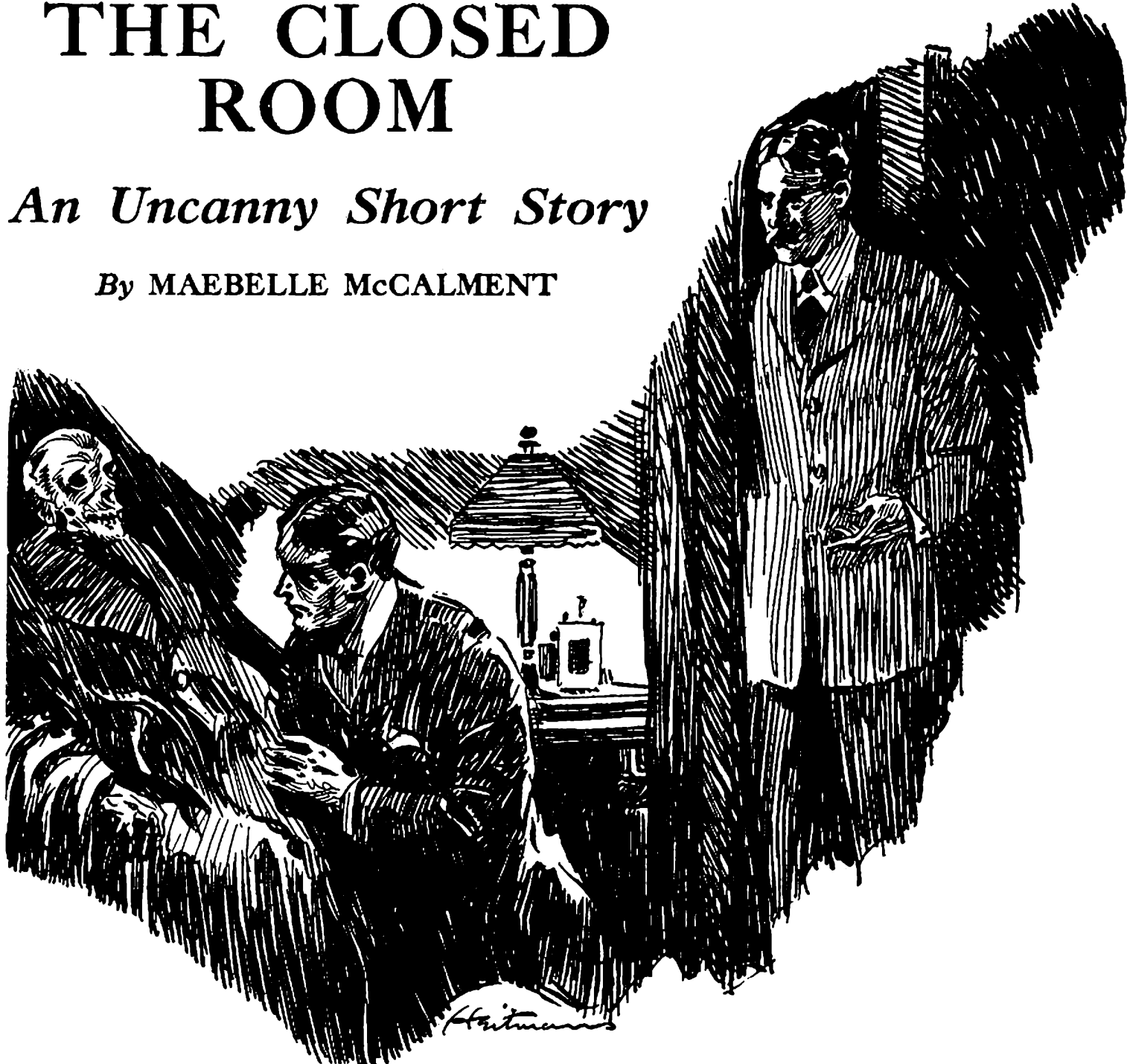


THE CLOSED ROOM

An Uncanny Short Story

By MAEBELLE McCALMENT



DR. KING WAYLAND, the eminent brain specialist, so far forgot his professional dignity as to lean tensely forward and gaze at Anne Norman in horror and amazement, intermingled with incredulity.

The eyes that looked back at him did not gleam with the light of insanity; yet had the story with all its gruesome details fallen from other lips, without hesitancy he would have pronounced it nothing more nor less than a grotesque hallucination. Now he mentally tabulated it the frenzy of a tortured brain. He noted the quivering lips, but the eyes were the same steadfast, unwavering eyes that had won him ten years before when her husband, Richard Norman, and he were pals in medical college.

At the time of his graduation, which preceded that of King Wayland by a year, Dick Norman had married Camille West, the gay college widow, and had left shortly for a year of travel in America and abroad. He had already come into his father's vast estate, and had studied medicine merely for the love of it.

Three months later came the terrible tragedy in his life. While crossing the Great American Desert his party had been overtaken by a severe sand storm, and in some unaccountable manner Norman and his wife were separated from their guides. They had wandered on and on for days, without food or water, until Mrs. Norman could go no farther. Norman staggered on toward

the alluring, ever-elusive mirage, or the visionary gray spiral of smoke he imagined he saw in the dim distance. Later he was found in an unconscious condition by two prospectors who took him to their shack in the foot-hills and nursed him back to life. It was a year later when all that remained of the beautiful dashing Camille Norman was found and identified by a few shreds of clothing, her wedding ring, and a string of emerald beads.

In the meantime Norman had returned to Denver and won from Wayland the woman he loved, Anne Paddington. King Wayland took his loss like a man, going abroad immediately for his two years of study in Berlin.

For eight years he had toiled incessantly

santly in his chosen profession and had attained a reputation as an insanity expert. He had seen very little of the Normans, for he had no time for society.

Doctor Reed, Norman's family physician, had called him in consultation that morning. Mrs. Norman had not left her room for two months. She had taken a peculiar aversion to her husband, screaming and becoming hysterical if he attempted to touch her, then lying in a state of semiconsciousness for hours after.

"I believe her condition due to shock," Doctor Reed had vouchsafed, "but I frankly admit that is as far as I can get. Mr. Norman says it cannot possibly be through any fault of his, so I can come to only one conclusion, that the aversion is simply obsession of an unbalanced mind."

While he was making his examination, Mrs. Norman had seized an opportune moment to whisper frantically:

"Send them all away. I will talk to you. Oh, King, please—"

Her voice had trailed off in a piteous little quiver.

He nodded his head understandingly without stopping in his deft movements. Again she lay quiet, but her wonderful eyes never left his face. When he had finished, he turned and spoke a few words to the doctor and nurse. They went out and left him alone with his patient.

Then it was he had listened to one of the most tragic stories that ever fell from human lips. One could scarcely imagine anything so hideous.

"OH, KING, only make me well," she had added. "I must leave this house. I have begged and implored him to tear down that east wing. It has always been a bone of contention between us, but he only laughed at me. And now that I know, I can't go on living under this roof. I couldn't tell this to strangers. They would only think me mad. They would not believe me, but it is the truth of the thing that is killing me. I know I am right, and yet it is war hard to believe my own eyes. Please find a way to help me. It is Dick who is insane, and you must save him, save him from himself. Will you promise me?"

Once again Doctor Wayland was the mere man, and his face worked with emotion as he leaned over the woman he had loved—yes, still loved—and gave her his promise.

"I'll find a way, Anne, but I'm doing it for you, not for him."

For a moment she lay back, breathing

deeply, and then the wan face relaxed into a relieved smile.

"Thanks, King," she whispered; "but wait, I must tell you more. Just behind that massive bookcase in Dick's study is a door leading into the wing. It is fastened with an intricate lock which even a locksmith cannot open. I have had two try it."

"Were you always curious about the east wing?"

"Curious? Yes, but never suspicious until things happened recently to make me so. At first he told me he was using it as a laboratory, and owing to the deadly nature of the chemicals no one must enter it but himself. That satisfied me, until one evening I caught the lettering on a big package he carried into the house. It was after the lamps were lighted, but as I was standing in the shadows he failed to see me as he passed through the study. *That package bore the name of a prominent women's furnishing goods house.*

"At another time I saw him buy a diamond necklace and give a small fortune for it. I stepped quickly behind a convenient screen in the jewelry store, for as the next day was my birthday I supposed it was for me. I managed to make my escape and reached home before he did. On his arrival I met him at the door. He caressed me carelessly, and I felt the box in his pocket. He entered his study hurriedly, saying he had to write some letters. I peeped in a moment later. *The study was empty.*

"I knew he had gone into the east wing. I waited just outside the mysterious door. I was determined to get a glimpse into the room as he came out, but I was doomed to disappointment, for when he saw me he gave me such a push that it almost sent me to the floor. He was bitterly angry. When he removed his coat a moment later to put on his smoking jacket, I picked it up to hang it upon a rack. The box was gone from the pocket."

"You are sure?"

"Yes. It was a large velvet case. I could not be mistaken. Since then I have seen thousands of dollars' worth of jewels and women's wearing apparel go into that room. Once I thought the place must be his rendezvous with other women, and the last time he went to New York I had workmen search for an underground entrance, but after two days they gave it up. I went on pondering and waiting, and at last my opportunity came.

"One night, on passing through the grounds after attending a club meeting, I noticed a tiny shaft of light from a wing window splitting the darkness out-

side. Without an instant's hesitation, I pulled one of the lawn seats under the window, and climbing upon it I glued my eye to the slit in the heavy green blind that seemed to be nailed to the casing all around the window, so closely did it fit. Then I saw it.

"At last I understood. I had the presence of mind to draw the seat back to its place. I staggered a few steps and fainted. The chauffeur found me and carried me in. No one ever knew what had happened. I haven't left my room since. Oh, King, if he ever puts his hands on me again, I believe I shall die."

A SHIVER of repulsion shook the woman's whole frame. She lay back among her pillows like a delicate flower broken from the mother plant. So thought the man who watched her.

Impulsively he got to his feet. He had come to another one of his habitual quick decisions.

"Anne, I will do everything I can for you. The story you have told me is almost unbelievable, and I can understand how you could not tell it to a stranger. I will investigate. In the meantime I will tell your husband that he must stay away from you if he hopes for your recovery. I will make arrangements for my assistants to take charge of my practice and I will stay in the house for a few days."

Her nervous fingers crept up his arm.

"Oh, King, will you do this?"

He smiled reassuringly into her upturned eager face.

"Yes. If such an unreal thing is possible, I will find it out."

She settled back again with a long drawn sigh of relief, and her closely drawn lips relaxed.

He called the nurse and went directly to Norman in his study.

"You are leaving your wife's case absolutely in my hands?" he asked abruptly.

Richard Norman looked up from the book he was reading and gazed meditatively at his old friend for a moment before he answered.

"Wayland, I know your reputation, and of course I value your opinion. If you think it is best, the case is in your hands. What have you to tell me?"

"Not much, but I want the privilege of remaining in the house a few days in constant attendance. In the meantime I want you to humor her. Keep out of her sight entirely."

The man before him winced, but he went on:

"Keep yourself out of the house as much as possible. Do not let her even

hear your footsteps in the halls. Be quiet about your comings and goings." He saw the man's lips quiver, and added more kindly: "I know it is hard, old man, but I want a chance to study her under those conditions, and I believe in a few days I can give you a complete diagnosis, and even suggest a cure. Will you give me your assistance?"

Again Dick Norman studied him through half closed eyes; then suddenly he got to his feet and held out his hand.

"Wayland, I guess I have been rather nasty to you in the last ten years, and I will admit it was deucedly hard for me to give in to Reed and call you. I haven't forgotten that Anne liked you at one time, but old chap, I'm willing to bury the hatchet if you will only pull Anne out of this."

Wayland took the offered hand.

"Let's forget it," he answered with brusque emphasis. "Anne must be our only thought now. I must have your cooperation."

"All right, King. I will stay at one of my clubs down town where I can be constantly in touch with you by telephone."

The next morning found Doctor Wayland installed in one of the many guest chambers of the beautiful suburban home of the Normans. As Dick had kept his word and left early for the city club, he found himself in full possession of the field. The first thing he did was to go for a reconnoitering walk in the spacious grounds. He circled around the east wing. It was a two-story structure built of stucco. The rest of the house was of solid stone. He came upon the gardener, overseeing the pruning of some bushes.

"Beautiful place here." He spoke casually, and added after a pause, "The grounds are wonderful. You keep them in perfect condition."

"Yes, sir, I do my best, sir. I just put in the landscape work this year."

"It certainly adds to the effect, and the house is a wonderful background for it all."

"Yes, sir."

Doctor Wayland turned and eyed it reminiscently.

"I used to come here a great deal years ago, but I don't remember that stucco wing. Has it been built on in the last ten years?"

The man raised his eyes to the wing in question and his face clouded as he answered:

"Oh, no, sir. I have been here twelve years and it has been here since I can remember. The servants would all feel better if it wasn't there; they say it is haunted, or bewitched, or something."

Dr. Wayland drew a cigar from his pocket and lighted it with one of his slow, deliberate movements; then he turned toward the gardener.

"Is that so? I guess most places have some kind of story attached to them. What time of night do the ghosts walk here at Normandale?"

He laughed, but no answering laugh echoed his, and he noted the seriousness of the old man's face.

"We haven't ever seen any ghosts; it's just sounds, sir. Nobody but Mr. Norman has entered that ground-floor room for nine years. He goes through a queer-looking door from his study. It is fastened with some kind of combination lock that looks like an alarm clock."

Wayland smiled again.

"I suppose he does that to keep prying people out of trouble. Certain chemicals in inexperienced hands sometimes blow up, you know."

"I know, sir, but even the heavy green blinds are tacked down all around the window casings. We hear queer music coming from that room at midnight sometimes; it is a weird, oriental *tum tum* that makes one shiver. I've heard that the first Mrs. Norman was very fond of that kind of music. That used to be her boudoir; it was furnished like a queen's palace."

"That likely accounts for its being closed. He can't bear the old associations. It probably makes him think of his former wife's tragic death."

The old man wagged his head sagely.

"That may be so, but it doesn't account for all those queer noises we hear coming from there almost every night. You see the servants' quarters are just over that room. The few old ones are used to it now, but the younger ones don't stay long."

Doctor Wayland threw away his cigar.

"Well, uncle, I think we have gossiped long enough this morning, but I suppose everybody enjoys a mystery. I must get back to my patient."

He went directly to Anne's room and dismissed the nurse.

"OH, King, you have a plan?" she asked eagerly, her eyes all excitement and her hands working nervously.

He turned upon her, again the stern physician.

"If you are going to be hysterical, I'm through. You can help me by being calm and brave."

She quieted immediately and held out her hand beseechingly.

"Oh, I will be, I will be. You mustn't desert me now, King."

He took her hand and gave it a quiet pressure; in his eyes was a look so vivid,

so intense, that it almost startled her. He opened his lips as if to speak and then closed them abruptly. He turned as if to go, but the woman held tightly to the hand that would have released her.

"King," she whispered, "tell me, do you know—have you seen—yet?"

He looked deep into her eyes for a long moment; finally he spoke, his voice hoarse with emotion:

"Anne, if that wing should burn to the ground and everything in it turned to ashes, could you go back to your husband's arms and still love him?"

She put up her arms as if to ward off a blow, and, sinking back, she buried her face in one of the soft silken cushions. She lay silent while the man bent over her, his face working with emotion.

"Tell me," he demanded sternly, "if I swear to you that you are simply the victim of an overwrought imagination, that you are suffering from hallucination, that as God and man are my judges, there is not an atom of truth or reality in your story—will you go back to your husband's arms?"

He placed his hand upon her shoulder, and shook her almost brutally.

She raised her head and looked straight into the burning eyes before her.

"No, never. Why torment me with such nonsense? I know what I saw. Nothing in the world can ever change that. What is more, I will leave this house when you do if I have to be carried on a stretcher."

"Anne, do you mean that? You mean that you will not go on here, regardless of amends that are made?"

"I do," she answered steadily.

"Suppose I put Dick in an asylum if it should be true? Mind you, I'm not conceding that it is."

Her face blanched, and her lips trembled as she answered.

"Oh, no, no, not that, King. I couldn't bear that."

"You still love him?"

She shook her head slowly.

"No, I'm afraid I almost hate him for what he has done."

"If you are going to leave him, why not let him go on in his idiotic dreams?"

"No! All evidence must be destroyed. It is bound to come to light sometime if it goes on, and then all the world will give one little shiver of honor and go on pitying me and laughing at me forever. Oh, I couldn't bear that!"

He looked at her silently for a moment, and then wheeled suddenly toward the door. Going to the study, he called Norman at the city club.

"She is very calm today, Norman, her only fear seems to be that you will come home tonight and come to her room. I have assured her that you will not, and I think it would be best for you to remain in town and come out in the morning. I will be ready to talk to you then."

After a slight hesitancy Norman agreed. Doctor Wayland hung up the receiver with a sigh of relief.

During that day and far into the night he made many quiet pilgrimages about the house and grounds, only to return to his room in the wee, small hours tired and disheartened. He dropped wearily into a chair. A little later he rose excitedly and began to pace the floor. Abruptly stopping before a wall mirror in one end of the room he gazed sternly at the image reflected, muttering to himself:

"What an old fool you have been to think you could turn burglar, safe-blower, or whatnot, to get into that infernal room. King, old man, there is only one honorable way to do it, and you have the right in your capacity as physician to do that. It is going to be done in the morning."

WITH a long drawn sigh of relief, he lay down to snatch a few hours of much needed rest. After breakfast the next morning he looked in on Anne, and then went directly to the study. To his surprise he found Dick already there, just removing his gloves.

"Hello, King. How's Anne?" he asked eagerly.

"As well as can be expected, Dick. You are early." Noting the other's haggard looks, he added, "You don't look very fit yourself."

"No. I feel a trifle seedy, but it doesn't make much difference about me. Have you anything to tell me about Anne?"

"Yes, but first of all, Norman, I have a few things to ask you. Will you please see that we are not disturbed for a short time?"

Norman looked up quickly. Something in the other's face seemed to hold him spellbound for an instant; then he crossed the room, closed the door, and locked it. Coming back, he stood with his back to the great fireplace. Wayland suddenly leaned across the back of the massive leather chair that stood between them, his eyes glowing with an unnatural light as they seemed to bore into the very soul of the man before him. Then, with upraised finger, he demanded:

"Norman, tell me, man to man—what have you locked in that wing chamber?"

A change so sudden, so swift, came over the man under the accusing finger that it almost startled the accuser. Norman's face changed from a healthy glow to a sickly pallor, his eyes protruded, and his jaw dropped.

Wayland stepped quickly around the chair that separated them. Grasping the other's shoulder with an iron grip, he shook him roughly. Then, with that accusing finger close to the livid face, every word coming like the rip of a saw, he almost shouted:

"Answer me this: What woman wouldn't have lost her mind, or have gone raving mad, when she learned that the husband she loved and respected had enthroned within a gorgeous room the skeleton of his former wife? That the love and caresses that should have been her right were bestowed upon this hideous thing; that the jewels she should have worn were hung about that gruesome neck; that the beautiful gowns that should have been hers were hung upon those rattling bones—God, man! is it any wonder that she goes raving mad at the sight of you, when you dare to come to her after spending hours with that thing of horror? When she knows this, is it any wonder that she acts like a mad woman at the sight of you?"

The man in his grasp had grown limp and had fallen to his knees. The hot stinging words of his one-time friend had rushed upon him like a simoon. There was no thought of denial within him. He merely groveled at the feet of the stronger man until Wayland raised him and thrust him into the big chair. For a moment he sat like one in a stupor; then, opening his eyes like one awakening from a deep sleep, he at last made an attempt to regain his poise.

"You—you gave me quite a fright, Wayland. What are you talking about? Have you gone mad?"

Wayland laughed—a laugh that was not pleasant to hear.

"All right, Norman; if I am not right, of course you will take me into that room and show me what is in there."

"Why, yes, of course I will—some day. But right now I haven't the combination. I'll get it out of my vault tomorrow."

"Oh, no, you won't, Norman. You have it right here." He touched his forehead lightly. "Don't lie to me. It only makes matters worse. You may as well take me in there now and confide in me. I'll do my best to help you. If you don't, I shall lose no time in having you committed to an asylum."

Norman bounded to his feet, his strength returning with the horror that came over him.

"For God's sake, no! Anything but that, Wayland. Oh, you don't understand. You can't understand. I'm not insane—I—oh—you—you—don't know what you are saying. You can't force me there. I have money—I—"

"Yes, you have money," the other interrupted stonily, "but this is one time your money won't buy a way out."

For a moment Norman stared unbelieving; then, like a man shaking with the palsy, he took a few steps towards the door behind the bookcase, and, raising a shaking hand, he motioned the doctor to follow. Before he stooped to work the combination, he spoke again haltingly.

"You won't tell what you see in this room, King, for old times' sake—for Anne's sake."

"I promise, but of course there will be conditions."

Norman bowed submissively; he knew that worse than death awaited him if he did not do as this man bid him. He fumbled the combination. After a second attempt the massive door swung wide, and Wayland pushed the man before him. He had no intention of being caught in any kind of trap.

"SWITCH on the lights," he commanded.

Norman complied, but instead of the brilliant lighting Wayland had expected there was only a warm red glow that came from colored globes at both ends of the room. It took him some time to accustom his eyes to the change, but when he was able to see clearly, he was surprised at the change that had taken place in the man before him. He had seemingly forgotten the doctor's presence and stood with outstretched arms before the massive white and gold bed.

"Camille, my darling, I'm here."

For a full moment he stood so; then, stooping, he gathered into his arms a thing of rattling bones clothed in the finest of lace-trimmed and silken *lingerie*. Long flowing sleeves fell from the dangling arms.

Wayland crept closer, unseen. He noted that the bones were threaded together with tiny silver links. Upon the head was a wig of golden curls held in place by a costly boudoir cap.

Norman raised it tenderly in his arms and placed it in a huge arm-chair which stood under a rose-shaded lamp in the center of the room.

"Dearest, don't blame me for staying away last night," he murmured. "See what I have brought you?"

He drew from his pocket a tiny leather case and took from it a ring set with a single pearl. He slipped it on the grue-

some hand and proceeded to tie it in place with a piece of ribbon as one ties a ring upon a baby's finger.

"Pearls stand for tears, dear heart," he went on in that low monotone, "the tears I wept last night because I could not be with you."

Wayland drew still closer. The fingers were covered with precious gems, some of them worth thousands. There was one gorgeous diamond weighing at least three karats. Around the neck was a great string of emerald beads, a rope of pearls, and a diamond pendant.

"Now, which gown tonight, Camille?"

Suddenly Wayland drew himself up rigidly, cold beads of perspiration breaking out upon his brow. Was he, too, succumbing to some weird spell? Did he hear some sepulchral voice calling: "King! King!"

As if in answer to his silent, startled question, Norman turned toward him for the first time.

"Yes, we have a guest tonight. You must look your best."

Norman crossed the room to a great built-in wardrobe and swung the door wide open. Inside hung row after row of wonderful gowns of all descriptions. Wayland sank weakly into a nearby chair. Glancing about the room, he saw that it was lavishly furnished, but over all was an accumulation of dust untouched for years. The air was close and stagnant.

He watched the man clothe the rattling bones in a gorgeous dinner gown of black lace and old rose satin, crooning all the while as if he were dressing a beloved child. Then, as he watched, he saw Norman turn and start a phonograph which stood near. Immediately the muffled tones of a weird oriental dance filled the room.

"Will you dance tonight? No? Well, then, we will sit and visit."

For an hour Norman talked. The scene was getting on Wayland's nerves, and he determined to put an end to it in some way. He was stifled. He had seen enough.

Approaching Norman softly, he put a hand upon his shoulder.

"Come, old man, let's go."

Norman raised his head and looked at him in a dazed, uncertain way; then, as if the sight of him brought back other memories, he started to his feet and looked about with wild, dilating eyes which roved from Wayland to the grinning thing in the chair, so grotesque in all its finery. Then he fell on his knees and began crying softly.

"King! King! Can't you see?" he murmured brokenly. "Can't you see

the beautiful image of Camille sitting there? Oh, you do see more than that framework of bones, don't you? That is merely the house in which her beautiful spirit dwells. I'm not crazy, man! She is as real to me today as when she was with me in the flesh."

THE doctor stooped and lifted the swaying man to his feet. In spite of all, he was touched.

"Why couldn't you have been content with her spirit, Dick? Why didn't you place Camille's remains in an honored grave instead of bringing them home like this?"

"I couldn't, King. The very night that I was notified that the bones had been found, she came to me in the spirit form and pledged me to do what I have done. She was jealous of Anne and bade me keep her frame to deck with jewels and finery, demanding that I buy for her two of everything to Anne's one. I've been in bondage all these years, but I do love her. I was driven almost mad when I lost her."

Wayland could not help turning his head away in disgust.

"You were not long getting over it," he remarked dryly.

Norman looked up quickly.

"I know you have always hated me for taking Anne. But, King, I have always been good to her outside of this. How did she find it out? I can't understand."

"I am not at liberty to tell you," Wayland answered. "Now let's get out of here. It's a foul atmosphere."

He took Norman firmly by the arm, and led him from the room, banging the door upon the horrors within. He was too much shaken himself to speak for a few minutes, and then he burst out almost savagely:

"Norman, I demand that you bury that thing in there at once. I don't want any publicity about this; I will arrange with an undertaker that I can trust to come and get it in the night. Then all of those things in there must be burned or otherwise destroyed and the room thrown open, or perhaps the wing torn down altogether. Will you agree to this?"

The face of the man before him turned ashen, and his lips trembled as he spoke.

"You—you are asking too much. I—I can't do it."

He buried his face in his hands.

Wayland's face grew stern.

"Very well, Norman. I have already told you the alternative."

"You—you mean the asylum?"

"I do."

There was the silence of death in the room for a moment; then Norman raised bloodshot eyes to the grave face above him.

"Please, King, leave me alone for awhile. I will give you my word by noon. Meet me here."

Wayland nodded a silent consent and, without further words, passed out of the room. Although outwardly calm, he was mentally in a tumult of unrest. It was a difficult situation to handle alone, but he could not lay it bare to the prying eyes of strangers. For the sake of his old friendship for Dick, for the sake of his love for Anne, he must deal with it to the best of his ability.

Three hours later, as the clock in the hall struck the hour of twelve, he again knocked at the study door. No voice bade him enter, so he pushed it open and went in. The room was deserted.

He found the door to the mystery chamber standing ajar, but all was silence and darkness within. He called softly, but there was no answer. Stepping inside, with hands that trembled he felt for the switch where he had seen Dick reach for it. After a few seconds he found it and flooded the place with that weird light that had almost unnerved him before. Was he mistaken, or were his eyes, not used to the red glow, playing him tricks? For a moment he stood transfixed. A white shadowy presence seemed to hang over the chair in which he had last seen the skeleton reposing. Then the white mist disappeared, and he made out the kneeling form of Dick Norman, his arms wrapped about the grinning thing so gorgeously attired in fine raiment. His head lay against the bony breast and within the circle of those long dangling arms swathed in their flowing sleeves.

With a smothered cry of horror, Wayland hurried forward. Then he drew back in sheer amazement, for instead of that horrible thing of rattling bones, he seemed to see the beautiful face and form of Camille West as he remembered her years ago. Was he, too, going mad along with Dick Norman? He rubbed his eyes as a child might on awakening from a deep slumber. Reaching down, he shook his friend with none too steady hands. A dull thud on the floor answered him, and he saw he had shaken a revolver from the other's hand.

At once his strength came back. He was once more the dignified professional man.

One touch of the icy fingers—he hastily felt for Norman's heart. Pulling the fast stiffening form backward, he searched feverishly for the bullet wound,

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So after all Dick had meant to take his own life, but the grim spectre Death had stalked in and reaped the harvest in his own way. Wayland glanced toward the hidden door and shuddered involuntarily. He would keep Anne in her room until every detail of that den of horrors was a thing of the past.

He took up the telephone and calmly called the coroner's number.

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but to his mystification he found none. He groped for the revolver. All its chambers were loaded.

He gave a quick sigh of relief, and then, without a moment's hesitation, he carried Norman's body back to the study and placed it in the chair in front of the fireplace. Next he replaced the pistol in the drawer of the desk where he had seen it the day before. There were several things that Anne and the public would never know. Leaving the door of the secret chamber slightly ajar he pushed the bookcase against it so that it was hidden altogether.

As he reached for the telephone to call the authorities, he saw an envelope lying on the desk addressed in Norman's big, bold handwriting. It bore Wayland's name. He tore it open hastily and read:

"Wayland, I am going to end it all. I must go with Camille. Our spirits will walk together in the great Unknown, but you may bury our bones together. Tell Anne anything you wish. She never loved me. It was always you, but I made her believe that you had wanted Camille. Take her, old man, she deserves all the happiness you can make for her.

"Dick."

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