

Chapter One

Fog in Paris

As Gregory Temple was about to turn the corner of the Rue de la Lanterne he heard a curious sound, something between a hiss and a whistle, which was evidently intended to attract his attention. He turned to look at the dark doorway from which it had come, but the combination of shadow and fog made it impossible to discern the face of the man who was lurking there. He cursed the bad weather; fog was the curse of London, but he appeared to have brought this one with him to the streets of Paris, where it seemed to him to be just as foreign as he was.

“Monsieur Temple!” The man in the door way was evidently impatient.

Temple did not move, although he had stopped dead. If the other man wanted to talk to him, then he would have to step out into the street, where he face would be lit, vaguely at least, by a street-light.

Eventually, the other accepted the necessity. He was a small man but a wiry one, dressed with unusual flamboyance for someone who maintained vigils in dark doorways, although he did not seem to have acquired sophisticated tastes, any more than he was blessed with natural elegance. He might have passed for a dandy in the worst kind of licherie, but he would have been a clownish caricature in the Bois de Boulogne.

“We’d do better to step into the shadows, Monsieur Temple,” the caricature said, speaking in vulgar French but obviously expecting to be understood. “You’re being followed, and you’re not the only visitor that Monsieur Sévérin is expecting tonight. Monsieur Vidocq suggested that I should look out for you, and make contact if I could. Don’t worry—we’re on the same side.”

Temple scowled in dire annoyance. He had not been in the best of tempers for some time, ever since discovering that Ned Knob had held back a considerable fraction of the story of what had happened in the Spezia. It was bad enough to be betrayed by one’s own petty low-life spies without having their French equivalents greet him as if he were a brother in arms. He had heard rumors at the Prefecture regarding the gang of ex-convicts who had set up as an arm of the detective police in the Petite Rue de Sainte-Anne, with the reluctant blessing of the Prefect, and was not at all pleased to learn that they had apparently heard rumors of his business—rumors that had evidently been updated as a result of his findings in the Prefecture files, which he had assumed to be known to no one else but himself. “Is that hulking brute dogging my footsteps another of Vidocq’s damned *bagne*-sweepings?” he demanded, angrily.

The agent did not seem at all alarmed by his attitude. “Monsieur Vidocq is a great admirer of your work, Monsieur Temple,” he said, earnestly. “He considers your book on the art of detection to be a masterpiece. My name is Coco-Lacour. I’m Monsieur Vidocq’s most trusted associate—and I can assure you that the person following you is not one of our men. If you will agree to work with Monsieur Vidocq in this matter, we can easily relieve you of the inconvenience of being followed.”

Temple suspected that there was probably little competition for the title of “Vidocq’s most trusted associate,” but he struggled to remove the cutting edge in his voice. Coco-Lacour might be the worst kind of police agent, but he was a policeman nevertheless. “That’s very kind of you, Monsieur Lacour,” he said, warily. “I shall be pleased to call on Monsieur Vidocq at the Petite Rue de Sainte-Anne when I have the time—perhaps tomorrow.”

“Coco-Lacour,” the other corrected him, understandably anxious that no one should think that Coco was his forename rather than part of a nickname he had doubtless been given in the *bagne* from which Vidocq had plucked him. “Would you like me to have your follower arrested tonight? I would have to summon several of my colleagues in order to make the arrest, but I could do that if you wish. He’ll doubtless linger nearby while you’re talking to Monsieur Sévérin.”

“Please don’t go to any trouble,” Temple replied. “If he’s not one of your men, he must belong to another branch of the Prefecture, and I wouldn’t like to cause Monsieur le Préfet any inconvenience.”

“I’m sorry to have to correct you, Monsieur Temple” said Coco-Lacour, who did not sound in the least sorry, “but he has no connection whatsoever with the forces of law and order. I dare say that your presence in Paris is not without interest to the political police, but the *hulking brute*, as you call him, is in the employ of an Englishman. Would you like to know his name?”

“If you’ve got something to say,” Temple retorted, “spit it out.”

The *licherie* dandy sighed. “Lord Byron,” he said, briefly, immediately adding: “but you probably knew that already.”

Temple had not known it already, but he did not find the news surprising. The fact that Byron was in Paris—although there was no suggestion in the reports received in London that Victor Frankenstein was with him—had been one of the factors that had drawn Temple here, although his principal motive had been a desire to consult the Prefecture files with respect to the infamous vampire affair of 1804. Thanks to Ned Knob’s disloyalty, he was apparently late on the scene, at least one step behind the other players in the game—including, it now seemed, the vampire himself. It was even possible, Temple thought, that Henri de Belcamp, *alias* John Devil—to whom The perfidious Knob had presumably made a fuller report of his discoveries in Spezia—might be among the people taking a sudden interest in the vampire of Paris, but he was not about to ask one of Vidocq’s gang of poachers-turned-gamekeepers about the one man in the world they undoubtedly admired more enthusiastically than himself. “Why are you watching Jean-Pierre Sévérin’s house?” he growled, instead.

“Monsieur Sévérin is a very popular man nowadays,” Coco-Lacour replied, still seemingly confident that he had the advantage of knowing more than his interlocutor. “If I were to tell you the names of some of those...but I have my duty to the Prefecture to consider, and you’re a foreign spy. Our countries are no longer at war, but still....”

“Monsieur Sévérin has always been a much-respected man,” Temple said, stiffly. “When he was in charge of the morgue at the Marché-Neuf, he had occasion to meet many influential people. It’s remarkable is it not, what a generous cross-section of Parisian society the...what do you call it in France?... the *salle d’exposition* brings out. You and Monsieur Vidocq must be regular visitors yourselves, in search of old friends and adversaries.”

“Monsieur Sévérin is not as well-respected as he used to be,” Coco-Lacour told him. “The political wind is a little chilly nowadays for old Bonapartists. A little unfair, perhaps, since he was never associated with the Deliverance, and his son-in-law is a *chouan*—but he did know the emperor personally, and that counts as a black mark nowadays. You visited the *salle* more than once yourself in the old days, I believe, war or no war—breakdowns in diplomatic relations are God’s gift to the criminal classes, are they not? You were not one to let petty international disputes keep you from maintaining contact with *old friends and adversaries*.”

The point was a fair one but Temple was not about to call *touché*. “Goodnight, Monsieur Lacour,” he said.

Coco-Lacour frowned “There is no need to be impolite, Monsieur Temple,” he said, in a wounded tone. “We are colleagues, after all. Our little band of heroic crime-fighters might well be able to render you invaluable assistance—if you were to get into difficulties.”

Temple did not bother to ask whether that was a veiled threat. He was, after all, the man on foreign soil; it was inevitable that the Prefecture should be enthusiastic to maintain a monopoly on detective work conducted in the capital, even of the crazy kind in which he was presently engaged. He could not help wondering, though, why Vidocq’s agents—who were supposedly affiliated to the criminal police, although they were rumored to be nothing more than organized criminals themselves—were taking such an interest in a representative of His Majesty’s Secret Service.

“I do not anticipate getting into difficulties, Monsieur Lacour,” Temple retorted, “and we are not colleagues. I’m no longer employed by Scotland Yard; I have retired from police work and am here in Paris simply to look up a few old friends, of whom Monsieur Sévérin is one.”

“Oh, have it your own way,” Coco-Lacour replied, probably more put out by the continued deliberate mangling of his name than by any disappointed expectations. “Monsieur Vidocq will be disappointed, but he’s come to expect such ingratitude.” He stepped back into the shadowed doorway so abruptly, that Temple turn round, expecting to see that a third person had come into view further along the street—but if Coco-Lacour had seen someone, the other had been very quick to take evasive action.

Again, Temple cursed the fog. Then he swiftly rounded the corner of the Rue de la Lanterne and sounded the bell of the first house whose door he encountered.

It was not a concierge who answered but a young woman, perhaps seventeen years of age. She had beautiful blonde hair.

Temple told her his name, and asked, in French, to see Jean-Pierre Sévérin.”¹

“I’m afraid that Monsieur Sévérin is very old, Monsieur,” The young woman replied. “He hardly receives visitors at all, and never at this advanced hour.”

“He’ll see me,” Temple said. “I knew him long ago, when he was in charge of... the establishment at the Marché-Neuf. I was a detective at Scotland Yard at the time, but I’m retired now, just as he is.”

The blonde girl’s dark blue eyes looked him up and down, as if estimating his own antiquity, and any worth he might have acquired in consequence. She was not about to be convinced, though.

“I’m afraid....” She began—but was then interrupted.

“It’s all right, Angela,” said a male voice from the stairway behind her. “This isn’t the one we were expecting. I’ll handle it.”

“Yes, father,” the young woman said, meekly. She stepped back, and was replaced in the doorway by a melancholy man with dark hair, who must have been in his late thirties.

“Monsieur de Kervoz, I presume?” Temple was quick to say. The corridor inside the door was too dark to allow him to judge the extent of the other’s surprise at hearing his name spoken.

“I don’t believe I’ve had the privilege,” René de Kervoz said, in English—with almost as much stiffness as a genuine Briton might have contrived.

“I need to speak to Monsieur Sévérin,” Temple said, not wanting to stand on the foggy street any longer than necessary. “I’m sorry to call at such a late hour, but I’ve been busy since my arrival. You will both be interested in what I have to say. It concerns Countess Marcian Gregoryi.”

This time, the young man’s start of surprise was very clearly visible. “What do you mean?” he demanded.

“I need to see Monsieur Sévérin,” Temple repeated.

René de Kervoz hesitated, then nodded. “Please go to your room, Angela,” he said. “I’ll take Monsieur Temple up to see your grandfather. If the other one comes, tell him that Monsieur Sévérin is engaged, and cannot possibly see anyone else tonight.”

“I’m glad that my unannounced call has provided you with a potentially-useful excuse,” Temple murmured, as they mounted the staircase to the first floor. “I shall feel a little less embarrassed by my inability to warn you that I was coming.”

Kervoz made no reply, but stood aside politely as he ushered his visitor through the doorway of a bedroom. Jean-Pierre Sévérin evidently had no reception-room or study, although he belonged to the respectable ranks of the poor and was the proud possessor of two large bookcases as well as a capacious writing-desk. The bed-curtains were closed, and the retired morgue-keeper was sitting in an armchair by the fireside. He was, as his great-granddaughter had said, very old—but he was not frail, and he stood up to greet Temple with a polite bow, followed by an English handshake.

“Gregory Temple,” Sévérin said, immediately. “Why, it must be at least five years since I saw you last. How are you?”

“Quite well,” Temple lied. “I wanted to come to see you when I was last in Paris, but I was exceedingly busy.”

“The affair of the two assassins buried at the Trocadero,” Sévérin said, as he resumed his own seat and indicated that Temple should take the one opposite the hearth. René de Kervoz fetched a less comfortable chair from the bedside for himself. “The trial at Versailles caused quite a sensation—we followed its course eagerly in the newspapers. Should the young man have been convicted? He came from a very good family, did he not? But he committed suicide immediately after his release, so I suppose he must have had some cause for shame.”

“His father’s family is a very good one,” Temple admitted, not bothering to tell his host that he had been in Paris far more recently than the trial at Versailles, in order to visit the Château de Belcamp and contend with a gang of kidnappers, “but his mother...well, that was another story. Henri de Belcamp was something of a chimera, his dark and light selves seemingly in continual conflict. Yes, he should have been convicted, but no, he did not commit suicide. That was yet another of his seemingly-miraculous evasions.”

“Mr. Temple says that he wants to talk about Countess Marcian Gregoryi,”² René de Kervoz put in, apparently eager to blight the old man’s gladness at seeing an old friend.

¹ A character introduced in Paul Féval’s *The Vampire Countess* (Black Coat Press, 2003, ISBN 978-0-9740711-5-2).

Jean-Pierre Sévérin did not react with alarm, though, or even with undue astonishment. “I did not know that you were party to that affair,” he said, in a voice that was low but perfectly even. “Our countries were not on the best of terms at the time—although such petty disputes did not always prevent you from visiting us, of course.”

“I’ve only read the reports filed at the Prefecture,” Temple admitted. “I don’t know how accurate the information contained therein might be, given the extreme unreliability of its sources, but I have some reason to suspect that it is not as fanciful as it must have seemed at the time to Monsieur le Préfet.”

“Do you, indeed?” murmured Sévérin, cocking an eyebrow. “I have not seen the files myself, of course, but I remember that old villain Ezekiel, who must have supplied much of their content. I wish I could say that the Prefecture no longer hires men of that stripe, but I fear that it would not be true.”

“There’s one watching your house as we speak,” Temple told him. “He seems to have been posted to look out for someone else who was intending to pay you a visit tonight—the one you asked your granddaughter to put off.”

“I seem to have become somewhat sought-after lately,” Sévérin admitted. “Everyone is hungry for information about my old friend Germain Patou. I seem to have convinced people that I have no news of his whereabouts, but I cannot seem to persuade them that I know nothing about his experiments, or that I do not know where he hid any records he might have kept. Even some of my old friends from the morgue can find no other topic to discuss.”

“I’m interested in Patou too,” Temple admitted. “Obviously, I take your word for the fact that you have no knowledge of any records he kept—but I’m a little concerned to hear that you’ve attracted the attention of people who might not. Would you mind telling me who you are expecting to call tonight?”

“Not at all,” the old man replied. He took up a visiting-card from the occasional table beside his armchair and held it out to Temple. “He did not request an appointment,” Sévérin said, with a slight sigh. “He simply asked the Dominican lackey who brought the card to say that he would call on me this evening, if he could. The Church takes the Restoration very seriously, and seems to regard the king’s resumption of his throne merely as a symbol of its own renewal.”

The name on the card was MALO DE TREGUERN. There was no address, but there was a design beneath the name: a red Cross of Calvary, entwined with a thorny briar that might—or might not—have symbolized Christ’s crown of thorns.

Temple was considerably intrigued, not so much by the fact that Malo de Treguern wanted to consult Jean-Pierre Sévérin as by the odd circumstance that Monsieur Vidocq had posted one of his men at the corner to watch out for a Churchman operating on the direct authority of a papal warrant. “Do you know this Treguern?” he asked.

“Only by reputation,” René de Kervoz put in. “He’s a legend in my native province. He was a Knight of Malta before the Emperor disbanded the Order, and then spent many years on a quest to find a fragment lost from the tomb of one of his ancestors. He was thought to be mad, but the object of the quest—the restoration of his family’s fortune—was eventually fulfilled, with or without the stone in question. After that, he disappeared from Brittany. It was rumored that he had gone to Rome.”

“He did,” Temple supplied, feeling that he ought to offer as much of a *quid pro quo* as his duty permitted. “He’s working for the Holy Office now.”

“As a heresy hunter?” Kervoz said. “What has that to do with us?”

“I don’t imagine for a moment that you’re under suspicion of heresy,” Temple hastened to reassure him. “He has a different quarry in view—the same one, I suspect, that I am pursuing. All my rivals are ahead of me, it seems, and I must count myself fortunate that I seem to have overtaken him, at least.”

“What quarry do you have in view?” Jean-Pierre Sévérin asked. “And by what authority are you hunting on French soil?”

“Monsieur le Préfet knows that I am here,” Temple said, taking the easier question first. “I have his permission, if not his blessing. I came to Paris to investigate the vampire that terrorized the city eighteen years ago—and was both astonished and alarmed to learn that he seems to have returned.”

“She, not he,” René de Kervoz put in.

² A character introduced in Paul Féval’s *The Vampire Countess* (Black Coat Press, 2003, ISBN 978-0-9740711-5-2).

“Countess Marcian Gregoryi,” Sévérin said, pensively. “Has she returned?” Temple was glad that the old soldier wasted no time with any futile protest that the countess was dead. The old man had seen René de Kervoz shoot her in the head, but he knew now, if he had not then, that the eyes of men were subject to gross deception in the presence of that remarkable woman.

“A woman of that name is now in Paris,” Temple told him. “I am not certain that it is the same woman that was here in 1804, since she is said to be in her early twenties, but I have learned to expect the seemingly impossible in this affair. That is one reason for my presence here—I was hoping that you might be able to identify her for me if your memory is good enough. Monsieur de Kervoz’s attempted correction might be mistaken, though; if my information is trustworthy—which is, I admit, dubious—the countess you encountered in 1804 was not the actual vampire, properly speaking, but merely his instrument.”

“That was not my impression,” René de Kervoz murmured, doubtless recalling the fateful day on which the countess had seduced him, while pretending to be her own dark-haired sister, seemingly in order to obtain the secret of his uncle’s whereabouts. “But you need have no fear that my memory has faded. If Countess Marcian Gregoryi is indeed in Paris, whether she had aged a full eighteen years or not a day, I will know her as soon as I set eyes on her.”

“Is it possible, do you think, Mr. Temple,” Jean-Pierre Sévérin asked, “that the woman now using the name might be the same one, even though she looks no older?”

“I think it is,” Temple said. “It is possible that she is a different person altogether—an innocent instrument, completely in her master’s power—and that even if she seems to be the same, that appearance is merely a clever illusion. I really do not know what to expect of this vampire—but I do not think that he is the bloodsucking monster of superstition. He appears to know secrets that science has not yet discovered, which might perhaps have been known to mages of old and then lost—but it is equally possible that he made them himself, if he is as old as the facts suggest.”

“There was no rumor of bloodsucking in 1804,” the white-haired ex-morgue-keeper said, softly. “The manner of predation attribute to the countess was even more bizarre—but people died nevertheless. Who does the countess intend to marry and murder this time?”

“I doubt that she intends to marry anyone,” Temple said. “Her master is in search of the same thing as everyone else: the records of Germain Patou’s experiments, and those of Victor Frankenstein, if any exist. I suspect, though, that the so-called vampire, like Malo de Treguern, is more intent on destroying such secrets than making use of them. Like the Church, albeit in a very different fashion, he is probably a would-be monopolist in matters of resurrection.”

“You said that asking for our help in deciding whether the present Countess Marcian Gregoryi is the same one that was in Paris before was one reason why you came,” Sévérin asked. “It seems a trivial one—what are the others?”

“I thought that you would like to know,” Temple said, simply. “I thought that you ought to be warned—and....”

René de Kervoz cut him off. “Warned?” the Breton said. “She is the one that ought to be frightened of us. We have a score to settle. I tried to shoot her once, and believed that I had done so; I’ll be delighted to have another chance. She killed my beloved Angela—the mother of the girl who answered the door to you just now.”

“It would be unwise to shoot her again,” Temple said. “It would be reckoned as murder if you succeeded this time, no matter what crimes she might or might not have committed in the past.”

“Might or might not?” Kervoz echoed. “Are you saying that she did not kill Angela?”

“I have no reliable information as to that, one way or the other,” Temple told him. “Neither, I think, do you.”

Kervoz was about to protest, but Sévérin silenced him with a gesture. “René was deluded when he was seduced and drugged by the countess, and was in no fit condition to form reliable judgments,” the old man said, addressing himself to the Englishman. “What I saw on the river that night—all of which must be neatly recorded in the Prefecture’s files—was admittedly impossible, and I have every reason to doubt that my own eyes were telling me the truth. I have had abundant cause to wonder whether I collaborated wholeheartedly in an illusion, because I could not bear the thought that my daughter had committed suicide. She was my step-daughter, as you probably know, but I loved her no less for that. The fact remains, though, that she did die—and that Countess Marcian Gregoryi was responsible, directly or indirectly, for her death.”

"If you really did catch a glimpse of a supernatural creature in the river that night," Temple told him, "it might have been the actual vampire rather than his glamorous instrument—I can draw no firm conclusion on the matter until I find out more."

"You were about to give us another reason for your visit when René interrupted you," Sévérin said. "Is it that you want our help in trying to find out?"

"Yes," Temple said. "I am alone in this business, mistrusted by my superiors and unable to place the slightest faith in my hirelings. I need assistance if I am to get to the bottom of it. All the other interested parties are ahead of me—including, it seems, the infamous Monsieur Vidocq. I hoped that you might give me the help I need, given that you have your own very powerful reasons for wanting to understand what really happened in 1804. I must warn you both, though, that it may not be possible for you to take your vengeance. If, as I suspect, the vampire has already died at least once, and has powerful means at his disposal to create illusions, he might be more difficult to destroy than you or I can imagine."

"I thought I saw the countess reduced to ashes once, and was then convinced that I had blasted her brains out," René de Kervoz muttered. "Was all that really no more than illusion?"

"I suspect so," Temple said, "but I cannot be entirely sure. There are more things in Heaven and Earth than I once dreamed of—but I need to find out, and I need help that I can rely on."

"I'm glad that you consider us trustworthy," Sévérin replied, courteously, "but my granddaughter is always assuring me that I'm far too old for adventuring nowadays. It's a long time since I took my little skiff out on the river. René, on the other hand..."

"René can speak for himself," Kervoz interrupted, sharply. The Breton did not seem enraptured by the prospect of working for an English policeman, even though the prospect of hunting down the vampire that had killed his young wife-to-be was obviously tempting, even after all these years.

"Might I ask you an exceedingly delicate question, Monsieur Sévérin?" Temple said, hastening to interrupt any possible dispute between the two men.

"Of course," Sévérin replied, suggesting by his tone that he was not promising an answer.

"You spent the whole of your working life in the Paris morgue," Temple said, his own tone one of deadly earnest, "And you succeeded your father, who held the same position before the Revolution. There is no one in the world more qualified to give an expert judgment on this matter. Tell me, Monsieur Sévérin: *do the dead ever return to life?*"

"You are the second person to ask me that, in so many words, within a week," Sévérin said, pensively. "Like you, the other was an old acquaintance from my days at the Morgue—a genuinely good man, though, not a polite ghoul like some of those who haunted the *salle*. I told him that I could not be sure, and I will give you the same answer. You must know, of course, that the morgue was first established in consequence of a panic regarding the possibility of premature burials, rather than for its ostensible purpose of allowing the dead to be formally identified. I do not know how much truth there is in the many gruesome tales of men awakening in their coffins and tearing off their fingernails scabbling hopelessly at the wooden lid, but it must have happened on occasion. It is certainly true that a small number of those brought into the morgue as dead eventually began to move again, and to sit up on their slabs demanding to know where they were.

"The official attitude to such cases has always been that they could not have been truly dead, but only cataleptic, and I have always agreed with that judgment in public...but I *cannot be sure*. Some of the *revenants* did not seem to their relatives to be the same person they had been before. Again, the official attitude to such cases has always been that their brains must have suffered some damage as a result of their catalepsy, which affected their minds, and it is certainly true that most of those undergoing such transformations were damaged beyond repair, having been rendered stupid or mad...but again, I *cannot be sure*. I am not at all certain what a man who really had returned from the dead, or a spirit that had possessed the body of a dead man, would be able to do to persuade an unprejudiced observer that he really had been resurrected, or that he really was a different person from the one who had died.

"If you were to ask me whether I believe in vampires, Mr. Temple I would have to say that I really do not know whether I believe in them or not, simply because I hardly know what I might mean by the word when I pronounce it. Germain did believe in the evidence of his own eyes, wholeheartedly—and, having convinced himself that Countess Marcian Gregoryi really had returned from the dead, he immediately set out to discover a means of restoring *all* the dead to life. He was

equally convinced that he had found the road to success, and I was present at some of his earliest demonstrations...but at the end of the day, all that I can truthfully say on my own behalf is that *I cannot be sure.*”

“Thank you for your honesty, old friend,” said Temple, sincerely. “I appreciate it. I, too, cannot be sure, but I have grown so familiar of late with the notion that the dead can return, with the proper assistance—and sometimes without any assistance whatsoever— that I am no longer certain even of my own uncertainty. Who, by the way, was the other old friend who asked you the question?”

“Colonel Bozzo-Corona—you might have heard of him. He’s said to be very rich, and a great philanthropist, although he lives quite modestly in the Rue Thérèse.”³

It was Temple’s turn to be astonished, and slightly alarmed, although he was unable to tell his host why that was the case, and was not entirely certain himself. “Colonel Bozzo-Corona is interested in this affair?” he repeated, playing for time.

“Not in this business with the vampire, or even the matter of Germain’s supposed secret—but he did ask the question about the dead returning to life. He has known me for a long time, as I said. He was always interested in the morgue—fearful, I think, of his own mortality. You do know him, then?”

“Yes I do,” Temple replied. “He has visited London several times, and had more than one occasion to make himself helpful to the police. He was directly or indirectly responsible for more than one of Scotland Yard’s early arrests.”

“He does not travel as much nowadays,” the old man told him.

Temple had to remind himself to get back to the immediate point of his visit. “I have not yet found out where Countess Marcian Gregoryi is staying in Paris, but I believe that I know where she will be tonight. I shall try to follow her myself, but I am not as young as I once was, and she will doubtless have at least one man with her on her carriage. Monsieur de Kervoz has followed her successfully before, I believe. If we were three instead of one, I think we would stand a greater chance of tracking her to her lair, in spite of the fact that two of us are no longer well-fitted for such work—and we shall certainly be able to learn more about her.”

“Where will she be?” Sévérin asked.

“I discovered, quite by chance, that she has made an appointment to see a lawyer named Robert Surrisy at his office, not far from the Tuileries. I do not know, as yet, what she wants him to do for her, and it might not be easy to find out once she has told him—he is another old acquaintance of mine, who has occasionally acted on my behalf in French legal matters, but he takes his duty of confidentiality very seriously, and would not have let it slip that she was about to become his client had he imagined that the fact could be of any professional interest to me.”

“And how do you propose we get to the Tuileries?” René de Kervoz demanded. “Have you a carriage?”

“No,” said Temple, evenly. “We shall have to take a fiacre. We will be followed, but that does not matter. If we split up thereafter, the follower will probably stick with me.”

“While I...” Kervoz began—but again he was interrupted by the old man’s preemptory gesture.

“We will both go with you,” Sévérin promised, standing up and reaching for a slender cane that was leaning on the arm of his chair. “If this woman really is Countess Marcian Gregoryi, René will run after her carriage when she leaves the lawyer’s office, and he will report back to us here when he has found out where she goes thereafter. But I must ask you one question first, Mr. Temple, since you have not asked it of me: Do you know where Germain Patou is?”

“I have information on that score that I believe to be reliable,” Temple replied, without hesitation, “and I have dispatched agents to find out whether it is accurate or not. I wish that I could reassure you that he is safe and well, but I cannot. He left London in very bad company: a small army of Grey Men, led by a veritable demon who calls himself Mortdieu. Did you witness his resurrection, by any chance?”

“No,” said Sévérin, who was already in the corridor, retrieving his coat from a stand. “That was not one of his early experiments. Germain left Paris in order to carry out a particular mission, but I do not know what it was—except that, now you mention...” he trailed off, as if struggling hard to recover a memory that had surfaced momentarily and then sunk back into oblivion.

“Except what?” Temple prompted.

³ A character introduced in Paul Féval’s *The Black Coats* series (several volumes, all from Black Coat Press).

“There was a lawyer involved in that negotiation too,” Jean-Pierre Sévérin said, as he set off down the stairs with an expected spring in his step, twirling his cane like a dandy in anticipation of some amorous adventure. “Now that I come to think about it, I believe that his name, too, was Surrisy....”