

Nocturne

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A yellow satin ribbon across the mat ivory of her frail shoulder held up the tattered batiste chemise. Long black silk stockings shimmered on her slender legs. And her delicate feet, in yellow pompommed slippers, tapped the floor impatiently. She had thrown off her peignoir, let down her red hair, and prepared to go to bed, yet could not find courage to carry out this resolution. To turn out the light — to lie alone in the dark; alone with that horrible feeling of forsakenness and blankness; alone in the awful stillness which only the thumping of her own bleeding heart would interrupt. . . . It was impossible! She smoked cigarette after cigarette. Stretched out on her couch-bed she tried to read. Then made the round of the studio, examined wet canvases without seeing them, picked up open tubes and flung them down again. . . . Horribly useless, this business called life. What does it all matter, when love is gone? And who can hold love? Oh, misery! misery! And still so many years to live. To live alone. Or would he come back? Could he come back? Oh — if only for a little while! Oh, to see him just once more — his dark face, his black eyes, to smell his tobacco breath, to feel the grasp of his strong hand. . . . One o'clock — no — he would not come back. This time all was over for ever — she felt it, she knew it. But perhaps tomorrow? He might regret — repent — he might come for breakfast, like the last time. Oh! jolly, happy, divine breakfast! No, no, never again. His love was dead. She knew it. And would he love some other woman? Would his eyes burn into another's eyes, his kisses crush another's mouth! God — God — this was hell. She could not bear it. She

would not. She must make an end — now — immediately.

With feverish hands she felt for a tiny Japanese dagger he once had given her. It must end her agony —

Yet — he *might* come tomorrow!