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THE WANDERING WAYFARER BY TAYLOR HUBBARD

Blotting the bloodstains from my bespattered monocle, I allowed my jaw to drop in honor of Le Théâtre du Grand Guignol, whose performance had left me... Taylor Hubbard... unbelievable as it may seem... speechless.

I gazed at my flawless yet green reflection in the wee glass of absinthe the theater so thoughtfully furnished and pondered, "Who am I?" What is this man, Taylor Hubbard? Am I merely an autograph on an eight-by-ten glossy, or on my latest autobiography, *I, Hubbard*? "Oh, Taylor, who is anyone, and where's my drink?" retorted my dear friend Zelda as she demanded further provisions from the café's tight lipped garçon, the green drops of her last drink dribbling onto her enticing fox fur wrap. "I'm thirsty," she whined, wrapping her red bowed lips around her thin ivory cigarette holder and inhaling deeply.

I drank in the moment and a martini to wash down the scurvy concoction fondly referred to in these parts as 'the green devil'. I rubbed my baby blues to reassure myself they still nestled in their sockets, then shuddered, remembering the gruesome climax of this evening's performance. Only then did words begin to return to me. Words like "Scandalous." "Astounding." "Me-Worthy." Yes, I had just experienced Le Theatre du Grand Guignol, Paris' latest most shocking phenomenon. While amazed, I was also aghast at the violence I'd witnessed onstage – more ghastly than witnessing a rhino rip my African safari guide to shreds on the banks of the Nile. Poor chap. I should send his family some chocolates. Perhaps from Belgium...

But I digress. Back in the theater, I let my mind's eye playfully linger over the heaving bosoms of every lady who'd fainted during the play's climax. I lingered further on their necklaces. Faux pearl. For shame. Has there been a more grievous sin to society than that of Mademoiselle Chanel's introduction of costume jewelry to high society? Surely not. Yet unlike their jewels, the ladies' fear was real. For so terrifying is the spectacle of André de Lorde's Grand Guignolers de Paris that they will be forced to tone down much of their performance when they travel to London. This is why my dear friend Mr. Coward insisted I see the production in their hometown. I suggest you do the same, as this event can be no more ignored than a Siberian Tiger, hurling down at you at speeds beyond imagine, fangs bared and eager for Hubbard Pie.

Was the blood spilled by the Grand Guignol real? Even I would be hard-pressed to deny it, and I am an expert. Surely you'll recall my humble column, "Tea in the Trenches" that both elevated me to celebrity and exposed me to flesh wounds I'd rather have wiped from my memory. Yes, my dear Zelda, c'est moi, the dashing figure once referred to by Miss Louella Parsons as, "that delightful gentleman in the cape who charmed the olive right out of my martini." Oh, Ms. Parsons, flattery will get you everywhere, but that's why Mr. Hearst hired us, n'est ce pas?" I do amuse me so. Yet my wounds bloomed fresh for me, reflected in the blood spilled during The Grand Guignol's mélange of horror plays and farces, each one violent, humorous and titillating in its own dark way.

After the performance, when I had regained my composure (and my balance – blast that wily devil absinthe!), the theatre's director, André de Lorde, and his troupe greeted me. The monsieur grinned devilishly when I asked him to reveal how the actors stabbed and yanked out the eyes of the lovely young actress in *Un Crime Dans Une Maison de Fous* (*A Crime in a Madhouse*). The monsieur slowly wagged his finger in my direction, eyes twinkling, "Non non, monsieur. Ce n'est pas possible. Soon, we will play in your country so we cannot say our magic." But I tried. Four martinis later, the only reveal I could muster was a glimpse of the milky thigh of a young actress but Monsieur de Lorde himself kept mum and soused... on my dime for that matter. Fortunately, with my fortune safely invested in stocks, I do have a few extra dimes to share (Django, you owe me a Scotch, dear fellow!). That and my rarely won praise for the most potent theatrical experience in my few years on this globe. When Monsieur de Lorde's Grand Guignolers do visit the States, be sure to see them and tell them hello from that caped wonder, their friend Taylor Hubbard.

And now I pack my bags, yet again, eschewing the comfort and gaiety of Paris for an igloo, a sled, and a pack of trusty canines. Yes, tomorrow I journey to China, to traverse the Great Wall a pilgrimage I will bring to you in my newest volume, *Hubba Hubbard*. Until then ... godspeed, fellow wanderers.



