

A Story of Tragedy,
Love, Mystery, by
Anna Katherine
Green

The Woman in the Alcove

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The Woman with the Diamond.
I was, perhaps, the plainest girl in the room that night. I was also the happiest—up to one o'clock. Then my whole world crumbled, or, at least, suffered an eclipse. Why and how, I am about to relate.
I was not made for love. This I had often said to myself; very often of late. In figure I am too diminutive, in face far too unbecoming, my nose to cherish expectations of this nature. Indeed, love had never entered into my plan of life, as was evinced by the nurse's diploma I had just gained after three years of hard study and severe training.
I was not made for love. But if I had been, had I been gifted with that eloquence of expression which redeems all defects save those which savor of deformity, I knew well whose eye I should have chosen to please, whose heart I should have felt proud to win.
This knowledge came with a rush to my heart—did I say heart? I should have said understanding, which is something very different. I looked up from the end of the first dance, I looked up from the midst of the bevy of girls by whom I was surrounded, and saw Anson Durand's fine figure emerging from that quarter of the hall where our host and hostess stood to receive their guests. His eye was roaming hither and thither, and his manner was both eager and expectant. Whom was he seeking? Some one of the many bright and vivacious girls about me, for he turned almost instantly our way. But which one?
I thought I knew. I remembered at whose house I had met him first, at whose house I had seen him many times since. She was a lovely girl, witty and vivacious, and she stood at this very moment at the head of the line. Her beauty lay the lure, the natural lure for a man of his gifts and striking personality. If I continued to watch, I should soon see his countenance light up under the recognition she could not fail to give him. And I was right; in another instant it did, and with a brightness there was no mistaking. But one feeling common to the human heart lends such warmth, such expressiveness to the features. How hard it seemed to make him look, how distinguished, how everything I was not except—
But what does this mean? He has passed Miss Sperry—passed her with a smile and a friendly word—and is speaking to me, singling me out, offering me his arm? He is smiling, too, not as he smiled on Miss Sperry, but more warmly, with more that is personal in it. I took his arm in a daze. The lights were dimmer than I thought; nothing was really bright except his smile. It seemed to change the world for me. I forgot that I was plain, forgot that I was small, with nothing to recommend me to the eye or heart, and let myself be drawn away, asking nothing, anticipating nothing, till I found myself alone with him in the fragrant recesses of the conservatory, with only the throb of music in our

ears to link us to the scene we had left.
Why had he brought me here, into this fairyland of opalescent lights and intoxicating perfumes? What could he have to say to me? Ah! he had seized my hand, and love, ardent love, came pouring from his lips.
Could it be real? Was I the object of all this feeling? If so, then life had changed for me indeed.
Silent from a rush of emotion, I searched his face to see if this paradise, whose gates I was thus passionately bidden to enter, was indeed a reality or only a dream born of the excitement of the dance and the charm of a scene exceptional in its splendor and picturesqueness even for so luxurious a city as New York.
But it was no mere dream. Truth and earnestness were in his manner, and his words were neither feverish nor forced.
"Oh, love you! I need you!" So I heard, and so he soon made me believe. "You have charmed me from the first. Your tantalizing, trusting, loyal self, like no other, sweeter than any other, has drawn the heart from my breast. I have seen many women, admired many women, but you only have I loved. Will you be my wife?"
I was dazzled; moved beyond anything I could have conceived. I forgot all that I had hitherto said to myself—all that I had endeavored to impress upon my heart when I beheld him approaching, intent, as I believed, in his search for another woman; and, confident in his honesty, trusting entirely to his faith, I allowed the plans and purposes of this new joy, and spoke the word which linked us together in a bond which half an hour before I had never dreamed would unite me to any man.
His impassioned "Mine mine!" filled my cup to overflowing. Something of the ecstasy of living entered my soul; which, in spite of all I have suffered since, recreated the world for me, and made all that went before but the prelude to the new life, the new joy.
Oh, I was happy, happy, perhaps too happy! As the conservatory filled and we passed back into the adjoining room, the glimpse I caught of myself in one of the mirrors startled me into thinking of the color of my dress, the color of the color of my dress, and the unique way in which I wore my hair that night, I should not have recognized the beaming girl who faced me so naively from the depths of the responsive glass.
Can one be too happy? I do not know. I know that one can be too perplexed, too burdened and too sad.
Thus far I have spoken only of myself in connection with the evening's elaborate function. But though I am a fair woman, large, and of a pleasant presence, accustomed to conquest, and gifted with the power of carrying off her victories with a certain easy grace irresistibly fascinating to the ordinary man; a diamond on her breast too vivid for most women, almost too vivid for her. I noticed this diamond early in the evening, and then I noticed her. She was not as fine as the diamond, but she was very fine, and had I been in a less exalted frame of mind, I might have envied the homelike she received from the men, not excepting him upon whose arm I leaned. Later, there was no one in the world I envied less.
The ball was a private and very elegant one. There were some notable guests. One gentleman in particular was pointed out to me as an Englishman of great distinction and political importance. I thought him a very interesting man for his years, but old and a trifle self-centered. Though he was constantly smiling, and only happy when free to use his own in conversation about himself, his contemplation of the scene about him, and of I might have noted sooner than I did that this contemplation was confined to such groups as gathered about the lady with the diamond. But this I failed to observe at the time, and only subsequently was much surprised to come upon him, at the end of one of the dances, talking with this lady in an animated and courtly manner totally opposed to the apathy, amounting to boredom, with which he had hitherto met all advances.
It was not admiration for her person which he openly displayed. During the whole time he stood there, his eyes seldom rose to her face; they lingered mainly on the great fan of ostrich plumes which this opulent beauty held against her breast. He was desirous of seeing the great diamond she thus unconsciously (or was it consciously?) shielded from his gaze. Yet it was possible, for as I continued to note him, he suddenly bent toward her and as quickly raised himself again with a look which was quite inexplicable to me. The lady had shifted her fan a moment and his eyes had fallen on the gem.
The next thing I recall with any definiteness was a tea-table conversation which I held with my lover on a certain yellow divan at the end of one of the halls.
To the right of this divan rose a curtained recess, highly suggestive of romance, called "the alcove." As this alcove figures prominently in my story, I will pause to describe it.
It was originally intended to contain a large group of statuary, which our host, Mr. Durand, had ordered from Italy to adorn his new house. He is a man of original ideas in regard to such matters, and in this instance had gone so far as to have this end of the house constructed with a special view to the display of art. Fearing the ponderous effect of a pedestal large enough to hold such a considerable group, he had planned to raise it to the level of the eye by having the alcove built a few feet higher than the main one. A

diminutive frame in its sea-green gown of low, wide steps connected the two, which, following the curve of the wall, added much to the beauty of this portion of the hall.
The group was a failure and was never shipped, but it did all the advantage of a room in the way of heat and light, had been turned into a miniature retreat of exceptional beauty. The alcove itself offered extended, or so we were happy to think, to the solitary divan at its base on which Mr. Durand and I were seated. With possibly an undue confidence in the advantage of our position, we were discussing a subject interesting only to ourselves, when Mr. Durand interrupted himself to declare "You are the woman I want you. When do you think you can marry me? Within a week—if it—"
Did my look stop him? I was startled. I had heard no incoherent phrase from him before, and I was not sure more time than that to fit ourselves for a journey or some transient pleasure. I hardly realize my engagement yet.
"You have not been thinking of it," I replied demurely, forgetting everything else in my delight at this admission.
"Nor are you a nomad among clubs and restaurants?"
"No, I have a home."
"Nor do you love me as deeply as I do you."
This I thought open to argument.
"The home you speak of is a luxury," he continued. "I cannot offer you its equivalent. You expect me to?"
I was indignant.
"You know that I do not. Shall I who deliberately chose a nurse's life when an indulgent uncle's heart and home were open to me, and have been braving poverty with the man I love?"
"We begin as simply as you please."
"No," he peremptorily put in, yet with a certain hesitancy which seemed to speak of doubts he hardly acknowledged himself. "I will not return to you if I must expose you to privation or to the gentle poverty I hate. I love you more than you realize, and wish to make your life a happy one. I cannot give you all you have been accustomed to in your rich uncle's house, but if matters prosper with me, if the chance I have built on succeeds—and it will—then I will succeed tonight—you will have those comforts which love will lighten into luxuries, and—"
He was becoming incoherent again, and this time with his eyes fixed elsewhere than on my face. Following his gaze, I discovered what had distracted his attention. The lady with the diamond was approaching us on her way to the alcove. She was accompanied by two gentlemen, both strangers, and she was looking at them with a brilliant smile, was turning from one to the other with an indolent grace. I was surprised that the man at my side quivered and made a start as if, to rise and make a gonging figure in the trailing robe of rich pink velvet, my diminutive frame in its sea-green gown

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ardent love-making. I felt a little plucked that he should divide his attentions in this way. Perhaps I thought that for this evening, at least, he might have been blind to a mere coquette's fascinations.
I was thus doubly engaged in listening to my lover's words and in watching the various gentlemen who went up and down the steps, when a former partner advanced and reminded me to leave Mr. Durand, yet seeing no way of excusing myself to Mr. Fox, I cast an appealing glance at the former and was greatly chagrined to find him already on his feet.
"Enjoy your dance," he cried, "I have a word to say to Mr. Fox, and I am going before my new partner had taken me on his arm."
Was Mrs. Fairbrother the lady with the diamond? Yes; as I turned to enter the parlor with my partner, I caught a glimpse of Mr. Durand's tall figure just disappearing from the step behind the sage-green curtains.
"Who is Mrs. Fairbrother?" I inquired of Mr. Fox at the end of the dance.
Mr. Fox, who is one of society's perennial beaux, knows everybody.
"She is—well, she is Abner Fairbrother's wife. You know Fairbrother, the millionaire who built that curious structure on Eighth Street. At present he is living apart—an amiable understanding, I believe. Her diamond makes her conspicuous. It is one of the most remarkable stones in New York, perhaps in the United States. Have you observed it?"
"Yes—that is, at a distance. Do you think her very handsome?"
"Mrs. Fairbrother? She's called so, but she's not my style." Here he gave me a killing glance. "I admire women of mind and heart. They do not need to wear jewels worth an ordinary man's fortune."
I looked about for an excuse to leave this none too desirable partner.
"Let us go back into the long hall," I urged. "The ceaseless whirl of these dancers is making me dizzy."
With the ease of a gallant man he took me on his arm and soon we were promenading again in the direction of the alcove. A passing glimpse of its interior was afforded me as we turned to retrace our steps in front of the yellow divan. The lady with the diamond was still there. A fold of the superb pink velvet she wore protruded across the gap made by the half-drawn curtains, just as it had done a half-hour before. But it was impossible to see her face or who was with her. What I could see, however, and did, was the figure of a man leaning against the wall at the foot of the steps. At first I thought this person unknown to me, then I perceived that he was no other than the chief guest of the evening, the Englishman of whom I have previously spoken.
His expression had altered. He looked now both anxious and absorbed, par-

icularly anxious and particularly absorbed; so much so that I was not surprised that no one ventured to approach him. Again I wondered and again I asked myself for whom or for what he was waiting. For Mr. Durand to leave this lady's presence? No, no, I would not believe that. Mr. Durand could not be there still; yet some women make it difficult for a man to leave them, and realizing this, I could not forbear casting a parting glance behind me as I yielded to Mr. Fox's importunities. It showed me the Englishman in the act of lifting two cups of coffee from a small table standing near the reception-room door. As his manner plainly betokened whether he was bound with this refreshment, I felt all my uneasiness vanish, and was able to take my seat at one of the small tables with which the supper-room was filled, and for a few minutes, at least, I had not even a remote as any phantasm, yet distinct enough in its outlines for me to get a decided impression of a square of light surrounding the figure of a man in a peculiar pose not easily imagined and not easily described. It all passed in an instant, and I sat staring at the window opposite me with the feeling of one who has just seen a vision. Yet almost immediately I forgot the whole occurrence in my anxiety as to Mr. Durand's whereabouts. Certainly he was amusing himself very much elsewhere or he would have found an opportunity of joining me long before this. He was not even in the room, and I grew weary of the endless menu and of the senseless chit-chat of my companion, and, finding him amenable to my whims, rose from my seat at table and made my way to a group of acquaintances standing just outside the supper-room door. As I listened to their greetings some impulse led me to cast another glance down the hall toward the alcove. A man—a waiter—was issuing from it in a rush. Bad news was in his face, and as his eyes encountered those of Mr. Ramdell, who was advancing hurriedly to meet him, he plunged down the steps with a cry which drew a crowd about the two in an instant.
What was it? What had happened? Mad with an anxiety I did not stop to define, I rushed toward this group now swaying from side to side in irrepressible excitement, when suddenly everything swam before me, and I fell in a swoon to the floor.
Some one had shouted aloud:
"Mrs. Fairbrother has been murdered, and her diamond stolen! Lock the doors!"
To Be Continued on Monday.

comes himself a party to the deception, for if there is anything in the world an amateur prides himself on it is his power to discern the true from the false. And so it comes about that the "faked" article is installed with honors in a great private gallery, and its owner dies he bequeaths his collection to a national museum, with the proviso of its being kept intact, the suspected article is performed exhibited as genuine.—Olive Logan in New York Evening Post.

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WHEN MARK TWAIN HAD STAGE FRIGHT

HUMORIST'S FIRST EXPERIENCE ON THE PLATFORM.

Following a musical recital by his daughter in Norfolk, Conn., Mark Twain addressed her audience on the subject of stage fright. He thanked the people for making things as easy as possible for his daughter's debut as a contralto, and then told of his first experience before the public.
"My heart goes out in sympathy to anyone who is making his first appearance before an audience of human beings. By a direct process of memory I go back forty years, less one month—for I'm older than I look," he said, wagging his snowy head.
"I recall the occasion of my first appearance. San Francisco knew me then only as a reporter, and I was to make my bow to San Francisco as a lecturer. I knew that nothing short of compulsion would get me to the theater. So I bound myself by a hard and fast contract so that I could not escape. I got to the theater forty-five minutes before the hour set for the lecture. My knees were shaking so that I didn't know whether I could stand up. If there is an awful horrible make-up in the world, it is stage fright—and senility. They are a pair. I had stage fright then for the first and last time. I was only seasick once, too. It was on a little ship on which there were 200 other passengers. I was sick. I was so sick that there wasn't any

left for these other 200 passengers. I was dark and lonely behind the scenes in that theater, and I peeked through the little peek-holes they have in theater curtains and looked into the big auditorium. That was dark and empty too. By and by it lighted up, and the audience began to arrive. I knew that one can be too perplexed, too burdened and too sad.
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watch me intently, and whenever I glanced toward her she was going to deliver a gubernatorial laugh that would lead the whole audience into applause.
"At last I began. I had the manuscript tucked under a United States flag in front of me where I could get it in case of need. But I managed to get started without it. I walked up and down (I was young in those days and needed the exercise), and talked and talked.
"Right in the middle of the speech I moved, a pathetic part which was to get at the hearts and souls of my hearers. When I delivered it they sat silent and awed, I had touched them. Then I happened to glance up at the box where the governor's wife was—you know what happened.
"Well, after the first agonizing five minutes, my stage fright left me never to return. I know if I was going to be hanged I could get up and make a good showing, and I intend to. But I shall never forget my feelings before the agony left me, and I got up here to thank you for helping my daughter, by your kindness, to live through her first appearance. I want to thank you for your appreciation of her singing, which is, by the way, hereditary."—New York Sun.

NEW LAMPS FOR OLD: A VERY DARING FRAUD

THE DARK-HAIRED WOMAN IN THE DOORWAY.

Every day on my way to dinner I pass a shop where a dark-haired woman sits in the doorway eagerly scanning the features, the deportment, the very eyes of pedestrians. She is looking out for possible purchasers, a credulous class with money in its purse, and far more numerous in New York than many persons would suppose. Not unnaturally one glances her way, for she is comely of face and figure; and moreover she is attired peculiarly in a manner which suggests the Russian. The profuse cross-stitch embroidery in red thread and the deep thick lace which border her apron are truly Russian, and a becoming headress is also of national type.
Your step slows as you glance at her merchandise and finally you pause. "You will buy ze antique?" she asks, pointing to the numerous articles in brass which comprise her stock.
Yes, gladly would you buy it, but for two hindering circumstances; you "suspect" that her wares are not antique, and she asks in payment "the eyes of your head," as the Parisians say.
To enter her shop is a liberal education of a limited kind. It is to realize in their hard, metallic substance the odd objects which you have seen pictured from the days you poured over your school book's page until perchance the latest number of your favorite magazine came to view. Here is the Russian samovar, the indispensable tea-making apparatus of the empire, here are brass fagons, snuffboxes, match holders, and a host of knickknacks attractive in their very unattractiveness. For these latter inexpensive things you buy guardedly, to save the situation, but as for the alleged rare antiques of Byzantine art, oh, no, indeed! Your Russian regularly send to the art-purchasing centers "ancient Byzantine masterpieces" which are produced plentifully by poverty-stricken native artists.
New Russian lamps purporting to have come from old mosques are plentiful, and so skillfully is the ancient workmanship reproduced that not only private collectors, but directors of national museums, are deceived by these fraudulent objects, buying them at enormous prices.
The most daring fraud of all, and at which Parisian toilers are now working, is the restitution in completeness

of Persian carpets, whose smallest real fragment is worth thousands of francs. As soon as an accumulation of stock is secured, unscrupulous dealers will place these clever imitations on the market, with the announcement that a quantity of these marvelous carpets has been discovered at Teheran or Constantinople. In the quarter of the Marshes in Paris, that great territory inhabited by a vast population of wretched artists, there is not a derelict skilled artificer, there is not an artistic object known to civilization that is not reproduced as the fancy of rich amateurs demands it.
Every day new imitations are yellowed as if by age by chemical treatment, and coins of new minting become curios of the immensely distant past by being buried in the damp earth; when found they are found to have acquired a very rich and deceptive patina. One truly amusing feature of the situation is the rapidly with which art objects are multiplied as soon as it becomes known that a certain notorious kind of things of that particular kind, say that a Rothschild intimates his desire to purchase rock crystal, or that J. P. Morgan is looking out for eighteenth century relics. As if by magic, these collectors are salled by dealers bringing a plentiful choice of articles of alleged authenticity of the wish-for character.
There is an eighteenth century craze on at present, and every one interested in the art wants something that has come down to us from "the century of Fragonard." The museum of the Louvre has recently arranged some of the objects for the epoch so great that dealers are reaping a rich harvest from the sale of imitations. Obviously, it would have been impossible for the group of great artists existing at that period to produce one on the market. And the prices! An eighteenth century pastel is worth a fortune; the smallest objects bring enormous sums.
Once a rich collector has been duped by a dealer in an art purchase, he be-

comes himself a party to the deception, for if there is anything in the world an amateur prides himself on it is his power to discern the true from the false. And so it comes about that the "faked" article is installed with honors in a great private gallery, and its owner dies he bequeaths his collection to a national museum, with the proviso of its being kept intact, the suspected article is performed exhibited as genuine.—Olive Logan in New York Evening Post.

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Later in the afternoon we reached Lake LaBarge. Here the ice was from ten to eighteen inches thick and spread from shore to shore like a great field of snow.—London Weekly.

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