa, lighting another cigarette. "I am afraid," he emphasized, "this one fact is certain. I am not afraid in the daytime—at least not yet—but I am afraid when I am asleep. Therefore this fear must be a subconscious thing, something instinctive and therefore real. But if it is—what am I afraid of?" He stared at his secretary. "Tell me, do you believe—do you believe it can be some slow poison?"

Ernst Rossius laughed a bright young laugh. "I shouldn't be afraid of that, Doctor! We aren't living in the Middle Ages any longer!"

Frank Braun turned on him sharply. "Oh, aren't we! And I tell you the world has never been as insane as it is today. You read the papers—This slaughter of hundreds of thousands—

when has the world ever seen such wholesale murder? And why—what for? Every Government uses the same stale phrases for the benefit of its school-children but that does not make it less absurd. No, our insanity is much more fantastic than at the time of the Inquisition, or when the raging hordes of Flagellants roamed through Europe, turning the world into a madhouse. Believe me, Rossius, New York is the most romantic city in the whole world—it is still in the darkest Middle Ages!

"But what makes it so disgusting here and what robs it of the Renaissance patina, is that it is all covered up by the greasy butter sauce of Anglo-Saxon hypocrisy. Look at the muckrakers and reformers who hound every outspoken word, every advertisement in the newspapers, who prosecute peddlers because they sell pictures of ladies in flimsy draperies! Look at these teetotalers and holier-than-thous who make blue laws, who close saloons in front to walk in by the back! Yes, it is the Inquisition of the Middle Ages, but it is not strong and cruel as it was in Spain, it is cowardly, narrow and mean. One thing is certain: nothing, absolutely nothing, is impossible in this immense city, in this giant garbage can in which the refuse of the whole world is assembled."

He laughed loud. "We two are also in it—you and I. But it is good for one's soul to realize once in a while where one really is—it helps one to escape if there is an opportunity. Otherwise one's soul would get poisoned imperceptibly! You see, Rossius, we get used to it, don't we? And then one gets to feel quite comfortable in all this mud and dirt."

He got up, opened a window, and then turned back into the room.

"If we have all the rest, why not poison, too? If the Medicis and Borgias could do it, the New Yorkers certainly can do it just as well! They even have their orgies, although they are lacking in style and taste." He laughed as he came back to the sofa. "Tell me, have you ever been to an orgy here?"

"Yes—" Rossius said, "at least, to what we called an orgy. With beer or whisky—with girls and singing."

"Where are my invitations?" Frank Braun interrupted him. "Get me the one from the Moon Ladies. I must take you along to their annual affair!"

Rossius looked for it. "Here it is," he said at last. "It is for the nineteenth—that was the day before yesterday."

"Sorry," Frank Braun said. "Too late. But we will go in the late Fall or Winter. Remind me of it when we get another invitation from them."

"The mail?" Rossius asked. "Do you want to see the mail?" Frank Braun shook his head. "No, not now—later!—Anything else?"

The secretary thought for a minute, reached into his pocket, and produced a sheet of paper. "I forgot about this—it is the song you wanted, about the Immaculate Conception. I went to the library yesterday and looked up St. Ambrosius; it gave me a lot of trouble, but here it is!"

Frank Braun read it loud:

Fit porta Christi pervia,
Referta plena gratia.
Transitque rex, at permanet
Clausa, ut fuit, per saecula.

Cenus superni numinis
Processit aula virginis
—Sponsus, redemptor, conditor,
Suae gigas ecclesiae.

"This is beautiful," he said, "it is magnificent! Isn't it amazing, the power of imagination in these men of faith! Who could do that nowadays—render an abstract thing so forcefully, make it so real! The creative power in these men makes the most improbable, the most impossible, the most incomprehensible seem so natural and logical—and all through the sound of a few words!"

Ernst Rossius said: "I tried to translate it last night, while I was waiting for you—"

"Read it," Frank Braun nodded. So the secretary began:

Thus did the Virgin's womb become the door,
Through which He came into this vale of tears . . .

"Not bad, not bad," Frank Braun said, when Rossius had finished. "You were a little free in your interpretation, but you caught the meaning. Your translation certainly sounds Ambrosian!"

"Thank you for the kind acknowledgment!" Rossius laughed. "But tell me, Doctor, why did you want the song?"

"And why, Ernst Rossius, did you translate it?" Frank Braun retorted. "Because you had nothing else to do? Certainly not! There are dozens of books here that would interest you and that you could have read; and the report for the committee, which for three weeks they have been asking—you haven't even started it! Instead you sat down and wasted an hour trying to render a mystical Christian poem into tolerably good modern verse! Why did you do it?"

"I don't know," Rossius confessed.

"I don't either! Probably some god wants us—you and me—to contribute our share to the medieval witches' sabbath that is going on in this city of New York. The grayish golden colors are lacking—and so fate orders us to provide them!"



HE WAS glad that he had to stay home this week. He spent hours lying on the sofa, thinking about his constant fatigue, about the emptiness that had again taken hold of him. He wondered what he could do about it, what had caused it. But his thoughts always wandered back to the anonymous letter; perhaps he was really poisoned. And he felt certain now that his sickness had something to do with women.

—His butler announced Mrs. van Ness. She was not alone—she had brought Dr. Samuel Cohn with her. Dr. Cohn was a man after Lotte's heart: German and Jewish at the same time. There was a bit of the Phœnician about him—a wealthy ship-owner in Carthage might have looked like that—with black, wavy hair and large round eyes that were a little near sighted. His thick, fleshy lips disclosed two rows of gleaming white teeth, but his complexion was pale and unhealthy—he needed sun and air. He was quite stout—obviously from lack of exercise. A badly groomed bachelor in his forties who needed a woman to take care of him. He was New York born, but he was German by education and thought—and in his culture German rather than Jewish. He was in great demand as a physician and as a speaker. A clever and well educated man—and a kind one.

"Don't get up!" he said. "How are you?"

"Very well, thank you! It is very kind of you, Doctor, to take

the trouble to come here, but it really wasn't necessary. I should rest, I know—"

Mrs. van Ness interrupted him. "I asked Dr. Cohn to come to see you. He is going to examine you."

Frank Braun looked at her, shaking his head. "This is the ninth one, now, with all due respect to Dr. Cohn's knowledge. Do you think he will find any more than the others have?" He dropped back on his cushions with a sigh. "Please go ahead and examine me, if it must be."

The physician examined him thoroughly, asking only the most pertinent questions. "One thing is certain," he said finally, "your body is perfectly all right, inside and out! There is your chronic laryngitis, of course, from smoking too many cigarettes—"

"I should smoke less," Frank Braun affirmed, "I know!"

"You can do as you please about that," the physician replied. "With your smoker's cough you could live three times three hundred years. I should like to ask you a few questions, however."

"Go ahead, please!"

Had he ever had malaria? When? Where?

Yes, he had had malaria, in Singapore and Colombo, but he had never had an attack since then, neither in the tropics nor in the temperate zone. Had the attack been severe? Yes, quite. How had he treated himself? With quinine, of course, with large doses of quinine. Did he know where he had contracted the disease?

Frank Braun tried to remember. It had broken out on the Lloyd steamer—but he had probably contracted it in the South Seas.

Where? In New Guinea.

"Oh, so you were in the South Seas, too?" Dr. Cohn asked casually. "You must tell me about that sometime. Are there any real cannibals left there? I mean, natives who actually eat human meat? Did you ever see any?"

Frank Braun laughed. "If there are cannibals there? I should say there are—everywhere in that part of the world, in New

Guinea, New Mecklenburg, New Pommerania, Bugainville and Buka. Of course, all the Kanakas and Papuans will swear that their particular tribe has never tasted Kai-Kai—human meat—but that the neighboring tribe regards it as the choicest delicacy! All the natives there are cannibals if they can get human meat without being caught."

"All?" Dr. Cohn said quizzically. "So you really think the natives there all eat human meat when they can get it?"

"Not all of them. The missionaries claim that there are only a few individuals in each tribe who swear by this delicacy, while others would not touch it. It seems that tastes differ even among cannibals."

"Hm," the physician continued. "I read a very interesting article the other day in the *Journal for Tropical Diseases*. The author claims that the cannibals with an unquenchable appetite for human meat suffer from a disease—a disease whose symptoms are somewhat similar to malaria. Oddly enough, the symptoms resemble those of your own ailment."

Frank Braun laughed aloud. "You are priceless, Doctor! That is truly New York—truly America! But unfortunately, I never had the slightest appetite for human meat. Tell me, is the author of your article an American, too?"

"No, he is a German—a professor at the Institute for Tropical Diseases in Hamburg. He spent many years doing research work in the South Seas. In fact I would advise you to go to Hamburg yourself—it is the only place in the world where they know something about these exotic diseases."

Frank Braun smiled. "Thank you for the prescription, I will have it filled as soon as the English clear the way to the pharmacy. By the way, what insect is it whose bite causes your cannibal malaria?"

"It is no insect. The Hamburg physician describes it as a kind of bat, some species of flying dog that attacks its victims while they are asleep, biting them and sucking the blood through the tiny wound. I know, it sounds fantastic that this bite should not only have a similar effect as the bite of the anopheles, but that

it should also create thirst for human blood and hunger for human meat. But it does not sound so impossible if you remember what effect the bite of the tsetse fly has, or that of a snake or a rabid dog. Their victims commonly suffer from fixed ideas and abnormal, fantastic hallucinations."

Frank Braun became attentive. He looked at Lotte van Ness a long time before asking her casually:

"What do you think, Lotte?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "I don't know."

That confirmed his suspicion. "Haven't you yourself been in New Guinea once, with your husband?"

"No," she said. "We came up from New Zealand on an English steamer and stayed for a while on the Solomon Islands; from there we went on to Yokohama without stopping."

"Oh—but then you *were* in the South Seas! Did you too have malaria?"

She looked at him oddly, her lips curling in an inscrutable smile. "No, I never did."

"You are lying!" he thought. He turned again to Dr. Cohn. "Do you believe this strange disease is contagious?"

The physician shrugged his shoulders. "Possibly—possibly not; I really don't know. No one in this country knows anything about it—you have to go to Hamburg for information."

Frank Braun nodded. "Yes, I am sure they know all about it over there. Doesn't it seem to you, Doctor, that all of Europe is afflicted with this disease, in fact, almost half the world? It seems so to me. Couldn't you make the people all over the world acquainted with your theory—perhaps in a letter to the *Times*? Tell the Germans and English, the Russians, French and Turks and all the rest of them that their war is a regrettable error, the effect of a contagious South Seas disease that creates cannibal instincts in human beings, and forces them to kill each other?—If people were to realize the truth of this, their war would be over tomorrow and the regiments would march in formation to the Institute for Tropical Diseases in Hamburg to be inoculated. While to you and your illustrious Hamburg colleague Mrs.

van Ness would build a monument in front of the German piers in Hoboken—wouldn't you, Lotte?"

"Don't be silly, please!" she said. "Can't you be serious?"

He stood before her, looking her straight in the eye. "You have known me a long time, Lotte Levi. You should know that I am never more serious than when I am joking like this."

She evaded his eyes and shrugged her shoulders. "As you like."

He went over to the window, drummed on the pane. "My suspicion is right," he thought.

But how, how? The more he thought about it, the more confused he became. There were no clues, no cause or effect—nothing definite on which to base his conclusions. He was sick—yes, that was true. He felt tired, empty, drained. Therefore there must be something that caused it, something that drained him of his vitality and of his blood.

But could it be Lotte? Lotte Levi? Who had loved him all these years, who loved him more than any other woman? It was ridiculous, absurd!

And yet a firm conviction grew in him: his sickness had something to do with her. Somehow she was involved in it—and not only she, but other women as well.

He turned abruptly and joined the others who were talking quietly.

"I am sorry, Doctor," he apologized, "I did not mean to offend you."

Dr. Cohn shook hands with him. "Perhaps a new symptom will appear that might give us a clue. Let me know then!"

After he had gone Lotte quickly turned to Frank Braun.

"You suspect me of something?"

"And what if I do?"

Her laugh sounded shrill. "Suspensions against me—you?" She took his hand and continued in a calm voice: "Tell me, what kind of suspicions have you?"

He gave himself up to the soft touch of her fingers. "What kind? But I don't know, Lotte."

"Don't go home yet!" Lotte van Ness said one evening. "Professor Kachele is coming tonight."

Frank Braun sat down again. "Professor Kachele? How far did he get with your horoscope?"

Lotte smiled. "He is very thorough, it seems. I probably won't get it for quite a while. He had to lay the work aside temporarily; do you remember what he was trying to tell you that time you could not stay? He told me all about it afterwards and I asked him to write it out for me. He finished yesterday—that's why he is coming tonight."

"You bought that, Lotte? But what are you going to do with it?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Perhaps I'll give it to a scientific journal, perhaps I will make you a present of it—I don't know. Why should I buy only jewelry and books, why not a manuscript for a change?"

The Professor arrived breathless, anxious to begin his lecture at once. He ate heartily but rapidly, continually attempting to speak about the matters that were uppermost in his mind. "Later, my dear Professor," Mrs. van Ness kept telling him, "later! You must eat your dinner first!"

After dinner they repaired to the library. Lotte made Dr. Kachele sit in a comfortable armchair, while she buried herself in the cushions on the sofa.

"Now let us hear it!" she said.

He began instantly and spoke very fast, interrupting himself now and then to look at his manuscript for an erudite quotation. His voice was loud and had a harsh rasping sound.

Frank Braun sat in a huge armchair in a corner of the room between the book shelves, his long legs stretched out before him, his arms on the soft arms of the chair. He smoked a cigarette and listened carefully, trying to accustom his ear to Dr. Kachele's sharp voice.

But he heard only sounds—words without meaning, sentences his tired brain failed to grasp.

It had come over him again, suddenly, this tired emptiness,

this sensation of being drained and hollow. It came over him every day now, for an hour or two, without any apparent cause. Suddenly it was there: a dense fog that clouded his brain.

He did not sleep and he did not dream—he heard only sounds, scraping, grating sounds strung together into an ugly unmusical tone pattern, seemingly coming from far away. He attempted to get up and escape from the room but he could not move. So he stayed where he was in the big armchair, suffering patiently the nerve-racking torture.

Then Lotte spoke and her soft cello voice broke the spell. He could move now. He jumped to his feet, walked over to the Professor's chair and took the manuscript from him.

"It was very interesting, Baron," he cried. "May I have it, please, I want to look up something in it." Without waiting for an answer, he went into Lotte's bed room. There he flung himself down on the sofa and closed his eyes.

But he was wide-awake now; the tiredness was completely gone, just as suddenly as it had come. He took up the manuscript and began to read—

It held his attention from the first page. Such thorough work! There were quotations from Egyptian texts, from Coptic, Hebrew, Latin and Greek sources. And there was Assyrian and Babylonian material, as well as excerpts in Geez, the old Ethiopian Church language. Through Byzantine words in the Albanian, Central Slav and Magyar languages, the author followed the trail from the Southeast northward into Europe, and traced it from Abyssinia through Amharic, Arabic and the Negro dialects across Africa as far as Dahomey. Everything was made clear: the trail started in the stars many thousands of years ago and could be followed clear down into the bloody sacrifice dens of New York—the trail of an Astral myth that had become real.

Very real, indeed—Frank Braun remembered the slim, dark-skinned Negro priestess whose nightly sacrifices he had attended several years ago in Haïti, in the Honfoû temple at Petit-Goave. With her own hands she had slaughtered her child and had presented its blood to the faithful, mixed with rum!

The Professor proved it to be purely a myth that had eventually become stark, bloody reality. The dream of a shepherd astrologer in the desert, of a poet—but a dream whose mighty consequences were felt all over the world for thousands of years.

The sun set and the sun rose—all the creatures on earth saw the phenomenon. But the poet in the desert saw more. To him, the sun, the young, beautiful sun, only a day old, had been killed by a cruel god. And the new sun that rose again the next morning, more beautiful, more scintillant still, must be the dead sun's beautiful daughter. She was her child—and yet the old sun herself, resurrected from her night of death. That was the story which the dreaming shepherd in the desert read in the stars, the age-old myth of the dismembered child.

Labartu was the Babylonian name for the star-goddess who stole the sun child, tore her into pieces and ate her; Labartu, the wife of Baal. And she was none other than the Indian Kali, Durga, the Killer, the wife of Shiva, the Destroyer. She was his *sakti*, his emanation, the fruit of his thought—and the bloody hand of his brain. And she not only destroyed the heavenly child, the young sun, but also persecuted the children of man, killing them in their mothers' wombs or slaying them shortly after birth. And therefore one had to offer sacrifices to her to invoke her mercy and to make her pass by the young mother's house. That was the toll that Labartu demanded for herself and for Baal. And as she ruled in Babylon, she also ruled in Sidon and Tyre and Carthage where her name was Astarte, and where, as the mate of Moloch, her reign of terror extended all over Phœnicia.

Every firstborn child was hers. The terrible Durga demanded only girl children who were drowned in milk to the glory of the goddess, as is done even now in the remote corners of India. But Astarte demanded all—she claimed every firstborn child that a mother bore. It was her cruel right all over the Orient, and humbly she was given her due by the people of the East, including Israel. Why does every firstborn child in the oldest part of the Bible story disappear mysteriously? Ishmael and Esau,

and Abel, David's first son by Bathsheba. And Jephtha's merry little daughter, and many others, many, many more.

Was not Isaac to be sacrificed to the same thought? But the great God of the Jews showed mercy, and with the sacrifice of two white doves Israel later bought off the cruel right of the gods upon their first born. And yet Solomon and many other Jewish kings and nobles continued to sacrifice their children to the terrible goddess. With their own hands they cut their children's throats, let the blood flow over the altar and dismembered the little bodies as Baaltis commanded.

The cult of the child-killing goddess was brought to Rome—Pliny tells about it. And from Greece it spread over the whole Balkans as far as the Danube Valley, and westward from there. It reached its wildest peak in the seventeenth century when Elisabeth Bathory, the Bloody Countess, filled her spacious rooms with the dying groans of the Hungarian girls whom she whipped to death.

The cult persisted throughout the Middle Ages until the present day, flaring up or dying down, but ever present in one form or another all over Europe. It took root as the Black Mass which the Church vainly tried to stamp out with fire and sword.

Did not Monsieur Gilles de Raïs slay more than eight hundred children with his own hands? He, Maréchal de France, famous warrior, banner bearer to the Maid of Orléans! And the Marquise de Montespan, the mistress of Louis XIV., and by him the mother of French princes, did she not offer more than once her own body as a precious altar on which the Abbé Guibourg dismembered newborn children in the chapel of the Castle at St. Denis?

Both she and the Baron de Raïs invoked the devil Astaroth; he was to help her keep the King's love as he was to help the Maréchal make gold. Yet Astaroth was only another name for Astarte.

From Carthage the murderous cult found its way into Central Africa. Moloch's wife Astarte was called by the Greeks Basileia, the Queen. The Semites changed it to Bersilia and the Copts

made it into Berzelya, meaning the goddess who kills children with iron hands. And even now the Abyssinians speak of Werzelya who steals and murders suckling infants, and who slays the unborn in the mother's womb.

From the banks of the Congo the black slaves brought the cult with them to America. And in the Voodoo cult the name of the goddess-priestess is the same that the Greeks had given her: Queen! Mamaloi—because the Negroes can not pronounce "R." Actually, her title is Mama—Roi: mother and queen!

And she is still drinking blood, she, Durga—Astarte—Mamaloi, the Killer. Even today—in the heart of New York!—

Frank Braun went back to the library where the Professor was still talking to Lotte. They spoke about horoscopes now, about the strange prophecy of Alexander

Frank Braun interrupted him, returning the manuscript. "Despite your excellent treatise, Professor, I still don't understand how your astral myth can suddenly come to life again somewhere else in a different form. You traced the whole development of the myth, you followed it through the centuries and explained the connections. But you don't believe, Baron, that perhaps my Mamaloi in Petit-Goave had any knowledge of this myth? You don't really believe that Maréchal Gilles de Raïs, that the Hungarian Countess or the French Marquise were in any way aware of the fact that their dismembered children were actually victims of the age-old rite? How do you explain, Professor, that spontaneously, centuries afterward, the old idea can be reborn in a different form in a human brain?"

The Professor did not answer for a minute, edging back and forth on his chair, but finally he said: "I realize that this is a gap in my work. I may be able to fill it in—perhaps! But you know, I don't like to think about it—much less talk about it."

Rubbing his nose vehemently, he continued. "It is absurd to believe in a god and not in a devil, you cannot imagine one without the other. The devil is as strong as the Lord! He appears when he wishes and where he pleases. In me——" His voice sank to a faint, awestruck whisper—"in me he did not trouble to ask

whether I liked it or not. Old women, ugly, stinking old women—that pleases him, the great Lord, when it happens to be his whim. Goethe also knew that—he writes about it in the second part of *Faust*! And as for myself—well, you know Doctor, what happened to me!”

He blew his nose in an enormous handkerchief, making a noise like a trumpet. Then he took off his glasses and cleaned them carefully, blinking at Frank Braun out of his half-blind eyes.

“Do I look like a faun?” he broke out again. “Would any one guess that in me lives Satan-Phallus, Pan the Ram-God, who has no brain and thinks with his brush? And yet it pleased him to erect his temple in these poor miserable bones of mine. This marvel, Doctor, is sitting before you now, very much alive and real—running free through the streets of New York, pleased that he can at last do some decent work again and does not have to make urine analyses. I know exactly what I did, I know all the details—but why I did it, how this absurd idea suddenly took hold of me—of me, a quiet scholar, the soberest professor in Germany—that I don’t know. It simply was there, digging its claws into my brain, holding me in iron shackles. Since then I know what it means to be possessed. After my experience, nothing surprises me any more, no dream, no whim, no wildest thought. Everything, absolutely everything is possible in a human brain.”

Frank Braun asked: “So you believe, Professor, that——”

“Yes, yes, and again yes!” Dr. Kachele cried. “I believe—and I have paid dearly for this belief—that no human being can be sure of himself for as much as a quarter of an hour. I believe that every human brain is an empty room in which any moment something—a god, a devil, or whatever you want to call it—may perform the craziest dances. Very pious and saintly dances, perhaps—or very ugly and cruel ones, if fate will have it. And if this kind and beautiful lady here, if Mrs. van Ness should suddenly reveal herself as the maddest priestess of Baaltis, if she should dismember young boys and drink their blood, I would

not regard it as anything extraordinary, in the light of my own experiences. I would regret it, but as a scientist I would include the interesting case in my treatise, simply as another example of the age-old Labartu cult."

He placed his glasses back on his nose, rose from his chair and put the manuscript on the table.

"A cigar on the way, Baron?" Frank Braun asked.

"No, thank you," the Professor said. "I still don't smoke, I still don't drink and I am still the soberest, the most uninteresting man in the world. But if what I said tonight sounds fantastic to you, just remember what brought me to America!"

The Professor had been gone for an hour, but the two were still sitting in the library, smoking and sipping their wine. They did not look at each other and did not speak.

"Do you want the car," she finally asked, "to go home?"

"I want to stay here tonight!" he said, looking her full in the face.

She rose quickly from her chair. "Oh, just as you like. Here is the wine, help yourself. I'll send the maid for you when I am ready."

At the door she turned and smiled back at him: "Wouldn't you like to find out tonight whether I might not be the blood-drinking Astarte after all? You used to call me the Phœnician, didn't you?"

Frank Braun let her go without answering, but he thought: "Everything is possible in a human brain."

He tried to fathom it—

Fathom what?—What was possible?

But she was right; he wanted to stay with her tonight to watch her, to spy on her. But what was it he expected to find? Did he expect to find that Lotte was the blood-dripping priestess—and himself her victim, the dismembered child?

It was ridiculous, absurd, like Dr. Cohn's silly hypothesis of the South Sea disease.

And yet the suspicion was planted firmly in his mind and he could not rid himself of it.

He drank a last glass of wine and followed the maid. He undressed, took a cold shower and put on his pajamas.

When he came in, she was sitting on the wide bed, her red hair falling loosely over her lace nightgown. She was playing with some glittering objects which she dropped on the night table as soon as she heard his light footstep. But Frank Braun had seen what she had in her hands: little scissors and tiny open knives.

She now took a ring from the table and put it on her finger.

"A new ring? Another charm?" he asked as he walked over to the bed.

She held out her hand to him. "Perhaps. But it is not new." It was an ugly old silver ring with a crest cut on a greenish stone and set in a cheap mounting.

"I found it yesterday in a junk shop on Second Avenue. The horrid man made me pay a hundred dollars for it when he saw that I was bound to have it. I just can't bargain—it is a pity."

"The thing isn't worth fifty cents!" he cried.

"Yes, it is! It is worth more to me. Look—a pelican pricking open her breast to feed her young with her own blood."

He looked at her sharply—again this ideal "Why does it interest you?"

She shrugged her shoulders. "Oh, it just does! It is the crest of Magdeburg—my mother's family came from there."

She took from the table a tumbler filled to the brim with a milky liquid and offered it to him. "Drink, my friend!"

"What is it?"

"Just a sleeping draught. I asked Dr. Cohn to mix it for me."

He shook his head. "No! Why should I need a sleeping draught?"

"Then I will drink it," she said.

She raised the glass to her lips and drained it. "One of us needs this—for tonight. You—if—. And I—if—"

She set the glass down, put her hands on his shoulders and smiled at him.

"You see—that is the way it is."

"What do you mean: 'If——'?" he cried impatiently. "Lotte, tell me!"

She put her head against his so that her soft red curls played around his neck and chin. "Don't ask me, please! You know that I won't say anything when I don't want to."

She lifted her head, looked at him and grew somber.

There was a great kindness in the deep cello-like tones of her voice. "It is very difficult, what I am doing, Beloved—very difficult. But I do it gladly."

"Just like my mother's voice," he thought.

She pulled him over to the bed. "Come—come—seize the short minutes. We have only half an hour—and then I will be fast asleep. I am yours when I am awake, Beloved—and still more when I am asleep. If you only knew how much——"

He rode in Central Park with Ivy Jefferson, the next evening.

"Why don't you say something?" she cried. "What are you thinking about?"

He did not answer. "I know what you are thinking about!" she continued. "You are thinking of Mrs. van Ness!—I am right, am I not?"

"Yes," he nodded. "How did you guess?"

Ivy laughed. "How did I guess?—The whole town knows!" And slowly, in a pensive voice: "I saw her this summer in Newport. She is proud and interesting—and very wealthy. Perhaps she is beautiful, too. I can understand that men like her—you, too!"

"Are you jealous?"

Again she laughed. "Of course, I am jealous. But that makes it nice; it is a game, a fight between her and me, and I like that! We are both equally strong—she is cleverer perhaps, but I am much younger. We will see who wins!"

She rode her horse close against his so that their flanks touched.

Her lips were tightly shut, but her nostrils quivered—she seemed to be inhaling a strong scent.

"Tell me," she murmured, "were you with her last night?"

He looked her firmly in the eye, and quickly, almost brutally, he cried—right into her face—: "Yes, I slept with her!"

She dealt her horse a stinging blow with her riding crop and spurred him to a furious gallop.

He did not follow her, rode on slowly, trotting his horse. "It is you who will telephone—and not I!" he thought haughtily.

And he took up his thoughts again, his dreams that Ivy had interrupted—his thoughts about last night.

Kisses, kisses and embraces. At first he had been cool and reserved, but her dear warmth soon melted the snow. She kissed the rich soil of his heart and made flowers grow there—beautiful multihued blooms. They dripped from his lips, raining down on her, covering her and wrapping her in a cloak of flamboyant beauty.

Yes, he had loved her—loved her until she fell asleep in his kisses. She kept her eyes open as long as she could. "Thank you," she whispered as her lids drooped.

Exactly half an hour—just as she had said.

He had switched on the light and sat up beside her, looking at her quietly.

And all the happiness was gone—and there was again that sneaking fever of terrible emptiness in his body. And in his brain there was again the suspicion—the gnawing suspicion—

Had she taken the draught to deceive him? Was she only waiting until he was asleep—in order to—

In order to—what? What?

He did not take his eyes off her, watching her in graven silence. He turned the light off and lay down, pretending to sleep—fighting his sleepiness with all his will-power.

He listened and waited—for hours.

But nothing happened. He could barely hear her breathing. Then—at a late hour—he fell asleep.

He awoke very late, feeling fresh—and well! And stronger than he had been for months.

Lotte still lay as she had lain all night, covered up to her chin, sleeping soundly.

He got out of bed, took a bath, dressed, had breakfast and came back to her room. She was still sleeping.

He had driven home and called her up a few hours later. Her maid answered and told him that Mrs. van Ness was still sleeping. And Madame had given orders last night not to be disturbed until she should wake.

He spurred his horse into a canter—then into a gallop. He felt so strong and well, he could have stayed in the saddle for hours.

And he felt that he had done Lotte an injustice, a grave injustice. He would go and see her tonight, he would kneel before her, kiss her hands and tell her how much he loved her—

Suddenly he remembered something. The little scissors, the shiny sharp knives that she had put down on the table when he came into the room. He had planned to keep an eye on them—but later he forgot and did not look at them when he awoke in the morning.

What had they been for? What did she want with them? What had happened to them last night?

Had she, nevertheless—while he was asleep—?

But what—what could she have done?

He could not find an answer.

But the suspicion was there again, a definite, strong suspicion, clawing at his brain—holding him fast—



"HERE is an invitation from Miss Pierpont," Ernst Rossius said as he opened the mail, "for a party of the Moon Ladies. You said you were going to take me there."

"Let me see!" Frank Braun said, reaching for the envelope. He shook his head as he read the engraved card.

"Good Heavens, they can't even give an original party in this parrot city! Look, Rossius: '28. Januarii A.D. 1490!' This is a literal translation of an invitation from Duke Rimoff, and the party of the Moon Ladies will probably be a cheap imitation of the entertainment which the Duke gave in Paris five or six years ago! It will hardly be worth while going."

"Were you at that party in Paris?" the secretary asked.

"No, but Miss Pierpont was, and she told me how marvelous it was! The idea is that the Abbess of San Sixto, of the order of St. Dominicus of Guzman, gives a feast for Cesare Borgia to celebrate his return to Rome. The details were taken from the diary of Burchard who was Master of Ceremonies to Alexander VI. It may have been all right in Paris—but I can imagine how terrible it will be here. Can you picture renaissance at Miss Pierpont's in New York?"

Ernst Rossius's face fell. "You don't want to go, Doctor? But you said it would be very good for me to see one of the—of the orgies—that these—ladies give!"

Frank Braun laughed. "Very good for you? I am not sure if it would be so good for your morals. But it will interest you! Have we anything for that night?"

"Not a thing! I looked up your appointments—no speeches, no theatre, not even a dinner invitation."

"All right, let's go then. Write her a note that I shall be very glad to accept and ask her for permission to bring you. Wait a minute—here is the list from which we can select our costumes—Papal Guards, Spanish court costume—French and Venetian ambassadors—here: Franciscan friars—that will do! That is the simplest—you will see something in the way of costumes! Call up the German Theatre and ask them to lend us a couple of friars' habits that aren't too moth eaten!"

They arrived late; the solemn reception was over and the Abbess Benedicta was just escorting her illustrious guest, the Pope's nephew, to the refectory where the entertainment was to take place. The refectory was the great hall of the club house; the glass partitions which separated it from an enormous solarium, had been removed for this night so as to give the effect of one immense room opening out into a garden.

There was no indication, of course, that the guests were supposed to be in the room of a convent; everything that had to do with religion, had been carefully avoided in the decoration of the hall. There was no crucifix, no statue of the Virgin or of a Saint, no religious pictures. The large hall with its dark red tapestries, dimly lighted by covered lights from the ceiling, could house anything—a rococo dance or a banquet from the Arabian Nights.

"There is Director André!" Rossius said.

"So you are a friar, too?" Frank Braun smiled. "A Dominican at that—that's unfair competition!"

"I am Savonarola," André answered. "I have come from San Marco in Florence to gather material here for my sermons."

There was no house in New York, or in the whole United States, that would not be glad to welcome this man. Society

fondly remembered him as the famous tenor of the Metropolitan who later was chosen director of the opera and who had ruled the artistic life of the city for many years. Now he had three musical comedies on the road, and a share in every other amusement enterprise: in the moving pictures, in vaudeville and the circus.

"Come, gentlemen!" André suggested. "Let's go over and stand on the platform where we can see the show better."

A platform with steps leading up to it, had been built around three sides of the room, and there the guests assembled now. Costumed lackeys stood behind the red and gold chairs, and in the center was the magnificent throne of the Abbess. Just as the men were taking their places, the Abbess in her solemn black and white habit was led to her throne by Cesare Borgia.

"Susan Pierpont looks well!" Frank Braun commented. "But who is her handsome Cesare?"

A girl of twelve sat down at the feet of the Abbess—Cesare's pretty little sister, Lucretia Borgia.

As the guests walked up the steps to take their places on the platform a herald announced their names with a flourish of trumpets.

Beside the Abbess sat the Pope's mistresses: a woman in her forties who played the rôle of Cesare's mother Vanozza, and young Julia Farnese with her husband, the Prince of Orsini. Julia Farnese was played by Miss Pierpont's intimate friend, Marion de Fox. Behind her stood the Cardinal Alessandro Farnese and next to him the Pope's Master of Ceremonies, Burchard. There was the Cardinal's mistress, Adriana Mila, and Cesare's sisters, Isabella and Girolama. Girolama was played by Miss Marlborough, the third in the Pierpont triumvirate, known in Paris as well as in New York. Gioffre Borgia was there and Giovanni di Celano and Pier Luigi—in fact all the nine children of the powerful Pope Rodrigo who called himself Alexander VI. Even the smallest children of the Pope had not been forgotten, little Laura and Giovanni, whom Julia Farnese had borne him. Julia Farnese held the little girl in her lap while Giovanni sat

with the woman who represented the Pope's mistress Vanozza. Only the Pope himself was not there—no, that would never do, one had to make concessions there. But all his nephews and relatives were there: Don Gioffre's wife Sancia, the Bishops Collerando and Francesco Borgia, Luigi Pietro Borgia who was the Cardinal Deacon of Santa Maria, and the Captain of the Papal Guard, Rodrigo Borgia. Even the Privy Councillor Juan Marades, Bishop of Toul, was there, looking magnificently real in his costume, and Pietro Carranza, the Privy Chamberlain, and his friend Giovanni Lopez, Bishop of Perugia. And many more.

"Remolino de Ilerdo," the herald announced. "Giovanni Vera da Ercilla, members of the Sacred College."

Frank Braun had been mistaken—all the costumes were tasteful and genuine, and no expense had been spared to reproduce the atmosphere accurately. It was only among the invited guests that one could see very strange interpretations of renaissance costumes. The whole thing was well managed and one could see that it had been carefully rehearsed.

The guests took their seats on the platform leaving a large cleared space in the middle of the room where Papal Guards and serving friars walked to and fro, finally withdrawing into the garden.

An organ started to play, somewhere, far away. The lights were dimmed leaving the room drenched in a soft bluish color like moonlight. Suddenly there was singing, and women's soft voices drifted from far away into the silent hall.

Frank Braun closed his eyes and listened, trying to remember where he had heard the song before.

It must have been long ago, long, long ago. The words of the song were in Latin and it had been sung by nuns—

Yes, the nuns—long ago—the Rose nuns—on Johannis night—
How had it all happened?

And he dreamed back through the years, carried back into the past by the chanting of the nuns—and he saw himself again as he had been then.

Then—Then——

He was a law clerk in a small town on the Rhine. The Judge who was his superior did not like Frank Braun—in fact, he had disliked him from the first and his dislike grew with each week and each month.

Frank Braun hated the Judge as he hated every one who did not like him.

Now he smiled about it. The Judge had been perfectly right, of course. What had he been given an assistant for? To take over a small part of his work, and naturally the most tedious part. It was not much work at that—three or four hours a day. And in the evening he was supposed to go to the inn with the Judge and keep him company and listen to his stories. One morning a week he had to write the court record, and one night a week he was supposed to play *skat* at the inn. That was fair and just; that was what his juridical education was for.

But Frank Braun did not play *skat*. He went to the inn—once—and never again. It bored him, he said.—Bored him! Him, the Herr Referendar!

He did not pay any social calls, either. Neither to the Mayor, nor to the County Counsellor, nor to the rector of the church or the director of the high school. When the Judge reproached him for his oversight, he calmly stated that he had met the gentlemen at the inn anyway, and that he did not consider any further acquaintance with them worth his while.

Once he wrote the record at a court session, but only once. When he submitted his sheets after the session, the Judge became red in the face, then pale and red again. "What is this supposed to be, sir?" he thundered.

"That's my record," Frank Braun replied.

The Judge slammed the documents down on the table. He would have liked to tear them up, but he could not. The record must always be written during the session—it is an iron rule and cannot be broken.

So he had to sign it, groaning pitifully. Finally he stuttered,

white with rage: "In my twenty years of experience as a Prussian Judge I have never seen such a mess!"

"I think it is very bad myself," Frank Braun announced calmly.

The Judge was speechless, staring at him, searching for something to say that would hurt him. Finally he hissed: "Sir!—Sir! Go back to school and learn penmanship!"

But his young assistant said: "Thanks for the advice. It wouldn't be worth while."

Frank Braun was absolutely useless as a law clerk. He was always an hour late at court, and he never did what he was supposed to. He forgot everything, he was unreliable and clumsy. He was impossible, simply impossible. It was certainly better if he stayed away from the courtroom altogether.

The Judge had long ago exhausted his stock of biting comments. "Hopeless," he despaired, "absolutely hopeless."

But once he had his revenge.

He called Frank Braun into his office and gave him a lecture, in a friendly, paternal tone. He wanted to talk things over with him calmly, he said—*sine ira et studio!* What was Frank Braun really thinking? And what should this lead to?"

Frank Braun said. "I don't think anything. All this simply bores me." And when the Judge flew into a rage, when he stormed and scolded and held out all his shortcomings to Frank Braun, methodically, from beginning to end, his assistant said haughtily: "Heavens, Judge, why don't you tell it to the President of the Supreme Court? Why don't you write this into my conduct list?"

And now the Judge had the upper hand.

"Sir," he said, "Sir, what do you think of me? I, to spoil your career? I? No, I will give you the same beautiful model-F recommendation that I have given a hundred other candidates! Now do what you like! I thank you! You may go now!"

This was an undisputable victory for the Judge. And that was why Frank Braun hated him.

The only person with whom he could talk down there was the fat Catholic priest. He used to play chess with Frank Braun.

The priest was a connoisseur and a lover of good wines. Like all good Rhinelanders he drank only Moselle, with a glass of Saar or Ruwer wine now and then. He enjoyed developing his young friend's taste in wines.

"Year?" he would ask.

"Ninety-three!" Frank Braun said, and the priest nodded. He learned to drink wine and to play chess, and he realized that both were half an art and half a science. And he was convinced that this was the best he could possibly do in this small town on the Rhine.

Thus the months slowly went by.

"Have you been to see the Abbess yet?" the priest kept asking him. Frank Braun shook his head—but each time he vowed that he would certainly go to the Dominican convent the next day. He had promised his mother he would go, and he had promised the priest. He did not forget it, but he just put it off from one day to the next. And the priest scolded him.

Once the priest said: "I went to the convent today. The Abbess asked me to tell you that you are a very rude young man."

Frank Braun blushed. "It is quite true! I'll go there to-morrow!"

"I am glad you realize it, but you don't need to go there to-morrow. The Abbess is inviting you for Sunday night."

"Night?" Frank Braun asked in surprise.

The priest nodded. "Yes, night! We are driving over at ten o'clock—when the moon rises. At ten o'clock the nuns are celebrating their Feast of Roses."

They drove through the June night in the priest's old buggy. The priest himself held the reins, clicking his tongue. "Giddup, Zoefke, giddup!" he called out to his old mare. And the mare neighed eagerly.

"For eight years I have driven over every year on this night," the priest explained. "Ever since Sister Beata became abbess of the convent. Since then they have been celebrating the Feast of Roses every year."

"Only since then?" Frank Braun asked. "So it is she who created it?"

"Oh, no, it is centuries old. As old as the convent itself, or slightly less so. The records say that the first abbess, Klara von Pappenheim, created this feast at the beginning of the fifteenth century. But you see, Doctor, it is no longer in keeping with the times—at least many priests seem to think so. The nuns were not forbidden to hold their feast, but there were hints and veiled suggestions—and so one old custom after the other was dropped until only the name was left: Feast of Roses. But our Abbess revived it again."

"What did she do?"

"She resumed all the old customs as they are recorded in the chronicle of the convent, leaving out only a few that were a little too crude. You will see yourself how it is. The church people in Cologne are very much against her, they are afraid that this drinking feast may create annoyance amongst the God-fearing and jeers amongst the heathen. But the Abbess is a Droste—of the Vischering branch—and three of her kin were abbesses of this convent. And her uncle is the Archbishop of Mainz, and one of her brothers is the Prince-Abbot of Trittheim. So they don't like to do anything against her. As long as she lives, the roses will blossom here every year on Midsummer Night, St. John's Night."

They arrived at the convent at ten o'clock and the deaf gardener opened the gate for them. They walked through the spacious garden, over a beautiful white gravel path that was bathed in soft moonlight. The priest showed Frank Braun a tall cedar tree whose black silhouette furnished a vivid contrast as outlined against the silver moon.

"From Lebanon!" he said. "They say that a young nun who joined the Children's Crusade of Peter of Amiens brought it back with her as a little tree, but it isn't true. A Droste brought the tree from Lebanon, only a hundred and fifty years ago; he was a cousin of the third abbess of his family."

The gardener showed them through the peristyle into the

cloister and told them to wait there. "The nuns will be here right away," he said, "as soon as their devotion is over."

Frank Braun looked around. Only a few lamps were lighted in the cloister but the cloister-garth was flooded with moonlight. The floor was covered with great white marble slabs, and everywhere there were roses twined around the columns and reaching high up to the galleries—white roses, thousands of white roses.

"These are all Niphetos and Boule de Neige," the priest explained. "Only these three bushes in front here are Francisca Krüger which I planted twelve years ago."

In the cloister-garth two long tables had been set with white damask, and before each chair was a plate and a finely cut goblet. There were silver baskets filled with pastry and cookies, and all over the tables, strewn over the tablecloth and growing out of tall crystal vases, were roses, white roses. Between the roses stood demijohns of Venetian glass. They were empty.

"Soon they will be full of heavy Cyprus wine," the priest explained, pointing to a rose bush. "Look over there!"

Frank Braun saw a good-size barrel on a wooden pedestal, covered with roses. And nestling against it, a smaller barrel. "The small one is mine," the priest smiled. "*Bernkasteler Auslese* from the high school in Trier. I brought it here because I don't like Cyprus wine. The Cyprus wine is for the women. Your uncle sends it every year from Rome."

"Who sends it?" Frank Braun said wonderingly. "My uncle?"

"Your uncle, of course! The Jesuit, the Monsignore. Don't you know the story?"

Yes, Frank Braun's mother had told him about it—about his uncle who had been a Captain in the Hussars and had left the service after the war of 1870. He had gone to Rome and become a Catholic priest. There must have been some connection with the Abbess, because that was why his mother had asked him to call on her. But he had scarcely listened, and what little he heard he had forgotten long ago.

"I had better tell you about it before you see the Abbess," the priest said. "Come with me."

At the end of the cloister a little table was set for three—three chairs, three plates and three glasses. There was also a basket with pastry and a large vase of roses.

"This is where we sit," the priest said. "You and I and the Deacon who is now saying mass inside. Sit down." He took two glasses, went to the small barrel of Moselle wine and filled them. "Drink, Doctor—drink! Tonight the roses are blooming!"

The faint tinkling of the glasses mingled with the sweet notes of a nightingale which began to sing in the rose bushes. And very softly, far away in the chapel, could be heard the singing of the nuns.

"*Stabat mater Speciosa!*" the priest said. "I brought this song to the Abbess! She has it sung only once a year—on Midsummer Night. I told her about Jacopone da Todi—"

This was the first time Frank Braun heard about the "Speciosa" and about Jacopone da Todi.

The priest emptied his glass. "They will be here in a few minutes. I had better get on with my story."

He began telling about the Abbess, and at his first sentences Frank Braun remembered what his mother had told him. But he did not interrupt the older man and sat quietly, dreaming amid the perfume of the roses.

His uncle had a friend and comrade who was a Lieutenant in the same regiment. And this friend had become engaged to Lenore Droste—she was eighteen then, young and beautiful. She and her fiancé had grown up together, and his family estate adjoined the ancestral seat of her family. He loved her—and she liked him—but she did not know then what love was. She did not know it then. But she knew it three months later when she met the other man, her fiancé's friend—Frank Braun's uncle. They both knew of their mutual love without ever speaking about it.

Then came the war and the Hussars went to the front. She said good-bye to her fiancé and wept as he kissed her. But an hour later the other man came. They did not mean to—but they

were in each other's arms and kissed fervently—once, to last a lifetime.

Her fiancé was killed shortly afterwards at Spichern. But the friend came back, a Captain, decorated with the Iron Cross, a radiant hero.

The woman he loved was gone. She had taken the veil, and as a Dominican nun she was doing penance for the kiss that had betrayed her fiancé. She was a Droste. Her kiss had betrayed her fiancé and sharpened the bayonet that killed him.

Lenore Droste believed it—and the other man, too—the man she never saw again. He took leave and went to Italy. Then he retired from the army, became a convert to the Catholic faith and a priest—as she had become a nun.

He did it out of a sincere conviction, that was certain. And yet, was there any greater way of showing his love for this woman?

They both rose in their profession. He became Monsignore and she the Abbess Beata. They never wrote but they heard of each other. And now, for many years, he had been sending the Cyprus wine for the Feast of Roses.

That was the story.—

The Deacon stepped out of the vestry door and came over to join them in the cloister. He was a man in his sixties, tall, powerfully built, with white hair and clever eyes. The priest introduced Frank Braun to him and asked if the Abbess was coming.

"They will be here immediately," the Deacon answered, emptying a glass to the priest's health.

Again the organ started to play as the doors of the chapel opened. Slowly, two by two, the nuns marched in, each of them carrying a branch with three roses.

But these roses were not white—they were dark red.

"The wounds of Christ," the priest explained.

"Signifying also the Trinity," the Deacon added. "Father, Son and the Holy Ghost—three and yet one."

Singing softly, the nuns passed under the columns out into

the moonlight-flooded cloister-garth. And through the white veil of roses drifted Palestrina's unearthly song:

Jesu! Dulcis memoria,
Dans vera cordi gaudia
Sed super mel et omnia,
Ejus dulcis praesential

Sic, Jesu, nostrum gaudium—

The sheer beauty of these words! The unbearable beauty of the music!

The nuns walked around the long table and stopped, each one behind her chair. Last came the Abbess, preceded by an old lay sister who adjusted the cushions on her throne. The Abbess mounted the little step and sat down, signalling the nuns with her branch to take their places at the table.

Frank Braun stared at her. She was beautiful, this Abbess, with a calm, austere beauty. How old could she be?

He counted. Forty—no, thirty-seven only, thirty-eight perhaps. And twenty years in the convent—

The old lay sister served the guests, keeping their glasses filled with Moselle wine. But at the tables in the cloister-garth, four young nuns poured dark wine from the shiny decanters which they filled from the barrel. Then, upon a sign from the Abbess, they all rose and prayed.

It was a short prayer, prayed in silence.

Silently the Abbess lifted her glass and silently she emptied it. The nuns followed her example.

Again Abbess Beata beckoned with her rose branch and one of the young nuns rose from the table and stepped into the center of the cloister-garth.

"Now comes the story of Jesus' marvelous love, the love that never ceases," the priest explained. "They say that the first Droste wrote it. For centuries it was spoken in Latin, but our Abbess has translated it into German. Sister Agnes is going to recite it."

The young nun began, half talking, half singing. She spoke of Jesus' love that was so much greater, so much deeper than the human brain could fathom. And even if a soul were weighed down with gravest sin, it could be saved if the sinner repented before the Lord Jesus. For seven years the Knight Tannhäuser had consorted in the Hürselberg with the she-devil Venus, enmeshed in a net of blackest sin. But at last he had freed himself and made the pilgrimage to Rome to do penance. He knelt before Pope Urban and kissed the tip of his fingers, confessing everything he had done and praying for absolution. But the Holy Father waxed wroth at the enormity of the sinner's wickedness and refused to grant it. There was no salvation for Tannhäuser—he would have to burn in darkest hell, damned in all eternity. Angrily, the Pope pushed his crooked staff into the ground and said that not until this old wand should bear blossoms would there be hope for the Knight!

The whole chorus of nuns sang the Pope's cruel answer:

Not ere life in this wood will show—
ere from this staff a rose will grow,
not before!

And again the Knight fell down on his knees, kissed the Holy Father's feet and sobbed greatly, again praying for absolution. But the Pope repeated his relentless "No!"

Not ere the world turns 'round in space,
ere earth and sky reverse their place—
not before!

And a third time the Knight fell to his knees and kissed the dust before the Pope's feet, moaning and weeping piteously. But the Holy Father persisted in his just anger, and bade him begone from the holy place that had been defiled by his presence—bade him go back whence he had come and where he belonged, to the evil witch Venus in the Hürselberg. Never could Tannhäuser obtain absolution from his sins, never!

Not ere winter comes at summertime,
ere it snows roses and rains wine—
not before!

In despair the Knight rose from the floor, took up his staff and left the Pope's great hall. And every one stepped back from him for whose poor soul there was no salvation from hell.

But at night a wondrously beautiful boy appeared to the Pope in his dreams. "Take your staff and follow me," the boy said as he disappeared in the gardens of the Pope's palace.

Pope Urban awoke and saw that it was bright morning. While he was being dressed, he remembered his dream and asked for his staff as he wanted to walk in his gardens. The valet brought the Pope's crooked staff and the Holy Father took it and walked down the steps of his palace. He went on into his garden and as he passed the fig trees laden with ripe fruit, he felt a desire to eat some of the luscious figs. He stuck his staff into the ground and went around the trees, breaking off the choicest fruits and eating them.—

Here the young nun interrupted her recital while a lay sister brought her an old stick in the shape of a crooked staff. Sister Agnes pushed the stick against the marble floor pretending to stick it into the ground. The old lay sister held it in this position while Sister Agnes walked around the cloister acting as if she were breaking fruit from the trees and eating. Meanwhile the other nuns formed a circle around the staff. Then Sister Agnes returned and continued her recital.—

And the Pope came back to the spot where he had pushed his staff into the ground, but could not find it. The staff had disappeared—and in its place he saw a rose bush that was grown exactly into the shape of the Pope's pastoral staff. The bush bore only a few young green leaves and three small rose buds.—

The nuns opened the circle—and Sister Agnes found her staff again which the nuns had decorated meanwhile with rose garlands and with three small rose buds.—

And the Holy Father walked on through his garden and it

seemed to him that in the dazzling sunlight, a young lad was walking ahead of him, beckoning him to follow. Pope Urban came to a small circular pond and as he gazed into the water, he saw the pine trees mirrored in the clear surface. They seemed to grow downward into the depths of the pool, and in its furthest depth he could see the bright sky with light fluffy clouds passing across.—

Here Sister Agnes again interrupted her chant. Followed by the nuns she walked over to the little pool in the corner of the cloister-garth.

"Let's go over there," the Deacon said, "this part is particularly beautiful."

One of the nuns had a small cardboard box which she opened carefully.

"I provide the actor!" the priest whispered to Frank Braun. "One of the children in my confirmation class gets me one every year. Formerly he used to live in a cigar box for a few days until he was ready for the Feast, but the nuns thought that was cruel—they thought that perhaps he did not like the smell. Now I put him into a soap box—apparently he prefers that odor."

The nun took a little frog from the box and put it on the palm of Sister Agnes' hand. The little frog sparkled golden green in the moonlight.

Sister Agnes' white hand trembled slightly. "He is cold!" she said. But immediately she fell back into her rôle and continued her recital.—

The Holy Father sat at the edge of the pool as a small frog jumped into his open hand.—

"He's going to bolt!" a bright voice cried, unmistakably Austrian in cadence.

"She is a Metternich," the priest explained, "from Vienna."

The little green frog did not wait for his cue. He hopped—plop—into the water.

With "Ah's" and "Oh's" the nuns pressed closer, bending down to see him. The little frog dived, swimming away quickly from the grass that overhung the edge of the pool, past the

pillars with rose garlands that were mirrored in the water. He swam toward the moon and the stars, down into the sparkling sky—away from the earth to the sky.

Every one's interest was centered in the frog and no one paid attention to the nun's recital. Her little frog acted exactly as the frog in her story had done—only that the Pope's frog had swum through the shining sunlight, disappearing somewhere in the depths of the pool, down in the sky.

"I can see him!" the nun who had been a Princess Metternich, chuckled. "Look, here he is!"

The nuns went back again and took their places in a circle around Sister Agnes. She told how Pope Urban had fallen thoughtful and how he had ordered that a hundred messengers be sent out on swift horses to ride through the country and bring the Knight Tannhäuser back to the Castle of the Angels. She told how the Pope had sat on his high throne, deeply lost in thought, without eating or drinking, and without speaking a word.

But that night was St. John's Night and he had promised the Dominican sisters to be their guest. It was the first time that he went to celebrate with them the Feast of the Roses in honor of the Lord Jesus. As he entered the cloister of their convent, little white roses snowed down on him and wine was sprinkled upon him from above while the sisters sang:

The dear Lord's love worketh wonders passing great;
It causeth snow to fall in summertime!
The Lord transformeth rain to golden wine
And showereth roses from the heaven's gate!

Sister Agnes did not speak these verses—they were sung by the full chorus of nuns. And Frank Braun noticed suddenly that there were twelve nuns standing up in the galleries. Some of them had cups into which they dipped their fingers and sprinkled wine upon those below so that it looked like golden

dew drops. Others dropped roses, many white roses that snowed down upon the sisters from above.

Then the nuns stopped singing and Sister Agnes finished her tale. She did not tell, however, what happened to the poor Knight. She told only how the Pope had knelt down with the nuns and had prayed to the Lord Jesus. And her poem ended with a triumphant song of praise to the heart of Jesus whose pure love embraces all creatures and is much deeper than the human brain can fathom.

The Abbess beckoned Sister Agnes to come over and kneel before her throne. The Abbess said a few kind words to her and patted her cheek. Then the nuns took their places at the table again, sipped their wine and munched sweets. There was a whispering and chuckling and chattering and soft laughter that sounded gayly through the cloister like the laughter of young girls in a boarding school during recess.

The Abbess rose. "Let us sing, sisters!" she said.

Four nuns rose from the table; an older one, two young nuns and a little novice. They took their places under a porticus that was overgrown with roses. The older nun beat the time with her rose branch and the four nuns sang:

Lasst uns singen und fröhlich sein,
In den Rosen,
Mit Jesus und den Freunden sein.
Wer weiss, wie lang wir hier noch sein,
In den Rosen?

The nuns took it up and their bright voices rang through the moonlit night: "*In—den—Rosen!*"

Jesus Wein ist aufgetan,
In den Rosen,
Da sollen wir allesamt hingahn,
So mögen wir Herzensfreud empfahn
In den Rosen.

Er soll uns schenken den Zyperwein,
In den Rosen,
Wir müssen alle trunken sein
Wohl von der süßen Minne sein,
In den Rosen.

They stopped and the Abbess rose to her feet. "Let us drink, dear sisters, to the love of The Bridegroom." She drained her glass and the nuns followed her example. "Pour the wine!" she cried. "Pour the Cyprus wine!"

Sister Klara, raised her rose branch and the novice alone sang. She was hardly more than a child, young and slender. Her voice sounded like liquid moonlight, like rain in May, like white rose petals sattered by Colombine:

Setzt das Gläschen an den Mund,
In den Rosen,
Und trinkt es aus bis auf den Grund,
Da find't ihr den Heiligen Geist zur Stund
In den Rosen.

"Tee—tee—taa—taal" it echoed in the colonnades, And the nightingale took up the note. "Too—tü—tütü—tül" it came back like a flute.

The Abbess beckoned to her: "Answer!" And the sweet novice sang, louder, with a fuller voice: "*In den Rosen*—" and louder and fuller came back the nightingale's answer: "Tü—tü—tütü—tütü—"

Once more, sharp and clear like hoofs on shining marble slabs, and again, almost dying, painful and mournful, like a farewell to life.

And always the nightingale answered.

The nuns sobbed. And two great tears dropped from the priest's eyes.

"This is so beautiful," he said, "so beautiful!"

But the Deacon whispered: "Yes—and very pagan!" But in his eyes there was also a moist shimmer.

The Abbess stood up. "He is in our midst—Jesus, the God of Love." She took her glass, held it with outstretched arm and sang with the nuns: "*In den Rosen.*"

They touched their glasses and drank. And all the nuns sang the last verse:

Lasst das Gläschen ume gahn
In den Rosen!
So mögt ihr fröhlich heimwärts gahn
Und allezeit in Freuden stahn
In den Rosen!

The Deacon rose also from the table with the priest and Frank Braun. And they joined in singing the refrain *In den Rosen*.

The old lay sister filled their glasses, and at the long tables out in the cloister-garth, the little novice and young sister Ursula hurried busily around with the demijohns, keeping the glasses filled. The nuns drank and sang.

The Abbess beckoned the priest to her table and welcomed him. "Tell them about the nightingale, Father," she smiled, "when you make up your report for Cologne."

"I shall certainly do that!" the priest smiled. He called Frank Braun over and introduced him to the Abbess.

She said: "So this is he——"

She asked him about his mother and his other relatives. She did not mention his uncle.

He answered, but he formed the words with his lips only; he could not think, all his emotion was concentrated in his eyes. He saw—saw——

There she was sitting on her throne, a tall, beautiful woman. Kind and saintly and serious—dead to life. He saw only her hands and the oval of her face. Everything else was covered by the severe folds of her black and white habit. The white roses formed a curtain behind her, but in her lap she held red roses. Her small hand was playing with them—a saint's hand, small, sweet, roundish.

And shining blue eyes.

She had his glass filled with Cyprus wine and drank with him.

Then he knelt before her. Knelt down on both knees on the step of her throne. Something drew him there, forcing him to kneel.

He thought: "Now I must ask for her blessing." But he did not say a word. The Abbess raised her hands and touched his temples lightly, with the tips of her fingers, looking at him silently. It seemed like an eternity to him.

"Just like him," she murmured. "Just like him."

She lifted up his head and bent down to him.

She kissed his forehead and kissed both his eyes—three kisses.

Then lightly—oh, ever so lightly!—she pushed him back, rose, and held out her branch to him.

"Go!" she said. "Go!"

He took the branch with the blood-red roses and got to his feet, stumbling as he retreated a few steps.

And now he found himself standing beside the priest and the Deacon, who talked fast in a low voice. Frank Braun did not hear what they said. He stared, stared at the most beautiful woman—

Was it not the Mother of God who had kissed him?

The Abbess quickly stepped down from her throne and walked through the porticus with all the nuns following her.

There was a great silence in the spacious cloister. Only the moon shone on the marble slabs, and everywhere, on all sides, there was the white sea of roses. A sparkling, gleaming white.

"Is the feast over?" Frank Braun whispered.

The priest said: "Ordinarily it wouldn't be. But tonight I am afraid it is over." He took Frank Braun's left arm and the Deacon his right. Together they led him out through the cloister, but at the last pillars he stopped. "One moment—" he pleaded, "just one more—"

He looked back. Roses, roses, white roses and moonlight. A glass had been knocked over—Cyprus wine flowed over the

gleaming marble. The wine looked like black blood. And the nightingale sobbed.

He grasped the Deacon's hand. "Reverend," he whispered, "say something. Speak—say something! I must hear your voice. I must know if all this is—real!"

"Yes, yes——" the Deacon assured him. "It is real! But come now, young friend!" They walked through the convent garden and out by the small gate. They got into the priest's buggy and drove across country. First through the birch forest and over the wooden bridge across the Angerbach to bring the Deacon home.

Frank Braun heard nothing and saw nothing—he was dreaming of the cloister as it looked when the nuns were fleeing from it, of the gleaming marble floor and the roses on which the moon shone.

"The Deacon is right," the priest said. "That was the last Feast of the Roses that the Rhenish nuns will ever hold."

"But why? Why?"

The priest shook his head slowly. "It was a sin that time when the Baroness Lenore Droste kissed her fiancé's friend—and she repented the sin and took the veil. She repented her sin for twenty years, until——"

"Until——?" he urged. "Father, tell me, please, until——?"

"Tonight, amidst wine and roses, the Abbess Beata kissed her friend's nephew—or rather, her friend himself. And that was a worse sin still."

He whispered: "It was a sin?—A sin?"

"Not to you—and not to me! Perhaps not even to the Deacon who is stricter than I am. But it will seem a great sin to Abbess Beata. A kiss betrayed the fiancé of her life—and tonight the fiancé of her soul, Jesus her Saviour, was again betrayed by her with a kiss!—Yes, this was certainly the last Feast of Roses! The people in Cologne need not worry any more on that score!"

"What shall I do?" Frank Braun asked in a shaking voice.

The kindly priest patted his cheek. "You? You can not do anything! Sleep well and pray for a saintly woman!"

Frank Braun did not dream that night. He slept soundly. But the next morning he went again to see the priest.

"I can help her," he said. "I will do what my uncle has done. I will become a Catholic."

The priest looked at him silently, but with shining eyes. Slowly he nodded and shook hands with the young man.

"I will become a Catholic!" Frank Braun repeated.

But he forgot it later.

Forgot it—as he had forgotten the Feast of Roses and the kind priest and the Abbess; life was so rich! He had not thought of the episode until today, not until the old song lifted the veil from these happenings of the past.

The organ was playing softly and from the garden came the sweet strain of far-off voices, too distant to be understood, carrying only the melody into the great hall—

And now a full-throated voice took up the song, a rich full voice, sweet and strong like love's fervent faith—

"There is only one woman in the whole world who can sing like this," André said.

The voice sang—and now one could understand the words—

*Jesu! Dulcis memoria,
Dans vera cordi gaudia—*

Rossius nodded. "What a heavenly voice!"

A solemn procession marched in slowly from the garden; forty Dominican sisters, walking in pairs, moving their lips as if in silent prayer as they fingered the beads of their rosaries. Slowly they circled the room, curtsying low as they passed the Abbess' throne, and finally assembled in the center of the hall.

Eva Lachmann's voice alone rang through the silent hall.

"I wonder how much she is getting for it!" André whispered. "I bet she doesn't sing in this circus for less than three thousand!"

Now the voice stopped and the guests applauded as if at the opera. But Susan Pierpont rose from her throne and made a

sign with her hand indicating that the number was not yet over. So the guests lapsed silent again and waited.

Again the nun's chorus took up the song, but now in full voice, a chorus of forty women.

"Now you are going to hear something, Doctor!" André laughed. "These are my chorus girls whom I lent to Miss Pierpont for the party. My conductor rehearsed them for two weeks and it nearly drove him crazy."

The girls began:

*Nil cantitur suavius,
Nil auditur jucundius,
Nil cogitatur dulcius,
Quam Jesus Dei Filius!*

But they pronounced it as if it were English, jazzing it and making it sound like ragtime—a Latin ragtime screamed at the tops of their lungs by worn-out musical comedy voices!

"Was this your conductor's idea?" Frank Braun asked.

"I should say not," the director laughed. "He fought against it tooth and nail. But Susan Pierpont wanted it. She said it would put life into the party and that it was a good prelude to the burlesque part of the entertainment."

Don Cesare made a painful grimace at the awful noise, but the Abbess and her guests enjoyed it immensely. Susan Pierpont was the first to applaud, and now the other guests were also allowed to, the number being over.

"Why don't the girls dance it?" Rossius asked. They might as well do it properly if they are going to do that kind of thing!"

"Because they are nuns, don't you see," André explained, "and because this is America, my young friend. It is all right to sing ragtime—but dance it? No, the Lord might get really peeved at such blasphemy!"

As the nuns left the stage, buffoons tumbled into the hall. Pulcinello, Arlequino and Pantalone, Fracassa, Colombine and Isabella, Brighella, Scaramucio and Santorello. Obviously the

director must have tried hard to teach these good people how to behave, but it would have been easier to train old bulldogs for Italian buffoonery than these men. They waved their arms, making ridiculous gestures that were anything but the antics of Italian buffoons.

"How do you like little Colombine?" André asked. "A nice little girl, isn't she! Her name is Davies, from the Knickerbocker Theatre—Susan Pierpont's youngest favorite."

There was applause when the buffoons had finished. Footmen brought in trays with cake and ice, lemonade and ice water. Every guest was given a silk bag filled with candy.

"Is there no wine in this place?" Rossius asked disgustedly.

"You are in New York, young man, don't forget!" Director André said. "Go to one of the bars—the nearest one is out there in the conservatory—and you'll get all the champagne and wine and whisky you want!"

A horde of women rushed on the stage in a wild dance that was supposed to be bacchantic. Their legs, arms and shoulders were naked and they had only thin colored veils around their middles and fastened across their shoulders.

"There are the nuns again," the Director explained—"they have changed into courtesans now—such is life!"

The Abbess rose from her throne, opened her silk bag and threw the candy on the stage, beckoning her guests to do likewise. The girls immediately got down on all fours, gathering up the candy as fast as they could. Some rolled up their draperies and used them as aprons, others pretended to fight with each other for the spoils. Finally the herald blew his trumpet as a signal for the girls to stop; the Master of Ceremonies stepped down from the platform to act as referee while the footmen counted the candy. A skinny girl with long, scrawny legs was pronounced the winner with a total of one hundred and thirty-seven pieces of candy; she received a diamond studded bracelet from the Abbess as the first prize.

Then the girls lined up in a row at the back of the hall while the athletes marched in to the strains of the gladiators' march.

"Do you recognize them?" André grinned. "The wrestlers from Manhattan Opera House! Go ahead, Rossius, you worked there last summer, tell us, who is the fat one, the one without a neck?"

Rossius rattled off their names like a trained barker: "Pierrard le Colossal Next to him, ladies and gentlemen, you see Wladek Zbyszko from Cracow and beside him Aberg and Lurich. We also have with us Luigi Mazzantini whose real name is Müller and who used to be chef on the *Kronprinzessin Cecilie*. Then there is Albert Fürst, the Pride of Hernals, ordinarily waiter in the Hotel Plaza, Linoff, the Cossack, Hevonpää, the Star of Finland——"

"That's enough, thank you!" André cried. "Your inside information is really amazing!"

The wrestlers wore narrow loin-cloths; no tights, not even trunks. While they stood awkwardly about the room, footmen brought in twelve large mats and stretched them out on the floor. The herald let the athletes draw lots from a helmet and then announced how they would be matched.

Upon a signal, the men stepped onto their mats and began wrestling, twelve pairs at once. It was an exhibition, of course, with Nelsons, cravats and headlocks to make the bouts spectacular. Some of the wrestlers used the Greco-Roman style, others catch-as-catch-can. Their wrestling would have seemed tame to a connoisseur—but who in this audience knew anything about it? Naked flesh and strong muscles for the women to feast their eyes on—that was the ideal! The Cossack Linoff furiously bared his teeth when his opponent freed himself from his long ape's arms, and the Finn Hevonpää played the wild man. He shouted and bellowed like a berserk, shook his fist at his opponent and at the public—that was his line, that was what he was paid for.

Burchard, the Master of Ceremonies acted as referee, and the wrestlers made his job easy enough. Whenever he stepped to one of the mats, a man would fall and remain pinned to the floor with both shoulders, as if nailed there.

"Winner—Lindström, the Swedish Giant," the Master of Cere-

monies announced. "Winner—Winnetou, the Comanche Chief."

"His name is Huber and he works for a butcher," Rossius laughed.

"Winner—Sam Einstein, the Hope of the East Side," the Master of Ceremonies continued, "Winner—Pierrard le Colosse!"

The Master of Ceremonies led the twelve winners over to the other side, to the courtesans who were to be the prizes for the heroes. But this piece of comedy was much harder for the strong men than any wrestling match. Each of the men was supposed to choose a girl; they were to act fiercely, grasp one of the girls, lift her up and carry her away by force. And the courtesans were to devour the heroes with eager eyes, spurring them on, and then, at the last moment, pretend to be frightened by so much strength and brutal power, cry and defend themselves. But the eyes of the chorus girls did not devour anything, and the naked wrestlers acted like embarrassed school boys at their first dancing lesson. The Comanche Chief Huber clicked his heels and stood at attention before his girl as if he were asking the wife of his sergeant-major for a dance at the Emperor's birthday ball. The Pride of Hernals gallantly offered an arm to his lady, and Pierrard le Colosse—weight three hundred pounds and with a round head as bald as a billiard ivory—stood there helpless, not knowing what to do. Only Hevonpää, the Roaring Finn, acted his rôle well. Smacking his lips and emitting gurgling sounds, he cast his bull's eyes from one girl to the other as if he wanted them all at once. Suddenly he rushed at Jim Hawkins, the Black Pearl, who had just given his hand to a thin anæmic girl, with a wild roar clutched the girl away from him, lifted her upon his shoulders and carried her triumphantly through the room. The girl became genuinely frightened and cried for help, kicking and screaming—to the immense delight of the Abbess and her guests.

As soon as the men had disappeared through the doors into the conservatory, they released their girls and went to one side, while the girls walked off to the other.

"Now my girls are through," André said. "Now they can dress

and go home. They get a hundred dollars for the evening and ten dollars extra for each rehearsal—quite good pay, don't you think?"

"And what about the wrestlers?" Rossius asked.

"I don't know," the director said, "they probably get much more. Besides, their main job hasn't begun yet; they are going to stay here, and they will be given all the food and drink they want, and more. Then, when they are properly soaked, they will be let loose on the Moon Ladies."

With a flourish of trumpets, the herald announced the end of the entertainment. The Abbess rose from her chair and walked down the platform on the arm of Cesare. The orchestra started to play and on the stage people began to dance.

The three men walked through the conservatory to the next bar where men and women crowded around, pouring down drinks: cocktails, champagne, whisky; whatever the footmen happened to have on their trays.

Frank Braun felt a hand on his shoulder and turned around.

"Aimée Breitauer?" he cried. "What are you doing here?"

"What am I doing here?" she laughed. "I am as good an American as any one else here—I am a member of the club!" She took his arm. "Have you been through the rooms yet, Doctor? Come, I will show you."

"I was going to get a glass of wine——"

"As much as you like," she cried. "We have many secluded spots here with a little cellar in each." She took him into a large dimly lighted room off the conservatory, and as soon as his eyes grew accustomed to the dim red light, he saw that a number of tents had been pitched in the room, side by side. She drew back the flap of one of the tents and pulled him in.

Inside everything was Persian. A small Persian lamp on the ceiling and rugs and cushions on the floor. A few weapons were hanging on the tent walls and there was a wooden chest which Aimée Breitauer opened. "Look!"

In the chest was a champagne bucket and some bottles on ice.

Also bottles of brandy, boxes of cigars and cigarettes, sandwiches, cake and candy.

"Make yourself at home," she smiled, throwing herself down on the cushions. "Eat, drink, smoke—do what you like."

"Where did you get your dress?" he wondered. She looked amazingly well, this slim woman of whom no one would have believed that she had been a grandmother for two years. Her marvelously even, white teeth flashed like the famous string of pearls she never took off. Aimée Breitauer's pearl necklace—more than seven feet long, worth a million dollars—every New York shopgirl spoke about it in hushed whispers. Her eyes shone with a misty blue light, and the effect of mystery was heightened by the fact that she was so nearsighted. Everything in her well-groomed face was harmonious—only the thin line of her lips slightly marred her beauty. She wore a close-fitting gown of silver brocade, stiff with rich embroidery, and her reddish hair was done high with strands of pearls woven through it. She wore large pearls as earrings and more pearls on her hands.

"My dress?" she answered. "The painter Runk designed it for me and Cyril Blackland made it. I am supposed to be a duchess from Cyprus, the mistress of Cardinal Colonna. Do you like the dress? Watch!"

She undid her silver belt, pulled a snap-fastener, and her dress flew open like a shell: her body lay before him completely naked—as she wore neither chemise nor stockings.

With quick, snake-like gestures she twisted her arms out of the sleeves, throwing herself back on the cushions.

"Now I am only in pearls!" she laughed. "Kiss me!"

He kissed her hand, poured out two glasses and drank with her. "You can afford to, Aimée," he cried gayly, "with a figure like yours!"

"Thank you!" she said. "But——"

She interrupted herself, putting a finger to her mouth. "Pst! Pst! There is somebody next door."

One could hear people talking in a low voice in the next tent.

"It's Marion de Fox!" she whispered.

She stretched out her arms and legs, kicking off her silver slippers.

Her feet—no woman in the whole world had such little feet. Sweet feet—very well-groomed feet—feet which made men follow her on the street, in theatres and restaurants. Her feet, shod in extravagant, bizarre slippers, turned many men's heads—but they could drive a man insane when they were naked.

Aimée Breitauer's pearls—Aimée Breitauer's feet——

But he did not touch her. Something repelled him.

Yes, she belonged here, as much as any of the other Moon Ladies. And she was worth many millions of dollars, this daughter of a rich German butcher; she was hungry for every lust and could buy whatever she wanted. And she did it, without much discretion or taste, just as the others did. Perhaps she was a little blunter about it, a little more natural, because that happened to be her way—but she was a whore like the rest of them.

Something deterred him——

Not an attack of chastity, of purity or virtue—not because he was ashamed or disgusted. He wallowed in the dirt with all these other animals, wallowed joyously in the mud, eating their food and sharing their appetites. And this naked woman clad only in pearls, this unbelievably well-groomed body, this gleaming white skin with its alluring scent, these soft curves that seemed eternally young like those of Aphrodite herself——

And yet he shook his head. Something repelled him.

But she knew how to manage him. She moved up closer to him, sitting with her arms far back so that the splendor of her breasts dashed his schoolboy's scruples. She pulled up her legs, putting her feet into his lap——

"Your feet are beautiful," he said, "they are sweet like——"

He could not think of anything beautiful enough. It must be the sweetest thing in the world.

"They are sweet like Eva Lachmann's voice," he decided at last. "Your feet actually sing, you know."

And he hummed the tune that drifted into the love tent from somewhere far away: "*Au mont Ida trois déesses*——"

Yes, the goddess herself was sitting before him. And he knew that he would give her the apple—she who was dressed in the richest pearls of the sea.

Now she sang to him:

La troisième, ah! la troisième . . .
La troisième ne dit rien.
Elle eut le prix tout de même,
Calchas, vous m'entendez bien!

Evohé, que ces déesses
Pour enjôler les garçons,
Evohé! que ces déesses
Ont de drôles de façons!
—Ont de drôles de façons!

And her feet chuckled and played, dancing Offenbach's music. Suddenly kneeling before him, she put her arms around his neck, trying to pull the brown monk's habit off him. "Come—don't be prudish!"

"Why do you want me?" he asked.

"I just want you—" she laughed, "you—and others—tonight! I want you because I enjoy taking you away from Mrs. van Ness."

She threw herself backward, rolling over on the cushions. "Good God, how slow you are! And what an idea—a tailcoat under a monk's habit! Venus did not have all that trouble when she kissed her Paris!"

He knelt beside her, naked as she was.

She put her arms around his neck, pulling him down to her. "How does that van Ness woman kiss?" she mocked.

"Shut up!" he hissed.

She laughed at him, took the long strand of pearls from her neck, unfastened the catch and wound the pearls around their bodies. "That is my happiness," she cried, "and my delight! And tears for other women! I am life—take me!"—

Slowly their bodies separated, falling apart like tired snakes. He slid the pearls off over his head and sat up.

"Thirsty!" she pleaded.

His hand trembled. He spilled champagne on her body. She drank hastily; then she stretched her limbs and a sensuous shiver passed over her body.

"Remember me to Mrs. van Ness!" she said pensively, fingering her pearls. "She is a clever woman. I am a whore—I know that as well as she does. She may have you—but I have you and many others. Many men come to a whore—and a whore needs many men."

"Sentimental?" he smiled. "Feeling tragic?"

She nodded and sighed. Then she laughed. "I am always a little sentimental—afterwards, you know!—I always think: that is what women are good for—and nothing else! And that holds true still more of men! It is the only thing in life—there is nothing else—that alone is our purpose in this world.—Oh, if only ecstasy weren't so short!" She sat up, holding out the glass to him. "Pour me some more, please!"

She drained her glass and breathed heavily, her breasts heaving. "Now I am all right—now I am laughing again! Ready for new deeds—who said that? Give me my dress, will you!"

As he held out the dress for her, he noticed that the wall of the tent moved slightly, and there was a soft laugh on the other side.

"There is somebody in the next tent!" he cried.

"It's that Gordon woman," she whispered. "She has the painter with her, the Italian—the one who played Rodrigo Borgia."

He dressed, drank a glass of wine and lighted a cigarette while he waited for her.

"Help me dress, please, it won't take me long—one, two, three—and without a maid!"

He held out the silver brocade for her and she slipped into it quickly. Then she went over to the chest and took out a large hand mirror, combs, a powder box.

"We have thought of everything!" she smiled while she fixed

her hair under the lamp. Suddenly she put down the mirror, reached into a small pocket on her belt and took out a little writing block in a platinum frame and a pencil.

"Write something in this," she said, "while I get ready. Write your name, the date and the hour. If you like, you can add something—about me!"

He laughed heartily, walked over to her and kissed her on the neck. "You are priceless, Aimée, this is just like you! So this is your collection, isn't it? Autographs from men to whom you have given your favors—written down after the hour of love?"

"Yes, of course!" she nodded. "My most beautiful memories!"

He sat down, thought for a moment, then looked at her as if he were going to draw her, and wrote in her notebook.

While he was writing, she powdered her face, put new rouge on her cheeks and nostrils, polished her nails and put on more lipstick. At length she turned to him. "Have you finished?"

He nodded and returned the notebook to her.

She read:

For Aimée Breitaue

Ain Haupt vom Behmerland
Zwey weisse Ärmlein von Präfand,
Ain Prust von Swaben her,
Von Kernten zwey Tüttlein ragend als ain Speer,
Ain Pauch von Österreich,
Zwey Pein von Flamländ gleich
Und ein Ars von Polandt,
Auch ein bayrisch Fut daran,
Dazu zwey Füßlein von dem Rhein:
Das muss ein schöne Fraue gesein!

"Oh, but I like that!" she cried gayly. "That old poet knew what matters in a woman! Nowadays all they talk about is lips and eyes, and they think they are God knows how abandoned if they talk about feet and breasts. But not one of them dares to mention the most important things!"

"You are right, Aimée!" he laughed. "But the old poet was herself a woman, by the name of Klara Hätzlerin, and lived in Nuremberg around the time we are celebrating tonight."

She tore off the sheet on which he had written the poem, and put it in the back of the frame.

"Free for the next?" he asked.

"Yes," she said quite seriously, "the notebook and myself—both of us!" she put the mirror and the powder box back into the chest, closed it and straightened out the cushions. "And this little nest here, too!—Where are my slippers?"

He put them on for her, kissing again her beautiful feet.

She pulled him up and offered him her lips.

"You were very sweet," she said. "Thank you, my dear!"

He went out to the check room to get his coat, and while the attendant helped him into it, he was hailed by Director André. "Please stay a little while longer, Doctor, I will take you home later in my car. I am looking for a fourth for a game of 'Mauschel.' My conductor is waiting upstairs with old Mrs. Godefroy. We are going to play only for an hour or so."

He helped Frank Braun out of his coat. Just then Eva Lachmann passed, all bundled up in a big fur coat. With her was a slim graceful little thing, her face hidden in a big fur collar just like the diva.

"Have you had enough, too, gentlemen?" she called out to them. "Good night!"

"You sang marvelously!" the director complimented her. "It was beautiful beyond description! There is nothing in the world that can compare with your voice."

"Yes, there is!" Frank Braun said. "Her voice is beautiful like—like Aimée Breitaue's little feet."

"He ought to know!" André laughed. "She had him in her love-tent!"

With a queer smile, Eva Lachmann came closer and stared at Frank Braun. "Aimée Breitaue?" Then, abruptly, she turned to go and called back over her shoulder: "She deserves it!"

Putting her arm around the little girl, she quickly went away. "What is the matter with her?" the director asked.

Frank Braun shrugged his shoulders. "She hates me—but I haven't the faintest idea why!"

André laughed. "Oh, these women! Did you see the girl she has with her? You didn't? It was the little Davies girl, the one who played Colombine. Susan Pierpont will burst with rage when she finds out!"

At the bar they found Miss Marlborough half naked, completely drunk, shouting "Tipperary" with some men. Director André stopped at the staircase and looked back into the room of the love-tents.

"There goes that Gouraud woman! Look—she is dragging three men into her tent—three at once!"

"Who are they?" Frank Braun wondered.

"Footmen probably, or chorus boys. Gouraud goes by size!"

The wild Finn Hevonpää came down the stairs, very meek and well behaved in his monk's cowl. With him was Aimée Breitaue who gayly waved to them.

"*Salvete, o gladiator! Gaudium multum habeas!*" André called out to the wrestler.

"*Gratiam tibi ago, artifex! Suum quisque optimum facit,*" the wild Finn answered solemnly, waving to the men as he followed his lady.

"What, the fellow speaks Latin?" Frank Braun wondered.

"Yes, and Greek and Hebrew! He studied for the divinity—but later he lost his faith and his scholarships. So he came over here and here his brain does not help him much—he has to use his legs and arms if he wants to fill his stomach."

In the yellow room people were playing poker; at a corner table sat the musician Milan and beside him, in a nun's habit, Mrs. Godefroy smoking a cigar. She was a fat woman in her fifties, always smiling, always gay, to be found everywhere where there was anything going on. And at every party she would find her way soon to the game room.

"At last!" she called out to them. "It's your deal, Director!"

There are your chips, count them, please. The blue ones are ten dollars, the yellow ones five, the red three and the white one!"

They played and André lost heavily, but the more he lost, the gayer he became. Between games they chatted and listened to Mrs. Godefroy's jokes and to the latest gossip. "Do you know who hooked the handsome van Straaten tonight? Baron de Bekker and Baroness de Bekker—both peacefully together!"

An hour passed and another hour. They were still playing and drinking.

Suddenly Ernst Rossius stole furtively into the room. Looking shyly about him, he sat down at one of the tables, pulled something out of his pocket and bent over it as if he were going to write.

Director André called over to him to join them. "Are you having a good time, Rossius?"

Rossius' young face shone and his eyes sparkled with excitement. "Something has happened to me," he stammered, "something marvelous—I would have never dreamed anything like this could happen!"

"Go ahead, tell us all about it!" André cried. "Who was it? We are terribly curious."

"I would rather cut my hand off," Rossius said solemnly, "than betray her name! A lady has kissed me—a lady—the most marvelous woman in the world!"

"Only kissed, nothing else?" the conductor asked.

Rossius laughed gayly. "Nothing else?—Oh, you can't guess it all! Nothing like this has ever happened to man before!" He stretched out his arms as if embracing the air. In his right hand he held a little frame.

Beautiful Aimée's notebook.

"What have you got there?" Frank Braun asked. "Let me see it, will you?"

Rossius unsuspectingly gave him the notebook. "She gave me this and told me to write a poem for her. A poem about—oh God, no Byron could describe that!"

"Sit down calmly," the Kapellmeister advised, "eat and drink and then you will surely think of something to write for her!"

The young man sat down and let Mrs. Godefroy fill up his plate. While he was eating with a healthy appetite, Frank Braun looked at the notebook, holding it carefully under the table. He pulled out the first few sheets: on the first sheet was a signature with a mediocre drawing. The second sheet contained only a signature, written in large boisterous letters sprawling across the whole sheet: AMATO. Amato, the great movie hero!

On the third sheet was written in a clear and intelligent handwriting:

Bibet, miscet ill' cum illa
Miscet servus cum ancilla!
Miscet coqua cum factore!
Miscet Abbas cum Priore!
Et pro Rege et pro Papa
Bibunt vinum sine aqua.
Et pro Papa et pro Rege
Miscent omnes sine lege.
Miscent, bibunt hoc in mundo
Donec nihil sit in fundo!

And under it, in old Roman letters like the script on a tombstone, was the signum of the erudite wrestler:

SULONIS HEVONPÄUS Helsingforensis,
Qui studiosus Theologiae Dorpatensis,
Christum, Dominum, Sanctum Spiritum
Corde calidissimo quaesivit,
Studioque ardente. Quos atque perdidit.
Qui, doctus ludi Graeci-Romanique
Mundum percurrit, sed arte stultorum
Vivit. Qua nocte Coelum rapuit,
—Amato amatam Amatam amato—
Bibens, Amatam coiens.

Frank Braun put the sheets carefully back into the frame and returned it to Rossius.

"I know a very nice poem for you," he said, "if you want to take it down." The secretary hesitated.

"But I was to write it myself—" he ventured.

"Never mind," Frank Braun smiled. "You won't be able to think of anything tonight. And the poem I have for you is ideally suited—just go ahead and write what I dictate. You read Rabelais recently, didn't you? If you remember the old French spelling you must use it!"

"That looks like a very learned affair!" the musician suggested.

"Not at all! Now go ahead, my boy, write it down word for word!" And he recited:

Nature n'est pas si sote,
Qu'ele faist nostre Marote
Tant solement por Robichon
Se l'entendement i fichon!
Ne Robichon por Mariete,
Ne por Agnès, ne por Perette!
Ele nous a faist, bele fille, n'en doutes,
Toutes por tous et tous por toutes,
Chascune por chascun commune
Et chascun commun por chascune!

Ernst Rossius edged back and forth on his chair, but he wrote obediently. "Are you through?" he cried at last. "I can't possibly hand that in!"

"Of course, you can hand it in!" Frank Braun reassured him. "Write underneath 'Le Roman de la Rose' with your name and date—and don't forget the hour!—Aimée Breitaueer will love the poem and she will give you another hour with her—if you pleased her otherwise."

Rossius stared at Frank Braun, his arms dropping to his side, utter consternation written all over his honest face. "How did you find out her name?" he asked listlessly.

Director André laughed. "Aimée Breitaueer's notebook? I am

in it, too, twice I believe! You have plenty of company in that book, young friend!"

Ernst Rossius jumped to his feet. All the color had gone out of his face, he struggled for words, vainly trying to speak. Finally he burst out: "It isn't true! That is a lie, a dirty——" He could not finish the sentence, tears welled up in his eyes.

"Go now," Frank Braun said, "bring the beautiful lady her lovebook!"

He was having tea with Lotte the next afternoon.

"You went to the party of the Moon Ladies?" she asked.

He nodded. "Do you want a confession, Lotte?"

"No, that isn't necessary. Just show me your little knife."

He took it out of his pocket and gave it to her. He watched her curiously as she took the little knife out of its leather case, removing the cotton and opening the blade.

The blade was shiny and clean, without a spot on it—it sparkled brightly in the lamplight.

She seemed relieved as she gave it back to him. "Now I know that you have been faithful to me!" she said.

He stared at her uncomprehendingly. "But Lotte," he began, "I——"

She did not let him continue. "Don't talk," she smiled, putting her hand on his lips. "What do *you* know about it? This little knife tells me more than you ever could!"

He thought: "The hell your little knife knows!" But he left her intact the conviction that made her so happy.



FRANK BRAUN saw his last visitor to the door. "Anybody else waiting for me?" he asked Rossius.

"Yes, a man. I will show him in."

Frank Braun fell into a chair, supporting his arms on the table, his head dropping heavily into his hands. He felt tired tonight, unspeakably tired and drained. "I am no longer a human being," he thought. "I am an inflated pig's bladder. I act as if I were big and fat, and I make a great deal of noise when I hit the floor. But I am hollow and empty inside, very empty——"

Rossius brought in a shabbily dressed man. He was pock-marked, bull-necked and bowlegged. His greasy black hair was slicked down over his forehead. He smelled of stable and whisky. Without a word of greeting, he stepped up close and awkwardly produced a dirty card which he held under Frank Braun's nose.

It was Tewes' calling card: "Perhaps you can help the man."

"Sit down," Frank Braun said. "What can I do for you?"

But the man would not sit down. Shifting from one foot to the other and twisting his cap in his hand, he said: "Ich bin deserter. Si vous voulez mich outkicken, tun Sies de seguido."

Frank Braun put the card down on the table. "If this gentle-

man has sent you here he had a reason. Tell me—when did you come over here and how?

"Nicht heuer—sure!" the man answered. "Hay doze años dass ich gemoved bin."

Twelve years ago he and two other men had deserted from the German Uhlan regiment of St. Avold. His companions had persuaded him that it was stupid to finish their military service, that there would never be a war in Europe anyway and that the army was there only to hold down the masses. So he escaped with them across the near border, but two weeks later he again wore a uniform—that of the Foreign Legion. After a wild night of drinking he had come to in a train to find that he was traveling to Marseilles and that he had enlisted with the Foreign Legion. He served in Algiers for two years until he had an opportunity to escape again; he fled to Morocco, thence to Spain and finally crossed the ocean to Argentina where he found work as a gaucho. When the war broke out he became restless and could not stay in the Pampas. He got a job as stoker on a steamer bound for New York from Buenos Aires.

"And now you are stuck here—and can't get over, is that it?" Frank Braun asked. The man's story was not a new one; he had often heard similar yarns—the details might differ a little, but on the whole it was always the same. From all parts of the world they had converged on New York—from Eastern Asia, from every part of the American continent, from Australia and the islands of the Pacific. They had come from Africa and from Spain and Portugal—some had even come from England. And now they were all bogged here, could get no further—the Yankees saw to that. Frank Braun even knew the pidgin language this man spoke: a clumsy German sprinkled with Spanish, English and French.

"Can't get over, Señor?" the man cried. "Ich war déjà three times in Europa this year. Nur nach Deutschland—that can't be done, vamos!"

This man had been with horses all his life. Grown up in a stable on an estate in the Rhineland, then a soldier in a German

cavalry regiment, later orderly to the surgeon in the Foreign Legion, and finally a gaucho in the Argentine Pampas—wherever he had been, he had had something to do with horses. So he finally arrived in New York and, after many weary weeks, had found out it was impossible to get over to Germany, and had decided to make war against the Allies single-handed. He saw that stable boys were needed badly, to act as watchmen for the immense transports of horses and mules going over to Italy, France and England. Only the flotsam of humanity could be found for this work, and therefore, the authorities did not bother much about papers and documents. And he, black-haired and tanned, with his impossible mixture of languages, could play French to the English, and Spanish to the French. He soon found a job on a transport of horses bound for Cherbourg, and then with another for Saloniki.

Ernst Rossius turned upon him furiously. "So you brought horses to our enemies, did you!"

The man grinned a broad grin, showing a few black stumps of teeth. He put his cap down on the table and addressed the secretary.

The Allies would not get much satisfaction out of those horses, he said. Did he know what *mallein* was? No? Mallein was the bacillus that transferred glanders. How had he got it, Frank Braun asked. Oh, one could get anything in New York for money! He had smeared that stuff into the nostrils of the horses, one by one, hoping they would infect others, too.

The third time they had caught him. He was to accompany a transport—to Portsmouth this time, two thousand horses. He had to start right in with his work, while they were still in New York harbor. He had poisoned twenty-seven horses when the Canadian officer caught him. He fled, racing up the companion-way on deck, the officer right behind him, emptying his revolver at him. A bullet hit him in the left arm, but it only grazed his skin and did not hurt much. So he had jumped overboard, swum across the harbor and made his getaway.

"When did that happen?" Frank Braun asked.

Last night. But that wasn't all. He had walked up and down the waterfront until his clothes were dry, after first washing the bleeding arm and bandaging it with his handkerchief. And the handkerchief probably was dirty and must have been in contact with the poison, because—

He painfully turned up the sleeve of his coat, showing his arm. It was swollen and almost purple, in some spots even green and black. Thick blue lymph strands radiated in all directions from the small bullet wound.

That was why he had come. He could not go to any doctor—that would mean immediate arrest. And it was high time that something was done—he knew the effect of the poison. In Sidi bel Abbas one of the Surgeon's assistants had become infected and had died in spite of all the hospital treatment.

Frank Braun thought rapidly, then went to the telephone and called a number. He talked for a long time, and finally he sat down and wrote an address which he handed to his secretary.

"Get a taxicab and take the man to this address!" Then he turned to the man. "The physician is a Jew. Just give him your name and address—he won't ask questions. He will keep you in his clinic until you get well."

"Well, nous verrons, carajol" the man said. "Là, der Arm muss 'runter, dann could I be saved—peut-être! Vamos! It wouldn't matter about me—je m'en fiche—if I could only poison the Franzosen und Engländer noch a few thousand potros! Hasta luego, monsieur—darf ich ask you noch a favor? Là, sewed in my coat are my Ersparnisse—mas als five hundred dollars. Pay den Doktor damit, wenn er den dinero will—not den entero, ich pfeif' darauf—et le reste—geben Sie dem Red Cross! Für den Fall that I die—bien compris?—Au revoir, caballero—muchisimas gracias!"

Frank Braun tried to rise to shake hands with the man. His legs trembled and he sank back into his chair. "Excuse me, please!" he said. "I am not very well myself."

The secretary rushed over to him lifting him up by the armpits. "Lie down on the sofa, Doctor, and rest awhile."

Frank Braun refused to be helped. With an effort he pulled himself up, supporting himself by the table, and stumbled over to the sofa.

"Shall I tell Fred to bring you some lunch?" Rossius asked. "No?—Then take a little rest, Doctor, lie down for a few hours. And don't forget, you are speaking tonight at the German Chamber of Commerce—you must be fresh for that. I will call for you about nine o'clock."

He threw a heavy blanket over Frank Braun, moved up a low table and got a glass of water and the strychnine pills. "Perhaps you might like to take one—sometimes it helps."

Frank Braun nodded. He wanted to ask Rossius to disconnect the telephone, but he could not open his lips; and his brain seemed incapable of concentrating on any action. "It does not matter," he thought, "my body would not be able to carry it out anyway."

He heard the two men leave, heard a door being opened and shut—and another further away—

Everything was quiet now. He was cold and his teeth chattered. He wanted to stop the chattering by pressing them together, but he couldn't. Then he tried to find a rhythm in the chattering of his teeth, but there was none. They chattered away, now faster, now slower, stopping for a second and beginning again. He made an effort to reach for the water but could not move his arm.

His telephone rang. It rang, shrilled, screamed. Again, and again. The noise bored into his ears, hammering cruelly against his brain. He pulled up the blanket, hid his head under it and stuffed his fingers into his ears. No use. It rang and barked and bellowed endlessly, piercing him with a thousand sharp knives. Finally it goaded him to his feet.

He stood now, trembling and tottering, but he stood. He stumbled through the room, fell down on a chair and lifted the receiver. Lotte—yes! Why had he kept her waiting?—He had not heard it ring.—But for a quarter of an hour—No, no, he

really had not heard it—But—No—nothing! His hand trembled so he could hardly hold the receiver, and his voice was sobbing.

Was he sick?—No!—But he must be, she could hear it!—Well, yes, he was, just a little.—She was out in Atlantic City—but she would take the next train to New York. Was he going to speak tonight?—Yes, of course he would speak.—Then she would expect him for tea.—Yes, yes, he would come.

He hung up the receiver, cold sweat breaking from his pores. His arms hung down limply at his sides and his head dropped against his chest. He knew: now he would fall from the chair. Then he would lie on the floor and would forget everything—

Again a sound that kept him from falling. The opening of a door, a soft step—

It was Fred, his old man-servant, standing before him, dumb and soulless.

Fred? What was he doing here? He hadn't rung for him! So he said: "Get my bath ready! Make it hot, very hot!"

Fred said: "Yes, sir." and walked across the room, took a silver platter from the mantelpiece and put a card on it. Then he came back and held the platter out to Frank Braun. "The lady wishes to see you, sir."

Frank Braun scanned the card but could not read the words. He heard the thin rasping voice say: "The lady—" but it did not convey anything to him.

He thought: "Why don't you go away, you beast! You torment me."

Instead he merely nodded and said: "Yes." Then he murmured: "My bath—"

He watched the old man leave the room, listened again to the soft, muffled steps on the rug. Somewhere somebody spoke—and there were more steps. And suddenly a heavily-veiled woman stood before him.

"Who are you?" he whispered. He thought: "Lotte.—But why the black veil?"

For whom did she wear mourning?

For him—? But he was alive—he was still alive.

"Who are you?" he whispered again.

Now he heard her voice. What was it she was saying?

Oh—Spanish! She lifted her veil.

He could see her now. She was the dancer, La Goyita—Dolores Echevarria! Her dark sapphire-blue eyes sparkled.

Was he sick, she asked. He nodded: Yes, a little. He was very tired.

She said that she had come from Sonora, that she had arrived only yesterday in New York with her wolf and the hurdy-gurdy man. She had promised to bring him mescal buttons and here they were. She opened her bag, took out a little kerchief, untied it and showed him the dried cactus.

He sat up instantly. "That will help," he said eagerly. "Let's do it right away, at once!"

With shaking hands he took the kerchief and plugged the electric cord into the socket. "Water!" he cried. "Fred, water!"

The servant came and filled the kettle. "Your bath is ready, sir. Have you any further orders for me?"

Frank Braun stared at him, shaking his head. "No, no! Go away!"

His man silently left the room.

Frank Braun tried to lift up the teakettle but he had to put it down, his hands shook so. So he supported his arm on the chair and lifted the kettle, breathing heavily.

The dancer had followed his movements with her eyes. "What are you trying to do?" she asked.

"Make tea. From the peyote fruits. Perhaps that will help."

She took the kettle out of his hands and put it on the electric grill. "Let me do it!" Then she dropped the yellow mescal buttons into the kettle.

He said: "Thank you.—I would like to take a bath and lie down before I drink the tea."

The Goyita nodded. "Yes, go! Your tea will be ready."

He went into the bathroom and undressed. He tried the water with his hand—it was scalding hot. Nevertheless he got into the

tub and stretched out his legs—it felt as if his body must burn in this heat.

Then he accustomed himself to the hot water and lay there quietly without stirring. He was not asleep and he was not awake. He did not think. There was nothing except a great void——

Nothing without and nothing within. Absolutely nothing.

Then he felt cold. He got out of the tub and rubbed himself dry. He put on his pajamas and his bathrobe and went back to the living room.

The teakettle and a cup stood on the little table beside the sofa.

He sat down, poured the dark brew into the cup and drank.

Then he heard a voice. "How does it taste?"

He looked up—La Goyita was still there.

"Very bitter!"

"You had a long bath," she continued. "I was getting worried about you. I was going to ring for your man. Do you think the mescal tea will help?"

He shrugged his shoulders. "Maybe, I don't know."

"They tell marvelous things about it down in Mexico. Do you know anything about it?"

"It is intoxicating—a strange intoxication, very different from any other. I tried them all—a long time ago. Opium, hashish, muscarine, digitalin, kawa-kawa, ganga, cocaine and many others. Nothing acts like mescal. It is a strange intoxication—it makes you see colors, bright colors."

"I would like to try it," the Goyita said. "Is it harmful?"

"Harmful?" He smiled painfully. "No, it is not harmful. It may be easy to become a morphinist, a drunkard, a hashish eater—but one cannot become a mescal addict. You yourself know how difficult it is to get it."

She fetched herself a cup and sat down beside him. "Pour me some, please."

He filled her cup to the brim. "Aren't you afraid? You will

be intoxicated, you will lie here unconscious for several hours. And you are in a strange house—with a stranger—”

The dancer turned upon him her large sapphire eyes. “No,” she said slowly and deliberately. “I am not afraid. Not of you.”

He thought: “No, you really need not worry! I am so weak, so miserable—and I, too, will be in a stupor. You are quite safe!”

But aloud he said: “Close the door, please, and lock it.”

She did as he bade her, came back and drank her tea. “Another, please!” she asked. He filled both cups again.

They drank.

There was something that drew him to this woman.

She smiled. “What now? I am curious.”

He fell back on the sofa, utterly exhausted from this effort. She noticed how tired he was and kindly adjusted the cushions under his head.

“Are you comfortable?” she asked.

“Thank you!” he whispered. “Sit over there in the large chair. Take a few cushions and lean back. And—open your blouse! You should be able to breathe freely and have nothing pressing against your heart!”

He saw—but veiled, as if looking through a dense fog—that she was doing something to her dress, that she walked over to the leather chair, put cushions in it and stretched out.

“Do you know a copla of the rumba?” he whispered. “Please sing it to me—until—you fall asleep.”

Softly, very softly, she hummed:

La Rumbita que yo bailo
La de Rumba, Rumba, Rumba,
Es muchísimo más dulce
Que unos labios de mujer!
Ay, ay, ay! Co, co, co.

Monotonously she hummed the melody, repeating the words over and over. He tried to reconstruct in his mind the picture of

her dancing before Villa and his Generals. But all he could see, was Villa's ugly ape-like face and the eagle-nosed visage of his aide. And then he saw the dancer's head: sapphire-blue eyes mounted in white. And a black circle around them—

Now he was asleep.

A click—and suddenly the room was flooded with bright light, blinding him—

People—faces bending over him—

Lotte van Ness was standing there with Ernst Rossius. Behind them the old servant quietly picked up the little table that had been knocked over, and gathered up the broken tea cups.

Frank Braun's arms dropped to his side and something fell from his hand. Fred picked it up and put it on the table. It was Lotte's little knife.

She saw it instantly, reached for it, but checked her hand in mid-air. With parted lips, she stared at him and turned away and stared around the room. And now she saw the sleeping woman in the armchair. The Goyita's head had drooped over the arm of the chair and her hands hung down limply. Her bodice was unfastened.

Lotte rushed across the room and bent over the sleeping woman. She screamed—a shrill and piercing scream. Then she hurried back to the sofa, picked up the knife and looked at it.

"I knew it!" she cried. "I knew it!"

Frank Braun reached in the sleeve of his robe for his handkerchief and wiped the perspiration off his forehead. "What do you know, Lotte?"

Without answering, she went back to the Goyita and fastened her dress. "Lift her up!" she commanded. "Carry her out into my car!"

With Fred's help Rossius stood her on her feet. The dancer stumbled and reeled—but she stood. Opening her blue eyes wide, she mumbled incoherent words and threatened to fall again;

the men supported her and she closed her eyes and allowed herself to be taken outside.

Lotte van Ness walked slowly over to Frank Braun. Her lips were trembling, she was trying to say something and could not find the words. Her slim fingers nervously played with the knife.

"You—" she whispered finally, "you—"

She could not continue. A violent sobbing shook her and tears welled up in her eyes.

He stretched out his hand to her: "What is wrong, Lotte?"

But she merely shook her head, turned sharply and walked out without a word.

He listened to her step, to the voices outside in the street and to the roar of the motor as her car drove away at high speed.

What had happened?

Then his secretary came back and ran to the telephone. It was ringing steadily.

"Yes, yes!" he called into the mouthpiece. "We are coming right away! We are all ready, yes! The Doctor will be on the stage in ten minutes. Absolutely!"

He hung up the receiver and asked Fred to get a taxicab. Then he turned to Frank Braun.

"We have to hurry, Doctor! It is past nine already! You'll have to dress—how do you feel?"

How did he feel? He took a few steps, tested his muscles. Heavens, he was feeling better than he had for many months!

He undressed quickly, jumped under a cold shower while young Rossius laid out his tailcoat, shirt, tie and pumps. "A nice mess that was!" The secretary laughed. "Mrs. van Ness is awfully jealous! To find a strange lady here with you—sleeping—and with her dress open, too. Was she pretty? I couldn't get a look at her in all this excitement."

Frank Braun rubbed himself dry and reached for his shirt. "Why the devil did you break down the door?" he asked finally.

"Because it was locked, of course! Wait—here, here—there is a button missing in the back! Here is your collar! We stood in front of your door for more than half an hour, calling to you and

shouting ourselves hoarse. Then we kicked and trampled against the door but got no answer! All we could hear were moans. We thought God knows what had happened to you!"

"I was asleep," Frank Braun said calmly. "I slept all the time you were away. I slept and dreamed a lot of silly nonsense. How did Mrs. van Ness get here?"

"Her car drove up just as I stepped into the house. I thought she had come to get you. Here is your waistcoat! And don't forget to button your trousers—the other day one of the buttons was open! That doesn't look so well when you are making a speech!"

He helped Frank Braun into his tails and held out his overcoat for him. "Quick, quick!" he cried. "The taxi is waiting downstairs!"

As soon as he had finished his speech, he drove to Lotte's house and waited for her in the library, pacing up and down the room. At last she came, nodded and beckoned him to sit down.

"Well?" he asked.

"Well?" she repeated. "Well, what? Is it my turn to make explanations?"

He drummed on the table. "As you like, Lotte. But don't think I am trying to hide anything from you. You might tell me how you happened to arrive so suddenly."

She laughed. "There is nothing to tell. I waited for you at six o'clock and you did not come. I knew you were sick—so I called you up about seven. I sat with the telephone receiver in my hand for three quarters of an hour—the operator did her best, but you must have disconnected your telephone."

"No, I didn't. I was asleep and I didn't hear it."

"You must have slept soundly!" she laughed sarcastically. "It rang all the time. Besides, you told me the same story at noon today."

"Yes, Lotte, I know," he admitted. "When you called me up at noon today, I lied to you. I was lying on the sofa and I felt very tired. I did not want to answer the telephone, but the ring-

ing tormented me—so when I talked to you I wanted to get through as quickly as possible. I said only 'yes' and 'no' because I did not want you to ask any questions and force me to give long answers. That is why I lied to you—to make it shorter."

"And now?" she demanded.

"Now I am speaking the truth. I did not hear anything. I was asleep."

She sighed. "All right—I believe you.—Anyway, you did not answer and that worried me. I waited a while then I called you again. Finally I got into my car and drove down to your house. Just as I entered, I met your secretary—he helped to break in the door. You know the rest."

"Where is the girl?" he asked.

"In there—in the guest room. She is still asleep—my maid is with her. The physician was here a minute ago—he said she must have taken a very powerful drug—but he did not know what it was."

He nodded eagerly. "Yes, yes, she took mescal. Two large cups full. I did, too." Then he told Lotte that it was the Spanish dancer he had mentioned before. The one he had met on the fever ship and who had performed in Torreon before General Villa. He told her the episode, how he had tried in vain to get mescal buttons and how La Goyita had promised to find him some. She had arrived quite unexpectedly at noon today, just as he had hung up the receiver. She had brought him the cactus buttons and he had thought it might help. As a matter of fact, it had—he was feeling better now than he had in many months.

Lotte van Ness laughed loud. "I should think you would! Is that why you boiled the stuff and drank it? And you gave the señorita a little—probably because she was curious and wanted to try it, wasn't that it?"

"That was exactly how it happened," he cried. "She had heard people talk so much about mescal intoxication down in Mexico that she was curious to try it. You know Lotte, she had more faith in me than you have!"

She jeered: "Oh, yes, abundant faith! And you fully justified it! I know, I know!"

He sprang to his feet angrily and paced the room. "I give you my word of honor, Lotte, that I did not touch her!"

She veered on him furiously: "You lie!"

He stopped before her and repeated slowly: "Lotte, I did not touch her."

"Then she opened her dress herself, did she?" Lotte scoffed.

"Yes," he said quietly. "She did it before we went to sleep—I on the sofa and she in the chair. I told her to open her dress so she could breathe more easily, and she did.—I don't care if you believe it or not; but I did not get up from the sofa and did not touch her all the time she was in my room. I did not even shake hands with her when she came in."

Lotte shook her head. "And yet you are lying!" She walked over to a table and picked up his little knife which she handed to him. He opened it—there were thick dark spots on the blade.

"It is dirty," he said. "What does that mean?"

"These spots are blood! Do you realize now that you were lying?"

He breathed deeply, holding on to himself with all his will-power.

"To hell with your stupid sorcery!" he finally cried, flinging the knife into the fireplace. "Tonight, this thing has lied to you again! I want to tell you something, Lotte. At the party of the Moon Ladies I was unfaithful to you. I took Aimée Breitaue—rather, she took me—whichever you prefer! In any case, your knife remained spotless and so you were sure that I had been faithful to you. And yet, as truly as I am standing here, I took her that night."

"What do I care!" she cried contemptuously.

He did not listen. "And today it is just the other way around. Today I really did not do anything—but your knife is bloody!—And now you are jealous."

She seized upon this word. "Jealous?! You taught me that in fifteen long years! If one can't go to sleep—if one lies in bed

awake—one night—another night—many nights—always thinking—always thinking of——”

She sat down, burying her head in her hands. “Jealous? Yes, I am—of everything you do! But I am no more jealous of a woman than of the glass that touches your lips, the shirt that you wear, the bath into which you step. There is one thing—one thing alone which I want to be mine—just one thing!” Her fingers gripped the arm of her chair. “Today you took from another woman—what you should take—only from me!”

Very softly he said: “Look here, Lotte, why should I lie to you? I told you about the others, and you don’t want to believe. But the Spanish girl I did *not* take.”

She snapped at him: “Who is talking about that? That you did not take her—believe me—I know better than you do!”

He did not grasp her meaning. “What do you mean?”

With a contemptuous shrug of her shoulders, she explained: “It was a whim—I had her examined by my physician. His report is: *Virgo intacta!*”

He stared at her, utterly failing to understand. “Yes—but—Lotte—what else could there be? How did I lie to you then?—And what—what else do you want?”

She passed her hand wearily across her forehead. “Whether you took her or not—what does that matter? Whether you take any woman that crosses your path—what does that matter to me?—No, don’t say anything—you did it—and you are still doing it all the time! Keep on doing it—it hurts me when I find out—yes, it still does—but you accustomed me to such pain! It passes; I can kiss you with a smile on my lips and you do not even notice how it hurts: you taught me that! But this thing—this is different!”

“But *what* is different, Lotte?” he pleaded.

She spoke very bitterly. “You have a good pair of eyes, they see clearly—and yet you are blind! The little knife that you threw into the fire did not lie! It spoke the truth—and it told me everything you did!”

She sat down beside him. “Look here,” she continued, “I will

tell you what it is: the highest thing that a woman can do for the man she loves, what a mother would do for her only child, a savior for suffering humanity—you taught me to do it, taught me the most marvelous, the divine gift!—And then you go and take it from someone else—any one who happens to cross your path! You take it from one who does not even know what is happening and who—if she knew—would spit at you! Now you know!"

He heard every word but he did not understand. "Say it again, Lotte," he begged. "Say it a little more clearly——"

She shook her head wearily. "No, no—it is no use. You would not understand. Another time, perhaps!"

He reached for her hand and patted it softly. "Try it now, please! Tell me tonight! Usually I am tired, worn out and weak in brain and body. But tonight my head is clear—I feel well and strong. Tell me now!"

She tore her hand away and sprang to her feet. A violent sob shook her whole body. "Strong?" she cried. "Well and strong?—What from?"

"I believe the tea helped me. The mescal, I mean."

With a wild hysterical cry she turned on him: "The mescal?—Blood, you mean, blood!"

As she quickly walked past him, he saw that tears were streaming down her pale cheeks. But her lips were laughing: "You fool, you fool—you incurable blind fool!"

She had gone and he was standing in the room, alone——



IVY JEFFERSON knew what she was doing when she set her clever little trap for Frank Braun. It had not taken her long to find out that a Spanish dancer had been in his apartment and that Mrs. van Ness had caught him with her. She also knew what had happened at the party of the Moon Ladies and that his name was in Aimée Breitauer's famous book. And he must have had something to do with Eva Lachmann—Director André had dropped a hint about that.

For a while Ivy tried to do without him and carried it through bravely for a few weeks—but then she gave in because she could not find any man she liked better. She needed thrills, as her mother did, as all society women did. And there was something in this German that thrilled her.

Love? No—a whim, perhaps. She happened to want him—and ever since she could remember she had always got what she wanted. Her logic was very simple: She was grown up and was in society now, and she had had a beau for a year and a half. Now she would marry. Him, of course. The man who meant more to her than any other, and whom she did not want to share with any other woman. Perhaps she would find in him what she was looking for—although she did not know what that was. If she would find it—well and good. And if not—she would

get a divorce—nothing easier. She could have anybody she wanted, she, Howard J. Jefferson's only daughter.

Frank Braun knew all this. Whenever possible he avoided being alone with her. He developed a genius for excuses and alibis.

"You are the worst beau in New York!" she told him.

"Why don't you get another!" he laughed.

She whistled; she could whistle beautifully, like a street urchin. That was the thing that intrigued her—that he never did what she wanted him to do. There were other things about him, of course. Some of them she knew—some she did not know. But she certainly meant to find out.

There was also another reason why he avoided being alone with her. It was not really a reason—it was a vague feeling, an instinctive fear. Something had happened that afternoon when La Goyita stayed in his apartment. Without being really conscious of it, he was afraid of being alone in a room with any woman. To go horseback riding—yes. To go driving—yes. To have lunch with a woman or go to the theatre with her—all right. He did not mind going anywhere where there were people around—there he was safe. But even walking in the garden with Ivy was uncomfortable. A vague fear that something might happen—a fear of her—of himself—

She knew that. And it was her game to create situations that found them alone. Her mother helped, made a point of leaving them alone as much as possible—in return, Ivy helped her with her beau, the Consul General. For a while Ivy tried to compromise herself with Frank Braun. She would kiss him just as her mother or one of the servants came in. But he pretended that it was all a childish game, the playfulness of a foolish little kitten.

Once she asked him point blank: "Would you like me for a wife?"

He still treated it all as a joke. "No!" he said. "You are no more fit to be a wife than I am to be a husband. But come

along now, Ivy, the car is waiting. We were going to drive in the country this afternoon!"

This time she persisted. "You would like me for a mistress, though, wouldn't you?"

"No, I wouldn't like you for a mistress either!" He did not like her serious tone. "Your parents would love it, wouldn't they? Come now, stop being foolish."

She merely shook her head, making no move to get up. "Mistress" was her favorite word. She flirted with it, and always used it when referring to Mrs. Van Ness. She would say: "I saw your mistress today on Fifth Avenue." Or when he came, she would greet him: "Are you coming from your mistress?" And when he left: "Give my regards to your mistress!"

"She has a secure hold on you, this mistress of yours," she mused aloud. "She doesn't want to let you go—that's it! You are never permitted to do what you like—you must always do what she wants. You are her puppet and she pulls the strings."

"Nonsense!"

"I know what I am saying. I have thought it all out. Everything you are doing—your whole work—you do only because she wants you to. She is anxious to have you do it because it keeps you busy—you are never to be the master of your own time, you must not have time to think by yourself and for yourself. Look here, I don't even like to read the newspapers any more with their constant sickening ballyhoo for the Star-Spangled Banner. But you are doing exactly the same thing for Germany—and you don't even know that all your speech-making is just as stupid as theirs! I don't give a damn about a 'Fatherland.' I would ten times rather live in London or Paris—probably in Vienna or Berlin, too, if I knew those cities. 'Fatherland' and all the other disgusting phrases are for the masses—but not for us!"

He looked at her in surprise: "But what is for us, then?"

"For us?" she repeated. "Life!"

He still refused to take her seriously. "Tell me, Ivy, where did you get all your wisdom?"

"I read it. In a book that we had in college. I forgot it—but later I remembered it again. And then I thought about it more. The people who refuse to follow the herd, who are either below or above it, don't need nonsense like Fatherland and Morals and State and God knows what! The hobo, the vagabond, the beggar doesn't pay any attention to it. He is below it—as we are above it!"

"We? Who are we?"

She had an answer ready. "We are the ones who have the means. Not all of us, of course, only those who know that money means power. And that power means Justice and Fatherland and Religion and Morals. In our book—it was some sort of guide through the philosophy of Plato and Aristoteles and Kant and Spencer and Buckle and all the rest, there was also a sentence by Spine-ozay——"

"Spinoza!" he corrected.

"I don't care how you pronounce it! The sentence was: 'Each man has as much right as he has power!' But the man who wrote it had to grind lenses because he had no money. He had therefore no power and no right. And so he was burned."

Frank Braun laughed. "Well—he was not burned exactly. But tell me, how long was your philosophy book?"

She measured. "It was that thick! More than two hundred pages! You can bet that none of us read it all!"

"Oh, of course not!"

"Go on, laugh if you like—I don't care. But what I said is true all the same. *WE* can do as we please. Every one in New York knows that Mrs. van Ness is your mistress, yet there isn't one family that refuses to receive her. And what about women like Pierpont or Fox or Gordon or Breitauer? America reeks with morality—but they can make merry in any way they please because with their money they stand above convention! And it is the same everywhere in the world. Mother's friend, the Consul General, told me that the reigning families of England, Russia, Belgium, Roumania are all German! They are Hohenzollerns, Koburgs, Holsteins, Wittelsbachs, Hessians—he had to

write it down for me and I learned it by heart so I could tell you. They don't give a damn about their German blood or about their German Fatherland! And when the war is over they will be honored in Germany exactly as if nothing had happened—and everywhere in the world for that matter. They can afford to do what they like; they have money and family and power and influence—and with that one can do as one pleases."

"All right," he cried. "But how does that apply to me? I am neither a Gould nor a Rockefeller, not a Koburg or a Hohenzollern. I have no money and no power. Therefore I cannot afford to disregard convention and must do as the masses, mustn't I?"

"No, not at all! It isn't the money alone—there are others who stand where we do. Only they are there not because of something they have—but because they have placed themselves there. That isn't easy, I believe—they may tumble down any moment—of course, so can we, but not as easily. And I believe you belong to them!"

He had dreamed something of that kind himself, once. He had dreamed of a nation of culture that would be above nationalities. His idea had not had anything to do with money. It was European in conception, far removed from American ideas. But wasn't it the same, fundamentally? In his concept as well as in hers, everything depended on the fact that one placed one's self on this higher plane, above the masses. Because with all his millions, the Pittsburgh steel magnate certainly did not stand above the masses—not this man who was so afraid of hell that he desperately tried to bargain with the Lord for a place in heaven, just a little tiny place in heaven. No, this man with his good deeds and his million dollar presents to charity certainly did not stand above convention—no more than the bourgeois professor who could not only pronounce Spinoza's name correctly, but who knew his philosophy by heart and that of many other philosophers as well.

Education or talent or money or birth or influence or name helped one to get there—but that wasn't enough. One must

have the will to do it, and the deep-seated conviction of being one of the chosen, of being entitled to break their laws on the strength of a right superior to theirs. One must have a feeling of power—regardless of where this power came from.

Ivy was right—he was following the herd now. He thought exactly as all the others thought, did what they did—the masses here as in Germany. And Lotte van Ness had harnessed him to this yoke—that also was true.

Ivy did not disturb his thoughts, waiting for him to say something.

"I don't know—" he muttered.

Finally she asked: "Tell me, would you have done all this—of your own free will?"

He hesitated. "I don't know. Perhaps. If not she, then some one else would have harnessed me. And I would pull a cart just as I am doing now."

She shook her head violently. "No, you would have broken away! But she holds you very cleverly. You would have left her long ago if she had married you. But she is only your mistress—and she leaves you your freedom. That, at least, is what you think! But actually you do only what she wants you to do. You even come to see me only because she is sending you here!"

"She sending me?" he laughed. "Why, she never did that!"

"Never? Really, never?"

He thought—true, the first time it had been Lotte together with Tewes, who had insisted, that he go and call on the Jeffersons. "Give the little girl her first kisses!" she had said, hadn't she?

"Perhaps once, in the beginning," he confessed hesitantly. "But after that she hardly ever mentioned your name!"

Ivy Jefferson nodded. "Of course! Your mistress is clever and she has known you a long time! It must always seem as if you could do as you please. You must never notice that you are doing only what she wants you to do!" She took a white carnation from the table, broke the stem and fitted it in his buttonhole.

"The new butler is so careless, he always forgets the buttonhole flowers. The old one was much better. Too bad I had to discharge him."

"You had to discharge him?" He laughed. "But why?"

"He was the best butler we ever had—perhaps you will see him again soon—"

"What do you mean—where?"

"In Mrs. van Ness' house! I had to discharge him—him and the second chauffeur—because they were both in the pay of your mistress. They reported to her everything, to the smallest detail, that happened in this house."

"No!" he protested vehemently.

"Yes!" she said quietly. "I listened in on three telephone conversations. Now you understand why she did not have to ask you about Ivy Jefferson?"

He did not answer.

"Your mistress is perfectly right," she continued. "One can learn a great deal from her. But I know a little bit myself! Do you think I don't realize why you are coming here?"

"Because I like you," he said quickly. "Because I enjoy playing with you."

"Perhaps—that may have something to do with it. But it isn't really the reason—it is only something that makes your work a little more pleasant. Don't think my father is as stupid as you and mother imagine he is! Yesterday he asked me down to his office in Wall Street—when he does that, he always has something serious to tell me. We had a long talk and I can assure you that he knows all about the game you are playing! He knows that you are flirting with me, that you pretend to be my beau—and badly enough at that!—because you believe that through me you have some influence on father. Because you assume—correctly, I suppose—that he would not do anything I did not want! That is your real reason! Is it so? Now try to lie to me!"

"It is so," he admitted.

"Any 'buts'?" she smiled.

He shook his head gravely. "No 'buts'."

"Sit down," she said. "I am not through yet. My father had five million dollars when he became a partner in the bank. Now he himself is senior partner and has twenty times as much. And what is more—his trust controls the whole Middle West. Don't think this is sheer blind luck and that one does not need brains to achieve that! The men down in Wall Street seem stupid to you—because they are ignorant. And the better ones feel it and are shy and embarrassed when they are with men like you because they can not contribute anything to a conversation about art and music, about social economy, philosophy and a thousand other subjects. But people underrate them—and you do, too! They know what they want!—Wait! You read all the newspapers and you know that General Villa invaded Texas three days ago and that he burned the city of Columbus. You went to see him down in Mexico—you and others: you Germans have caused it!"

"No, that isn't true!" he protested. "No German had anything to do with that!"

"Whether it is true or not isn't the point as long as they all believe that here. Don't think I am blaming you—it would serve these parlor patriots right to get an idea of what war is like; I only wish Villa were ten times stronger than he really is. And if you were the one who got him to invade Texas I could only congratulate you! But that is not what I wanted to say. I know with whom you made friends down in Torreon—with a Jew from New York who is Villa's aide—his name is Colonel Pearlstone."

"How did you find out?" he asked listlessly.

"Father told me yesterday. He heard it in Washington—through the Japanese Embassy. Do you understand now?"

"Yes——"

She laughed. "You would be in the Tombs tomorrow if I wanted it—and then in Atlanta—for twenty years or more. I mean: it would be quite possible, wouldn't it?"

"Oh, yes," he nodded. "Absolutely. Everything is possible in this country at this time!"

After a pause she continued. "It is true then! It is the one nice thing about the United States, I think: it would be possible this way—and it would be possible the other way, too!"

"What other way? Have you any more surprises?"

"No, enough for today. I mean only, it would be possible the other way, too! That you don't sign your name tomorrow in the Tombs register—it all depends on you!—Are you willing to pay the price?"

He knew perfectly well what she meant, yet he asked: "What do you mean, Ivy? What is the price?"

She laughed again. "You, of course! Do you want to become engaged to me tonight? Think it over—but not too long! I play a different game—not like your mistress! I am quite willing to put down my cards—but they are nice trumps, aren't they?"

Marvelous trumps—he had to admit! And he had nothing in his hand.

He had to gain time. "I'll think it over and give you my answer tomorrow!"

She shook her head slowly. "Tomorrow? Oh, no! You want to talk it over with your mistress, don't you?"

He could not think of anything else, so he said: "Yes, I do."

Her young voice was scornful, but it was a good-natured scorn. "Why, of course, we will have to get her consent. But it need not take long—we will ask her to come here!" She turned sharply and hurried across the room.

He followed her. "What are you going to do?"

She had lifted the telephone receiver. "Plaza 3761"

He listened as she talked to a butler first, then to Lotte's maid, asking for Mrs. van Ness. He wanted to snatch the receiver from her, wanted to tell her to—

Then he thought: "Perhaps it will be better if she comes—perhaps she can find some way out."

"Is that Mrs. van Ness?" the girl was saying. "This is Ivy

Jefferson speaking. I am so sorry to trouble you.—He is here—yes—Your—your lo——”

But she did not say the word. “Your friend is here, Dr. Frank Braun.—Yes!—He would like you to come right over.—No—I can’t discuss it over the telephone!—No, no, he can not come himself, not now!—It is really very important.—For him, too.—In twenty minutes then? Thank you so much!”

She hung up the receiver. “She is coming! You heard it!”

She paced the room with quick, nervous steps. Her eyes were sparkling. He sat down, burying his head in his hands, trying to think of a way out—but in vain.

They did not speak, either of them. They simply waited.

Finally the butler announced Mrs. van Ness. Frank Braun sprang to his feet.

Ivy went to the door, shook hands with Lotte and led her to a chair. “So nice of you to come, Mrs. van Ness. He wants to become engaged to me, you see, and he feels that he must have your kind permission first. I can understand that and I think it is considerate of him that he does not like to do anything important without the permission of his—his——”

She hesitated—but only for a short second. She must have this satisfaction, she must say it, right in her rival’s face.

“—Of his mistress. Because you are his mistress, aren’t you, Mrs. Van Ness?” She did not say it bitingly, however, or offensively—she said it softly and gently, in a flattering voice.

Without waiting for Lotte to answer, she continued rapidly. She explained the situation frankly and clearly, without using an extra word. She explained that she wanted Frank Braun—well, just because she wanted him. That it was a whim, perhaps, but that she meant to have him. That both she and her father knew why he had been sent into the Jefferson house. And that she had him in her hand—with the Mexico business—and a few other things. She concluded by saying that she had asked Mrs. van Ness to come here not only for his sake, but that she, Ivy Jefferson, also had something to say to her.—If Mrs. van Ness should give her permission—and Ivy felt sure of it—Frank

Braun would be her fiancé. And she wanted him for herself alone, she wanted that understood. Of course, he would not be able to see his former mistress any more and would not go to her house again. It would have to be all over—once and for all—

She said it very softly and sweetly, cooing like a bird: "I would like to make this quite clear!"

Mrs. van Ness rose from her chair. She was very pale and nodded silently.

There was a pause which Ivy broke. But she was not as sure of herself now as she had been a minute before and her voice trembled slightly. "It seems that she agrees, your mi—" She interrupted herself. "No, she is no longer that—I beg your pardon! Mrs. van Ness agrees then! May I have the butler show you out, Mrs. van Ness?"

The pale woman said: "Are you in such a hurry? Just a word, Miss Ivy, from his—former—mistress. You should know—know that—" she hesitated, searching for the right words. "You should know that your fiancé needs something which you probably won't be able to give him."

Ivy shrugged her shoulders. "One does not know how much money you have, Mrs. van Ness—my father does not know exactly, either, and perhaps you have more than we.—At least now! But you do not earn anything—and my father does. He is making a great deal of money now. Before the war is over, we will have much more still. So you need not worry, Mrs. van Ness, I don't believe that the man I marry will lack anything he needs."

The ghost of a smile flickered on Lotte's lips. "You misunderstood me. One can not buy it!"

"What is it, then?"

Lotte shook her head. "I can not say it."

So Ivy turned to him. "Do you know?"

He cast a long glance at Lotte Levi, questioning and imploring. But she did not say anything and did not look at him. "I do not know what she means," he said at last.

"Well?" Ivy asked.

Lotte answered: "No—he does not know. But he will know sooner or later. And if you can not give him what means life to him—he will know where he can get it. And then—he will come back to me!"

Ivy quickly pressed the button, without replying. But Lotte did not wait for the butler—she nodded and left the room.

Frank Braun followed her with his eyes. "Now she is gone—" he felt—"Mother!"

The butler came in. "Ask Mr. and Mrs. Jefferson to come in, please," Ivy said.

Then she turned to him. "I believe I will take the chance," she said slowly. "Something that you need? That she can give you and I can not? But she won't say what it is—and you don't know? Either she is lying—or——"

Her glance wandered over his face, his whole body, as if she were undressing him. There was desire in her eyes—and more——

"Or——" she whispered as if to herself, "or——"

She stamped her foot and threw back her head with a defiant gesture. Breathing hard, with quivering nostrils, she flung out the words at him: "I want to say it, I want to say it! I want to be able to say anything I like—do you hear!—This is why I want you!"

"What is it?" he asked. "Why don't you say it?"

"I want to say a great deal," she continued quickly, "but I don't know the words. You must teach me—not now, but later! Over there in the Old World, in Europe and Asia you know so much more than we do here. You have so much more knowledge—that is the culture of which they are so jealous here although they make fun of it in the newspapers. You have a greater knowledge of everything—and of love, too! Love is an art—I read that in a French book once. I want to learn this art, I want to know it as well as—as that van Ness woman. This is what I want you for!"

She came over to him and put her hand caressingly on his. Her hand was moist and trembled violently.

"Tell me—" she whispered, "did your—did Mrs. van Ness perhaps mean that you—that you liked something special—in love? That she knew something—and could do something—that I don't know and couldn't learn?—Why don't you say something! Answer me!"

"I don't know what she means," he evaded.

Her eyes glowed into his as her fingers closed tightly around his hand. "You must tell me," she pleaded, "you must never hesitate to say anything to me."

But he merely shook his head. "Upon my word—I really don't know."

She sighed and was silent for a minute. Then she continued, but her voice was firmer now and more confident. "And yet I don't believe that she lied. Only—she is twisting it around, I think. It isn't that you need something that only she could give you—it is she—she who is taking something from you!"

He stared at her in open amazement. "I thought of that too—that very thing—more than once! What made you say that?"

She patted his hand quickly with nervous fingers. "Do you think I didn't notice all this time how you were? Sometimes you were very well—strong and healthy—and other times tired and empty and flat. And Mrs. van Ness? I have watched her whenever I met her, at the opera, and at concerts in Carnegie Hall! When you looked well—she was pale and gaunt—and sometimes she looked like death! But she blossomed forth and became well and fresh-looking when you were feeling miserable! I have been writing it down in my calendar—for almost a year! I can show you the dates if you like. Tell me, what did you two——"

She interrupted herself at the sound of approaching voices.

"Not now," she cried. "Here are father and mother! Not now! But this is the explanation—I am sure! She sapped your strength—and she drove you into this mad whirl, so you would not notice, so you would not find time to think about what she was doing to you!"

"But what was she doing?" he cried. "And how and when?"

Ivy laughed. "I don't know how—nor what she did. But I can

certainly tell you when she did it! Did you never sleep with her?"

As the door opened Ivy threw her arms around his neck, rose up and kissed him. Then she tore herself away and ran to her parents. "Dears!" she cried. "We are engaged!"

He did not have one minute to himself all day. He had to stay for tea and then Ivy drove him home. He walked slowly up the stairs, afraid of the "At last" that would greet him. This eternal "At last!" and "Please hurry!"

He was greeted with two "At last's!" and his secretary added a "Thank God you have come!" He hurried Frank Braun into his bedroom where Fred was waiting to help him dress.

"Please hurry! Isn't that what you are going to say? I know! To the bazaar—yes, yes! Can't you leave me alone one single night?"

"But, Doctor!" Rossius said reproachfully, "this is Sunday! The big day! The Ambassadors have come especially from Washington!"

"I know!" he sighed. "Where is my tailcoat, Fred?"

Thousands of people crowded around Madison Square Garden. The gates had to be closed some time before and a detail of policemen was keeping the crowds in check. Ten people would come out and then the policemen let ten others in—ten only! But tens of thousands were waiting for admission. They stood patiently outside in the pouring rain—for hours.

Frank Braun and his party went in through the basement and up the stairs into the immense arena where a tent city had been built. It represented Nuremberg—a Nuremberg that one sees in children's picture books.

Frank Braun went up to the gallery and as he leaned over the balustrade he looked down upon a sea of changing color. Roaring and shouting waves of humanity rippled and swelled, heaved and broke as they were pushed in and out of the room by the everlasting human tide. Colored waves under a huge sky of cloth that covered the whole scene with its soft yellow folds.

Right inside the gate of the tent city was a booth in which the nurses of the German hospitals sold dolls. Adjoining them, in an endless row, were the tents of the various German organizations, *Arion*, *Liederkrantz*, *Deutscher Verein*, *Heinebund*, *Sprachverein*, *Verein der Vereinigten Bäcker*, and countless others.

Next to the waffle booth in which the ladies were dressed in purple colors, was Lotte Levi's tent where she sold Nuremberg toys. He could see her from the gallery, working busily with three young ladies who all had reddish-blond hair just like hers. All four wore identical silk dresses of a milky steel-blue color, with Nile-green kerchiefs tied over them.

He watched her selling a little wooden horse with a cart to a fat lady, and persuading her to take a doll kitchen as well. Then Lotte took up a jumping-jack and pulled the strings making him dance and jiggle merrily. The fat lady could not resist and bought the jumping-jack as well as the other things. She tried to make him jump, but hard as she tried, she could not emulate Lotte.

"Lotte is much better at this!" he thought. "She knows all about jumping-jacks, whether they are made of wood—or of flesh and blood!" Something within him jerked and he felt as if he, too, had to jump and beat his arms and legs when Lotte pulled the strings.

Now she wrapped up the jumping-jack and gave it to the fat lady, the buyer.

The buyer? Had not Ivy Jefferson bought *him*—but a couple of hours ago?

With a deep sigh he wiped the perspiration off his forehead, and walked over to a refreshment tent for a drink.

After he had sat there a while, Dr. Cohn came in, panting for breath, and sat down beside him.

"What did you buy?" Frank Braun asked him. "Your coat hangs down like a flour bag!"

The physician pulled a black case out of his pocket. "That!" he cried. "Oh, I have been carrying this around with me for days.

I brought it for Mrs. van Ness and I always forget to give it to her!"

He put the case down on the table. "But what is in it?" Frank Braun was curious. "May I see?"

Dr. Cohn opened the case. "A set of bistouries—a very nice one, too. You couldn't get a better one anywhere—not with knives that cut better than these."

Frank Braun gaped—a complete set of surgical instruments. "But what does Mrs. van Ness want with it?" he asked.

"That's a professional secret. But I guess I can tell you. She needs them for her corns!"

Involuntarily, Frank Braun cried: "But Lo——" He choked back the words, not to betray himself, meanwhile staring at the shiny knives as if in a trance. He knew them well, her white, well-groomed little feet. She wore rings on her toes, with colored stones on them, when she felt in the mood——

Corns! Ridiculous!—Lotte Levi—and corns!

The physician shut the case and pushed it over to Frank Braun. "Do me a favor and give it to her when you see her, will you? I might forget it again."

"Why don't you give it to her yourself? There she is—no, she is just getting up. She is coming over here now."

Dr. Cohn hailed her. "This is a lucky coincidence, Mrs. van Ness! I brought you your set!"

With a sigh she took the case. Then she smiled faintly. "A little late, my dear Doctor. Who knows whether I will ever be able to use it now." She turned to the woman with her: "May I present our president to you? Dr. Cohn!"

The two shook hands and walked slowly ahead.

Lotte sat down at his table, idly playing with the black case.

Neither of them spoke. A frozen smile was on her lips. Her hands on the black case seemed very white, like the hands of a marble statue.

"She is a dead woman," he thought. He loved her dearly.

He had a curious tight feeling in his chest. Tears welled up in

his eyes and ran down his cheeks, quietly, slowly, but incessantly. He loved her so very dearly.

She rose and passed her cool hand softly across his forehead. "Farewell!" she said.

Then she turned to go.

His eyes fell on the case. "You forgot your case!"

She nodded, thanked him and took it.

"Perhaps later——" she said.

Then she left.

He took out his handkerchief, wiped his face and sipped his coffee.

Now that she had gone, he could think more clearly.

Those little knives, those shiny knives! The best and sharpest knives in the world for cutting and making incisions!

For her corns—she had told the Doctor! She, who had never had a corn in her life!

What did she want with them?

And what was it she had said to Dr. Cohn? That it was too late now.

He laughed. Too late! Too late? Because this very day, Ivy Jefferson——?

Yes, Ivy had bought the jumping-jack now! She had bought him!

Lotte had wanted the knives for him, there was no doubt about it! Had he not often noticed similar knives on her bedside table?

And the sharp little knife that she had given him to take down to Mexico? The one that got bloody on the day he drank the mescal?

That day he had been sound asleep on his sofa, having absurd dreams. But the knife had become bloody!

What was it Ivy had said?—She did not know how and what—but she did know when! When they slept together—then!

And why had Lotte taken the dancer straightaway to her

house? Why? Had the dancer done what Lotte commanded her to do—while he was asleep? Had she been only Lotte's tool?

A tool for what?

No matter, one thing was certain: something had happened to him—and had happened over and over again while he was asleep! And it must have something to do with these sharp little knives and with red blood. And also with the strange disease from which he suffered—this slow disease that was puzzling the physicians, and that drained his vitality and sapped his strength.

She sapped his strength—she, Lotte, his beloved!

He loved her so much—he had never known how much until now. He loved her so dearly, he did not want to believe all this about her.

And yet, what else could it be—it must be true!

He left the refreshment tent and stepped out once more onto the gallery. There she was standing in her booth with the three ladies—pale-green kerchiefs over dresses of a milky steel-blue color. And their hair—what a symphony of color! She sold little wooden horses, cows, doll kitchens and cannons that shot peas. No jumping-jacks? No, there weren't any more in her booth. All sold out!

He went downstairs into the immense arena and followed the pressure of the crowd.

Finally he arrived at a Biedermeier wine garden which Aimée Breitauer was running in a quiet nook in the basement of the huge building.

Here only champagne was sold. This was the place where all the notables and the rich were sitting, while the crowd that filed past the rose hedge surrounding the garden, would stop curiously to point out some one: "Look, there is——"

Aimée Breitauer stood under a linden tree playing the hostess in a genuine period costume, assisted by twelve bar-maids in similar dresses.

The Ambassador was sitting in a corner, hiding modestly be-

hind the rose hedge. But some one had spied him from outside.
"There is the Count!"

The Count—he was the symbol of Germany in this country. He was the Kaiser's Ambassador and the Kaiser's friend, he meant home, he meant Germany!

"*Hoch!*" they cried, "*Hoch, hoch!*" They cheered Germany and the Kaiser and the Ambassador, they sang the *Wacht am Rhein*, *Deutschland über Alles* and the *Preussenlied*. They did not stop until he mounted a chair and addressed them. And again they cheered.

Some one next to Frank Braun hissed: "It is a disgrace how he is carrying on!"

Frank Braun turned around. A woman of rich, mature beauty—oh, Mrs. Thistlehill!

"What is a disgrace?" he inquired.

"Can't you see?" she hissed. "There he has her at his table again. Your Ambassador takes her along everywhere! That dirty piece of trash—now she covers herself with diamonds since she married a millionaire, but she is a whore—haven't you slept with her yet? My husband has—everybody in this garden has!"

She shouted it in a loud voice, to make sure that every one could hear her.

"Hold your tongue, will you!" Frank Braun said angrily.

But Aimée Breitaueer calmly turned around and patted her good-naturedly on her naked shoulder. "Well, well!" she laughed. "And didn't they sleep with you, too, my dear? Why be jealous, then?"

She turned to Frank Braun: "How do you like my dress?"

He looked her up and down. "The devil knows how you do it, Aimée! The oldest of your ladies is ten years younger than you—but you look ten years younger than the youngest of them. And your dress—give your dressmaker a kiss for me!"

Leaning against him, she whispered: "My dress is very comfortable—and it has a secret!"

"Another one? It seems all your dresses have secrets—but

only to solve the question of comfort. Tell me, Aimée, what good is a comfortable dress to you—here?"

She winked at him. "Come along, I will show you something!"

She pulled him behind a little fountain surrounded by iris, past a jasmine bush, and pointed to a hedge overgrown with honeysuckle.

"Do you see anything there? No, of course not. Nobody can see it. My gardener is just as clever as my dressmaker." She took his hand and led him into the green shrubbery. "Hold on to that!" she whispered. "Lift it up, but be careful!"

He felt a doorknob in his hand and turned it softly, opening a narrow door that was hidden in the shrubbery, until he could see through a slit.

"That's enough!" she whispered. "Now look through the slit!"

He saw a small room with rugs on the floor and mirrors on the walls. There were a few low tables and in one corner stood a small suitcase. On the sofa sat his secretary, Ernst Rossius, bending over a pad and writing busily.

She closed the door carefully. "I locked him in here," she chuckled. "He has to write a poem for me. He is well taken care of until I have time to eat my dessert. I am looking forward to it—he is a sweet boy!"



FRANK BRAUN sat on the beach in the silvery night.

He was alone; the ocean stretched before him in an endless quiet, moon-lit expanse. Far away were the lights of Newport. No human sound, no bird-cry broke the stillness, and not the slightest breath bestirred the calm, soft air.

A little further north must be the steamship route—a continuous procession of English, French, Italian, Dutch, Norwegian, Danish, Greek steamers—but never a German boat.

The steamers carried guns and rifles, cartridges and shells, sabres and pistols. They carried airplanes and submarines, machine guns, war material of every description, for the Allies—all that America could produce to help force to her knees a bleeding Germany. And for Germany—yes, they had cargo for Germany, too: every neutral steamer carried a dozen mail bags which were promptly taken off by the English in Falmouth or Kirkwall. The Lords of the Ocean did not want even a few letters to reach their hated enemy. Letters are refreshing, they revive the spirit, they are food just as much as bread is—and Germany was to starve.

He sat on the beach in the silvery night. He had walked over from Oakhurst, the great Jefferson estate near Newport, and now he was waiting for Ivy, his fiancée.

The calm night enveloped him with a soft, warm embrace making him dream.

He had dreaded going to Newport and had postponed his visit as long as possible, although he hated staying in the hot city. Finally he had come and now he was glad he was here. He had spent these weeks in Newport swimming with Ivy, riding horseback with her, driving in her car—or just lying on the beach beside her, basking in the sun. He saw no one but her, and now and then her parents, when her father came up for the week-end or when her mother spent a few days there with her solemn beau, the English Consul. Frank Braun thrived in the atmosphere of peace and quiet luxury with which he was surrounded. He loved the vast grounds of Oakhurst with its deer preserve, with its immense green lawns and innumerable hothouses. A hundred gardeners were employed there and yet he hardly saw any of them—the estate was so big. He and Ivy drove through the grounds in a dog-cart, sometimes drawn by a donkey or a pony, and they played golf when old Mr. Jefferson happened to be there.

At night, after dinner, Frank Braun generally went out for a walk alone. Then he would sit on the dunes and dream, waiting for Ivy to come and walk with him on the beach.

She did not ask questions, left him very much to himself. But she listened attentively when he told her about his life, which was seldom enough. She was interested in everything he said or did, but she never intruded. She managed him very well and gradually found her way into his heart. "Ivy," he thought. "Her parents have chosen a good name for her."

She came very late that night. He saw her slim figure from afar, but he did not go to meet her, waiting until she came up to him.

"I took mother to the train," she said. "She went to New York."

"Because her Consul did not come up this week?" he asked.

"Yes—but why say it?"

"Why not? Isn't it true?"

"Of course it is," she nodded impatiently. "But one need not say it, just the same. You know—I know—so why say it? It is so German to call everything by its name."

He laughed. "And so American not to! And yet, Ivy—you don't follow your own advice—What was it you used to call Mrs. van Ness?"

"I called her your mistress! But that was different, I had a reason. I wanted to make you angry—and hurt her. And—perhaps—hurt myself, too. With mother it is different. I do not want to spoil things for her, I want to help her whenever I can. To feel young is the one thing in her life! And she feels young as long as she has admirers, and especially as long as she has her beau, the Consul General."

"Tell me," he inquired, "does your father help her, too?"

"Yes—I think so," she said slowly. "At least he makes no fuss about it, and that is just as good. He has his actresses, his chorus girls—I don't know that, of course, I only think so because every man in Wall Street has. In any case he does not interfere with mother, he simply persuades himself that it is a harmless friendship. And I say the same, and you should say it, too—and then it would be so! Perhaps it really is: the two do not invite company—when they—when they are alone."

"I have no objections!" he laughed. "Let's all tell ourselves fairy tales."

"Yes, why not!" she cried, pulling him up by his hands. "Since you have been educating me, I always find things I like in the books I have to read! Listen to this—the Cardinal Mayzarine said it: '*La vérité? Qu'est ce que c'est?—Une fable convenuel*'"

"His name was Mazarin!" he corrected her. "And it wasn't he who said it but Richelieu."

"But it was a Frenchman, anyway. And it is true if his name were Billy Sunday!"

She pulled his arm under hers and they walked slowly on.

Gently Ivy stroked his hand. "I am afraid Germany will lose," she said. "Roumania has declared war on you."

"How do you know?" he burst out.

"The Consul called up a little while ago to tell mother. They had a cable in Washington, just an hour ago. He prophesied for weeks that this would happen but I did not like to talk to you about it—it would have upset you. Roumania—that means another six hundred thousand soldiers for the Allies. And they have excellent equipment and the best guns—all from Germany. Do you know that their king is a Hohenzollern?"

He nodded and pressed her hand silently—she understood and did not say any more. Quietly they walked on.

Liquid silver all around. Everything dissolved in it—sand and ocean, sky and air—nothing but silver, liquid silver. And they, he and Ivy, the only living things—nowhere a human being.

He looked up and let his eyes wander out over the ocean. A cool, soft silvery mist covered the world and shooting stars blazed a fiery trail through the haze. The moon cast its light on the silver sea—illuminating a bright path that led far out to a glittering sparkling square. Water nymphs should be dancing out there, moon maidens—dancing in gossamer veils of silver—

Yet he was glad they were not dancing there, that the white ocean was still and deserted, a lonely empty expanse of water. He was glad that the moon path from their eyes to the middle of the ocean was barred to all living things, that only their longing would tread this path.

Their longings that had become as one. His—and those of the fair-haired girl beside him—

Her's, too? Ivy's, too?

He looked at her and she nodded. Did she understand his reveries? He believed so because he wanted to.

Hand in hand they walked through the silver night. Quietly and silently and very lonely they walked.

Their step was light and noiseless as if their feet were not touching the ground. As if they were gliding over the sand—or were they floating over the moon-drenched water?

Liquid silver.

Two longings—that had become one. Or two souls, gliding

over the water—or was it the air? Everything was dissolved in the liquid silver around them. They were gliding over the ocean path out to the moon-lit water.

Two souls that had become one. One soul then—the soul of their two selves.

Everything had disappeared in the silver haze—sand, ocean, sky and air. Their soul was the shimmery haze—that alone existed and nothing else.

Nothing, absolutely nothing in all the world.

Only the silver soul of their longing floating through eternities.

Silver feet—silver wings—

Silver night.

A cry—Ivy. She jumped aside, pulling him back. A dead body lay before her feet, a small dead body—a drowned dog—or a cat.

The animal's fur was white.

She trembled with horror. "Take me away," she pleaded, "please!"

"Where are the horses?" he asked.

"Jack is waiting with them under the elm trees."

They hurried up the dunes, found their white horses, jumped into the saddle.

"Gallop!" he cried. "Ivy—let's gallop into the moon!"

They spurred their horses, flying over the sand—

The night was very beautiful—

He was alone in Oakhurst the day Director André came up from New York. Ivy had gone into town with her mother.

Early that morning Ivy had burst into his bedroom and jumped on his bed, waking him with a quick kiss. "We will be back tonight!" she cried.

"What's happened?" he asked.

"Oh, nothing! Father hasn't been up for two weeks and has asked us to come to town and have luncheon with him at his club."

She kissed him quickly, hopped off the bed and hurried out.

Frank Braun spent a quiet day talking with Director André. In the evening the ladies came back from New York. Director André immediately cornered Mrs. Jefferson to tell her about his latest business venture. Ivy took Frank Braun to another room.

"Do you know why father asked me to come to town?" she asked when they were alone. "The Duke of Stratford wants to marry me!"

"What did you say?"

"That I very much appreciated the honor!" She laughed. "But that I was already provided for, that I had you and was quite satisfied—for the time being."

There was a moist glimmer in her eyes. "I also told him to have patience. I said that perhaps—but only perhaps—you might turn out to be a disappointment. And that I might then—later—perhaps!—consider his offer."

"You told him—that?" he whispered.

"Yes, in these very words. And now you know—that I am well insured—just in case."

He paced up and down his room, waiting for Ivy. He wanted to talk to her that night and he had asked her to come to his room.

The Duke of Stratford, he mused. This was surely the work of the British Embassy in Washington, especially of the Consul General. They were really amazing, these Englishmen, obdurate and persistent, never willing to give up and admit defeat. He, Frank Braun was engaged to Ivy and the English knew perfectly well that this engagement had been Ivy's wish and not his. But the Consul had known the Jeffersons for a good many years and he had seen Ivy grow up. He knew that her love for the German was a whim, deeply rooted perhaps, yet merely a whim. And he was also well aware that he held a strong trump in the Duke of Stratford.

To marry into high English nobility was the great dream of all the wealthy and prominent American *débutantes*. The Duchess of Manchester was a Zimmerman; Lady Curzon, wife of the

Viceroy of India, was a Leiter. May Goelet became the Duchess of Roxburgh; Margaret Drexel the Viscountess Maidstone; Vivian Gould, Lady Decies.

And this Duke of Stratford was some one to be proud of as a husband. A volunteer in Flanders, then Lieutenant, finally Captain. Wounded and decorated with the V.C. A hero. And a member of one of the best English families. Besides, he was a man of great personal charm, slim, well-built, fair-haired and blue-eyed, with pleasant manners. A really attractive boy, good-natured and modest, whom people liked the moment they met him. He had been sent over as attaché of the Legation, undoubtedly in the hope that the young warrior would bring home one of the huge American fortunes. That would lend new glamour to the time-honored name of Stratford—and would be at the same time a not-to-be-despised accretion to England's tax receipts.

He had three slight faults. His left leg was a bit stiff from a German bullet, he stuttered when excited, and he was somewhat stupid. But each of these faults only made him the more desirable to a woman of Ivy's sort; while her wealth more than made up for her lower social rank, his trivial shortcomings gave her a decided superiority over him. Slow, and handicapped in walking, talking and thinking, this young man promised to make the most comfortable husband. A member of an impoverished family, but only too well acquainted with the luxury he could no longer afford, her wealth—on which she would surely maintain a tight grip—would soon become indispensable to him and render him completely dependent upon her. And at the same time she would have a free hand for her most bizarre whims, able to live life as she pleased, in style.

Frank Braun smiled. No doubt, compared to him, Herbert Stratford was ten times better suited to be her husband. He, Frank Braun, was a German, one of millions. He did not belong to the nobility, he was no hero. He was moody and did not hesitate to inflict his moods upon those around him. He could be charming and winning when he had a good day—but he was almost unbearable when he happened to feel out of sorts; and

then he behaved like a hysterical woman. This the Duke never did.

Yes, he would make a very bad husband. No woman had ever been able to endure him long—or vice versa, which amounted to the same thing in the end.

Besides that, he was sick, very sick. The other man was healthy.

He sat down on the bed and pulled open the drawer of his night table, where he kept his medicines. He pushed back the black Bible—was there any house in this country that did not have a Bible on every bedside table?—and reached for his nostrum boxes and bottles.

For many months he had been dosing himself indiscriminately with strychnine, arsenic, laudanum, heroin, atropine, mescal, cocaine. These drugs would help him for a little while, but nothing seemed to cure him permanently. His condition was in a latent stage and his symptoms remained always the same—a tired, empty feeling, a state of anæmic semi-existence that had by now become natural with him. Yes, he could stimulate himself for a brief while—he was doing it every day now—he could pretend for a few hours, to himself and to others, that he was like other people, a normal human being.

But how long could that last? This disease dragged on and on, not getting worse and never getting better. Of one thing he was convinced: if it was Lotte Levi who had fixed this fool's disease on him with her sorcery and witchcraft, if it was she who had drained life from his body and reduced him to a passive jumping-jack, it was also she who had the secret of his recovery, who could pull the strings to make him dance merrily, and could restore his health for weeks at a time. Little Ivy did not know the secret—she could not pull the strings that returned him to life.

But he was to marry Ivy—Ivy, of all women. He had liked her, yes, and he liked her better every day. She spoiled him with her love and he enjoyed letting himself be spoiled by her. And yet, she did not have anything that excited him, she could never

make him see the woman in her. She was his little playmate—he enjoyed her as his toy, as he would a puppy.

A puppy? No, not even as much as a puppy. When his dog was run over, he carried the heavy carcass home and sat up with it the whole night. He himself jabbed the syringe with cyanide into the dog's heart when the veterinary told him that the animal's spine was broken. He saw the dog pass away in his arms and then he dug a grave for him, covered it with earth and planted a great yuka tree over it. And he wept—

Would he weep if something should happen to Ivy? No, his dog had been much closer to him.

But even if he should love her, if he should desire her with every fibre of his body—what difference did it make? This marriage was bound to break up in a short time.

Of course, he was not going to marry Ivy Jefferson for his own sake. Only to keep her wealth from working against Germany, as it would if she should marry the Duke. This was the reason why he was selling his half-rotten carcass to Ivy's whim, so that the great Jefferson Trust would remain neutral in the financial war against Germany.

"This is probably the only sensible thing about the whole affair anyway," he thought. "I must arrange it so that this money will not be working against Germany under any circumstances." The thought comforted him.

Or rather, not this thought, but another thought. The thought of Lotte Levi and how her eyes would be shining if she knew what he was feeling this moment. And this was the real reason—

He told Ivy all this. She listened quietly, attentively and patiently. Then she said: "Yes, that may all be so."

"And?" he questioned.

She came over to his chair and sat down on his knees, putting her arms around his neck.

"Listen to me, now!" she began. "Perhaps some day I will be the way you think—perhaps even in a few months. But I am not yet that way, not just now. I am still—a girl, I have never kissed

any man before you! I love you—yes, I really do—as much as I know how. I want you—” quickly, nervously, she passed her hand through his hair. “You give me something—I don’t know what—but I want more of it. I know that you gave it to other women—to many other women—and yet I want it. The Duke and all the other men I know do not give me anything—they mean nothing to me. I am generally cold and reserved—and I imagine I always will be—and I get even more so when I am with these men. But with you I lose my reserve, you make me dream and wish things—which—which— That is why I want you!”

Her fingers trembled as she fumbled with the hooks on her dress. She took his hand and pulled it into her blouse, under her chemise. “Feel how my heart is beating!” she whispered. “And you—you? Don’t I mean anything to you—nothing at all?”

Her little breast snuggled into his hand. And he could feel the pulsing of her blood.

He closed his eyes. Yes, really, her blood was beating against his veins—as if it sought entrance. And slowly, very slowly he felt a pleasant sensation streaming through his body. Very softly, very faintly. As if—at last—warm blood were flowing once more through his veins—

“Yes—” he said, “yes, you do, Ivy—perhaps—now—”

She pushed her neck against his, lifted her little head and whispered into his ear: “I am so stupid, so clumsy. Mrs. van Ness was clever—she knew how to strike flames out of you. I don’t know anything. Why don’t you help! Teach me—show me—I will do anything you want!”

He thought: “Be my cover. Lie down, you fair-haired child, very naked against my naked body. Cover me, wrap me so I can feel everywhere the life in your young body. And your blood—your red blood. But quietly—quietly—you must not move!—And nothing else, do you hear—nothing else, nothing!”

But he did not say it. He only warmed his finger-tips under the beat of her heart.

"So you don't want the Duke?" he asked. She quickly shook her head. "No!" she cried, "I want you!"

"Then promise me, Ivy, that—if—if——"

He pushed her away gently and rose to his feet.

"If——" he began again. "Promise that—whatever may happen—you and your father—and your father's money—that you will never do anything against Germany."

"That is all you care about!" she said contemptuously, and all the warmth was gone from her voice.

"Yes, of course! I must be free from this thought. I must be assured on this point if—if I——. Do you promise?"

"Yes, I promise," she said carelessly, shrugging her shoulders as they shook hands on it.

Something was wrong there. She had promised so quickly, so lightly—she would think nothing of breaking that promise!

Then he remembered the Bible. She was an American girl and the Bible must therefore mean something to her—something special. Just as her worldliness could not conceal a trace of youthful shyness in her, she must have retained also a certain reverence for the Bible and all it stood for. She could not have overcome completely the influence of her family and of her education, it must have left in her an unconscious, vague awe for this black book, a fear at least.

"Come!" he said. Taking her by her hand, he led her into his bedroom, took the Bible out of the drawer and gave it to her.

"This is my Bible!" she said. "It was given to me when I was confirmed. Mother put it there for you, it is supposed to bring you luck!"

"Then let it bring me luck!" he cried. "Swear to me on your Bible that you will keep your promise!"

She quickly put down the book.

"Why swear?" she hesitated. "Why——"

He watched her carefully. Yes, that was the way to do it; that was an oath she would keep! Let her take the Duke then, if she liked!

Finally she reached for the Bible. "I will swear it," she said firmly, "on one condition."

"What?"

"That you marry me—now!"

"Now?" he protested. "But it was definitely agreed between us—on your father's request—that we would not marry until the war was over!"

"I know!" she cried angrily. "But I thought then that your foolish war would last only a few months. Now I realize that it was silly of me to underestimate your European stupidity. You Germans will never beat the Allies—and it will take them years before they can beat you. But they are all too stupid to admit it." She walked over to him, standing close and looking him firmly in the eye. "I do not want to wait any longer! Is that clear? I am twenty years old. I—I need—a man—do you understand?"

She shouted it into his face, then she covered her eyes with her hand, hysterically laughing and sobbing at the same time.

"I am shameless—" she whispered, "yes, I know! You force me to be. I cannot wait any longer—I need you. I want you!"

He did not answer. He did not take her into his arms, he did not touch her.

Again she spoke. "We can be married in a week, if you like! I will swear on the Bible as you asked me to, and my oath shall take effect from the moment when—when——"

"When the Reverend Mr. Clark gives us his blessing!" he concluded. "Because it will probably be he since it was he who married your parents."

"Yes, it will be Mr. Clark. But this is not when my oath shall become effective. My cousin Maud Pope married the Douglas boy a year ago and she is getting a divorce now—because—well—because he never touched her all that time! I don't want to marry you that way. My oath shall take effect when——" Again she hesitated, repeating her "when," searching for words. Finally she slammed the Bible on the table and cried: "I want to say it and I don't care how it sounds. The oath shall become effective when—you'll have made me a woman!"

Her eyes shone and her delicate nostrils quivered as she stood there, waiting for her words to take effect. "She has temperament, that girl," he thought.

"All right then, swear!" he cried.

She took his hand and put it on the black book with her own right hand. "I swear it to you by my Bible—by the Almighty God!"

She had said it! Now he had her where he wanted her. He sat down on his bed with a deep sigh. All the tension was gone, his arms fell limply at his sides.

She did not notice it as she sat down beside him, pressing her body close against his. "Now I am your bride," she whispered. "Now I am very close to you."

He forced himself to pat her hand. "Yes," he said, "very close!"

Again she whispered into his ear. "If you like—my oath can take effect tonight. I will stay with you—if you want me to."

"No, no!" he protested, "Tomorrow, tomorrow or whenever you like, but not tonight!"

She looked at him—her suspicions aroused again. She watched him closely. "I am tired, Ivy," he explained at last. "I am dead tired. Please go, Ivy!"

With tightly shut lips she kissed him quickly and got up.

"Good night. I will dream of you—as I do every night. Soon——"

Another quick kiss and she was gone. He listened to her soft steps as she went to her room, and finally heard a door shut.

At last he was alone——

But Ivy was holding him firmly—she had bought him and she insisted on getting her money's worth. She had bought his body and she would have it.

In a week—even earlier, perhaps.

He jumped up. That must be put off, he must gain time somehow.

He had not touched a woman since he left Lotte. Not because he was engaged—that would not have prevented him from having a different woman every night.

No, it was something else. Fear perhaps—He did not like to render himself an account of what the real reason was—but he knew that it must have something to do with his disease. When he was with Ivy—or any other woman—he did not desire them. Only now and then, very rarely, a passionate desire shot through his body as it had done the other day at Eva Lachmann's concert. It was as if he wanted something from this woman, something very strange and wild. But he did not know what it was—except that it most certainly was not love.

If Ivy had stayed with him tonight—the thought alone made him shiver. Perhaps he would have pushed her away, rudely, brutally, perhaps he would have spat at her. Or would he have forced himself, with all the will-power at his command, to have done it against his desires?

The thought made him ill.

But tomorrow? Or next week? Would it not be exactly the same? What drug was there in this world to help him through his wedding night?

He hurried to the telephone and asked for New York, Bryant 6335. That was the number of his secretary.

The telephone at the other end rang for a long time and finally a sleepy voice answered.

He told Rossius to get out of bed at once and send a night letter—a long and detailed night letter recalling Frank Braun to New York at once. He must make it sound very urgent and extremely important.

What reasons he was to give? Good God, any reasons! Invent them—anything—

Frank Braun hung up the receiver with a sigh of relief. Now he would have a few days' respite at least, possibly a week.

He was so tired. He fell into his bed.

Ivy was waiting for him at the breakfast table.

"Director André sends you his regards," she said. "He went to New York with mother on the first train. I drove them to the station."

"Oh, really?" he said. "Your mother also, you said?"

"Yes, she had a wire from her sister who is coming from Boston to see her. You have a wire, too."

He opened it eagerly, trying to feign surprise and grief. Then he read aloud: "*Professor very sick. You have to take over his lectures until further notice. Come to New York at once. Roscius.*"

Until further notice—he could hardly conceal his delight. His secretary had done that splendidly: *until further notice!* That was like rubber, one could draw it out and stretch it to fit anything.

"What Professor?" Ivy asked.

"Dr. Södering. He is terribly overworked, the poor man. When I last saw him, he looked ghastly. I expected him to have a breakdown any day."

"Perhaps he was only pretending," Ivy suggested. "Maybe he wants a vacation and is simply trying to get you to take over his talks."

"How can you say such a heartless thing!" he cried indignantly. "That man is duty personified. He would speak as long as he has sound in his throat, as long as he can drag himself to the platform—even on crutches! I am sure the poor fellow had a complete breakdown."

She patted his hand. "You are awfully sweet to feel so sorry for him. But I have good news for you: your Professor is not at all sick."

"What?"

"Yes, really!" She laughed. "He is in far better health, in fact, than you are! He wants to be remembered to you and told me to ask you if you couldn't come to his lecture tonight. He is speaking here in Newport tonight, you know."

He stared at her dumfounded, but she jumped up with a gay laugh and kissed him heartily. "You are so sweet when you make your stupid face! We met your Professor at the station, he came out on the early morning train. André talked to him and then he introduced him to us. It is a pity I did not know what your

secretary was going to wire you, because I would then have invited the Professor to our house. I could have hidden him behind a curtain and brought him out—presto!—your poor, sick, overworked Professor who had a complete breakdown and whose place you are to take—*until further notice!*”

Until further notice—what an idiot Rossius was, what a stupid fool! Couldn't he have known that Södering was going to speak in Newport the same night?!

“It must be a mistake,” he attempted. “Perhaps he meant some other Professor.”

“No, no other Professor,” she cried gayly. “Don't try, you little German boy—any child can see when you try to lie! Besides, I heard you last night call up your secretary and ask him to send you the wire.”

“So you listened?” he said sternly. “At the door?”

She shook her head. “Much worse! Do you think only our Secret Service in Washington and the English detectives can tap telephone wires? It cost me the great sum of five dollars—and now it rings in my room every time you call Central! And I listen to all your calls. I agree with our Government: one must watch the German conspirators and one must not be afraid of breaking the law now and then, if necessary. You conspired against me—you were trying to get away—why don't you admit it!”

“If she were only hurt,” he thought, “if she were offended at least, or indignant! If she cried or made a scene——”

But she was laughing. It was all a game to her—and she was pleased that she had seen through his silly bluff. She held much better cards.

“Now you are going to stay, aren't you?” she mocked. “But you might wire your secretary so he won't have to go to the station. Have you a piece of paper in your pocket? And a pencil? Now write!”

And she dictated. “*Very sick Professor speaking tonight in Newport. You are an ass.*”

He wrote as she dictated and then added: “So am I.”

"Don't forget the address!" she reminded him. Then she rang for the butler and gave him the message. "Urgent!" she said. "Get that off at once, please."

She did not go swimming with him that morning. She was busy, she told him, and he would have to go without her. It was the first time they were alone in Oakhurst, as a real bride and groom, and that must be celebrated. She would prepare luncheon.

"You as a housewife—fancy that!" he laughed.

"Never mind, you'll see," she said. "Wait for me on the beach. I will come for you when I am ready."

He went to his room, undressed, and put on sandals and a beachrobe. He always undressed in his room and walked through the park in his bathrobe, using the cabin on the beach only to change into his bathing suit.

Today he took a long time undressing, hesitating what drug to take—strychnine or laudanum? Finally he decided on arsenic.

He strolled through the park, following a detour that led him past the game preserve. He fed beets to the deer and gave the stags shiny chestnuts. One graceful white hart that often followed him through the whole park, sniffed at the pockets of his beachrobe until he gave her some sugar.

He swam far out into the ocean and then lay on the beach, content to lie perfectly still and bask in the sun. He was not asleep and was not thinking—he did not even dream. It pleased him that his tanned skin was so firm, that his eyes held such a lustre.

He had taken a good dose of arsenic—that would keep him fresh until late at night.

Sea—and sky——

Sometimes his lips murmured something, forming the word: Lotte.

Only a word, only five letters that his lips formed mechanically, from force of habit. It was merely a reflex action, nothing else.

Then he remembered that Ivy had said she was going to call for him on the beach. He looked at the sun—it must be long

past noon. Two o'clock perhaps, or half past. No sign of Ivy, although he could have seen any one approaching the beach from the direction of Oakhurst.

He went to his cabin, took off his bathing suit and had a shower. Then he put on his beachrobe and walked slowly through the little gate into the park.

Two of the gardeners were just coming down the road in their street clothes, smoking their pipes.

"Where to?" he asked them.

"To Newport," one of them explained. "Miss Ivy gave us all the afternoon off."

"Hope you'll enjoy yourself!" Frank Braun said. He wondered about it as he walked on. What day was this? Was it a holiday?

He passed the hothouses, and looking through the windows he could see the great blue grape clusters on the vines—soon they would be ripe.

Suddenly he heard Ivy's voice behind him. She was coming up the road from the beach, clad as he was. "I was looking for you on the beach," she said, "you must have entered the park just as I left it by the other gate."

"Do you want to go swimming so late?" he wondered.

"Oh, no, we are going to have luncheon now. Everything is ready."

"Fine. It will take me only a minute to get dressed—I will be ready before you. Bet?"

"I will bet with you tomorrow. Today you don't need to dress."

Taking his hand, she pulled him into the hothouse, closed the door behind her and put the key into her pocket.

"What is it all about?"

"A surprise for you. Come along."

They walked through the hothouses, past hedges with luscious peaches, pears, figs and pomegranates, through houses filled with laurel and oleander, through forests of oranges, lemons and nectarines, little kumquats, succades, limes.

Then through the tropical houses where grew alligator pears

and cherimoyers, mangos and bananas, kakis, passion fruit, guanabanas, mangosteens and granadillas. The air was oppressively hot under the glass roofs.

They came through houses filled entirely with roses and camelias, with hydrangea and chrysanthemums, with peonies and daisies.

The next house of the glass city was a sea of white tuberose with dark purple lady's-bower on all the walls. Then three rooms full of lilies, the walls covered with sweet honeysuckle. White and Japanese lilies, tiger lilies, sword lilies, dark blue iris, slim grass lilies.

Next there were rows of glass houses with little ponds in which Calla lilies grew, water lilies, sea roses and lotus—and glycines hung down from the ceilings. In a round pond in the next room floated the giant leaves of *Victoria Regia*.

Four houses with cacti—the last a flaming red.

And six large rooms full of orchids.

More glass houses, some low, long and narrow, others high and wide, resembling a vast auditorium.

And still more houses, all connected and forming an immense labyrinth. Doors opened and closed behind them as they walked on. Everywhere they heard the faint murmur of water flowing directly under their feet.

Now they were walking through the palm houses with high dome-shaped ceilings. Old Mr. Jefferson had more than seven hundred varieties of palms—they were his greatest pride.

They walked through conifer forests, through a jungle of rubber trees, and were dazzled by a flame of color in a room filled with blazing red hibiscus.

Another door—but it was locked. Ivy produced a key and opened it, locking the door carefully behind them.

A high glass house, in the middle of this glass city. Here the murmuring water formed a little brook that emptied into a pond. Papyrus, gold lotus and water lilies floated lazily on the still surface of the pond, while little goldfish darted quickly through the water.

The floor was covered with thick green vegetation. Musae and philodendra extended giant roots everywhere and great mangroves grew out of the pond. Between the green leaves shone the flaming red blossoms of carpet trees, interwoven with lianas, ferns and Venus hair. Orchids drooped their fiery blossoms—a wild riot of vegetation, but everything still and dead, without the slightest breath of air.

Three Indian temple trees permeated the atmosphere with the sweet soft scent of their yellow-white blossoms, mingling with the dark, heavy perfume of *Dama de Noche*. Red and purple *Bougainvillia* covered the walls and hung down from the ceiling.

Ivy was still holding Frank Braun's hand as she led him along a narrow path to the pond and around it to a small clearing on the other side.

Here, behind the bamboo thicket, was the place. Rugs and skins. Piles of cushions. In the center of the clearing a tablecloth was spread with their meal set out. Now he understood. So here it was—here—

He did not say anything, just looked at her.

She did not flinch under his gaze. "Yes," she said simply as she slowly, without haste, slipped off her bathrobe. She stood before him—naked.

For a fraction of a second he hesitated and looked around—at the table set with oysters, lobster and other cold dishes. At the bottles of champagne, moselle, burgundy, cognac and even whisky—

These bottles were his salvation. He would get her drunk. She must drink until she was rendered senseless, unconscious—until she would forget him, forget herself, everything!

Yes, that would be his defense.

And now he smiled back at her and slipped off his bathrobe as she had done, standing before her—naked.

He noticed the excitement in her face, the struggle within her. But she would not give way.

It was a sport for her—a fight to the finish. She was going to have her victory and she wanted to taste it to the last drop.

"Not today, little Ivy!" he thought. "Not today!"

He adjusted the cushions for her as she sat down. She passed him the food and asked what he would like to drink.

For a moment he hesitated, then he decided: "Champagne, if you like."

She nodded and pointed to the silver bucket.

He raised a bottle and looked for the corkscrew. "You thought of everything except a bottle opener!" he cried.

"Wait, I'll find something!" she said as she quickly jumped up and darted through the bushes.

He followed her with his eyes. Her young body was beautiful, with a supple, taut slimness. Her light foot carried her like one of Diana's huntresses.

"She is young," he thought, "beautiful and young. She is very rich, too. And she wants me, she really wants me! Why don't I want to marry her?"

She came back with a big case under her arm which she set down before him.

"These are gardeners' tools," she explained. "Perhaps you can find something in here."

The tool chest contained all sorts of knives, big and small, for grafting and pruning and inoculating. There were hooks and scissors and shears, small sickles, asparagus knives, dozens of instruments whose use he did not know. There was even a corkscrew.

"Now we can open the bottles," he said, proceeding to uncork them all, every one of them. "Nothing shall be left of our wedding draught. Let the gardeners drink the rest—let them drink to our happiness!"

He filled the goblets to the brim, touched his glass against hers, and drained it quickly. She followed his example.

They ate and drank, and he was careful to keep the glasses filled.

The hot, oppressively heavy atmosphere under the glass roof was an unexpected help, for it made them very thirsty.

Ivy asked for water but he took the bottles with mineral

water and emptied them into the pond. "No," he cried, "no water for us today! We want to be drunk—you and I—drunk with wine and with——"

As he filled the large goblets with blood-red burgundy he felt that his eyes were sparkling—forgetting it was the arsenic that made them so.

In the beginning he spoke little, but later he fell into his rôle and talked animatedly.

He described to her the silver herons he had shot in the early dawn of morning near Santa Barbara de Samana. He told her about the first tiger he had killed in the deepest thicket of the Ganges jungle. Of brown Samoan girls he spoke, calling them sun rays that a strange whim had turned into human beings. Of sweet Burmese women who were a smile become flesh and blood. Of the Parsee girl he spoke, who was young and fragrant as a blossom, and whiter, oh, much whiter than snow. Of the lithe little singer in Nanking whose name was Va Jee—that is, Beautiful Finger.

Va Jee had been no woman—she had been a hand. Or rather: two hands. Two hands—long—narrow—slim—and bearing every forbidden sin.

He had loved these hands and he had loved the Cool Snow and the Sun Ray and the Eternal Smile.

He had known a woman whom he described as Three-Quarter Time. One who was Wolf's Blood. And in the Mezquita, in Cordoba, he had met one who was a Symphony of Silver and Black.

"What am I?" Ivy asked.

"I don't know—because you are nothing as yet, you will only be something! But today you and I—we both—shall become—this—here." He flung out his arms, taking in the whole glass house in a wide, sweeping gesture. "Yankee country—immense, a far-flung empire. And in it a park, and in it a glass city. And in the middle of the glass city a torrid dream of the tropics. And in that dream we shall be submerged, you and I—and in us shall live only our intoxication. That intoxication shall grow and

strike flames, shall melt us into one with this magic, blazing flaming dream. Our glass forest is a brazen lie, Ivy—a madly grotesque lie just as our love is. You know it as well as I do. But your Yankee whim wants it—and thus it shall come true—today—this mad dream shall become reality as I create it!”

He filled the goblets half with champagne, added burgundy and then filled them up to the top with Meukow brandy.

She hesitated when he offered her the glass. “Drink, drink!” he urged. “Drink! We must get away from our everyday selves!”

He put the glass to her lips and held it there until she had emptied it.

“Birds should be flying here!” he mused. “Quiet, brightly colored birds. Lizards and geckos should be scurrying across the path here, and over there, on that giant root, a lazy chameleon should be sunning himself. Crabs should crawl over the mangroves and speckled salamanders hide between the lotus leaves. Here on this liana a green iguana should be watching us with his small bright eyes, while snakes should lazily twist their sparkling bodies through the bamboo stalks. Blue butterflies in the air, red and yellow ones——”

It was hot, and the languid air seemed to discourage sober thoughts.

And from somewhere came a cooing, a soft, luring cooing.

Clear drops purred down his forehead—and clear silvery drops arose everywhere on Ivy’s young body.

“Drink,” he commanded. “Drink!”

A scent—a scent hotter and heavier than the hot air. Temple flowers—Damas de Noche—and somewhere there must be spike-nards, too.

“I am thirsty,” he whispered, “I am still thirsty. Let me drink, Ivy, from your lips.”

He leaned back on the cushions while she moved over to him on her knees. She reached for the burgundy glass, took a small sip and put her lips against his. He sipped the wine from her lips.

Then she drank from his lips. She trembled, shaking violently all over at the mere touch of his fingers.

"More!" he demanded. "More!"

He was aware that slowly the wine was gripping his senses, too; but let it! Then their intoxication would lift them both out of this world—both together.

He broke maidenhair for her fair tresses. Deeply he inhaled the scent of the blossoms, throwing back his head and joyously shouting into the air:

*Me juvat: et multo mentem vincere Lyaco
Et caput in verna semper habere rosa!*

"What is that?" she laughed drunkenly.

"That is what we are doing here, in the deepest cave of this magic glass city! Propertius said it, a Roman who knew more about the art of living than all the people in your Yankee country put together! Drink—drink—and kiss me!"

She lifted herself and sipped the dark wine. Then she flung the glass into the bushes, threw her arms around him and offered him her lips——

"Ivy," he whispered, "Ivy——"

Something stirred within him, something dark and strange. A desire—a wild wish——

Her body was smooth and slippery, and it felt moist and warm to his touch. "She is a snake," he thought—"a snake with warm, with very warm, red blood——"

"Thirsty!" she pleaded. "Thirsty! Let me drink—wine—kisses——"

What was happening? Something excited him—he desired something from her! What could it be?

And the birds were cooing. Invisible birds—somewhere.

His fingers strayed idly over her skin, down her body, hardly touching her, like the soft fluttering of wings. She writhed and twisted under his touch. Her body was one pleading moan, a single tremendous shiver.

"You——" she panted, "you——"

And again she took up the glass, emptied it, held it out again

to be filled. And again and once more. And he poured the wine and drank with her.

Then she laughed out loud, poured the burgundy over him, dropping the glass—

A mad light shone in her eyes. Her desires had broken loose—

"Mænad!" he thought. "The beast in her has awakened."

They were kneeling in front of each other. Suddenly she lifted her arms and reached for his shoulders with both her hands, gripping him firmly, digging her sharp nails into his skin. Then she threw herself over him, burying her teeth in his flesh, biting—biting—

He was still aware of everything around him. He was still able to think: "She is no longer a human being, no longer a girl. She is a mad beast now—one of Dionysos' tiger cats."

"Her bite is poisonous—"

He still noticed everything. He could see the white woman clinging to his neck with her teeth and the pond and the dark green foliage around it. The white tablecloth, the plates and glasses and bottles.

Then suddenly everything was shrouded in a red fog. There was a scent of burgundy and of blood. And the cooing of invisible doves—

Pain—pain.

He screamed.

He gripped her body—hands—teeth—

Then he had the sensation of falling. And the bear rug on which he was lying was lifted up and became soft like feather down. It was a bed. But it moved, floating in the air, rocking to and fro softly like a boat.

He was in a boat. He could see the ocean gleaming brightly in the dark night. There was no sound of oars—only the splashing of water against the hull.

He sat up rubbing his eyes, and looked around. No, there was no ocean.

He must have been dreaming. And yet he could hear the gurgling sound of water.

He concentrated and looked more sharply.

He was—yes, of course!

It was still light enough to distinguish outlines. It was dusk, probably, because there was still a faint light coming in from above.

Gurgling water and the pond. Everything around it very dark.

The tablecloth was a light spot. And there was a white body.

Spots on it—dark spots. Wine perhaps—or blood.

Ivy—

He heard her breathing heavily.

He rose to his feet slowly, knocking against the tool chest. It had been upset and the tools lay strewn among the plates and bottles. He found their bathrobes, threw Ivy's over her sleeping figure and put on his own.

Slowly he walked along the soft path, found the door, unlocked it and went on through the glass house, carefully feeling his way between the hibiscus bushes.

Suddenly he saw something, something big and white, right before him. He looked closer and recognized Dagmar Erikson, Ivy's Swedish maid. She was sitting on a chair, fast asleep.

He shook her awake and asked her what she was doing there. It was Miss Jefferson's order, she explained—she had been sitting there the whole afternoon, waiting. He told her to sit in front of the door and wait quietly until Miss Jefferson should wake up.

The maid had the keys and led him through two, three houses and finally out through a side door.

He stepped into the park, deeply inhaling the clean, strong air. It flowed through his pores in an invigorating stream and made him instantly feel gay and young.

He tested his step—it was springy, elastic. He stretched his arms—oh, he felt like flying, like flying far out over the ocean!

And the feeling lasted, it grew even stronger with every step!

This was different from the false strength that strychnine gave

him, very different from the strength that came from morphine or arsenic.

This was—health! This was something that he had not known since—since he had said good-bye to Lotte.

But then—then——?

Then Ivy, too, knew the secret?

Ivy—his fiancée!

Triumphantly he flew through the evening—brimful of joy—singing.



ON THE day before Christmas, Frank Braun came back from a three-months' lecture tour through the West. His train got into New York about tea time. There was no one at the station to meet him.

He took a taxi home, unpacked his things and had a bath. It was comfortable and warm in his apartment.

But there were no flowers. And he was alone. He paced the rooms.

Finally he went to the telephone and called Rossius, asking him to come over for a chat. But Rossius could not come. He was busy at the office and could not get away until about ten that night. They agreed to meet afterwards, at Lüchow's.

Frank Braun went back to his desk, sat down and drank his tea. There was his mail waiting for him, neatly arranged in stacks. Nothing had been forwarded to him in all these months. Rossius had attended to the mail and had sent him a report only now and then, or asked for instructions.

In a corner of the desk, under a cigarette case, were more letters, but this pile had not been opened. They were personal letters—the envelopes bore feminine handwriting.

He glanced at them idly—a bill from his manicurist, a request for his autograph. And a photo.

Ah—a letter from his mother. Opened by the English censor

and sealed up again. He tore open the envelope—it was empty.

One more letter, Ivy's handwriting.

The letter had been addressed to him in Los Angeles and had been forwarded from there. He hesitated before opening it—this was the first message from Ivy in all these months. He had written her, however—three, four times.

Why had she not written before?

He had not seen her again since that September day, in the glass city of Oakhurst.

He had walked home through the park, had dressed quickly and driven over to Newport to hear Dr. Södering's lecture. After the lecture they had had a long chat and then he had driven back to Oakhurst.

When he got back, late that night, Ivy's maid told him that Miss Jefferson had gone to bed and was asleep. He himself woke up late the next morning to find Ivy gone. She had taken an early train to New York, leaving no note or message for him.

He had packed his things and also left for town. He waited that day and the next—but still did not hear from her. Finally he telephoned her and was told that she had gone to Boston with her mother.

A few days later he had a letter from her father. Ivy was sick, Mr. Jefferson wrote, she was suffering from a nervous disorder and would stay in Boston for a while. She would write him, however.

So he started on the Western speaking tour which Tewes had mapped out for him. Again he had become an obedient jumping-jack doing his tricks nightly.

Still he hesitated to open her letter, as if afraid of what it might contain. It was the first direct message from her.

But why should he be afraid, and of what? He did not love Ivy, did he?

Nevertheless, something bound him strongly to her.

He opened the envelope. Two lines—two short lines.

"Go back to your mistress." And her name. And a postscript:
"I will keep my oath."

Nothing more—not a single word more.

Slowly he tore up the letter. So that was over. The dream was ended.

But he could not understand it. Why? What reason could she possibly have?

Had he not submitted to her whim? Had he not done what she demanded?

Had *he* left her? No, she had left him, *she*!

He took up a sheet of notepaper and wrote her. She must at least tell him her reasons. Explain how and why——

He wrote quickly and impulsively. At that moment he desired her—and his letter told her so.

The words flew from his pen, crying out to her.

He read over what he had written, put the sheet into an envelope, wrote the address and affixed a stamp. Then he rang for his butler.

Suddenly he tore up the letter. "Clear away the tea things," he said when Fred came in.

Why explanations? What had happened had happened and that was all. And she would keep her oath.

Only—he was alone. Very much alone.

Lotte——? He had not heard from her in all these months.

"Yes, Fred? What do you want?"

Shouldn't he get a bath ready? Lay out the evening clothes? The Herr Doktor was surely invited out tonight——

Invited?—"Yes, yes, get everything ready."

Walking up Fifth Avenue through the wet December wind, wrapped in his fur coat.

A little past eight o'clock—but the streets were deserted. Only here and there some one loaded with packages and bundles was waiting on a corner for the bus.

Frank Braun stepped into Sherry's, took off his coat and walked through the lounge. Not a soul there—not one guest in the big dining room.

A lady came up to him. She was tall and stout, bundled up

in a big fur coat, and heavily veiled. She stretched out her hand and bade him good evening.

Ah—Eva Lachmann!

"With whom are you here?" she asked.

"I am all by myself!"

"So am I!" she smiled. "Then we might have dinner together, if you like."

They went into the dining room, selected a table and gave their order.

"So you are alone, Doctor!" the diva laughed. "Alone at Christmas!" She clicked her glass against his. "Prosit, then! To our friendship!"

"So you have decided to be friends with me again?"

"Yes, why not? After all, one must take things as they come—people, too. Only—one must keep them at a distance, as much as is necessary for one's peace of mind." She smiled. "This way—across a dinner table—you are quite entertaining, really, quite nice—and altogether harmless! And therefore we will be friends again—shall we? It is all a matter of taste, anyway. My *psyche sexualis* is Gourmet and Gourmand—oysters and caviar, and afterwards Irish stew and pork—whatever it happens to be. I like a great many varieties—only I can get along very nicely without your delicacies, thank you!"

"My delicacies? What do you mean? What are my delicacies?"

"Red ducks," she said. "Red ducks à la Knickerbocker!"

"What kind of stuff? I have not the slightest idea what you are talking about!"

"Oh, come now, don't pretend with me!" She picked up the bill of fare and showed him a dish. "There—that's what I mean! Red ducks—the favorite dish of the sybarites in this country! Have you never tried it?"

Yes, he had—but he had found it awful. He had tasted one bite and no more.

"Why on earth should that be my specialty?" he asked impatiently.

"Never mind, Doctor. Let's not fight—especially not tonight.

We all have our own special little pleasures—we are simply made differently, that's all. And I really want to be nice to you, at a distance, of course, but nice just the same! And tonight of all nights, when all the little human animals huddle together while your devilish fancies have given you only solitude for a Christmas present!—That's bitter, isn't it?"

What was that woman raving about, what was she driving at? "What is bitter?" he demanded.

She reached for his hand across the table. "Good God, Doctor, why so secretive? Can't we two talk things over quietly and frankly? Why pretend that you don't know what I mean? It is bitter that your little dove flew away, isn't it?"

"My little dove? Do you mean Miss Jefferson?"

She laughed. "Of course! Who else could it be? You are alone tonight—while on the Christmas tree of your little ex-bride hangs an English bird cage!"

"Who told you that?" he demanded angrily.

"Who told me? It is in all the evening papers! With pictures! At this very hour—just thirty blocks up the Avenue—your little Ivy is celebrating her engagement to the Duke of Stratford. You should have known better, Doctor—you might have waited a little, at least until after the wedding!"

He became impatient. "Speak up, in the devil's name; will you! What should I have known better?"

She looked at him sternly. "Well, that this little doll would certainly back out where even I gratefully declined the honor. There! Now you know!" With a mocking laugh she turned back to her oysters.

He did not understand—not at all. What had he done to Ivy? And what was it he had done to this woman?

This woman—who was not only a great singer and an artist from top to toe; who not only sang, wrote, and composed, but at the same time collected art treasures—who was Sappho and Catharine; who stood above society, spending herself unreservedly and unabashedly—this woman—Eva Lachmann—drew the line where he was concerned?

She?—Shel! What was at the back of her mind?

No, it was ridiculous! She was simply making fun of him and he was silly enough to take her seriously.

So he smiled. "You are perfectly right! One ought to search one's soul and try to improve one's self, in fact one should become virtuous. I will think it over seriously."

"Don't waste your time," she scoffed. "It's no use if one is as deeply immersed as you are—in Sodom!"

"There she goes again!" he thought. Never mind—he would let her have her fun.

He merely nodded. "Yes, yes, you are probably right!"

"I call it Sodom," the diva continued, "because that is what it amounts to in the end. I have studied it thoroughly—this great chapter of love. With my formula, one can solve every riddle no matter how utterly baffling it may seem at first. I could give you a long lecture on this subject!"

"Do, please!" he urged. "I have just come back from the West—for three months I have seen nothing but middle-class bourgeois and farmers—creatures who have very little in common with human beings in your sense of the word. Please talk!"

She laughed. "When I have *Katzenjammer*—and I have it now and then—then this whole mess disgusts me; I become chaste for a while. Then I do a little research and that is what my books are for and my pictures. One day I found my formula—it is simple and hackneyed but it was never before conceived in quite the same light as I see it."

"And what is your formula?"

"There is an animal in every human being—and sometimes more than one——"

"This is not quite——" he interjected.

"Not quite new, you are going to say. Of course not! I told you that the whole thing was an old story! But just listen to me for a little while. What we call the *psyche sexualis* is nothing but this animal within us—this animal that is forever searching for his mate, for a mate of his kind. Now take for instance the

belief in the migration of souls; hundreds of millions of people share in this belief and yet it has one great flaw: according to it, the soul, always the same one, migrates through an infinite number of bodies. One soul, mind you, which is always the same and must always remain the same! The same soul in the frog and the lion, in the emperor and the beggar, in the nun and the harlot. If that were correct, all lions' souls would have to be different from one another, as would be all frogs' souls, etc. But this is very rarely the case—on the whole, all dogs' souls are fundamentally alike, the same as all fleas' souls and all rabbits' souls. Do you follow me? But, the more highly developed a creature is, the more souls find room in him. Goethe said there were two souls in his breast—but if you read his books you will find that there were not two souls in him but two hundred!"

"What do you call Soul?" he interrupted.

"What it is—Sex! There are two instincts that motivate all living creatures, according to doctrine: the self preservation and the procreation instinct. That is absurd, of course, because no creature ever thinks of procreation—it is the sex instinct, nothing else! If you want to distinguish at all between body and soul, you must admit that it is obviously the body that wants to preserve itself, that wants to eat, drink, live and remain healthy. And if this is true, then the other part—the soul—must manifest itself through the other instinct—the sex instinct! The body is mortal and perishes after a brief span of years, and therefore its instinct, as it serves only the needs of the body, is as unimportant as the body itself. But the soul is immortal and so is its emanation, its instinct! The purpose of the world is to become more and more populated with creatures in order to provide always new bodies for the soul to dwell in."

"If that is the purpose of this world," Frank Braun suggested, "you manage very successfully to evade it! You undoubtedly work hard and unceasingly on behalf of—of your soul instinct, but you do nothing for procreation!"

"Do you really think so, Doctor?" she asked soberly. "It is

true that, to me, the time which it takes to bring forth a single child seems much too long to do without what I consider my life. And yet I feel that I do more to achieve the purpose of which we spoke than many thousands of women put together."

"What do you mean?"

"Go to the opera some time when I am singing—or when Caruso is singing—but don't look at the stage, look only at the audience. Watch people's eyes, watch them when the mating instinct of the animal awakens in them. They don't say it, they don't understand it—they only feel without knowing what it is. But their mute instincts are aroused and their desires, the desires of thousands of animals in heat, lie over the auditorium in a heavy fog. And then they go home and lie with each other and beget children—my children!"

"But then, divine diva, your singing is merely—cantharides!"

"Why, of course," she affirmed. "Celery for the bridegroom and asparagus for the bride! Champagne or a low cut dress, a lewd book, an obscene dancel—That's all my singing is and I am fully aware of it. It is sex—pure sex and nothing else! I believe that the souls of many animals manifest themselves in me when I prostitute myself on the stage, and therefore I awake many different desires in my audience. I have thought about it often as I waited in the wings for my cue while Caruso was singing. He is a bull sometimes, and at other times an ape—now a boar and then a nightingale cock. And the little gray nightingales in the audience stretch their heads, the cows in the theatre stop their masticating, the she-apes roll their eyes and the sows become restless."

"But is there nothing human in them?" Frank Braun asked. "Nothing at all?"

She sighed. "Rarely, very rarely! There are so many million times more animals in the world than human beings! And human souls migrate, too—so they are mostly enshrined in animals. It is very difficult to find a human soul in a human body!" She offered him a cigarette from her case, lighting one herself. "We simply have to get used to the fact," she continued,

"that the whole world is a great Sodom and that we have to live in it! We are animals and must search for animal mates—and it has always been so since Leda!"

He took up her train of thought. "Leda had a swan's soul—and therefore Zeus came to her in the shape of a swan."

She nodded. "And to Europa as a bull, because she was a cow. Ganymede, whose youthful dreams soared high up into the clouds, was seduced by him in the shape of an eagle. That was the way of the gods in every country and at all times. Odin approached Gunnlod, the giant's daughter, as a dragon, and the Holy Virgin was visited by a dove. I do not know what Loki's giant wife looked like, but she must have been a strange beast if he could beget the Fenriswolf with her. The world of the ancients was peopled by many such hybrid creatures—fruit of the embrace between god and man, or man and animal. You see: Sodom all throughout history, in every religion! Fairy tales, you will say, and perhaps you are right, but they at least prove how much the mind of man has always been occupied with thoughts of this kind. The Indian, the Egyptian, the Babylonian mythology is full of hybrid creatures. And ours, too, for that matter—just read the Revelation of St. John! Hellas had her centaurs and fauns, sirens and nymphs—all true children of Sodom, like the Minotaurus who was begotten of the union between Pasiphae and a bull. Do you believe that all the strange, weird stories that are alive wherever there are human beings, could simply be invented? They were possible only because man has always mated with animals, since the darkest ages!"

"All right," he cried, "perhaps it is all true. But you must admit that on the whole, the sex instinct of human beings does not turn to animals!"

The diva shook her head doubtfully. "Yes—and no! I haven't come to a final conclusion about that yet. The natural explanation—the simplest one—would be to believe that the cat's soul in a human being longs for the tomcat. The tomcat as he is—with tail and paws and mustache. But here the matter becomes complicated: she does not long for the tomcat! She is searching

for the tomcat's SOUL—and this yearning is unconscious and instinctive. Her human brain does not help her at all—on the contrary, whenever possible it will lead her astray so that in many millions of cases the poor soul does not know at all what she is really looking for! Throughout a whole long bodily existence, she will grope in the dark, she will long and yearn and never know for what!—And if by chance she finds in another human being a soul of her kind, she will be happy but without knowing why! But in most cases she, the unfortunate blind cat, will offer herself to a fox or an ape or a guinea pig! You can see it every day, in thousands of marriages. The funniest thing about it is that such marriages and love affairs—simply because human bodies are involved—are considered natural and normal, although they are really against nature—they are the truly sodomitic matings! And what mankind calls sodomy—when souls of the same kind have found their mates—is the only natural and normal solution!”

She rose and let him help her into her coat. “Thank you, Doctor,” she said at last, “for listening so nicely. Think it over some time when you have nothing else to do—it is very stimulating! It has already whetted my appetite—I am looking forward to the little love bird that will be waiting for me under my own private Christmas tree. I dare say it will lose a few feathers in this Holy Night!”

They went out into the lobby and waited while the doorman whistled for her car.

Again she spoke: “I know that the souls of many animals are in me. I love everything that is strong and big and wild and beautiful! I love the bull and the stallion, the eagle and the swan and the wolf.”

She hesitated, as if expecting him to say something—something definite.

Almost against his will, the words formed on his lips: “Then I am not any of these?”

“No, no!” she cried with a savage glare in her eyes. She looked as if she were going to spit at him. “No! you are a bat,

a spider, a mosquito perhaps—you have the soul of a flea or a louse——!"

After this outburst she drew herself up triumphantly. "*Auf Wiedersehen*," she nodded as she walked out quickly, leaving him standing in the lobby.

A bus stopped on the corner and he got in, not noticing that it went uptown instead of downtown.

There were only two men in the car. One of them spoke to him—it was Dr. Samuel Cohn. He was carrying a number of packages like every one else in New York this night.

"Back again?" the physician greeted him. "This will surely be a nice surprise for your fiancée!"

Frank Braun merely nodded—that man, at least, had not yet read the evening papers; so he would not ask any questions. "Where are you going tonight?" he asked.

"To your old friend, Mrs. van Ness. There will be only a few people, Professor von Kachele, Tewes, myself and two or three other guests. Shall I give her your regards?"

"Yes, please do. Remember me to all my friends. How is Mrs. van Ness?"

"Better, really much better! I sent her to Saratoga for a few months and that helped. Of course, she is still very anæmic."

Dr. Cohn rose and they shook hands. "I have to get off here—going over to Park Avenue! Merry Christmas!"

The other man also got off, leaving his newspaper on the seat.

Frank Braun picked it up and quickly glanced through it. There it was—and with pictures, too. A big photograph of Ivy spread over a whole page, and on the other page her parents and the Duke. The Duke really looked splendid in khaki—every inch a young hero! Oh, there was his own picture, too, up in a corner.

He crumpled the paper and threw it on the floor.

Central Park on the left—there was the Jefferson house now, on the other side—

The curtains were drawn but he could see the light behind

the windows and it all looked very festive—Christmas and an engagement. On every window hung a little round holly wreath.

He got off at the next corner and stopped for a minute to look up at the brightly lighted house. With a brief sigh he turned up his coat collar, buried his hands deeply in his pockets and walked on over the wet asphalt, whistling a student song.

Was he really bitter about it?—no, Eva Lachmann had been wrong. He wished them all the happiness in the world—every one of them gathered up there in the imposing mansion—Ivy, the Duke, her father and mother. And the Consul General, too, who was surely present to help celebrate the engagement. His Christmas presents were the blows which the diva had said. But that also meant that he was free for a changel Free and alone—wasn't that the same thing in the end?—He, the only person who was alone tonight in this giant city.

Nobody would give him a kind word, tonight, on Christmas Eve. His mother's Christmas greetings probably had been in that envelope. The English censor had most likely lighted his cigar with it—

So much the better—then he need not feel grateful to anyone. His Christmas presents were the blows which the Diva had given him.

A pity he did not carry a cane! His fingers itched for a stick with which to cut the air—

Or a horse!—Now, through the empty park!

Ivy might have done that, at least—given him the Irish bay mare that he liked so much. Ivy could have done it so easily—she never rode that horse and she had a dozen better ones, anyway.

Instead: her letter! No greeting—not even an address. Her Christmas present and that from the singer—resounding blows!

One shop window was still brightly lighted: at Cartier's. He stopped and looked in. A lady was buying something—a ring, or a watch perhaps.

She was getting her change, and took the little box with her. As she came out of the shop, she brushed closely past him.

It was—it was—Dolores! La Goyital—

She stopped—she had recognized him. For an instant she hesitated, trembling all over, then she screamed and hurried across the street, lifting her skirts. Quickly she opened the door of a taxicab and leaped in.

Gone—

Quickly, quickly—before he had fully realized what was happening.

Another blow. That was his third Christmas present.

He walked back to the shop window and looked into the mirror on the side, staring at his own image.

"Like a leper," he thought. "Like a man infested with the plague!"

He walked on as the lights were turned out inside the shop. But the face that he had seen in the mirror was walking ahead, looking backwards so he could not avoid seeing it.

He saw fear in this face—and desire, a great hungry desire.

But he did not know what he desired, and did not know what he feared.

Hadn't he been glad to be alone—free of everything? Only a few minutes ago?

He walked on.

Wind and rain. And his steps, his resounding steps on the stone pavement. Clack!—clack!

Union Square—broken fences, deep holes and huge stone piles beside them. Wooden sheds and board fences, and in between lamppost and a few bare trees. Broken benches—and a monument. And rats.

Somewhere through the wet night the wind carried the sound of singing voices. It came from a hole where they were building the new subway. Sounds of his childhood, dream sounds—

O Tannenbaum, o Tannenbaum—

No, those were not the words—it was only the melody.

He stopped and listened. It was the old fighting song of the Irish in America.

Old Germany! Old Germany!
When do you set old Ireland free?

But it came as if from a grave.

Lüchows. Tables with white tablecloths, empty chairs—not a single guest.

Rossius was sitting alone in a corner of the empty dining room and jumped up as soon as he saw Frank Braun. "You have kept me waiting a long time, Doctor!" he cried. "I have been here at least two hours."

"Is it really so late? I am very sorry!" Frank Braun apologized. "Let's sit down and tell me all that has happened here since I went away."

But his secretary's thoughts seemed to be elsewhere. He fidgeted nervously in his chair, sighed audibly and finally pulled out his watch.

"Well, what is it?" Frank Braun asked.

"I have an invitation!" Rossius explained. "I am to be there at midnight and I promised I would be on time. Now it is already——"

"A new girl friend? Never mind, she can wait a while!"

"No, it isn't a new girl friend," Rossius protested. "I have no girl friends any more—neither new ones nor old ones. I have an invitation—oh, you know Doctor, who it is."

Frank Braun finally remembered. "So you are going to Aimée's, are you? I hope you have a nice present for her!"

The young man reached into his pocket and produced a manuscript. On the cover was typed neatly: *The Pearl Necklace.—A Cycle of Sonnets*. And underneath: *To Aimée B.*

"So you wrote a poem in praise of her pearls! But why not

in praise of her feet? Many women have pearls like hers, but only Aimée Breitaueer has such feet!"

"Oh, but I wrote many poems in praise of her feet," Rossius said eagerly. "In praise of her feet and her eyes and her lips—and everything! She has already more than forty poems from me—she is going to publish them as soon as there are enough for a volume. On Japan vellum—bound in silver gray leather!"

So much youth, so much happiness in Rossius' blue eyes—

"Run—" Frank Braun urged, "hurry over to her, fly!"

"I'll see you tomorrow then," Rossius cried while he was putting on his coat. He was gone in an instant.

Frank Braun sat down again and ordered a beer. In the next room there was an enormous Christmas tree that reached to the ceiling. An orchestra played German Christmas carols. Everything there was as it should be at Christmas time.

Only—the smell' of wax was missing—the scent of burning pine twigs. The Christmas tree was decorated with electric bulbs.

And the songs, the German songs that floated softly into the room, made him sick. He called the waiter and gave him money for the orchestra to make them stop. But the waiter said it was midnight anyway and the musicians were going home.

Frank Braun sat at his lone table waiting. Perhaps one of the many guests who patronized this restaurant would come in. There must be somebody who did not have any other place to go on Christmas Night.

There must be somebody who was alone tonight as he was.

But nobody came.

The musicians packed up their instruments and went home, then the bar keepers and the waiters. They all left, one by one.

Only one waiter had to stay—the one who tended Frank Braun's table. He stood leaning against the wall—a tall, thin, narrow-shouldered man—looking like a reproachful exclamation point.

The man probably has a wife, Frank Braun thought. And children—they are waiting for him, too.

But for him, Frank Braun, nobody was waiting.

He paid his check and sent the waiter home, but remained sitting before his untouched glass.

He waited—

Several times the porter walked past the table. Frank Braun called him over and gave him money and cigarettes, shutting him up when the man tried to thank him.

The man was fat and had a very red face. He must have had his celebration already, perhaps early in the evening.

And still Frank Braun sat there, staring into space.

At last he got up and went to the telephone. He did it mechanically, automatically.

He called her number—her voice answered.

“Lotte—” he said.

Then her voice: “Come——”

That was all she said.

But he did not go.

He went back to his table and sat down again before his stale beer.

No—no—he did not want to go there. He was afraid.

He had had three Christmas presents already—three, and that was enough. From Ivy, from Eva Lachmann, and from the dancer. Three presents—all of the same kind.

Hard blows—

But why—why?

And he sat there alone all through the merry Christmas night—

At dawn he finally dragged himself home and fell into his bed.

No, he would not go to Lotte van Ness. He stayed home day after day, working with his secretary. He was tired and felt flat and empty. He slept a great deal, going to bed early every night, and often sleeping during the day.

He lay on the sofa playing chess with Rossius one afternoon

when her car drove up. She did not ask Fred to announce her, but simply stepped into the room. Suddenly she was there.

She took off her fur coat and sat down.

No explanation, no scene. She acted as if she had been here only yesterday—as if it were all perfectly natural and could not be any other way.

She chatted with his secretary and watched the chess game. He did not say a word.

He lifted the bishop, meaning to make a move, but forgot to put it down and kept it in his hand. He listened to her talk for a few minutes, then he forgot to listen and only looked at her, for a long time.

At last he even forgot to look at her. He leaned back, falling into a dreamy state of semi-consciousness.

Finally he fell asleep.

Red veils—everything dipped in red. Red rose leaves—red rain—streams of blood—

And fear, fear—tremendous fear—

He screamed—and his own scream awakened him. He leaped to his feet, took a few quick steps, and stopped, looking suspiciously around him.

He was alone—the room was empty except for himself.

But her scent was there—soft—sweet—Jicky.

What had happened? What had she done? He saw blood—streams of blood.

He felt something hard in his hand—

The little knife—yes, of course—a knife!

She had had it and he had wrested it from her.

As he opened his hand it fell on the rug at his feet—

It was no knife—it was the chessman—

There was a scream outside and again he shivered violently. But no—it was only the horn of an automobile.

Then there was a step in the hall and his secretary came back.

"Where is she?" Frank Braun whispered. "Where is—Mrs. van Ness?"

"I just took her to her car. She did not want to wake you because you were sleeping so soundly." He picked up the chessman. "Shall we continue the game, Doctor? It's your move."

Without answering, Frank Braun stared at the other man, watchfully, suspiciously—

Then he felt a slight pain. On his shoulder—and under his arm. No—it must be further down—on his back. No, no—right on his chest—

He tore off his coat and waistcoat, shoes, trousers, and shirt, looking at his body—

He could not find any mark. He felt himself carefully all over. The wound? Where was the wound?

He ran into the bathroom and looked at himself in the tall mirror, bending his head around to examine his back.

Nothing—no mark at all. He closed his eyes. Where did it hurt?

But he could not feel it any more.

Rossius had followed him into the bathroom. "What is wrong, Doctor? Has anything happened to you?"

Frank Braun cried: "I have been stung. Some insect has bitten me. Help me look for the wound, please!"

Rossius turned every switch until the bathroom was flooded with bright light. He looked carefully all over Frank Braun's body and finally shook his head. "You must have been dreaming, Doctor!"

Now he could feel it again. No pain—only a sting, an itching sensation. And not in one place alone—everywhere, all over his skin. And he felt cold. He shivered and his teeth chattered. "My clothes!" he groaned. "It is terribly cold here!"

"Cold? But it is at least seventy in here!"

They went back to the other room and Frank Braun put on his clothes. Could he trust this boy? Oh, no, certainly not—Rossius would betray him—of course he would. Not for money, but for a kiss from painted lips.

Cautiously he asked: "How long have I been asleep?"

"For at least an hour!"

Frank Braun was silent for a while. He sat down, moved his chessman and tried to appear casual. "You went out, didn't you? I saw you go out while Mrs. van Ness was here.—Did you post the letters?"

"No, they are still here. I wasn't out of the house, we both sat here talking in a low voice so we would not disturb you."

"You are lying!" Frank Braun shouted. "You are lying to me! You left me alone with—with—" his voice gave out and his hands grabbed the edge of the table. If he could only get at the boy's throat, choke him—choke—

Rossius rose to his feet, his face ashen pale. He did not say one word.

Frank Braun looked at him—helplessly, pleadingly, frightened.

The other man understood. He sat down again and moved his castle.

They went on playing, silently.

When the game was finished, they played another.

Late at night they went out, idly walking up Broadway, going nowhere in particular.

Ernst Rossius did all the talking. He told Frank Braun about the great adventure of his life, about beautiful Aimée.

Frank Braun listened absent-mindedly, looking at the hurrying crowds.

They stopped in several places for drinks. Jazz, drunken shouting, dancing—everywhere the same thing.

"Where shall we go now?" Frank Braun asked.

Rossius looked at his watch. "It is six o'clock already! I have just time to get home and take a bath. I must be at the office early."

So they went home.

Frank Braun opened the front door and walked slowly through the hall—then he hesitated. Something was moving behind the door of his room. And there was a light—he could see it through the crack under the door. He listened to a soft noise, as if some one were walking up and down the room.

Fred?—Of course not—Frank Braun could hear him snoring downstairs.

He carefully turned the key and with a jerk pulled open the door.

Lotte stood before him.

There was a strong scent in the room—a scent of roses, of blood red roses.



IN THOSE days he recorded his observations in a sort of diary which he always kept carefully locked away and took out only when he was alone and sure there would be no intrusion. Then he would make his entries.

He began with a story of his disease. He searched his memory for the smallest detail, probing into the innermost recesses of his mind for any fact that might have some connection with his mysterious affliction. First he wrote everything down at random—as it came to his mind, and then went over his entries, arranging them in the proper sequence and searching for the connecting links.

It had all started in Europe, many months before he started out into the world. He had been restless and impatient, his nerves irritated, longing for something—

For something that had slumbered within him since—

No, he did not know since when.

He could well remember a time, however, when this thing had not been there—when he enjoyed what the moment offered, strongly and simply, like an animal living only in the present.

Slowly this thing grew, very slowly and gradually, until it took complete possession of him. That had caused his restlessness and in the end had driven him away from Europe.

But as soon as he left Europe behind him, he became quiet

and still—and for a time, that thing in him seemed shut up, as if in a shell.

When he drank in the torrid heat of the tropics, when he strayed through forgotten cities buried by the jungle, when he breathed the solitude of the deserts and when his longing bathed in the infinity of the oceans—then he was at rest and could amass new strength for more years at home.

He had done it, once, twice, and again. And every time he had come back well and strong, his muscles hard as steel.

Looking back now, it did not seem like a disease—at most like a disposition, a soil in which something poisonous might grow.

And his old remedy had always helped, even the last time.

Because he had been well again—or almost well—on that day in Antofagasta. Only some little thing had remained—something soft, something strange and wild and untamed. On the day on which he watched the sea lions chasing the schools of herring and diving into the silver waves in the harbor of Antofagasta—the day when a streak of lightning flashed across the sky at home, and the whole world rang with a single cry that was taken up and carried over land and under water and through the air: the wild cry of the assassination at Sarajevo.

Then came the fever ship and the Yellow Death. The slow trip up the West Coast—and the quick dash across the United States. And then the war—war!

He could not remember having shown any symptoms then. If he had really been sick even then, and if the poison germs had already been within him, they must have been dormant. Or else he had not noticed them—blinded, as he was, by the flashes of cosmic lightning that struck all around him and all over the world.

He had felt really sick for the first time, in New York, in those weeks after he had found her again—Lotte Levi.

And this much was certain: his disease had something to do with that woman. With other women, too—perhaps! But certainly with her.

But what disease? He wrote down his symptoms, comparing what the physicians who examined him had said. Their diagnoses were exactly alike; he was perfectly all right, they had said, his heart, his lungs, kidneys—everything. All they could find was a slight, nervous ailment—probably psychological: the war, of course! Only one of them, Dr. Samuel Cohn, had made an attempt to go deeper. He had mentioned the possibility of an obscure tropical disease—

But his had been vague, fantastic conjectures, not based on any definite facts. Nevertheless, Frank Braun wrote them down, word for word, read them over again, weighing and judging them—and could not make anything out of them in the end.

Summing up his condition, which on the whole had remained unchanged in the past few years, he arrived at the following conclusions:

First, there was his constant fatigue—fatigue of an unusual nature, which sleep did not relieve. On the contrary, he often felt especially tired on waking from a long, deep sleep; at night or by day. His sleep was as it had always been—deep, sound and generally dreamless. Only now and then, strange, confused nightmares . . .

These dreams—perhaps they could furnish a clue. He decided to write them down, all those that he could remember. But first he wanted to get a clearer picture of his disease and how it affected him.

There was this constant fatigue then. Often it would come over him suddenly, other times it would work up slowly, gradually taking possession of his weak body. Sometimes it made him forget to listen while talking to people, or else he would hear every word without grasping what was said. It would also happen that suddenly he himself could not go on, stopping in the middle of a sentence, forgetting a name he had wanted to say, a word, a whole sentence. At such times his memory seemed temporarily suspended.

But there were also severer attacks—then a paralyzing dizziness would grip him, like the time in Torreon when he almost

fell off the horse, and he would shake and tremble all over, losing control over his limbs. Often it seemed as if his life process was completely suspended, as if he merely vegetated in a state of semi-consciousness for hours, for days even, completely stunned by this sensation of emptiness, of slowly wilting and dying.

At other times he would walk in his sleep. Once his secretary had caught him doing it, and several times his old servant. And it surely must have happened often—unwitnessed.

These attacks varied greatly in severity. Sometimes they affected only his body, leaving his brain perfectly clear, so that he could watch his own reaction and study the symptoms. Other times they seized on his brain alone and partly paralyzed it. It would happen to him while he was on the stage addressing a crowd, in the middle of a speech. His lips would continue to form the old phrases, but something would be missing, he would feel that he could not get across, that a high wall had suddenly sprung up between him and his audience.

Now and then, in the case of a particularly severe attack, he would be completely paralyzed—his body and his brain as well.

There were times when he did not feel sick—yet not well, either. Then he would live just as usual, but in a tired, indifferent, machine-like way—emptily fulfilling the obligations of his daily life like a wound-up automaton.

There were periods between these attacks, however, when he felt completely well and when life pulsed through his veins as of old, when he felt young and strong, even exuberant. It was a strange phenomenon—only yesterday it might have cost him a tremendous effort merely to lift his hand—and today he would swim for hours or enjoy a whole day in the saddle.

His appearance?

He looked well when he felt well. But he looked ghastly when one of his attacks was coming on. His friends could easily tell how he was feeling any particular day. He looked like "sour beer," Rossius had once said. And at those times he looked not only sick—something else, something strange would then show

in his face—something that other people did not notice. Suddenly, Frank Braun would come face to face with it—like the other night, on Christmas Eve, in front of Cartier's window when the dancer came out of the shop.

It was something eerie, indeed, something that was not usually in his face.

Now, while he was writing up his observations, he sat before the mirror for hours, studying himself, searching his face.

There was something in his expression that had not been there before.

And lately it was always there, even in those increasingly rare periods when he felt well. It was an expression of uneasiness—and also of an obscure, elusive desire. During his attacks it became more pronounced, distorting his face into a hideous mask.

Then the uneasiness turned into a vague fear and the vague fear into downright terror. And his desire grew until it became a craving, and the craving a wild, mad need.

And there was also something else in his face, something that was becoming more marked every day—

The expression of hopeless despair.

But that he could understand. Despair, of course! Because he utterly failed to comprehend the meaning of his fear and of his desire.

Desire for what? Fear of what?

The drugs he was using and on which he had been living all these years, he knew were no good at all. He had started with small doses of strychnine, first in powder form, then pills. Later he tried morphine, muscarine, digitalis, atropine and cocaine—but all of these would help him for only a little while. Heroine had scant effect on him, and opium was altogether useless as it made him only go to sleep and dream, and when he awoke from an opium sleep he felt worse than before. Arsenic kept him fresh for several hours, however, and also mescal—if he took it in small doses.

But these drugs could at best postpone an imminent attack,

never prevent it. They might make him into the semblance of a normal human being for a day, for a week even—but no more. They might save an evening for him when he had to make a speech, might give him strength for a long horseback ride.

They lent him a nervous strength, but only to leave him more completely exhausted when his nerves finally did collapse.

They were merely stimulants—and not always that.

It was probably imagination that he believed human touch could help him. He dismissed this idea as auto-suggestion, and yet—

When he almost fell off the horse, that time at the gates of Villa's garden, when the reins fell out of his hands and he slumped forward in the saddle, the vigorous touch of the officer's hand had revived him. He remembered clearly how strongly he had felt the warm pressure, how he had instantly regained consciousness, his thighs again gripping the horse, his hands again taking up the reins—

And that time in Philadelphia, when he had debated against Miss Livingstone? He had felt completely drained and worn out, but had drunk new strength from the diva's sensuous lips!

And in Ivy's case, too—the mere touch of her young body had endowed him with strength. The more tender she had been, the closer her naked body pressed against his, the more surely he had felt life resurging in his own body.

He had the same feeling, only infinitely stronger, with Lotte. If her cheek only brushed against his own, if her small hand softly nestled in his—

Her pulse—the beating of her blood.

If he closed his eyes he could still feel it.

Feel it? Was there nothing more? He again closed his eyes, carefully scrutinizing the sensation it gave him.

Feel it? Did he really feel it?—Was there not much more to it: did he not wish, desire something?

The more he thought about it, the more it confused him.

In the end he dismissed the whole idea—this fantastic hy-

pothesis that human touch could have any effect on his disease.
Imagination, auto-suggestion—

Tropical anæmia, perhaps? That was a theory that had much in its favor.

His constant fatigue, his desperate lassitude. This feeling of wilting away, of vegetating in a state of semi-consciousness, these sudden lapses of memory, this shaking and trembling when his limbs refused to obey him. And his lack of breath—the beating of his heart: like a ship's screw out of water!

But he was not at all anæmic; he had enough blood, plenty of red blood corpuscles, full of hæmoglobin and oxygen.

And his lips, his gums, his eyes—all very healthy, with not a trace of anæmia.

Nor did his dreams furnish him a clue, although, when comparing them, he was struck by the fact that they were all very much alike.

After a close analysis he decided, however, that the form of his dreams was determined simply by the nature of the drug he had taken—muscarine or mescal or whatever it might happen to be—while their contents were merely a vaguely distorted picture of his condition.

There were dreams in which he saw red—which were not caused by any drug or poison. These dreams with their madly jumbled pictures—sometimes stupid ones—of past events, were always based on the same two emotions: Fear and Desire.

So far he was groping in utter darkness.

Things cleared a little only where Lotte was concerned.

And only one concrete fact stood out as any tangible evidence: Lotte's knives.

When he went to Mexico, she had given him a knife with a spotlessly clean blade, and in her message she had said: "Carry it for my sake. Don't use it unless you have to. Bring it back to

me the way it is. It will not mean anything to you—to me it will mean everything!”

He had obeyed her whim, carrying the knife in the breast-pocket of his shirt as she had asked him.

The knife had a platinum handle and on it were engraved her two constellations: Scorpio and Cancer. She obviously attributed some special significance to them.

She had said that the knife would show her when he was unfaithful to her. She had said that—but it probably was a lie and she had something entirely different in her mind.

Because he was unfaithful to her with Aimée Breitaue at the party of the Moon Ladies—and Lotte's knife had remained clean. And she had not seemed a bit perturbed when he told her about it later.

“What do I care?” she had said contemptuously.

But another time the knife had become bloody—on the day Dolores Echevarria came to see him in New York. And yet he could have sworn that he had not stirred from his sofa all afternoon, that he had lain there quietly, fast asleep, dreaming strange mesal dreams—

Yet—Lotte would not believe—that! Her knife had been stained with blood and so he must have been guilty! But if that were true he must have got up from the sofa while fast asleep and must have—unconsciously—

No! Lotte herself had told him that she had had the dancer examined and that the doctor's report had been: *Virgo intacta!*

Whatever superstition, whatever fantastic ideas she might have had about this knife—it could not possibly have had anything to do with whether he was faithful to her or not.

And Lotte van Ness had lied to him another time. She asked Dr. Cohn to bring her a complete set of surgical instruments, with sharp little knives and scissors and pincers, telling him she wanted them—for her feet! There he could prove that she had lied, because Lotte Levi never had had a corn in her life!

She lied a third time—the time he found her wearing the seal

ring with the crest of Magdeburg. "My mother is from Magdeburg," Lotte had explained, "that is why I bought it."

But the Kühbecks came from Thuringia and not from Magdeburg. It was the picture on the ring that had intrigued her: the pelican cutting open her breast to feed her young with her own blood. And with this stone she sealed all her letters to him.

Didn't the same idea recur? To drink blood from a living body?

She had certainly spoken the truth when she told Dr. Cohn that she would probably not need the instrument case now! Of course not! Because that very day Ivy Jefferson had taken Frank Braun away from her!

She had kept the black case, however. "Later, perhaps!" she had said. Later—that was when he would return to her. Later—that was: now!

But these were not her only instruments for cutting and stabbing. He remembered the night when she had offered him the sleeping draught which she had finally drunk herself. He had noticed a number of other knives on her night table—open knives with sharp shiny blades. He had intended to watch them and for many hours he had lain in bed trying to keep awake. But finally he, too, had fallen asleep and forgotten the knives.

On rising in the morning, however, there had been blood on Lotte's pillow!

He had no doubt that the knives played a part in the fool's game in which Lotte had the main rôle and in which he somehow played a highly involuntary one. And a very passive one, at that—a suffering one!

It was only natural that her knives should appear also in his dreams. Then the small blade which she had given him, would grow into a long, strong knife with which he defended himself against weird assailants. Sometimes also he would get up at night, open his little knife and walk over to his dressing table and play with the razor blades—like the time young Rossius had found him walking in his sleep.

And there was another symptom: he always saw blood, when

he was awake and when he was asleep—always and always red blood. Red roses that dropped down from galleries, a rain of red blood. The wound on La Goyita's white breast as she danced the rumba—a small, narrow bloody scar. And he often saw blood in his speeches—and blood in his dreams.

But that was natural: where there are knives that cut, blood must flow. And then there was the great bloody cloud that drifted over from Europe, coloring everything a bloody stain, day in, day out.

The time was red with blood!

And this was perhaps the explanation—that his thoughts which were occupied so much with blood when he was awake, followed him into his sleep and colored his dreams.

Yet—these little knives were Lotte's own ideas. They were there and they must have a meaning.

What meaning?

Did she use them? Against—him? But why?

If she hurt him, he must have wounds! This had been his first thought on her recent visit, when she talked with his secretary while he was asleep. He had felt so sure of it that he believed he could feel the pain. So he had torn off his clothes and examined his body.

But there had not been any wounds. Not the slightest scratch on his skin.

It must be his imagination, the nervous strain under which he was living—

And yet—the knives were the key to everything.

He held the key in his hand—but he did not know what to do with it.

But she, Lotte, knew the meaning of it all. He had frankly voiced his suspicion to her and she had scarcely troubled to deny it. "Don't insist!" she had said. "I don't want to say it—and so I won't."

He had not insisted. He knew her well enough to realize that once she refused to tell him, he could never make her.

Ivy Jefferson had shared his suspicion regarding Lotte. She had shown him the calendar in which she marked all the dates. When he felt well, Lotte was sick, but she always recovered when he had his attacks. She made him well and she made him sick—at will. And his health was somehow bound up with hers.

He seemed to have no life of his own. He had become a puppet in her small hands, her jumping-jack responding to her whims.

He permitted her to do with him whatever she pleased. His reaction to her was feminine—she was the man, not he. "You are like soil, like woman, like a mother's womb—" Were these not her own words?

She was the motivating force. Whatever he did, he did for her and through her. He actually drank in her thoughts!

And her influence stayed with him when he did not see her,—through all the months with Ivy.

She was sick, always, when he felt well.

Sick? Why was she sick?

She had anæmia! That was the disease for which Dr. Cohn was treating her, that was why he sent her to Saratoga.

She was anæmic and naturally wished to try every possible means of getting fresh, healthy blood. So she took the cure and obediently swallowed arsenferratose, hæmatogen, Levico-water, somatose—anything containing iron and arsenic, in order to make up for the lack of hæmoglobin and oxygen in her blood.

Lotte van Ness had been infected by the inane superstitions fashionable in her country of adoption. She went from one fortune teller to the other, ordering horoscopes by the dozen. But she took them seriously, scientifically, her European mind probing the depths where others stopped at the surface. She herself studied all the old mystics, had taken for this reason Professor Kachele into her employ. She might laugh at a thousand absurd theories, but she believed the thousand-and-first.

Professor Kachele had said: "Anything is possible in a human

brain." And Kachele himself was the most convincing proof of that irrefutable truth.

Kachele—and the World War. That also was sheer madness—and yet it had been engineered by human brains.

If such things could be, was it surprising that this woman should also do an unusual thing and search for an exotic cure for her disease—a cure far removed from the province of exact medical science?

That she should search for it and—perhaps—find it?

On a golden chain around her neck, Lotte carried a little crystal ball with a winged griffon cut into the crystal. Professor Kachele had explained what it meant: It was to bring her milk. And she had agreed with him. "Yes, yes—red milk!"

Red milk? Blood, of course!

Whether she really believed it or not, she at least toyed with the idea, so much was certain. And it was equally certain that any means were good enough for her to get all the good healthy "milk" she needed—red milk!

Then Frank Braun remembered Dr. Kachele's lecture on Labartu—the old myth of the Star Goddess who steals the Sun Child and later dismembers it. This mad, age-old story that had survived thousands of years and had come to new life in many different countries and among many different people. Babylon's Labartu, Sidon's Astarte, the Indian Durga—always the same goddess, in Rome and Carthage, in Asia, Africa and Europe. A goddess who found always new followers, new priests and priestesses—and one who always demanded new victims for her bloody cult.

And finally the cult of the goddess had found its way to America. Had not he, Frank Braun, seen with his own eyes how the beautiful negress Adelaide, the blue priestess-insignia on her forehead, had slaughtered her own child in the Voodoo temple at Petit Goave? How she had sacrificed it to her goddess whom she called Dom Père? How she had strangled the child to death, cut its jugular vein and drunk its blood—

She, the Mamaloi—Mother and Queen?

That was no fabric of his imagination, no illusion of his over-worked nerves. It was the naked truth—and it had happened in this enlightened age.

In this marvelous age that racked its brain seeking new and better ways of slaughtering human beings, to make the blood flow in a continually mounting torrent, carrying out the slaughter on water and under it, on land and high above it!

Wholesale murder wherever one looked. A heyday for the Terrible Goddess!

No, what the Mamaloi had done was nothing strange in this age; anything was possible in a human brain.

And why could not Lotte van Ness do what the Mamaloi had done?

The words of the erudite Baron still sounded in Frank Braun's ears: "And if this kind and beautiful lady here, if Mrs. van Ness, should suddenly reveal herself tonight as the wildest priestess of Baaltis, if she should dismember young boys and drink their red blood—I would not regard it as anything extraordinary, considering my own experiences. I would regret it, but as a scientist I would include the interesting case in my treatise, simply as another example of the age-old Labartu cult."

The kind and beautiful lady—was Lotte van Ness!

It had seemed possible to Dr. Kachele—possible! But to Frank Braun it not only seemed possible, but probable—more, almost certain!

But if she was Labartu, if she was another Blood-Countess and Voodoo priestess—then he must be her victim!

And she was undoubtedly using a new method instead of the old ones that the Professor had described. She was a modern woman, and therefore her methods must be modern, too.

No quick slaughtering of her victim—not for her. She preferred a slow, cruel game.

Why had she selected him—him of all men? It must be be-

cause—*she loved him!* Was it not the foremost desire, the greatest thrill of an all-consuming lust, to hurt what one loved best?!

She was his mistress. She was also his sister and mother. Her dear boy, she called him, her only child.

She sang him to sleep with sweet lullabies.

If all this was true—if she was Astarte—then he was the dismembered child!

And this would explain at least one thing: his constantly growing fear, the terror that had stamped its mark upon his face and had taken complete possession of him. Now he even transmitted this terror to other women.

This fear made him bolt from Lotte's bed as he had run away from the diva that night in Philadelphia. This fear and terror within him had protested against being alone with Ivy, had compelled him to invent excuses and lies so he would not have to be with her.

But now he was at the bottom of this fear.

Only—his knowledge did not help him much. He had established one fact: the phenomenon Lotte-Labartu. He also had another fact: Lotte's anemia. And he had the concrete and tangible evidence of her knives.

But it still remained a puzzle of which many pieces were missing—and he was unable to find them.

Involuntarily he turned again to Dr. Cohn's fantastic theory. The physician had suggested that it was Frank Braun himself who might be the unwitting cause of it all. But if this theory was correct, it would apply even more to Lotte. She, too, had been in the South Seas, on the Solomon Islands.

True, he had had malaria in all its symptoms, and the anopheles parasites had once ravaged his blood. But he had taken quinine by the pound and gotten rid of the disease at last.

She, however, denied she had ever had it.

This was suspicious.

"Cannibalism is a disease!" the physician had explained. It is caused by insect bites—no, by the poisonous bite of some small

mammal, a bat or a flying dog. A latent disease that creates a mad hunger for human meat, a mad thirst for human blood. And it would then have the same effect as the bite of a rabid dog that transfers rabies to its victims and make them bite anything they can get their teeth into.

Like running amuck—

Possible? Yes, that, too, was possible! Just as possible as Dr. Kachele's theory.

But the effect would be the same in both cases: it would make her want to drink *his* blood.

One point, however, did not fit in with this theory; how did this explanation apply to other women?

He went over them in his mind, one by one.

There was Aimée Breitauer. No—he could eliminate her right off. The little adventure with her had been simple and natural, with not the slightest trace of mystery or secret evil.

The dancer then. For the twentieth time he searched his memory for a clue to what could have happened that afternoon in his apartment. He could not find anything. And yet, when he met her again later, she had run away from him as if he were a leper.

He could not explain it unless—unless Lotte had something to do with it. Lotte had taken the dancer into her house that night, and probably had seen her again afterwards.

Then Ivy, his fiancée. There had been nothing in their life together to warrant the slightest suspicion—until that last day of madness in the hothouse of old Jefferson's glass city. And months afterwards he had received her laconic message: "*Go back to your mistress!*" He tried to recall every detail of that afternoon behind the bamboo thicket, up to the moment when he lost consciousness, when he saw the drunken fire flare up in her eyes.

Only one thing struck him strangely as he thought over the events of that afternoon—the gardener's tool chest!

She had thought of everything when she prepared their bridal feast. Nothing was missing, not the minutest trifle.

Only the corkscrews and bottle openers were not there. She had forgotten them.

Strangel

And so she had brought the chest with the instruments.

That *might* have been pure coincidence—of course!

But perhaps—perhaps—it had been intentional.

Knives—just as on Lotte's night table!

And finally there was the diva.

When he had gone back into the wings after his speech, her eyes had invited him for that night and she had whispered: "You bit my lips—I will pay you back tonight!"

He had kissed her. Had he bitten her in that kiss? If he had, he did not remember.

But she paid him back—with interest. She bit him just as Ivy had bitten him—Ivy the maenad, with the flame of naked lust in her blazing eyes. His night with the diva had been fierce, the struggle of two great beasts—until they both fell back exhausted and went to sleep.

For almost two years she had not spoken to him, yet when they had dinner together on Christmas Eve, she lectured him on Sodom. And as her parting shot she spat at him: "You have the soul of a flea or a louse!"

Why wasn't it possible, though, that this woman indulged her desires just as Lotte did? And that her field was Sodom, with which she was so familiar and which she had explored from its lowest depths to its greatest heights?

Which would mean that she herself was doing what she accused him of.

That she herself was the bat, the spider, the mosquito—she! Like Lotte Levi.

Like—yes, like little Ivy, too. But then Ivy must have known why she brought the gardener's tool chest!

He held his hands against his head to keep it from bursting. That—that—was——

Impossible? Nothing was impossible in a human brain! And what one brain could conceive might also occur to another!

What if they—Lotte and the diva—and Ivy Jefferson—and the dancer, too—? If they all—?

He remembered the anonymous letters. They had accumulated, since he had asked Rossius to save them again, and they were now filling several folders. He could have papered his apartment with them. Generally they contained merely abuse—but some were definitely threatening. One would find ways and means, some of the correspondents wrote, to get him out of the way, this traitor and conspirator, this barbarian German swine, this paid agent and spy of the child-killing Kaiser.

If one kills millions of men with bullets and grenades, Frank Braun concluded, one does not hesitate to remove in some other manner the one enemy who happens to be safe from bullets. With a sure poison, for instance.

Poison? That had been Colonel Perlstein's first thought! And Dr. Cohn had also hinted at some form of poisoning.

A slow working poison? Why not? It was possible, just as all the other incredible madresses the world over had not only become possible, but a terrible fact, in the course of these sanguinary years. And it was especially possible in this enormous city where every vice and every crime flourished merrily!

He read his entries once more. He scratched out everything that sounded fantastic or romantic, and left only the bare facts. There was little left when he finished—ten or twelve lines.

His mysterious ailment, with its ups and downs, now ebbing, now flaring up again. Just like the ocean, he thought, and certainly just as dependent on some outside force, just as ebb and flow are caused by the moon.

Moon—Moon Goddess—Astarte! There he was back again. But he firmly struck out the last words.

This outside force must be Lotte. Other women? Perhaps, but highly uncertain. Whereas she had surely something to do with

his disease. She caused ebb and flow in him, caused his well-being as she caused his sickness.

And the third fact, perhaps the key to everything, were her knives. It might be any of the three factors alone, it might be all three combined. He underlined the "perhaps" and the "might."

Nervously he paced the room, stopped for a moment, went to his desk and wrote down a line. Then he jumped up again and resumed his pacing, trying to concentrate.

He must remember it, every verse, every word as he had heard it—long ago.

He had been a senior at college. His mother sent him to England for his vacation and wrote down for him where he should go and what he should see. He was to be sure to see the Cathedral in Lincoln. It was the most beautiful Cathedral in England, his mother said.

He gazed at the building. But the old man who showed him around, explained that there was something much more interesting in Lincoln, and took him to an old house that resembled all the other old houses in the town.

The white-haired man told Frank Braun that a Jew's daughter had lived there, many centuries ago—the one who had murdered little Sir Hugh at Eastertide. And in a hoarse voice he recited the old Scottish ballad.

Frank Braun was trying to remember it now. He wrote it down from memory, slowly, line for line, and it took him hours. At last he took up the sheet and read it over, and again aloud:

Four and twenty bonny boys
Were playing at the ba,
And by it came him sweet Sir Hugh
And he played oer them a'.

He kicked the ba with his right foot
And caught it with his knee

And throuch-and-thro the Jew's window
He gard the bonny ba flee.

He's doen him to the Jew's castell
And walked it round about
And there he saw the Jew's daughter
At the window looking out.

"Throw down the ba, ye Jew's daughter,
Throw down the ba to me!"
"Ne'er a bit," says the Jew's daughter,
"Till up to me come ye!"

"How will I come up? How can I come up,
How can I come to thee?
For as ye did to my auld father
The same ye'll do to me."

She's gane till her father's garden,
And pu'd an apple red and green;
't was a' to wyle him sweet Sir Hugh,
And to entice him in.

She's led him in through ae dark door
And sae has she thro nine;
She's laid him on a dressing table
And stickit him like a swine.

And first came out the thick, thick blood
And syne came out the thin,
And syne came out the bonny heart's blood
There was nae mair within.

She's rowd him in a cake of lead
Bade him lie still and sleep;
She's thrown him in Our Lady's draw-well
Was fifty fathoms deep.

When bells were rung and mass was sung

And a' the bairns came hame,
When ever lady gat hame her son,
The Lady Helen gat nane.

She's taen her mantle her about
Her coffer by the hand
And she's gane out to seek her son,
And wandered oer the land.

She's doen her to the Jew's castell,
Where a' were fast asleep;
"Gin ye be there, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak."

She's doen her to the Jew's garden
Thought he had been gathering fruit:
"Gin ye be here, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak!"

She heard Our Lady's deep draw-well,
Was fifty fathoms deep:
"Wareer ye be, my sweet Sir Hugh,
I pray you to me speak."

"The lead is wondrous heavy, mither,
The well is wondrous deip;
A keen pen-knife sticks in my hert
A word I dounae speak.

"Gae hame, gae hame, my mither dear,
Prepare my winding sheet,
And at the back o merry Lincoln
The morn I will you meet."

Now Lady Helen is gane hame,
Made him a winding sheet,
And at the back o merry Lincoln
The dead corpse did her meet.

And a' the bells o merry Lincoln
Without men's hands were rung
And a' the books o merry Lincoln
Were read without man's tongue,
And neer was such a burial
Sin Adam's days begun.

He stared at the sheet in utter fascination. Wasn't there again the old myth of the killing of the Sun Child?

And it was his own, Frank Braun's case, as well! He saw Lotte's knives before him, small, sharp, shiny. They cut and stabbed—and his blood flowed. First thick, then thin, then his heart's blood. Until no more was left.

Yes, it was true. There was no blood left in him, he was drained to the last drop. And in his ears sounded the hoarse voice of the old man in Lincoln:

A keen pen-knife sticks in my hert
A word I dounae speak!

He had first met Lotte Levi playing tennis in the old Jew's lovely garden near the Tiergarten in Berlin. She was young then, and fragrantly beautiful, like the ray of an early morning sun in April. And the red and green apple that enticed the poor boy? Often Eve had offered him the fruit which her ancestor, Lilith the Snake, had picked from the tree. Yes, he had tasted of it again and again, until he fell asleep in her arms—until—

She led him through all the dark doors, deep into the magic garden of her sins. She took her little knives and laid him out on the slaughter table of her bed. Then she stuck her knives into him.

Now she would put him into a case of lead and throw him into the well, fifty fathoms deep.

Would his mother come to search for him? Would she kneel down by the side of the well and call him? He whispered:

Gae hame, gae hame, my mither dear,
Prepare my winding sheet—

He would lie beside her, at the back of the merry town on the Rhine. Where his father already lay and his grandparents and great-grandparents. There was still room left for him in the old family tomb.

In these months he saw Lotte almost daily, but he was careful not to spend a night in her house, or to fall asleep there in the daytime. As soon as he felt the familiar tired emptiness taking possession of his body, he called for the car and drove home. He had a special lock made for the door of his apartment and locked himself in when he felt an attack coming, always carrying the key with him. In this way he hoped to forestall surprises of any kind.

She was in good health—while he felt utterly miserable. Painfully he dragged himself on only by the grace of his drugs.

It was obvious that Lotte desired him; she made no attempt to hide it. Often she said: "Stay here tonight with me—love me!"

But he did not stay, although his whole being ached for her.

Once he fell asleep in her house in spite of his precautions. It was at tea time and he was scheduled to speak that night.

On the morning of that day he had felt tolerably well, but in the afternoon at her house he was overcome by a sudden attack of fever and dizziness. She noticed it immediately and left the room, coming back with a glass of water into which she emptied a white powder.

"Drink this!" she said.

"What is it?" he asked suspiciously.

"Chloral! It will make you sleep for an hour or so, and you will feel fresher when you wake up!"

His fingers itched for the glass, but his fear was stronger. He did not touch the sleeping draught. Instead, he telephoned his secretary and asked him to come over and bring him the arsenic—in the little drawer—on the left.

She slowly shook her head, sadly, full of compassion and understanding, full of love. But she did not speak and only sat down beside him, stroking his head and his hands. Thus she lulled him to sleep—in spite of himself.

He woke when the butler announced Ernst Rossius. Lotte had left the room.

He looked at his watch—he had slept hardly an hour.

“Did you bring the arsenic?” he called out to Rossius.

The secretary gave him the drug and Frank Braun was about to take it—when he suddenly hesitated: he felt fresh and well! All the tiredness and emptiness was gone. Vanished, stroked away by Lotte's magic hands.

Only it did not last long. Ten days—or two weeks.

He was afraid. And his fear grew daily.

Then one day he remembered the story of the man tiger.

He had laughed when he heard the story for the first time, told to him by an old native in Rajputana, the Land of the Princes.

The beast that prowls through the country at night, skirting the edge of the villages and terrifying the whole district, the beast that attacks lone wanderers on high roads or on the banks of rivers, is not a tiger; the natives claim it is a man. All the Hindus believe it, and many Europeans. Not the Europeans who live in big cities, but all those who have breathed the feverish, moist scent of the jungle—officers, engineers and tea planters. They know it as well as the villagers: this or that man is a man tiger!

And every third moon the man disappears into the jungle and turns into a tiger, lying in wait for his victims in the dark of the night, leaping suddenly upon them and drinking fresh blood out of their brown bodies. Afterwards he returns again to the quiet village and lives there as any other man for many weeks, shy and lonely, subsisting on rice and Areca nuts, chewing betel like all the others, but avoided by the whole village—and feared.

Years later, when Frank Braun heard the story again in the

German Cameroon, he did not laugh. Out there in West Africa the story was just as much alive as in India, only that there it was the leopard instead of the Royal Bengal tiger whom they called man tiger.

One day the natives brought before the sheriff a short, stocky man whom they claimed to be a man tiger. He had confessed to having murdered the two children found dead the week previous, they said, and demanded that the man be hanged.

He had confessed, that was true. But the sheriff did not have him hanged—he did not believe in that sort of thing. He examined the children's bodies which the leopard had dragged away into the forest, and the following night he himself went out with his rifle and shot the leopard. The accused man was locked up for his own safety, but mysteriously escaped into the bush a few days afterwards.

Later, in Boma, Frank Braun saw two man tigers swing. This time there was no doubt about their guilt; they had been caught at the ford just as they were attacking the black sergeant's wife. The sergeant was a seasoned veteran of the Colonial troops and respected nobody, neither man nor devil, only his Lieutenant. When he heard the cries of his wife, he ran up to the river bank and caught the two fellows red-handed. They had sewn themselves into leopard skins and on their fingers they wore steel caps bent into the shape of sharp claws with which they attacked their victims.

Once more Frank Braun came across this legend, but this time it was in the Gran Chaco, in the middle of the South American continent. It was the same story he had heard in Asia and Africa, only that it was told about the jaguar instead of the leopard or the tiger. And there was one strange feature about it: the natives of the Gran Chaco claimed that it was only women who assumed the shape of the beast, not men. Wild women who at night turn into jaguars and attack boys and girls, yes, even grown up men, strong warriors who have fought many a victorious battle with man and beast. And the victims of these female man tigers put up no defense and allow them-

selves to be choked to death, completely paralyzed with fear.

Frank Braun himself had not seen any cases, but he heard the same story wherever he went, all through the Chaco, in Paraguay, Bolivia and the Argentine. And he found it confirmed by other travellers among the tribes of the Brazilian forests, on the Xingu, Tarpejos and Madeiro—as far as the Amazon. He could not learn whether the legend was based on a belief in the migration of souls as in India, or on actual happenings, as in Africa. Probably both were true; probably in South America as on the other continents the legend was based partly on fantastic superstition, partly on bloody reality.

There was no connecting link between these brown and black and red people; in fact, they were separated by thousands of miles of ocean and land. And yet they all believed in the same basic principle: that at night man often turns into a ferocious beast, lying in wait for his victims at the brink of the forest or on the river bank, leaping upon them suddenly out of the dark, choking them to death and drinking their warm, red blood. And the beast was always a big cat: the Royal Bengal tiger, the leopard, the jaguar.

At home, in Europe, there are no big cats, only small, tame ones that have been domesticated for thousands of years. And yet the same belief can be found in Europe, although in a milder form befitting the milder variety of cats. In Europe, the gray cat is always associated with a witch, and sometimes the cat herself is believed to be a witch, prowling darkly through house and garden and bringing ill luck to its inhabitants. Of course, the cat does not dare attack adults, not even boys and girls, because it is too small, but people believe that she attacks infants in the cradle and chokes them to death; this belief is not found in cities, but among the mountain folk, the villagers living on the edge of the forest and in isolated hamlets. They believe that the gray cat is not an animal but a demon, a witch, a succubus—an evil human being versed in sorcery!

Yes, the belief extends over the whole world, and in the same form, with but minor variations owing to different circum-

stances. And everywhere the evildoer is of the cat family—only rarely a wolf takes the place of the big cat, in countries where the wolf is the only wild animal, where there are no big cats but where the belief in this form of witchcraft is strong enough to countenance more savage crimes than those of which an ordinary domestic cat would be capable. And there they believe in the werewolf.

A superstition? One that is essentially the same all over the world, in every country and in every age? Frank Braun with his own eyes had seen the natives hang the black man tiger, he had been present during the trial and he had cajoled the sheriff into giving him one of the leopard skins with its sharp claws!

The man tiger, the human being that turns into a ferocious beast either in a most fantastic or in a very natural manner—does exist, there can be no doubt about it. It exists all over the world—so why shouldn't one be found in Manhattan, too?

Green as those of a cat were Lotte Levi's eyes. They shone in the dark.

Frank Braun took a ferry to Hoboken. Great ice cakes were floating down the Hudson, crashing against the wooden hull of the boat and breaking into smaller pieces through which the ferry slowly ploughed its way with a crunching, grinding noise.

Today the Ambassador was leaving, with his entire staff and with all the German Consuls in the United States. Frank Braun wanted to speak to one of them, ask him to take a message to his mother.

Not a letter—of course not! The Danish steamer might be prevented by the German submarine blockade from landing in England, but at least it would stop in Halifax in faithful obedience to the Lords of the Sea so they could examine and search it. Whether it was in Halifax or in Kirkwall, the English would not allow even the smallest scrap of written paper to enter Germany.

But an oral message—that might be possible!

He could not get through to them. A cordon of police and soldiers was drawn around the Danish pier.

Star-Spangled Banners everywhere, on every house, in every window, even across the streets. Beside them the Union Jack, the French Tricolore, and Russian, Italian, Japanese, Serbian, Belgian flags—an ocean of color roaring out that at last there was *WAR!* War against Germany! War against the Huns, the Barbarians, the Child-Killers—against the arch enemies of humanity, the Germans.

Frank Braun realized that this meant complete and final victory for England. Here in the United States the victory was won, not on the battlefields of Flanders and Poland. And this meant also the end of Bismarck's heritage, the doom of Germany. Now there was only one thing left to do: to die decently.

Frank Braun would try to escape into Mexico and continue his work there. He would try to—perhaps, perhaps—

He knew very well that there was no more "perhaps." Now that the whole world had taken up arms against his country, only the men from Mars could bring help!

The train for St. Louis was leaving early the next morning.

Frank Braun was at Lotte's that evening to say good-bye. They had dinner together and sat in the library afterwards. He loved her so much.

They sat hand in hand, talking quietly. He was tired, as he had been these last few months, but he felt better when she held his hand in hers, when her pulse beat against his.

"Don't go yet, please don't go!" she said every time he made an attempt to get up. "Stay just a little longer, please, dear boy!"

So he stayed. He knew very well that she wanted to keep him there all night. His suspicion was again aroused—and also his fear. But stronger, much stronger than his fear, was the desire to feel her white skin—this longing for her touch, for the soft

stroking of her fingers, for the light beat of her blood. It was so ingratiating, so quieting and soothing.

He stayed another hour, and another, sitting beside her and holding her hand.

Then she got up. "Come!" she said.

He shook his head. "No, no!" he whispered. "I want to go home."

She kissed him. "Are you afraid—of me?" she asked gently.

He merely nodded, staring at her, helplessly, pleadingly. Oh, just one more word from her, only a light touch of her hand—and he would follow her.

But she did not say the word. "You can sleep alone," she said finally, "but please stay—so I can see you once more tomorrow morning before you leave."

She took him into the room beside her bed-room. "Lock yourself in here and bolt the door! Wait a minute, I will bring you an alarm clock so you will get up in time."

She left the room. He looked around—it was the room in which her maid slept when Lotte was not feeling well. There was the bed, and there the door to the small bathroom.

He remained standing where he was, not wanting to move, not wanting to think. Oh, it would be better if he went home.

In a few minutes Lotte came back with the alarm clock. She had taken off her clothes and put on a negligee.

"I set the clock for half past five," she said. "That will give us time to have breakfast together."

He put the clock down on the table, taking an unnecessarily long time about it. But finally he had to look up and into her eyes.

Something was urging him, no, driving him to her. No longer a wish or longing—a mad craving, an overpowering desire! She—she—

She was his life—his blood and his health!

Merely to touch her, just touch her!

He stumbled forward into her arms and kissed her, drawing her to him, closer, closer.

"Lotte!" he sobbed, "Lotte!"

Then he tore himself loose and pushed her away. "Go now, please go!"

And she went. "Good night!" she called back to him as she closed the door.

Why didn't she stay? Why didn't she take him with her? He wanted to cry, cry out to her his torment, his desire—

But there was that fear in him, that terrible fear! He knew something would happen that night!

He did not call her back. He went about the room, looking at all the doors and bolting them securely. Then he put a chair in front of each door and placed a water pitcher on each chair. If any one tried to open the door, the pitcher would fall and make enough noise to wake him.

He sat down on the bed straining his ears for a sound from her room.

Nothing. He jumped up again, felt the walls, looking for a secret panel. He opened the closets and looked under the bed. Nothing. And still no sound from her room.

Yet he did not dare to undress and go to bed. He went to the telephone and called Rossius. He had to wait a long time before the young man sleepily answered. Frank Braun asked him to be at the station the next morning and gave him many unnecessary instructions, merely to prolong the conversation.

Then he went back to his desk, took a pen and paper and tried to think of somebody to whom he could write. But his pen only formed the words: "Dear Lotte"—and again and again: "Dear Lotte."

He crossed it out—tore up the sheet and took a new one. No use.

He gave it up. Oh, let her find the letter in the morning! Let her know how desperately he had been longing for her, with no other thought but her in his mind.

"You—" he began, "you—you." He repeated it, lines and lines of it. "Dearest," he wrote, "Dearest, you—"

He did not write a letter, he did not even write sentences.

Only words. Only a poor stammering, a tortured sobbing, a desperate cry—for her.

Longing, fear and despair.

Tears and blood.

Then—then he felt his hand refusing to obey him. He stared at it, at the three fingers that held the pen. They were stiff and would not move.

His brain commanded: Press down—press the pen down on the paper! Write!

But his hand would not move.

Cold sweat broke out on his forehead—he was seized by a clammy shiver that made his body shake and tremble violently. Yes, he knew these symptoms well—but they were so much more severe tonight, and the shiver so much clammier. It felt as if he were congealing from his feet up.

His wide-open eyes stared empty, glassily. They were burning down upon his hand as if trying to give it strength. And he saw his hand bending down slowly at last, infinitely slowly.

Ah—now the pen touched the paper.

"Write!" his soul cried out. "Write: Lottel!"

Now the pen moved, drawing a thin, barely legible line. It wrote: "MOTHER."

Then it fell from his nerveless hand and rolled over the table.

But the word stood, the last word: "Mother." His eyes were staring at it.

Now his lids dropped heavily, but he could still see the thin letters forming the word: "Mother."

There was still a slight cognizance in him, a trace of consciousness still left in a corner of his brain. Now it is coming, he felt. Now the end is here. Suddenly it grew very dark.

And out of the darkness flashed up one more thought: "In there it is light. If I could only get up—open the door—go to her. In there is life—red life——"

All about him it was black—bleak darkness. Everything was submerged in it. Everything—and he, himself, too.

Heavily his head sank down on the table.

A mad screaming noise tore the air. A cutting, hammering, screeching noise.

That woke him.

He was standing in the middle of the room. What was happening?

He looked around, rubbing his eyes. Oh—the alarm clock! He went over to the table and shut it off. Half past five—he must get up.

But he was fully dressed. The chair that he had put before the door to Lotte's room had been moved aside and the water pitcher stood on the rug beside it.

The door was wide open.

He listened—but could not hear a sound.

Was she still asleep—in spite of the piercing noise the alarm clock had made?

He felt a curious taste on his tongue. Sweet—very sweet—a peculiar taste—"Because I haven't slept all night," he thought.

Then it struck him that this strange taste seemed familiar.

He shut his eyes, trying to remember. As he licked his lips, the taste became stronger—it was sweet, strangely sweet and faintly sickening. The way it had tasted the time blood trickled down his face—blood from a sabre-cut inflicted in one of the duels he had fought as a student.

Then it *was* the taste of blood!

"I must rinse my mouth," he thought, "brush my teeth——"

He went into the bathroom and leaned over the washbasin—when his glance happened to fall on the mirror.

He saw—

His mouth was bloody, and his chin—covered with blood. There were great blood stains on his collar, his shirt and coat—

And his hands—the hands—

Red, red as if he had bathed them in blood!

He stared at the picture in the mirror. This man was he—he, Frank Braun! Covered with blood!

But what had happened, what—

He rushed into Lotte's room and over to her bed. There she

lay—pale as death! Buried in the pillows and bed clothes, covered up to her chin.

Blood spots everywhere—great red spots wherever he looked. And on the night table were knives, bloody knives scattered in a horrible confusion.

He tore back the bed clothes and her night gown. He saw her breasts—there were gashes on them, deep gashes—

Many cruel wounds on her white breasts—

What beast—what mad ferocious beast had—

What cruel, repulsive beast—

He, he himself!

He fell down upon his knees.

"Lotte! Lotte!"



HIS cell was seven feet long, seven feet wide and seven feet high. There was plenty of work to do catching bed bugs, lice and cockroaches, although this was possible only during the day when he had a small light burning in his cell. In the daytime it was quiet in the enormous prison.

But at night hell broke loose. Sometimes when he had been asleep for a few minutes and woke up quickly to semi-consciousness, still drowsy with sleep, he believed himself in a primeval forest, somewhere on the upper Pilcomayo, in the middle of the Gran Chaco. He would lie on his cot listening to the voices all around him, far and near—disembodied voices that had life of their own and became separate entities, divorced from bodies and throats and tongues. This must be the croaking of tapirs—or was it bullfrogs? And that, the grinding sound of land crabs—no, it must be a jaguar—

Then slowly he would realize what it was. It was men snoring, sighing, singing and laughing in their sleep. The coughing and painful breathing of consumptives. And down from below the cries of men who were beaten by the guards—recalcitrant criminals, poor lunatics and men from whom they wanted to force a confession.

Every night it went on like this.

The blankets he had been given were unspeakably dirty, cov-

ered with vermin, stiff with pus from the sores of former inmates. A negro in the adjoining cell who was sentenced to the electric chair for murder, taught Frank Braun how to cover himself with newspapers—that helped him to keep warm a little.

Hours, at first—then days, weeks—and now months.

No connection with the outside world or with the other men in the prison. Nothing but the cell—and he in it. From the guard who pushed his grub into the cell through a small opening in the door he heard that there were other Germans in the prison. All locked in as he was, behind huge, windowless stone walls, behind heavy iron gates, locked in with murderers, pimps, burglars.

Once in the middle of the night he heard the tramping of heavy boots—a whole troupe of new prisoners arriving. A bright, unmistakably Swabian voice cried out in German: "Are there any bed bugs in here?"

He was greeted by howls of laughter, and from all corners of the enormous building came the answer: "Yes!—Yes!—All the bugs you want!"

Frank Braun had a pencil stub, about an inch long. He tore the edges off newspapers, smoothed them out neatly and put them together like a notebook. This was to be the end of his diary. He left out the first few pages—from the moment when he fell forward, his head dropping on the table, to the other moment when he regained consciousness, standing in the middle of the room, terrified into awakesness by the screaming of the alarm clock. Only one person could fill in this gap: Lotte.

Then he wrote. How he had tasted the sweet blood on his tongue, how he had stood before the mirror and had seen his face covered with blood. How he had rushed into Lotte's room and found her there.

He had held her in his arms, praying her name. But his lips—and he did not know how—had formed another word; the word: "Maria."

"Strange," he thought, "why had he called her Maria then?"

Maria was his mother's name. "Mother Maria," he always called her when he was a boy.

"Maria," he had prayed as he knelt by Lotte's bed, "Mother Maria!"

And there was another Maria, too, a Maria he had also loved—
Softly he had prayed:

*Eia Mater, fons amoris,
Me sentire vim doloris
Fac, ut——*

At last she heard him and opened her eyes.

Very softly her fingers touched his hand. And her lips moved.

He put his head against hers and read the whispered words from her lips. "Put the case away," she said.

He obeyed. He threw the scissors and little knives into it and locked the whole thing away in the closet. Then he came back to the bed.

Again she whispered: "You must wash yourself! Take a clean shirt."

"Lotte," he pleaded, "Lotte! You—you——"

But she insisted. "Do as I say!"

So he did as she said. He undressed, washed, took a clean shirt and collar, and put the bloody things into the laundry basket.

She followed him with her eyes, smiling a still, quiet smile.

"That is good!" she breathed. "Now telephone the Doctor."

He hurried to the telephone and called Dr. Cohn, asking him to come to Mrs. van Ness' at once.—No, not in an hour! He must come at once, immediately, he must leave right away!

What had happened? . . . Frank Braun hesitated.

"Hemorrhage!" Lotte whispered.

"Hemorrhage!" he called into the telephone.

Bad? . . . Yes, terrible—yes, frightful! Had she lost much blood?—Yes, very much, an enormous amount!—What, Dr. Cohn was still in bed?—He would come over as soon as possible,

in half an hour! And in the meantime Frank Braun should give the patient to drink—What?—Anything! Milk, tea, champagne, mineral water, strong coffee, whatever there was! Everything! As much as possible! She must drink!

Frank Braun replaced the receiver and wanted to hurry to the kitchen but Lotte's eyes detained him. They pointed to a bloody knife that lay beside her pillow. "Look!" she whispered. He looked in the stained bed clothes and found another one.

"The boric ointment! Over there!" she said.

The box stood on her night table. He opened the cover.

"You do it, dearest," she whispered. "Nobody but you shall see my breasts!"

He pushed back her nightgown and washed her wounds with eau de Cologne. There were seven wounds—seven.

Small wounds, but deep. They were red and there was a drop of blood on each.

Like the blood drop on the wound he had so often seen in his dreams, on the breast of La Goyita when she danced the rumba.

His fingers trembled. He washed her wounds—it hurt. She winced as he touched her.

Then he kissed her, gently, softly, with quivering lips. She was smiling.

"Are you well now?" she asked.

He shrank back, staring at her.

But she smiled. "You drank so much milk, my beloved! So much red milk!" Tenderly her eyes caressed him.

"Mother," he thought, "dear Mother Maria!"

He put the ointment on her red wounds, spreading it with shaking fingers. Then he fastened her bloody nightgown at her neck.

Only then did she let him go. He rushed out of the room shouting for Lotte's maid and ordering her to make tea and bring champagne. He himself ran downstairs for mineral water.

And then he sat again beside her, putting the glass to her lips.

"Drink, drink!"

At last Dr. Cohn arrived. But before she turned to the physician, she whispered to Frank Braun: "Now go away, beloved, please! You can still make your train. Go now!"

"I am staying here!" he cried.

She slowly shook her head. "No, you must go. I want you to. Think of me!"

Very softly her hands stroked his hair, very softly her lips kissed his eyes. "Good-bye," she breathed, "good-bye, my darling boy. Thank you——!"

Thank you! she said. He had not misunderstood. *Thank you!* she said.

She—she—thanked *HIM!*

He slowly left the room, walking backwards so he could see once more her sweet smile.

He got to the street and to the station.

But there they caught him, put manacles on his hands and led him away to prison.

Frank Braun, the German agent, the dangerous German agent who had dared to work in America against England.

What did he care? And if they locked up all the Germans in this country—what did he care?—Only not her, not her—not Lotte!"

He carefully arranged the narrow paper strips. She should have them, Lotte, who had cured him.

Yes, she had known about him all the time! And had kept silent, never betraying her secret because she realized that one word from her would finish it all. He must not know what he was doing, because if he knew—he would not do it!

And only the fact that he was doing it, had kept him alive—that alone. And only that could cure him in the end.

So she had been silent.

And now he knew why she wore the little crystal ball on the gold chain around her neck: the winged griffon was to give her milk—red milk for her child. Now he understood about the ring with the pelican—because she herself was tearing open her

breast to feed her young. Strange whims of a bizarre woman—but a woman who thought of nothing but him and his happiness.

And her scissors and knives—they were for him, to help him cut more deeply into her white skin, so the spring would flow more richly—the spring that was life to him.

She had taken a sleeping potion so she would lie still, his poor, bleeding victim, and not wake him by crying out in her pain when he was obsessed by his wild desire for blood.

But later she did not need a sleeping draught.

She let him cut her and drink her life blood. She let him cut into her living body—and smiled.

She was the priestess and she prepared the sacrificial knives. She even made the victim beautiful for him—herself.

And this was the only thing of which she was jealous, what she did not want any other woman to have. That was why she had given him the little penknife to take on his trip to Mexico.

It had remained shiny and clean. And it showed blood stains only once—after the mescal sleep with the Goyita. Now he understood it all so clearly.

He understood the blows he had received on Christmas Night, understood Ivy's letter and the sneering words of the diva. And the terrified flight of the dancer.

These women spat at him for what he had done.

But Lotte Levi kissed him for it! Again and again! For him she took cures, for him she swallowed every kind of medicine that would give her more blood. So his avid lips could drink their fill of her heart's blood!

All these years he had been so blind! How could he have failed to see it! He had fancied she was a blood-thirsty goddess, the sorceress who was poisoning him! Had fancied she was the spider draining his life!

How had she said it that night when he came to see her after his speech in the Terrace Garden? He could hear again the cello tones of her sweet voice: "The highest thing that a woman can do for the man she loves, what a mother would do

for her only child, a Saviour for suffering humanity—you taught me to do it, taught me the most marvelous, the divine gift!" Divine, she called it, marvelous!—She said that he had taught her—he! And she thanked him for it—it was her last word when they parted.

She thanked—*HIM!*

This was the way she took it—she, Lotte Levil

"South 2.19" Some one shouted. That was Frank Braun's number.

They were lined up in the prison yard, eighteen Germans. They were fettered together in twos and had to march through the streets, surrounded by soldiers. They were taken from their prison in Brooklyn over to Manhattan, across the bridge, but slowly so as to give the crowd a good chance to stare at them. Many times they stopped on the way and waited for half an hour at a time—no one knew for what.

"Sons of bitches!" people shouted at them. "Spies, German swine!"

There were flags everywhere. Many new ones had been added, of nations that had declared war on Germany following Washington's lead.

A platoon of soldiers in khaki came parading down Broadway. Many of the men were flat-footed and bowlegged, but there was a certain ardor in their bearing that lent firmness to their curiously waddling gait. Their color bearers carried the Star-Spangled Banner and beside it another flag—blue and white stripes with a blue star in the center. The Mogen Dovids! They were East Side Jews, volunteers embarking for Palestine. They were going to war to fight the Germans, to help conquer a new province for England.

Frank Braun laughed out loud. "Where is Lotte's flag now?" he thought. "What has become of Levi's banner?"

He was pulled sharply aside as the man to whom he was fettered suddenly wheeled around.

"What's happened?" Frank Braun asked.

"An old woman put something in my hand," the man answered. "A piece of paper." He read it out loud: "She is better!"

Frank Braun snatched it away from him as he recognized Dr. Cohn's handwriting. "Let me have it," he cried, "it's for me!"

They trotted on. "She is better," he muttered, "she is better."

They were transferred to another prison and a few weeks later to a third one in New Jersey. There they had to live, forty German prisoners, in a coal cellar. For one hour every day they were allowed to go out into the prison yard for a breath of fresh air.

From this place he wrote several times, and sometimes he received messages from her doctor. It was always the same: "She is better."

But never: She is well. Never—not once in all these long months.

Then he was sent to a prison camp in the South—for many more weary months.

Always the same faces, the same days and nights. He lived through these months in a trance like a sleepwalker.

The other prisoners thought he was slightly insane as so many others were. It did not matter and no one paid much attention to it—one got used to it in the camp.

But it was simply that he did not feel, did not see, did not think anything.

Except Lotte.

Then suddenly it broke loose, without any reason. He was standing behind the barbed wire fence staring into space. A sergeant walked past and Frank Braun hailed him.

"Would you like to make a hundred dollars?"

The American became interested. It was simple, Frank Braun explained. He wanted the sergeant to smuggle him out and take him to town for a night. He held the hundred dollar bill under the soldier's nose.

When it was dark the sergeant came for him with two other

men. They put revolvers into their holsters, making sure that Frank Braun would see they were armed. And the sergeant said: "Neither of us drinks!"

Frank Braun laughed. No, he did not want to get them drunk, he did not want to escape. He simply wanted to make sure that he was still a human being, with flesh and blood.

They made the rounds of drug stores and gambling dives and whorehouses. They drank moonshine and home-brew with black and white women. They played poker, baccarat and roulette.

There was an immense yearning for freedom in him, born of many months of confinement in which his life had been regulated with a tape measure.

And there was also something else, stronger even than his yearning for freedom: he was well and strong, and he wanted to test his strength. An instinct was driving him and he enjoyed himself recklessly.

"Like an animal!" he thought. "Thank God!"

He rolled dice and played cards and drank and reached for the women.

An octoroon put her hand on his shoulder as she filled his glass: "Are you coming?"

He looked at her. She was white and young and very beautiful. Her naked breasts were gleaming.

Slowly he shook his head. "No!"

The censor permitted two letters a month, which Frank Braun wrote to his mother. But he wrote to New York every day—the soldiers mailed them—for a good tip. He always wrote just a few lines—and only once was it more. There was a rhythm pulsing in him, so he wrote verse. He wrote:

It happened, oh, it happened often and again

Throughout that burning night and in that fated hour,
Sobs stole my voice, my soul distilled its pain.

Was that chill laughter, or did the blonded power
Of this joy-child fail in understanding? Through her tears

And through her cries and in her sighs I heard your voice,
Your voice, my Lotte, and your body calling mine, your fears
Your cries, your terrors, telling me: "Rejoice!"
I am your wife, your mate, forget it not.

Oh Lotte, I was true—in my way true!—
Was true to you from the start of time.

It happened, oh, it happened often and again:
Whores shrieked, and bottles spewed their mirth and wine,
Cards clicked, my silver passed to bantering men.
Then, sudden, as the vapor lay supine,
There came the scent of you, your Verveine breath,
That stilled these things and drove them all away.
I wanted you, my Lotte, through this haze of death,
Your blood to drink, your wine to drive my lust away.

Oh, Lotte, I was true—in my way true!—
Was true to you to the end of time.

Only once in all these months came a direct word from her.
She often wired him, however, and Dr. Cohn wrote. "She is
better," he would say, and again: "She is better!"

All the bells were ringing in the town, guns were booming,
and factory whistles screeching. It began at four o'clock in the
morning and lasted all day: Armistice—the Germans are beg-
ging for peace.

The prisoners slunk through the morass of their camp like
whipped dogs. They did not speak and did not dare look at
each other.

They were ashamed—

But life went on in the camp for many weary months longer,
as if nothing had happened, until suddenly a wire came from
Lotte telling him that he was free. The commander of the camp
sent for him; he had already been notified from Washington.

"You must have pull," the Colonel said. "Who is it?"

Frank Braun did not answer.

But still it took days. And every day he wired: "Tomorrow"—and he counted the hours, crossing them off one by one.

He spent these days in a fever heat.

At last he sat in the Pullman car. He bought newspapers at every station and tried to read, but could not. He strode up and down the whole length of the train, came back to his seat and immediately jumped up again to resume his impatient pacing.

How the time dragged!

He chose a book and tried to read, but had to close it.

A cigarette, and another.

Then he found the rhythm of the wheels, and leaned back in his chair, humming the rhythm with closed eyes.

He did not sleep—he was only dreaming, half awake.

He walked up the stairs of her house. The tall butler opened the door—the one who had been with the Jeffersons. The servants were busy moving the plants in the hall downstairs. Frank Braun greeted them all, but did not dare speak to them or ask how Lotte was. He was afraid.

Lotte's maid took him up to the library and asked him to wait. He was counting the minutes now.

At last the door opened. A nurse asked him to go upstairs, Mrs. van Ness was expecting him.

Silently he followed her to the bedroom. She stopped him at the door: he must not stay too long, the Doctor had said, not more than a quarter of an hour.

And then he entered her room—and now he was at her bed, burying his head in the pillows.

"At last you are back, my darling boy!" she said.

She had made herself beautiful for him. Her hair was carefully arranged, its rich red contrasting with the Nile green of her lace gown. She wore emeralds on her hands, but her fingers were thin, terribly thin.

She had put lipstick on her lips and powder on her face. She

was half sitting up, her back supported by the pillows. The faint scent of Jicky was in the room.

The yellow curtains were drawn, admitting only a dull white light and enshrouding the room in dusk. She looked like a wax figure, restored to life.

Once this was Lotte, he thought. Now it is only her will-power that is keeping her alive, her tremendous will to live, born of her love—her love for me. "She is living only for me," he thought, "for me alone."

"For me!" he whispered.

She nodded. "Yes, what I did, I did for you." And she repeated. "At last you are back, my darling boy!" She stroked his cheek, brushing her fingers through his hair. "How do you feel now? Is it true that you are well and strong?"

"Yes, completely well, Lotte."

"How glad I am! I knew it—I felt it—that last night! You drank your fill then!"

"Lotte——" he groaned, "Lotte——"

"Say nothing!" she whispered. "Please say nothing! I am so gay and happy—my blood is flowing in you now and it will make you strong and young! Come, let me kiss you!"

She took his head in both her hands and kissed him softly, his eyes, his cheeks and his mouth. Then she reached for his hand and held it in hers.

She looked at him for a long time.

Again she kissed him.

"I understand it all now," she continued. "I have been thinking about it all these months while I was lying here, still and alone, dreaming of you. You, my beloved, were doing only what the whole world did."

Her eyes caressed him tenderly. "It has all been a terrible insanity which obsessed mankind—as it has before, hundreds of times, in the course of history. Now and then there springs into existence in this world a new faith or a new insanity, and sometimes we know its origin and often we do not. If the time for it is ripe, then this faith—or this insanity—will find fertile soil

and will grow until it covers the earth. Christianity was founded in this way, and Buddhism and Islam—but also the belief in witchcraft, the Inquisition, the Crusaders, the Albigenses and the Flagellants. Throughout history, down to the present day, new beliefs and new insanities have ever sprung up, but they all passed away when their time had come. They are all the same at bottom, even if some are small and ridiculous while others are great and powerful. And there will come a time when even the wild madness that now rages throughout the world will subside.

"What madness?" he asked.

"The *blood madness*! It must have started somewhere, although we do not know where, but it is contagious and infects all the people who come in contact with it. They all want blood, blood! Just as you did!"

"No, no, Lottel!" he protested. "I did not want anything. I did not even know what I was doing—not until that last night when I woke up. Before that, I knew nothing about it, absolutely nothing!"

She smiled a wan smile. "I know, my beloved! But do you think the millions of soldiers in Europe know more? They are unaware of their wild madness, of their thirst for blood—just as you were."

"But they don't want to drink blood, Lottel!" he countered.

"Are you so sure of that? Are you sure they don't? That none of them wanted to, not even wanted to without realizing it?—When there is a storm, only a few leaves are carried up into the clouds. The others remain near the ground. How many of the old Christians actually wanted to be martyrs? Hardly one in a hundred thousand! The others were merely swept along.

"I, too, dreamed of blood—of rivers of blood in which to drown our enemies! And that I grew above it I owe to you! The storm seized all the leaves and tossed them about near the ground—but it carried me high up into the clouds and even beyond—up to the stars!"

A lock of hair had fallen over her forehead; she brushed it

back with her hand. Her eyes sparkled like the emeralds on her fingers. "Ask a hundred, a thousand, a million people, but not one of them will be able to tell you how it all happened! They don't know, because they were merely swept along by the storm. They saw red—all of them—as I did and as you did! The time is red—red with blood, and in you it simply revealed itself more strongly, more wildly—more divinely, if you like! Humanity had become stricken with a wild fever and had to drink blood to make themselves well and young again. And they are drinking it, every day and every hour. When, when will it ever end?"

"It has ended!" Frank Braun said.

She shook her head. "No! No! Not today and not a year from now! And not for many years!"

"We are completely broken," he said. "Germany is no more."

There was a visionary light in her eyes, as she whispered: "*Thou art lifted up, O sick one, that liest prostrate. They lift up thy head to the horizon, thou art raised up and dost triumph by reason of what hath been done for thee. Ptah hath overthrown thine enemies according to what was ordered to be done for thee. Thy head shall not be carried away from thee after the slaughter, thy head shall never, never be carried away from thee!*"

She interrupted herself to look at the door that had softly opened.

"Yes, I know!" she called out to the nurse. "I know—my time is up! You must go now, Dearest—until tomorrow then!" Her eyes caressed him tenderly. "You are well—I can see that, I can feel it. You drank your fill—but when will mankind's thirst be stilled? When?" She sank back upon her pillows, the cello notes of her voice slowly ebbing away. "Today is Tuesday—how I have looked forward to this day! But you see, every day is Tuesday now: *Dienstag, Tirsdag, Tuesday—Mardi, Martes, Martedì!* The day of Mars and of Tiu, the God of the Sword! Every day now—today and tomorrow and always—is Sword Day, War Day, Blood Day!"

She closed her eyes. "Good-bye, Dearest!" she whispered. "Until tomorrow——"

Like a wax figure she lay there, strangely alive—

She was still breathing

BERSERKER

BOOKS

