

THE HOUSE BY THE LAKE

Hugh Mills

MAURICE: It isn't that, my dear. It's simply that there's nothing left except a great desire for sleep. *(He touches her temple gently with his hand. She closes her eyes for a second or two.)* If I put you into a light sleep, Janet, you'll be very rested. It will turn into ordinary slumber. You'll relax. To sleep would do you so much good. You're desperate for sleep. Sleep is all you care about. *(Slowly and softly.)* When I complete the count of five you'll fall into a light and restful sleep. Look at me. One. *(He takes from his pocket a gold pencil and holds it up above her head. She stares at it.)*

JANET: *(in a whisper).* Maurice.

MAURICE: You don't want to talk, my dear. You're getting drowsier and drowsier. *(Softly.)* Two *(JANET again closes her eyes for a second or two.)* You can't keep your eyes open, can you? Your eyelids are getting heavier and heavier. You're tired and drowsy and relaxed. You do need sleep. Sleep. *(After a moment.)* Three. *(She closes her eyes. He puts the pencil back into his pocket.)* Your eyes won't keep open any longer. Your arms feel heavy. You are resting placidly. *(Very softly.)* Four. Now you're making no effort at all. You're attending only to my voice. Telling you to sleep. *(In a whisper.)* Five. *(He stands for a second or two looking at her. She remains quite still with her eyes closed.)* Now you're asleep. You have a heavy feeling in your arms. They seem to be weighted down. As heavy as lead. If you try to raise your arms you find you can't. Try to raise your arms. You can't. *(JANET tries. It seems impossible. Quickly.)* You see, you can't! And the more you try the more difficult it is. *(It can be seen that she is struggling to raise her arms but literally cannot.)* All right. Don't try. Relax. Now I'm going to tell you to open your eyes. At present you can't. But when I say, "Open your eyes" you will be able to. But you will continue to sleep. Open your eyes. *(JANET does so. Froth now on they remain open. But the gaze is a curiously expressionless and unseeing one. It seems to be fixed on some-thing invisible to us, a foot or so in front of her.)* Sit in this chair. *(He puts his hands on the back of the big chair for her and she obeys him. Her movements are extremely slow and the strange, unfocused expression never leaves her face. MAURICE goes and puts out some of the lights so that there is just the desk lamp giving a very subdued light. Then he comes back to her. He is much more relaxed now himself He stands behind her chair, looking down at her.)* Now you're sleeping very lightly, Janet. But you're very glad you let me put you to sleep, aren't you?

JANET: *(softly).* Very glad.

MAURICE: And when I put my hands on your head—then you'll go into a far deeper sleep. A very deep sleep indeed. *(He strokes her head for a moment. She sighs, a very deep sigh. Then he goes and sits on the sofa, lying back, quite relaxed. After a moment.)* Now Janet . . . now that you're sleeping very deeply . . . concentrate carefully on

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what I have to say to you. I'm going to suggest to you that you no longer know what day it is. What day is it, Janet? (*She half closes her eyes and makes a quite visible effort to remember.*) You see, you can't remember. And you can't remember what month it is, either. Can you remember what month we are in?