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# SUMMONED

from the

By  
JOHN RANDALL

# DEAD

*How a shadowy Presence averted the catastrophe  
that threatened two loving hearts*

I AM the attendant at the City Hospital morgue. You might think that an uninviting job, but I don't mind it. I've never had any of the dead population rise up and speak to me, except—well, that's the one strange experience I want to tell you about.

Our Massachusetts city is so located that it's a crossroads to the White Mountains at the North, the Berkshires on the West and Cape Cod and the Boston resorts to the

East. Consequently we have plenty of accidents on the highways—too many.

On the Sunday afternoon in question the City Hospital morgue—the only one for miles around—was filled and I was so busy, with weeping relatives and all, that I didn't know which way to turn. So it wasn't with any sweet smile that I looked up to see a slip of a nurse put her head in the door and heard her hoarse whisper:

"That woman has been seen again!"



*"It is — it is  
—my Mary!"  
Spurling cried  
huskily*

"What woman?" I snapped impatiently. "That queer one who's been haunting the corridors lately."

I got peeved.

"Listen, sister," I said, striving to keep my temper, "this is no time for kidding. I'm busy. If you and the others out there in the hospital haven't anything better to do than cook up tales of spooks walking the corridors, you'd better get a job elsewhere. You don't frighten me one bit."

"But I mean it," she put in. "They saw her a minute ago, tall and stately, with gray hair and a lovely smile. Never saying a word to anyone, but slipping silently along the corridor without any sound of footsteps!"

"Beat it, sister," I motioned with my head. "I haven't any time now. Come back some other time and tell me another."

She gave me a disgusted look and went away. And about that time up wheeled the ambulance with a new victim. But this time the big policeman who was the attendant on the ambulance was crying.

"Ah, it's a shame," he said, blowing his nose hard. "Just a kid, and pretty as a picture. So young to die. I—I'm thinkin' she's me own daughter, Jack."

"Put her over there on the table, Mike," I said quickly. "The ice-box is full."

He turned on me, furious.

"Ain't ye got any respect for the dead?" he barked at me, getting hot. "Have ye been so long here, ye old gray-headed rat, that ye're gettin' cold and callous?"

"I didn't mean that, Mike," I returned. "I'm being rushed to death this afternoon—and on top of that, the nurses and internes have been trying to kid me about a ghost walking the corridors."

And then I asked him where the surgeon was on the ambulance.

"**N**O surgeon," he said shortly. "Every-thing's busy today. I had to go out on this by myself. She was hit crossin' the street. I've got her name—Mary Spurling. She's gone all right—the poor kid. I'll have the doctor send up the report later."

Big Mike went out after leaving his sad burden and I had a minute to look at the girl. I didn't blame Mike for snapping at me about the seemingly casual thing I had said. The girl was, I judged, about twenty, with soft brown hair done in a small knot at the back, and a face that in death looked like one of these marble goddesses in the museum. She had on a summery, floating

sort of dress in colors that all the young girls were wearing.

But the face—so lovely and sweet. As Mike said, she was the kind you'd like for a daughter. Long, delicate fingers—the sort that ought to linger over the keys of a piano or over a beautiful silver tea service.

I'd just about got her straightened out on the table and pulled a sheet over her pretty face, for the ice-box—excuse me, but "ice-box" is what we call it in the morgue—was full, when the door leading to the hospital proper burst open and two men entered. They were both intensely agitated and the older of the two appeared just about driven to insanity.

"Have you—have you—" he could hardly say it—"a young woman here named Mary—Mary Spurling? The police said—"

**H**EAVEN knows I try to make it easy for the folks. I'm not so callous as you might think. I have to meet them when the tragedy is fresh and it's no simple thing.

"I'm mighty sorry to say she's here, Mr. Spurling," I said, for I recognized him at once as the leading corporation counsel of our city. "It's going to be hard on you, sir. She was a lovely girl."

He stared at me a minute. My sympathetic reference to her that way took him by surprise, I guess, but it gave him a chance to get a grip on himself.

"Thanks, my man," he said simply.

Then I led him over to the table and uncovered her face. He stared at her a long time before he uttered that low cry that seemed wrung from his very soul. His face worked, and his fingers clenched and unclenched.

"It is—it is—my Mary," he said huskily, after a while. "Oh, God!"

He turned and staggered to a chair and buried his face in his hands. I let him alone for a minute and then I put a hand on his shoulder.

"I'm awfully sorry, Mr. Spurling," I said. "Death comes to all of us like that sometimes, and we don't know the reason why. We're not given to understanding it always—not at first, anyway. I'm mighty sorry, sir."

He looked up gratefully and grasped my hand.

"Thanks," he said again. "God bless you. I—I'll have someone come and take care of—of the body."

He got up as though he were going out.

But he turned suddenly and spoke, as though he wanted to talk with someone, to ease his soul for a moment.

"You don't know how awful this is," he said vehemently. "She was all I had—my only child. Her mother—as lovely and sweet as Mary—left us—died—two years ago. I thought I couldn't live any longer then. But I tried to keep up—for Mary's sake. Now—now she's gone. My wife is—is over there—in the cemetery." He pointed out of the window to the tiny little old churchyard across the street, lost in the midst of the city's growth. A queer little old churchyard still used by a few of the older families.

Suddenly the man uttered a cry like that of a stricken animal. Then he breathed deep, by sheer will power getting himself together again.

"This hospital will have sad memories for me," he spoke slowly.

"Your wife—she died here?" I asked.

"Yes. Out there—in the hospital. We—we thought everything was going nicely. She—she went suddenly. They sent for me, but she—she died before I could get here. God!"

But all this time the younger man had stood beside the table, staring at the girl's face. He hadn't said a word, but his face seemed almost as bloodless as the girl's lying there so still.

"Who is he, Mr. Spurling?" I asked.

"Her—her sweetheart. Henry Brent. They were engaged to be married. Desperately in love. God—I'm thinking about myself; how it's hitting me. But look at him! Poor fellow!"

Young Brent stared at the girl stupefied. He was in a daze. His jaw was set so you'd think it never could be opened. All the horror, all the grief in the world sat carved in his face. Good-looking chap when himself. But now—I don't think I ever saw such an agonized expression.

Spurling went up and took him by the arm. The young chap moved like a wooden man. He didn't resist. He stared ahead of him without seeing. Spurling moved with him toward the door. But suddenly the father moaned again and turned to me.

"I'd give anything in the world to have her back again," he cried. "Isn't there any power, here or beyond, that will bring her back?" he pleaded. "God, man! Must she lie there—dead? Isn't there—some way?"

I shook my head sadly. "It comes to all of us," I said.

Taking young Brent by the arm, leading him as though he were a child, Spurling went out of the room, his head bowed on his breast. I watched them go, my heart full of pity for them.

Tragedy. My world is full of it. But somehow this got under my skin more than anything else I'd ever seen. And as I went back and drew the sheet up over the dead girl's

lovely face, I felt as if I myself had lost a friend, or a kin—a beautiful daughter of my own. I felt my eyes smarting . . .

At that moment there came the slip of a nurse again, with wide eyes and flushed face, putting her head in at the door.

"She's been seen again—that strange woman who walks the corridors," she said.

And because I needed some vent for my feelings, I shouted at her:

"Will you get to the devil out of here and stop that nonsense! If you come over here again, trying to kid me about that woman, I'll report you to the superintendent. Now, beat it!"

She gave me a hurt look that time, and disappeared.

I felt like letting go a nice string of curses.

**T**WILIGHT came—summer twilight—and I switched on the lights. A few people drifted in, asking for missing relatives, but I didn't have them. It had been a hard day and I was tired. I had until midnight when I would be relieved by the other attendant and could go home.

I sat down in a chair in a corner of the room to rest a minute. Maybe I dozed; probably I did. But all at once I came to with a start. I had the feeling that someone was in the room—not any sense of sound, but just a feeling.

I opened my eyes and blinked. I stared



around. Sure enough, there was a woman, a tall and stately woman with gray hair and dressed in some kind of dark outfit, standing beside Mary Spurling's body! The sheet was drawn back and the woman stood there, her face in the shadow so I couldn't see her features very well.

Well, sir, I was knocked cold. Generally visitors seeking some lost person would ask me first, before they went peering around, pulling sheets off the dead. I didn't know what to make of it.

**T**HEN another queer feeling suddenly came over me. I might have been glued to my chair. My legs felt all sort of numb and useless and when I tried to get up I couldn't. I thought they were asleep, first, like the rest of me had been. But it wasn't that. There was no prickly sensation. They felt like lead, so heavy I couldn't stir them at all.

Meanwhile the woman stood there, her gaze riveted on the girl's face. She wasn't touching the body. She stood there, her hands clasped in front, her gaze intent. Strange tingling sensations went up and down my spine, for no reason at all. I began to be afraid. I felt as if I wanted to run from that place. Then I started to ask the woman who she was.

But I couldn't do that, either. I was absolutely dumb! I suddenly discovered I was numb all over—everywhere except my brain. I could think. But that was all. The rest of me wouldn't respond.

And that woman! Staring at the girl as though she was trying to hypnotize her—or bring her back to life. But she couldn't do that. The girl was dead, right enough. The nasty wound just back of her ear was cause enough. White, no pulse, no breath—she was dead all right, and anything that strange woman appeared to have in mind wouldn't be a bit of use.

Then suddenly she heaved a deep sigh—a sigh of satisfaction, I thought. It wasn't loud. A sigh like a breath of wind in the trees, or a faint whisper coming from some far-off corner of an empty house. Then she moved back and her action caused me involuntarily to look at the floor near her feet.

If I had been held motionless before, I was frozen solid and utterly without speech this time—without even thought.

For I had discovered something that gave me the horrors!

In the light of the electric wall lamp just beyond the table, I could see a shadow cast

by the table itself and the girl's body on it. There were shadows of other articles around—another table, a wheel-truck, the corner of an instrument case. But where the woman stood—where her shadow should have been—there wasn't any!

Before I could say or do anything, once more the woman turned toward the girl and began to stare at her, and once more I was held spellbound by that strange feeling sweeping over me like an invisible power. And as I watched the woman, it seemed to me she was transferring some force from herself to the girl, as though she were commanding her by sheer will power to get up off that table and walk!

To this day I don't know what gave me that impression, unless it was the tenseness of the woman's attitude. But as surely as if I had seen it with my own eyes, it seemed to me that some intangible something—some force, some vital element, passed—or rather, flowed—from the figure of the woman into that of the girl.

Then came that soft, fluttering sigh once more and suddenly the woman moved back and without a word or a look at me, left the room. She floated, rather than walked. She made no more sound than if she had been her own shadow, not even when she crossed the floor.

For several seconds I stared at the empty doorway through which she had vanished out into the corridor. Then, still in surprise, I glanced back toward the girl.

Believe me, right at that moment I wouldn't have been surprised if all those boxes on the wall had opened their doors and all my dead charges had suddenly stepped out.

For when I staggered over to look at the girl, *she was breathing!*

**M**Y eyes weren't lying to me. My mind wasn't playing tricks. In the light of the lamp I could see her breast slowly rise and fall. Not much, you understand. Not rapidly. I could hardly detect it at first. But she was breathing, just the same.

She was breathing, and that meant she was alive! And in a second I saw her throat convulse and relax as she swallowed. Then slowly her left hand, hanging off the edge of the table, began to rise. God, it gave me the creeps! Yet rise it did, not like that of an automaton, but slowly, as though gathering strength, and the fingers touched the wound behind her ear as if in her unconscious state she realized the pain

there and strove to lessen the agony.

I've seen strange things in the morgue. I've heard bodies grunt and groan from the gases that form in them. I've seen muscles contract and relax, causing grotesque movements that would have caused a nervous person to jump out of the window.

But never anything like this. That girl wasn't dead. She was alive—living! As surely as I was.

It didn't take me long to stir myself then. I jumped to the button on the wall and jammed my thumb into it until I might have pushed it through. After what seemed ages an orderly came.

"FOR God's sake, get a doctor," I cried, "and get that girl on the table out of here and into a bed. She's alive!"

The orderly stared at me a minute and grinned.

"Cripes, Jack," he said. "You're going nuts. Calm yourself. You'll be in Ward J next."

I couldn't stand any bantering from any young squirt like that—not at such a time.

"Damn your hide," I yelled at him. "Get a doctor, I tell you, and—and be quick, or by heaven I'll—"

His eyes opened as though he thought I truly had gone mad. He ran. He didn't wait any longer. He went for a doctor, more for me, I guess, than because he thought anybody else in that morgue needed one.

The doctor came at once, a young chap, with a serious look on his face. I don't know what the orderly told him. But the doctor had an inquiring look as he came in in his white uniform and said:

"What's the trouble here? What's happened?"

"This girl," I said breathlessly, pointing. "They brought her in for dead. The police ambulance. She's living. Look at her. Look at her—breathing!"

The doctor went over to her immediately. Instinctively he caught her hand and tried her pulse.

"Who examined her?" he asked brusquely.

"Nobody," I replied. "The police surgeon was busy. A policeman picked her up and brought her in. He said the report would come later."

"How long has she been here?" he snapped.

"An hour, or an hour and a half."

He signalled to the orderly.

"Get her to the women's ward right

away," he ordered. "Tell the nurse to undress her and get her to bed."

We all helped lift her off the table to the wheel-truck. Even the orderly was stirred into action and quickly he whisked her out of the door and off up the corridor, followed by the doctor.

I stood in the middle of the floor and passed a hand over my forehead, wondering if I'd gone absolutely daft and asking myself if it hadn't been a dream. And just then I saw something else that made me start.

It was dim, out there in the corridor. Up at the other end was a light somewhere, but in front of my door there was very little. And as I stared out, unthinking, a shadow passed. It seemed to me that somebody went by—a tall, stately woman, with gray hair—the very one who had been in the room!

I wanted to talk to her. I wanted to ask her if she had anything to do with the condition of that girl. I ran to the door.

"Wait a minute, if you please—" I began.

Then my mouth fell open. Again I felt that creepy sensation up my spine.

The corridor was empty!

Somewhere, far up around the corner, I could hear the retreating footsteps of the orderly and the doctor, and the muffled rumble of the truck. But otherwise there wasn't a sound—or a person! Nor were there any doors close by where the woman could have entered, for the corridor was nothing but a long passageway.

"For crying out loud!" I said to myself. "Are you going crazy? Is the job getting you?"

I staggered back into the room and half fell into my chair. I hadn't been there long before the doctor came back.

"What do you know about that case, more than you told me?" he asked.

I GOT my thoughts together and told him exactly what had happened—how Mike had brought the girl in, how she had lain on the table apparently dead, and how I woke up to see the woman standing there, and the impression I got of some force passing between them.

The doctor did not laugh or anything. He just stood there, thoughtfully, turning things over in his mind.

"How's the girl?" I asked presently.

"She's alive all right," he said. "She's on the dangerous list and it's a question whether or not she'll live. I think she will. But we've had to resort to a blood transfusion."

He didn't say anything more for a minute, and then, "That woman—" he began. "What do you think about her? Have you heard about a woman that's been seen frequenting the corridors of this hospital in the last day or so?"

I nodded.

"Just after the girl was brought in, a nurse came in here and said the woman had been seen again. I bawled her out and told her to get on about her business. I thought she was kidding me. They do, you know. They try to make me nervous and afraid."

"I know," he said. "But that woman—?"

"What about her?" I asked, when he hesitated. "She's getting my goat. God, she isn't real! She can't be, when she didn't cast any shadow. Say, what the devil is there about her?"

He turned and looked me straight in the eyes. Suddenly he seemed to give way, as a young man does before an older one.

"I swear I don't know." He shook his head. "I'm just a beginner in the game. I haven't had such a devil of a lot of experience and I'm not qualified to say. But—" he seemed to feel his way—"there are a lot of queer things written in medical books—things it's hard to understand, put down by doctors you're taught to take damn seriously. They're things about forces we don't know about and don't understand. The men who write about them don't understand them either, and don't try to explain. They simply set them down as strange experiences. They tell about influences that seem to come from nowhere—unless it's the other world. They tell about the dead seeming to come back, until you wonder if the whole lot of them haven't gone absolutely batty. And then something like this crops up to start you wondering all over again."

HE stopped, toying with a pencil he took from his pocket.

"A woman who doesn't cast a shadow," he meditated. "A woman who haunts the corridors—tall and stately, with gray hair. She doesn't do any harm. In this instance she seems to have been waiting for the girl to be brought here and apparently has done some good. That girl might have been buried alive, or killed by the jab of an embalmer's needle, if it hadn't been for her. Well," he added, turning to me, "keep it to yourself, Jack. We'll see what happens."

The hour was getting late and soon I'd be leaving, I thought with relief, but I was counting ahead of things. In just a few

minutes matters broke loose again—with a bang!

I had just sunk back into my chair when hurried footsteps sounded in the corridor and before I could say a thing, into the room burst Mr. Spurling. He was a wreck. He had aged years in the hour or so since I'd seen him last.

"For God's sake, tell me!" he burst out. "Where is she? They say she's alive. Where is she?"

"She *is* alive," I cried, springing to my feet, glad of the chance to reassure him. "It was a mistake. She's alive. She's hurt pretty bad. But they've taken her to the women's ward, and the doctor thinks she'll live. Aren't you glad?"

IF I had hit him, he couldn't have gone into a chair with a heavier thud. Once more he covered his face with his hands. One minute he was thanking God, and the next, of all surprising things, he was crying like a kid. I couldn't understand it. I'd seen them cry for joy. But this was different. This man was crying in grief and disappointment with one breath and thanking God for the life of his daughter with the next. I thought for a minute his mind had cracked. I moved over to him and he caught my hand, squeezing it and weeping like a child.

"Quit it, Mr. Spurling," I said harshly. Sometimes being stern does them good. "Quit it. Aren't you glad about your daughter?"

He struggled with himself. At last he ceased his crying, but when he looked up at me, still clinging to my hand, his face was gray with grief and horror.

"Of course I'm glad," he whispered. "You don't know how glad—about her! But something else has happened. The boy—Henry Brent. He couldn't stand it to think of Mary lying here—dead! Something snapped. He tried to commit suicide. He threw himself under a truck. I've just brought him to the hospital, in my car. He—he's alive—but—oh, God!"

Again he buried his face, sobbing one minute, almost laughing the next, like a hysterical woman.

Well, sir, there was tragedy for you!

The girl who was thought dead, now alive and with a fighting chance to recover. But the boy, who had been alive, now badly hurt and in a fair way to die.

There wasn't a thing to be said. I just let the old man sit there and cry. With his

nerves frayed and jangling, I thought that was the best thing to do.

It was. In a few minutes he seemed to feel better. After a while he arose, weakly, and caught my hand again to shake it.

"Thanks, for all you did for Mary," he said slowly. "I—I appreciate that. Thanks—ever so much."

"Oh, that's all right," was all I could say.

Stooping wearily, his head sunk on his breast, with heavy footsteps he crossed the floor and went out into the long hallway.

And, I'll be damned—if not far behind him I didn't see the shadow of that woman again! And when I went to the door and looked out, there wasn't a soul there, except the old man making his weary way up the corridor toward the rooms where his daughter and her sweetheart lay, each very close to death.

I didn't hear anything from the patients for several days after that—any more than that they were clinging to life somehow. Matters of my own kept me busy. Nor did I hear or see anything of that strange woman haunting the corridors. I got to thinking a lot about her—who she was and where she kept herself, and why she didn't cast any shadow on the floor.

I got to thinking, too, about that little cemetery across the street and wondering if the woman could be. . . . But what the devil! You don't accept things like that!

The young doctor came over occasionally and we chatted about strange occurrences that happen in the medical profession and whether or not you could explain them all with logical reasoning if you only knew how. And so the weeks went by.

Then one glad day, when the air was getting chill with fall, the doctor dropped by with news for me. He said the girl and boy were strong enough to go home. They were leaving that morning. I was glad to hear it,

of course. I'd like to tell you that they were all well, and everything, and that neither of them was the worse for the experience. But I can't. That only happens in fiction. The girl was all right, according to the doctor. But the boy hadn't come off so easily. The truck under which he threw himself had got his left arm at the elbow. They had to amputate. And it was pretty certain he'd always be lame in his right leg.

Too bad, of course. But the father said he didn't care. He said if a fellow liked his daughter well enough to die with her, he was the fellow to live for her, injured though he was. As for the girl—well, it didn't dull the spirits of either of those kids. They were more madly in love than ever. And one morning I looked up to see her in the doorway, laughing a little nervously as she glanced over at the table on which she'd lain.

She'd come to thank me, she said in a minute. Evidently nobody had said a word to her about the strange woman, so I didn't either.

"But what I really came for," she announced, blushing prettily despite the hospital pallor, "was to invite you to our wedding. Henry and I are going to be married next week. Dad says you did so much for me, that I want you to come."

"WELL, thanks a whole lot," I responded, "but I guess not. *You* would understand it all right, of course, but if your guests knew that the keeper of the morgue was at your wedding—well, it might add an embarrassing note that would spoil the party. Thanks just the same, but I guess I better stay away."

But she wouldn't take no for an answer. "If you feel that way," she asserted, "we won't say anything about your—ah—vocation. But I want you to be there just the





same. Please! Oh, do say you'll come."

Funny kid. She wouldn't let up until I promised. Said that anybody who snatched her from death ought to be there to give his influence for a long and happy married life.

I consented at last. I had to. Still a little pale, she was like a pretty picture. I couldn't do anything else than promise.

I GOT my partner on the job to come in early that evening. I changed my clothes and made myself as good-looking as a gray-haired old fellow could. Then I started out from the morgue, intending to be at the wedding about nine o'clock, just in time to see the bride given away and hear the clergyman pronounce the words that made them one.

But I got as far as the end of the corridor, intending to go out the front way, when I stopped short with a gasp.

Right in front of me, standing in a dim corner of the passageway, was that strange woman who had hovered over the girl. Tall and stately, she was, with luxuriant gray hair. I could see her features quite plainly now, and she was a mighty good-looking woman. I don't remember how she was dressed. As I think back on it, her clothes didn't have any definite detail. They were just dark.

But the thing that struck me so forcibly about her was her face. It seemed all sort of radiant and glowing, as though a spotlight from somewhere shone on it. The light seemed to flow from her face and radiate out into her hair and then off that so it formed a sort of halo about her head. Nor was that all. Somehow her whole body seemed to glow, as though another spotlight behind her threw its rays each side of her.

And I'll be doggoned if the light didn't appear to shine through her too! All I could think of was an angel standing there, "in bright robes," as the Good Book says.

I started to speak, but my throat was as tight as a drum. I stared at her, while tingles chased themselves up and down my spine. I wanted to ask her who she was, why she was standing there, and what made her look so bright and shining. But I couldn't say a thing. I gulped. The sweat began to pour out on my forehead.

It wasn't that I was scared. Rather, I was just plain amazed. No, you couldn't really be scared by looking at her, astonishing as she appeared, for there was the loveliest, kindest smile on her face, as though she had attained at last the thing she wanted most.

I started to speak again, and gulped again—and suddenly had a great desire to keep right on, as though her presence there was none of my business. Which I did.

I just kept walking, right on up the corridor. Just before I opened the door that would let me out into the hospital proper, I looked back. The woman still stood there. But she appeared to be fading, dissolving, like mist floating away through the darkness. Dimly I could see her, but it looked as though she were a long way off, instead of about fifty feet from me.

I jumped through the door and shut it quickly. I straightened my tie—that didn't need straightening—and pulled down my vest—that didn't need pulling down. All the way to the wedding I couldn't get my mind off that strange scene.

Up to this time, you understand, I'd accepted supernatural things—so-called—as a lot of hoovey, believing there was an explanation for everything, as I'd told the doctor. But after what he had told me about strange, unexplainable things encountered in the medical profession, I had begun to think maybe I was a little too skeptical.

Anyway, the wedding was lovely and went off without a hitch. The young couple looked great, though they still were somewhat pale from their convalescence. But they were properly showered with rice and ran away, hand-in-hand, amid the laughter, and the tears and good wishes of the guests.

When it was all over, Spurling hunted me out and got me by the arm.

"Do you—ah—take something?" he asked.

Well, I wasn't quite sure what he meant by "something," but I was willing to find out. He led me upstairs into his den and when the glasses and cigars were set out, he seemed to relax and fall into a talkative mood.

"BY the way, Randall," he began after a while, and I knew he was leading up to the thing most on his mind, "what did you ever find out about that strange woman who stood over Mary, there in your place?"

"I wish I could tell you, Mr. Spurling," I replied. "I never found out a thing, and what's more what I saw tonight makes her stranger than ever."

"What was that?" he snapped, setting down his glass and eyeing me with new interest.

I told him what I had seen just before I came away.

He sat for a long time deep in thought.

"How long have you heard about this woman?" he asked. "It's true, isn't it, that she's been seen before?"

"I've been at the hospital about a year and a half," I said, "and I never heard about her until a few days before your daughter was brought in. Then I began to hear that she'd been seen occasionally in the corridors—that people had come on her suddenly. They thought she was someone a little out of her head, who might have lost a relative by death in the hospital, and stole in at odd times to search for them. But when they began to get mysterious about her, I thought they only were kidding me, to get me nervous on my job—ghosts, and all that sort of business, you know."

He nodded, smoking meditatively the while.

"About a year and a half ago, you came?" he mused.

"Yes," I said. "But somebody thought they recognized her as a former patient, though they weren't sure."

"Interesting," he remarked. "Then if she were a patient, that would place her in the hospital—say, two years or so ago?"

"It might," I agreed.

"—really possible?" he whispered, as though talking to himself.

"What?" I asked.

Suddenly he laid down his cigar, and sprang to his feet as though coming to a decision.

"Could you recognize her again?" he asked, staring hard at me.

"Why, yes, I think so," I said. "I got a pretty good look at her face tonight."

Quickly he went to his desk, flung it open and took out a plush frame that had a cover on a hinge. He opened it, stared at it a minute, and handed it to me. Inside was a photograph.

"Did you ever see that woman before?"

God above! It gave me the creeps again. Out of that photograph was looking the face of the woman I'd seen in the corridor hardly two hours before—the woman who had stood there with that strange glow about her, like an angel!

For a minute I couldn't speak. I just

stared back at the photograph, my hands trembling, the sweat standing out on my forehead again. Then it came over me.

"This—this—?" I couldn't say what I wanted. "Then—this is—"

He didn't wait for me. He took the photograph out of my trembling hands, reverently closed the cover and put it back in his desk. When he looked at me again his face was white and haggard.

"Do you think—if I went back to the hospital with you," he asked, sort of pleading like, "do you think—she might still—be there?"

HE seemed so much to want me to say yes that I couldn't refuse him. His whole heart was set on my answer. So I nodded.

"At least we can try," I suggested.

He called his car and we set out. I knew he was tense as a taut string. I could feel it, as he sat next to me. But he didn't say a word and only pulled deeply at his cigar while his chauffeur wove his way through the traffic. I wondered if we were going on a fool's errand. That would be too bad, for Spurling evidently wanted with all his heart to see the woman. If she wasn't there—

Poor fellow! His daughter was gone. She belonged to another man now. He was all alone in the world, you might say. Felt mighty lonely, on this night of nights, when he'd just given his daughter away. Wished

he could feel the hand of his wife in his—just this once. . . .

We whirled up to the hospital entrance. I guided him through the hallway, though he didn't need much guiding, for he had come to know this place mighty well. Then we arrived at the door that would lead out to the morgue building—the door that opened into that long corridor where I'd seen the strange woman at the turning.

Would she still be there? Was this man who had been through such sad experiences and so much worry, and now had bade his daughter farewell, to have his quest rewarded? I almost hated to open the door, for I knew his disappointment would be awful if she weren't there.



Then at last I pushed it open. My gaze went down the corridor. Was that the woman? Or was it only a shadow in that dim corner? I blinked my eyes. I shook my head to clear my brain. Then I reached back and took him by the arm.

She stood there, a vaguely welcoming smile on her face, I thought.

With a low, glad cry he brushed past and ahead of me.

"Mary!" he called. "Mary! Sweetheart! My own dear wife!"

He sank on one knee before that strange figure, like a knight waiting to receive her approbation, or blessing. I think he reached for her hand. I don't know whether he took it or not—things were so vague and shadowy in that corner. Besides, somehow it seemed too sacred a moment for me to intrude. I turned the other way, walking back to the door, waiting.

**A**FTER what I thought was a long time, I looked again. If there had been any Presence in that corner, it was fading—mingling itself again with the shadows. Spurling was rising to his feet. As he approached me his features were glorified with a far-off look of happiness that rarely comes to us mortals. He put a hand on my shoulder.

"It was Mary, my wife," he said in an awed voice. "She died here in the hospital two years ago. I couldn't get to her in time—I think I told you about it once. I—I've always wanted to say good-by to her. Not good-by, really, but *au revoir*."

"Somehow—" he hesitated and then

squared his shoulders, "I can go on now. I'm a better man for this night. I can go on, facing the world, happy again, waiting patiently now for the time I can go to her. No suicide—as the boy attempted. Waiting, making my life full, until it's time to go. Would you—would you care to come with me to the—the place across the street?"

I went, of course. The little churchyard was very quiet. We found our way along until we came to a stone marked "Mary Spurling."

Maybe you think this was all a mirage. Maybe you'll say we two old fellows hypnotized ourselves into believing all we saw and did and that from a stress of emotion we conjured up things in our brains. Put it any way you like—but I'm stating the facts as they appeared to me.

Frost had seared the foliage and the sharp breath of the wind told us winter was just ahead. But on the grave of Mary Spurling the light from a neighboring street lamp showed a small green vine creeping up the stone, with a tiny pink blossom on it, fully open. Spurling bent and picked it, folding it reverently in his wallet.

"In memory of her," he said, half apologetically.

He straightened and turned.

"Shall we go?" he asked. "Mary's work is done on earth. I'll wait gladly now until it's time to go to her. We—we've said *au revoir*—until we meet again. We—we won't see her anymore."

And we never did. The strange woman who haunted the corridors never was seen there again.