

had taken to drink and late hours and was seldom seen at home. This was mysterious. Neighbors pried but could find naught to criticise in the management of the household. So the world cast its just censure upon the young man.

But it never suspected, this prying world, that he could tell another tale, could show a picture on the side of the canvas turned to the wall. Still the world would not have changed its opinion much, if it had seen what he saw. The picture would have been meaningless to it. If the world had known that the young wife's eyes shone with a light that had belonged to dark, gloomy ones; that her graceful movements were like those of another form—a serpent-like form; that her clear musical tones held the silver of another's voice, and her laughter sometimes seemed akin to the howl of a hyena—if the world had known all this it would not have understood. It would have wondered a little more and censured the young man just as much. But he saw and recognized and he knew what the picture meant. So he took to drink and late hours.

One night returning late to his home, he found his wife awaiting him as was her way. She spoke. As usual he turned gruffly away. Again she called him. This time the ring of her voice, a soft, sad voice, caught his attention. He turned to her quickly. Could it be? Instinct rather than reason answered. Yes; there was the same old smile and the same old light in the eyes, the same face he knew and loved—long, long ago, it seemed. Yet how changed! Though the smile and the fair, sweet face and the light in the blue eyes were the same as of old, yet now each held the trace of a great pain, of a long and terrible suffering.

"Laura!" he cried. "My Laura!"

He clasped her in his arms and choking sobs for a while silenced both.

At last she spoke. It was a strange, wierd tale that she told him. "How it came about I do not know," she said, "but on our wedding day my will passed from

me; a pressure as of a serpent's coil seemed to constrict my brain; a death-like numbness held my soul as if petrified; I was helpless—a prisoner in my own body over which I had no control. But I could see and feel all. I could know what I seemed to be. All that you suffered—all your pain and sorrow were mine also. But as one tight bound I could make no sign; only watch and feel dumb agony." Her soft voice trembled and the pain of a great horror came into her eyes as she continued: "But that was not the worst. One day there suddenly came to my prisoned soul its master, and I was a slave. Oh, the agony of that! The long, slow torture! No beaten slave ever suffered more than I. My body and soul were dominated by another—a cruel, dark spirit who held me in an icy grasp that paralyzed and who stung me to spasmodic life as might an adder. Since that evil one enslaved me, I have seen how you shunned and hated me, but I knew that it was not I whom you hated but she who lives through me, who has crowded her life into my body and rules there. But the pain of it—the terrible pain of it!" She shuddered. "It were better to die—far better to die and be free," she went on, "but I could not die. She held me. Tonight she is gone. Once before she went, but came back again. It was not long and you were not here so I could tell you nothing. I thought she had gone forever but she came back. It was part of the torture. And she will come again. But I must not be here. You must kill me—my body. If she finds me here, I am her's and you can do nothing. I cannot be so again. It is hell. You must set me free."

She was sobbing now, and all her slender form was shaken by her sobs.

In the husband's eyes was the light of a tender pity and a great love. "Poor Laura, my poor Laura, you shall be free," he said. "We shall both be free. Free from that she-devil! Free to love and be together! Free, and forever!"

When the morning light stole softly into the chamber, drawing aside the kindly veil of shadow, it revealed two motionless forms clasped in a last embrace. Their love had sought fruition in the eternal silence. They were free.

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