# The Amputated Arms

Jorgen Wilhelm Bergsoe

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It happened when I was about eighteen or nineteen years old (began Dr. Simsen). I was studying at the University, and being coached in anatomy by my old friend Solling. He was an amusing fellow, this Solling. Full of jokes and whimsical ideas, and equally merry, whether he was working at the dissecting table or brewing a punch for a jovial crowd.

He had but one fault—if one might call it so—and that was his exaggerated idea of punctuality. He grumbled if you were late two minutes; any longer delay would spoil the entire evening for him. He himself was never known to be late. At least not during the entire years of my studying.

One Wednesday evening our little circle of friends met as usual in my room at seven o'clock. I had made the customary preparations for the meeting, had borrowed three chairs—I had but one myself— had cleaned all my pipes, and had persuaded Hans to take the breakfast dishes from the sofa and carry them downstairs. One by one my friends arrived, the clock struck seven, and to our great astonishment, Solling had not yet appeared. One, two, even five minutes passed before we heard him run upstairs and knock at the door with his characteristic short blows.

When he entered the room he looked so angry and at the same time so upset that I cried out: "What's the matter, Solling? You look as if you had been robbed."

"That's exactly what has happened," replied Solling angrily. "But it was no ordinary sneak thief," he added, hanging his overcoat behind the door.

"What have you lost?" asked my neighbor Nansen.

"Both arms from the new skeleton I've just recently received from the hospital," said Solling with an expression as if his last cent had been taken from him. "It's vandalism!"

We burst out into loud laughter at this remarkable answer, but Solling continued: "Can you imagine it? Both arms are gone, cut off at the shoulder joint;—and the strangest part of it is that the same thing has been done to my shabby old skeleton which stands in my bedroom. There wasn't an arm on either of them."

"That's too bad," I remarked. "For we were just going to study the ANATOMY of the arm to−night."

"Osteology," corrected Solling gravely. "Get out your skeleton, little Simsen. It isn't as good as mine, but it will do for this evening."

I went to the corner where my anatomical treasures were hidden behind a green curtain—"the Museum," was what Solling called it— but my astonishment was great when I found my skeleton in its accustomed place and wearing as usual my student's uniform—but without arms.

"The devil!" cried Solling. "That was done by the same person who robbed me; the arms are taken off at the shoulder joint in exactly the same manner. You did it, Simsen!"

I declared my innocence, very angry at the abuse of my fine skeleton, while Nansen cried: "Wait a moment, I'll bring in mine. There hasn't been a soul in my room since this morning, I can swear to that. I'll be back in an instant."

He hurried into his room, but returned in a few moments greatly depressed and somewhat ashamed. The skeleton was in its usual place, but the arms were gone, cut off at the shoulder in exactly the same manner as mine.

The affair, mysterious in itself, had now come to be a serious matter. We lost ourselves in suggestions and explanations, none of which seemed to throw any light on the subject. Finally we sent a messenger to the other side of the house where, as I happened to know, was a new skeleton which the young student Ravn had recently received from the janitor of the hospital.

Ravn had gone out and taken the key with him. The messenger whom we had sent to the rooms of the Iceland students returned with the information that one of them had used the only skeleton they possessed to pummel the other with, and that consequently only the thigh bones were left unbroken.

What were we to do? We couldn't understand the matter at all. Solling scolded and cursed and the company was about to break up when we heard some one coming noisily upstairs. The door was thrown open and a tall, thin figure appeared on the threshold—our good friend Niels Daae.

He was a strange chap, this Niels Daae, the true type of a species seldom found nowadays. He was no longer young, and by reason of a queer chain of circumstances, as he expressed it, he had been through nearly all the professions and could produce papers proving that he had been on the point of passing not one but three examinations.

He had begun with theology; but the story of the quarrel between Jacob and Esau had led him to take up the study of law. As a law student he had come across an interesting poisoning case, which had proved to him that a study of medicine was extremely necessary for lawyers; and he had taken up the study of medicine with such energy that he had forgotten all his law and was about to take his last examinations at the age of forty.

Niels Daae took the story of our troubles very seriously. "Every pot has two handles," he began. "Every sausage two ends, every question two sides, except this one—this has three." (Applause.) "When we look at it from the legal point of view there can be no doubt that it belongs in the category of ordinary theft. But from the fact that the thief took only the arms when he might have taken the entire skeleton, we must conclude that he is not in a responsible condition of mind, which therefore introduces a medical side to the affair. From a legal point of view, the thief must be convicted for robbery, or at least for the illegal appropriation of the property of others; but from the medical point of view, we must acquit him, because he is not responsible for his acts. Here we have two professions quarreling with one another, and who shall say which is right? But now I will introduce the theological point of view, and raise the entire affair up to a higher plane. Providence, in the material shape of a patron of mine in the country, whose children I have inoculated with the juice of wisdom, has sent me two fat geese and two first−class ducks. These animals are to be cooked and eaten this evening in Mathiesen's establishment, and I invite this honored company to join me there. Personally I look upon the disappearance of these arms as an all− wise intervention of Providence, which sets its own inscrutable wisdom up against the wisdom which we would otherwise have heard from the lips of my venerable friend Solling."

Daae's confused speech was received with laughter and applause, and Solling's weak protests were lost in the general delight at the invitation. I have often noticed that such improvised festivities are usually the most enjoyable, and so it was for us that evening. Niels Daae treated us to his ducks and to his most amusing jokes,

Solling sang his best songs, our jovial host Mathiesen told his wittiest stories, and the merriment was in full swing when we heard cries in the street, and then a rush of confused noises broken by screams of pain.

"There's been an accident," cried Solling, running out to the door.

We all followed him and discovered that a pair of runaway horses had thrown a carriage against a tree, hurling the driver from his box, under the wheels. His right arm had been broken near the shoulder. In the twinkling of an eye the hall of festivities was transformed into an emergency hospital. Solling shook his head as he examined the injury, and ordered the transport of the patient to the city hospital. It was his belief that the arm would have to be amputated, cut off at the shoulder joint, just as had been the case with our skeleton. "Damned odd coincidence, isn't it?" he remarked to me.

Our merry mood had vanished and we took our way, quiet and depressed, through the old avenues toward our home. For the first time in its existence possibly, our venerable "barracks," as we called the dormitory, saw its occupants returning home from an evening's bout just as the night watchman intoned his eleven o'clock verse.

"Just eleven," exclaimed Solling. "It's too early to go to bed, and too late to go anywhere else. We'll go up to your room, little Simsen, and see if we can't have some sort of a lesson this evening. You have your colored plates and we'll try to get along with them. It's a nuisance that we should have lost those arms just this evening."

"The Doctor can have all the arms and legs he wants," grinned Hans, who came out of the doorway just in time to hear Solling's last word.

"What do you mean, Hans?" asked Solling in astonishment.

"It'll be easy enough to get them," said Hans. "They've torn down the planking around the Holy Trinity churchyard, and dug up the earth to build a new wall. I saw it myself, as I came past the church. Lord, what a lot of bones they've dug out there! There's arms and legs and heads, many more than the Doctor could possibly need."

"Much good that does us," answered Solling. "They shut the gates at seven o'clock and it's after eleven already."

"Oh, yes, they shut them," grinned Hans again. "But there's another way to get in. If you go through the gate of the porcelain factory and over the courtyard, and through the mill in the fourth courtyard that leads out into Spring Street, there you will see where the planking is torn down, and you can get into the churchyard easily."

"Hans, you're a genius!" exclaimed Solling in delight. "Here, Simsen, you know that factory inside and out, you're so friendly with that fellow Outzen who lives there. Run along to him and let him give you the key of the mill. It will be easy to find an arm that isn't too much decayed. Hurry along, now; the rest of us will wait for you upstairs."

To be quite candid I must confess that I was not particularly eager to fulfill Solling's command. I was at an age to have still a sufficient amount of reverence for death and the grave, and the mysterious occurrence of the stolen arms still ran through my mind. But I was still more afraid of Solling's irony and of the laughter of my comrades, so I trotted off as carelessly as if I had been sent to buy a package of cigarettes.

It was some time before I could arouse the old janitor of the factory from his peaceful slumbers. I told him that I had an important message for Outzen, and hurried upstairs to the latter's room. Outzen was a strictly moral character; knowing this, I was prepared to have him refuse me the key which would let me into the fourth courtyard and from there into the cemetery. As I expected, Outzen took the matter very seriously. He closed the Hebrew Bible which he had been studying as I entered, turned up his lamp and looked at me in astonishment as I

made my request.

"Why, my dear Simsen, it is a most sinful deed that you are about to do," he said gravely. "Take my advice and desist. You will get no key from me for any such cause. The peace of the grave is sacred. No man dare disturb it."

"And how about the gravedigger? He puts the newly dead down beside the old corpses, and lives as peacefully as anyone else."

"He is doing his duty," answered Outzen calmly. "But to disturb the peace of the grave from sheer daring, with the fumes of the punch still in your head,—that is a different matter,—that will surely be punished!"

His words irritated me. It is not very flattering, particularly if one is not yet twenty, to be told that you are about to perform a daring deed simply because you are drunk. Without any further reply to his protests I took the key from its place on the wall and ran downstairs two steps at a time, vowing to myself that I would take home an arm let cost what it would. I would show Outzen, and Solling, and all the rest, what a devil of a fellow I was.

My heart beat rapidly as I stole through the long dark corridor, past the ruins of the old convent of St. Clara, into the so−called third courtyard. Here I took a lantern from the hall, lit it and crossed to the mill where the clay was prepared for the factory. The tall wheels and cylinders, with their straps and bolts, looked like weird creatures of the night in the dim light of my tallow candle. I felt my courage sinking even here, but I pulled myself together, opened the last door with my key and stepped out into the fourth courtyard. A moment later I stood on the dividing line between the cemetery and the factory.

The entire length of the tall blackened planking had been torn down. The pieces of it lay about, and the earth had been dug up to considerable depth, to make a foundation for a new wall between Life and Death. The uncanny emptiness of the place seized upon me. I halted involuntarily as if to harden myself against it. It was a raw, cold, stormy evening. The clouds flew past the moon in jagged fragments, so that the churchyard, with its white crosses and stones, lay now in full light, now in dim shadow. Now and then a rush of wind rattled over the graves, roared through the leafless trees, bent the complaining bushes, and caught itself in the little eddy at the corner of the church, only to escape again over the roofs, turning the old weather vane with a sharp scream of the rusty iron.

I looked toward the left—there I saw several weird white shapes moving gently in the moonlight. "White sheets," I said to myself, "it's nothing but white sheets! This drying of linen in the churchyard ought to be stopped."

I turned in the opposite direction and saw a heap of bones scarce two paces distant from me. Holding my lantern lower, I approached them and stretched out my hand—there was a rattling in the heap; something warm and soft touched my fingers.

I started and shivered. Then I exclaimed: "The rats! nothing but the rats in the churchyard! I must not get frightened. It will be so foolish—they would laugh at me. Where the devil is that arm? I can't find one that isn't broken!"

With trembling knees and in feverish haste I examined one heap after another. The light in my lantern flickered in the wind and suddenly went out. The foul smell of the smoking wick rose to my face and I felt as if I were about to faint, it took all my energy to recover my control. I walked two or three steps ahead, and saw at a little distance a coffin which had been still in good shape when taken out of the earth.

I approached it and saw that it was of old−fashioned shape, made of heavy oaken boards that were already rotting. On its cover was a metal plate with an illegible inscription. The old wood was so brittle that it would have been very easy for me to open the coffin with any sort of a tool. I looked about me and saw a hatchet and a couple of spades lying near the fence. I took one of the latter, put its flat end between the boards—the old coffin fell apart

with a dull crackling protest.

I turned my head aside, put my hand in through the opening, felt about, and taking a firm hold on one arm of the skeleton, I loosened it from the body with a quick jerk. The movement loosened the head as well, and it rolled out through the opening right to my very feet. I took up the skull to lay it in the coffin again—and then I saw a greenish phosphorescent glimmer in its empty eye sockets, a glimmer which came and went. Mad terror shook me at the sight. I looked up at the houses in the distance, then back again to the skull; the empty sockets shone more brightly than before. I felt that I must have some natural explanation for this appearance or I would go mad. I took up the head again—and never in my life have I had so overpowering an impression of the might of death and decay than in this moment. Myriads of disgusting clammy insects poured out of every opening of the skull, and a couple of shining, wormlike centipedes—Geophiles, the scientists call them—crawled about in the eye sockets. I threw the skull back into the coffin, sprang over the heaps of bones without even taking time to pick up my lantern, and ran like a hunted thing through the dark mill, over the factory courtyards, until I reached the outer gate. Here I washed the arm at the fountain, and smoothed my disarranged clothing. I hid my booty under my overcoat, nodded to the sleepy old janitor as he opened the door to me, and a few moments later I entered my own room with an expression which I had attempted to make quite calm and careless.

"What the devil is the matter with you, Simsen?" cried Solling as he saw me. "Have you seen a ghost? Or is the punch wearing off already? We thought you'd never come; why, it's nearly twelve o'clock!"

Without a word I drew back my overcoat and laid my booty on the table.

"By all the devils," exclaimed Solling in anatomical enthusiasm, "where did you find that superb arm? Simsen knows what he's about all right. It's a girl's arm; isn't it beautiful? Just look at the hand—how fine and delicate it is! Must have worn a No. 6 glove. There's a pretty hand to caress and kiss!"

The arm passed from one to the other amid general admiration. Every word that was said increased my disgust for myself and for what I had done. It was a woman's arm, then—what sort of a woman might she have been? Young and beautiful possibly—her brothers' pride, her parents' joy. She had faded away in her youth, cared for by loving hands and tender thoughts. She had fallen asleep gently, and those who loved her had desired to give her in death the peace she had enjoyed throughout her lifetime. For this they had made her coffin of thick, heavy oaken boards. And this hand, loved and missed by so many—it lay there now on an anatomical table, encircled by clouds of tobacco smoke, stared at by curious glances, and made the object of coarse jokes. O God! how terrible it was!

"I must have that arm," exclaimed Solling, when the first burst of admiration had passed. "When I bleach it and touch it up with varnish, it wild be a superb specimen. I'll take it home with me."

"No," I exclaimed, "I can't permit it. It was wrong of me to bring it away from the churchyard. I'm going right back to put the arm in its place."

"Well, will you listen to that?" cried Solling, amid the hearty laughter of the others. "Simsen's so lyric, he certainly must be drunk. I must have that arm at any cost."

"Not much," cut in Niels Daae; "you have no right to it. It was buried in the earth and dug out again; it is a find, and all the rest of us have just as much right to it as you have."

"Yes, everyone of us has some share in it," said some one else.

"But what are you going to do about it?" remarked Solling. "It would be vandalism to break up that arm. What God has joined together let no man put asunder," he concluded with pathos.

"Let's auction it off," exclaimed Daae. "I will be the auctioneer, and this key to the graveyard will serve me for a hammer."

The laughter broke out anew as Daae took his place solemnly at the head of the table and began to whine out the following announcement: "I hereby notify all present that on the 25th of November, at twelve o'clock at midnight, in corridor No. 5 of the student barracks, a lady's arm in excellent condition, with all its appurtenances of wrist bones, joints, and finger tips, is to be offered at public auction. The buyer can have possession of his purchase immediately after the auction, and a credit of six weeks will be given to any reliable customer. I bid a Danish shilling."

"One mark," cried Solling mockingly.

"Two," cried somebody else.

"Four," exclaimed Solling. "It's worth it. Why don't you join in, Simsen? You look as if you were sitting in a hornet's nest."

I bid one mark more, and Solling raised me a thaler. There were no more bids, the hammer fell, and the arm belonged to Solling.

"Here, take this," he said, handing me a mark piece; "it's part of your commission as grave robber. You shall have the rest later, unless you prefer that I should turn it over to the drinking fund." With these words Solling wrapped the arm in a newspaper, and the gay crowd ran noisily down the stairs and through the streets, until their singing and laughter were lost in the distance.

I stood alone, still dazed and bewildered, staring at the piece of money in my hand. My thoughts were far too much excited that I should hope to sleep. I turned up my lamp and took out one of my books to try and study myself into a quieter mood. But without success.

Suddenly I heard a sound like that of a swinging pendulum. I raised my head and listened attentively. There was no clock either in my room or in the neighboring ones—but I could still hear the sound. At the same moment my lamp began to flicker. The oil was apparently exhausted. I was about to rise to fill it again, when my eyes fell upon the door, and I saw the graveyard key, which I had hung there, moving slowly back and forth with a rhythmic swing. Just as its motion seemed about to die away, it would receive a gentle push as from an unseen hand, and would swing back and forth more than ever. I stood there with open mouth and staring eyes, ice−cold chills ran down my back, and drops of perspiration stood out on my forehead. Finally, I could endure it no longer. I sprang to the door, seized the key with both hands and put it on my desk under a pile of heavy books. Then I breathed a sigh of relief.

My lamp was about to go out and I discovered that I had no more oil. With feverish haste I threw my clothes off, blew out the light and sprang into bed as if to smother my fears.

But once alone in the darkness the fears grew worse than ever. They grew into dreams and visions. It seemed to me as if I were out in the graveyard again, and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane as the wind turned it. Then I was in the mill again; the wheels were turning and stretching out ghostly hands to draw me into the yawning maw of the machine. Then again, I found myself in a long, low, pitch−black corridor, followed by Something I could not see—Something that drove me to the mouth of a bottomless abyss. I would start up out of my half sleep, listen and look about me, then fall back again into an uneasy slumber.

Suddenly something fell from the ceiling onto the bed, and "buzz— buzz—buzz" sounded about my head. It was a huge fly which had been sleeping in a corner of my room and had been roused by the heat of the stove. It flew

about in great circles, now around the bed, now in all four corners of the chamber—"buzz—buzz—buzz"—it was unendurable! At last I heard it creep into a bag of sugar which had been left on the window sill. I sprang up and closed the bag tight. The fly buzzed worse than ever, but I went back to bed and attempted to sleep again, feeling that I had conquered the enemy.

I began to count: I counted slowly to one hundred, two hundred, finally up to one thousand, and then at last I experienced that pleasant weakness which is the forerunner of true sleep. I seemed to be in a beautiful garden, bright with many flowers and odorous with all the perfumes of spring. At my side walked a beautiful young girl. I seemed to know her well, and yet it was not possible for me to remember her name, or even to know how we came to be wandering there together. As we walked slowly through the paths she would stop to pick a flower or to admire a brilliant butterfly swaying in the air. Suddenly a cold wind blew through the garden. The young girl trembled and her cheeks grew pale. "I am cold," she said to me, "do you not see? It is Death who is approaching us."

I would have answered, but in the same moment another stronger and still more icy gust roared through the garden. The leaves turned pale on the trees, the flowerets bent their heads, and the bees and butterflies fell lifeless to the earth. "That is Death," whispered my companion, trembling.

A third icy gust blew the last leaves from the bushes, white crosses and gravestones appeared between the bare twigs—and I was in the churchyard again and heard the screaming of the rusty weather vane. Beside me stood a heavy brass−bound coffin with a metal plate on the cover. I bent down to read the inscription, the cover rolled off suddenly, and from out the coffin rose the form of the young girl who had been with me in the garden. I stretched out my arms to clasp her to my breast—then, oh horror! I saw the greenish−gleaming, empty eye sockets of the skull. I felt bony arms around me, dragging me back into the coffin. I screamed aloud for help and woke up.

My room seemed unusually light; but I remembered that it was a moonlight night and thought no more of it. I tried to explain the visions of my dream with various natural noises about me. The imprisoned fly buzzed as loudly as a whole swarm of bees; one half of my window had blown open, and the cold night air rushed in gusts into my room.

I sprang up to close the window, and then I saw that the strong white light that filled my room did not come from the moon, but seemed to shine out from the church opposite. I heard the chiming of the bells, soft at first, as if in far distance, then stronger and stronger until, mingled with the rolling notes of the organ, a mighty rush of sound struck against my windows. I stared out into the street and could scarcely believe my eyes. The houses in the market place just beyond were all little one−story buildings with bow windows and wooden eave troughs ending in carved dragon heads. Most of them had balconies of carved woodwork, and high stone stoops with gleaming brass rails.

But it was the church most of all that aroused my astonishment. Its position was completely changed. Its front turned toward our house where usually the side had stood. The church was brilliantly lighted, and now I perceived that it was this light which filled my room. I stood speechless amid the chiming of the bells and the roaring of the organ, and I saw a long wedding procession moving slowly up the center aisle of the church toward the altar. The light was so brilliant that I could distinguish each one of the figures. They were all in strange old−time costumes; the ladies in brocades and satins with strings of pearls in their powdered hair, the gentlemen in uniform with knee breeches, swords, and cocked hats held under their arms. But it was the bride who drew my attention most strongly. She was clothed in white satin, and a faded myrtle wreath was twisted through the powdered locks beneath her sweeping veil. The bridegroom at her side wore a red uniform and many decorations. Slowly they approached the altar, where an old man in black vestments and a heavy white wig was awaiting them. They stood before him, and I could see that he was reading the ritual from a gold−lettered book.

One of the train stepped forward and unbuckled the bridegroom's sword, that his right hand might be free to take that of the bride. She seemed about to raise her own hand to his, when she suddenly sank fainting at his feet. The guests hurried toward the altar, the lights went out, the music stopped, and the figures floated together like pale white mists.

But outside in the square it was still brighter than before, and I suddenly saw the side portal of the church burst open and the wedding procession move out across the market place.

I turned as if to flee, but could not move a muscle. Quiet, as if turned to stone, I stood and watched the ghostly figures that came nearer and nearer. The clergyman led the train, then came the bridegroom and the bride, and as the latter raised her eyes to me I saw that it was the young girl of the garden. Her eyes were so full of pain, so full of sad entreaty that I could scarce endure them; but how shall I explain the feeling that shot through me as I suddenly discovered that the right sleeve of her white satin gown hung empty at her side? The train disappeared, and the tone of the church bells changed to a strange, dry, creaking sound, and the gate below me complained as it turned on its rusty hinges. I faced toward my own door. I knew that it was shut and locked, but I knew that the ghostly procession were coming to call me to account, and I felt that no walls could keep them out. My door flew open, there was a rustling as of silken gowns, but the figures seemed to float in in the changing forms of swaying white mists. Closer and closer they gathered around me, robbing me of breath, robbing me of the power to move. There was a silence as of the grave—and then I saw before me the old priest with his gold−lettered book. He raised his hand and spoke with a soft, deep voice: "The grave is sacred! Let no one dare to disturb the peace of the dead."

"The grave is sacred!" an echo rolled through the room as the swaying figures moved like reeds in the wind.

"What do you want? What do you demand?" I gasped in the grip of a deathly fear.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," said the deep voice again.

"Give back to the grave that which belongs to it," repeated the echo as the swaying forms pressed closer to me.

"But it's impossible—I can't—I have sold it—sold it at auction!" I screamed in despair. "It was buried and found in the earth—and sold for five marks eight shillings—"

A hideous scream came from the ghostly ranks. They threw themselves upon me as the white fog rolls in from the sea, they pressed upon me until I could no longer breathe. Beside myself, I threw open the window and attempted to spring out, screaming aloud: "Help! help! murder! they are murdering me!"

The sound of my own voice awoke me. I found myself in my night clothes on the window sill, one leg already out of the window and both hands clutching at the center post. On the street below me stood the night watchman, staring up at me in astonishment, while faint white clouds of mist rolled out of my window like smoke. All around outside lay the November fog, gray and moist, and as the fresh air of the early dawn blew cool on my face I felt my senses returning to me. I looked down at the night watch man—God bless him! He was a big, strong, comfortably fat fellow made of real flesh and blood, and no ghost shape of the night. I looked at the round tower of the church—how massive and venerable it stood there, gray in the gray of the morning mists. I looked over at the market place. There was a light in the baker shop and a farmer stood before it, tying his horse to a post. Back in my own room everything was in its usual place. Even the little paper bag with the sugar lay there on the window sill, and the imprisoned fly buzzed louder than ever. I knew that I was really awake and that the day was coming. I sprang back hastily from the window and was about to jump into bed, when my foot touched something hard and sharp.

I stooped to see what it was, felt about on the floor in the half light, and touched a long, dry, skeleton arm which held a tiny roll of paper in its bony fingers. I felt about again, and found still another arm, also holding a roll of paper. Then I began to think that my reason must be going. What I had seen thus far was only an unusually vivid dream—a vision of my heated imagination. But I knew that I was awake now, and yet here lay two−no, three (for there was still another arm)—hard, undeniable, material proofs that what I had thought was hallucination, might have been reality. Trembling in the thought that madness was threatening me, I tore open the first roll of paper. On it was written the name: "Solling." I caught at the second and opened it. There stood the word: "Nansen." I had just strength enough left to catch the third paper and open it—there was my own name: "Simsen."

Then I sank fainting to the floor.

When I came to myself again, Niels Daae stood beside me with an empty water bottle, the contents of which were dripping off my person and off the sofa upon which I was lying. "Here, drink this," he said in a soothing tone. "It will make you feel better."

I looked about me wildly, as I sipped at the glass of brandy which put new life into me once more. "What has happened?" I asked weakly.

"Oh, nothing of importance," answered Niels. "You were just about to commit suicide by means of charcoal gas. Those are mighty bad ventilators on your old stove there. The wind must have blown them shut, unless you were fool enough to close them yourself before you went to bed. If you had not opened the window, you would have already been too far along the path to Paradise to be called back by a glass of brandy. Take another."

"How did you get up here?" I asked, sitting upright on the sofa.

"Through the door in the usual simple manner," answered Niels Daae. "I was on watch last night in the hospital; but Mathiesen's punch is heavy and my watching was more like sleeping, so I thought it better to come away in the early morning. As I passed your barracks here, I saw you sitting in the window in your nightshirt and calling down to the night watchman that some one was murdering you. I managed to wake up Jansen down below you, and got into the house through his window. Do you usually sleep on the bare floor?"

"But where did the arms come from?" I asked, still half bewildered.

"Oh, the devil take those arms," cried Niels. "Just see if you can stand up all right now. Oh, those arms there? Why, those are the arms I cut off your skeletons. Clever idea, wasn't it? You know how grumpy Solling gets if anything interferes with his tutoring. You see, I'd had the geese sent me, and I wanted you to all come with me to Mathiesen's place. I knew you were going to read the osteology of the arm, so I went up into Solling's room, opened it with his own keys and took the arms from his skeleton. I did the same here while you were downstairs in the reading room. Have you been stupid enough to take them down off their frames, and take away their tickets? I had marked them so carefully, that each man should get his own again."

I dressed hastily and went out with Niels into the fresh, cool morning air. A few minutes later we separated, and I turned toward the street where Solling lived. Without heeding the protest of his old landlady, I entered the room where he still slept the sleep of the just. The arm, still wrapped in newspaper, lay on his desk. I took it up, put the mark piece in its place and hastened with all speed to the churchyard.

How different it looked in the early dawn! The fog had risen and shining frost pearls hung in the bare twigs of the tall trees where the sparrows were already twittering their morning song. There was no one to be seen. The churchyard lay quiet and peaceful. I stepped over the heaps of bones to where the heavy oaken coffin lay under a tree. Cautiously I pushed the arm back into its interior, and hammered the rusty nails into their places again, just as the first rays of the pale November sun touched a gleam of light from the metal plate on the cover.—Then the

weight was lifted from my soul.