

The Remembrance

By Mark Edgemon

She married him for his money. Catherine Elizabeth Brighton married Winston Marcellas Prescott two weeks ago for the two hundred and eighty seven million dollars that she expected to receive on the day of his death, which she hoped would be any time now. He was old and in frail health, which were two of the three things Catherine looked for in a man, the third being his wealth.

She was a somewhat attractive woman in a heartless, self-absorbed, only giving a damn about herself sort of way. Winston mistook her self-centeredness for a feisty independent spirit. He was taken in by her con artistry. She had the one trait he liked in a woman; she was interested in him.

They moved into his palatial desert estate outside of the town of Preston, Arizona in Yavapai country. It was a sprawling desert paradise, which was landscaped by mostly sand and cactus.

Winston was not a handsome man. He had been lonely since his wife's death. He had spent most of his life accumulating wealth as a business broker, buying companies, breaking them apart and selling its components for more than the company was worth as a whole.

Recently, he had become ill and believed his time was drawing near.

Catherine was secretly delighted by the prospects of being a powerful, socially connected, extremely wealthy...widow. She was counting the days...literally on her pocket calendar, circling each day, as they seem to drag on as she breathlessly awaited his last breath.

Through her insistence, Winston scheduled an immediate doctor's appointment to have further tests run to pin point the source of his condition. She appeared to be the concerned wife, but in actuality, she was awaiting his results like a gambling addict watches closely to see if his lottery numbers had turned up. After a thorough examination the source of his health problems did indeed turn up. He was suffering from anemia, caused in part by living off of a diet solely existing of junk food. The cure, stop eating junk food!

After eliminating take out food, snack cakes and candy bars and replacing them with a more healthy diet, he slowly began to get his energy back and eventually became a more healthy, vibrant man.

Catherine was of course devastated. The days seem to drag on even slower than before. To add insult to injury, now he had more energy, he wanted to spend it...with her...in the bedroom.

She was determined not to spend the next two decades waiting on this man to die!

She began a research project on poisons that would kill without being detected. Her first thought was some form of pesticide, something found around his garden supply house. After further study, she became acquainted with a poison named organophosphate e.g. parathion. The medical databases in the vast Internet library provided Catherine with a wealth of information on poisons that were available to anyone.

However, the poison she wanted was now being regulated by the EPA and was not easily attainable. Parathion does not occur naturally in the environment. It is a brownish liquid that has an odor similar to garlic. Well, that was it! Winston loves garlic.

Waving large sums of money around, Catherine found a connection to the black market, where a person can get just about any type of illegal contraband for a high price. Investing a few thousand dollars for a payoff of hundreds of millions seemed like the best deal she ever made.

She hid the poison in her own personal safe and began researching online how to make various garlic dishes. She hated cooking especially the part where the cook handles the food, so this was the worst part of the plan for her. But she thought to herself, "We all have to make sacrifices". Winston just thought she was going out of her way to make him happy, which turned him on and caused him to pay her all the more attention upstairs.

She urged him to do some hands on gardening, so it would appear more plausible for him to have been exposed to this poison through the insecticides. She also hoped it would cut down on his energy level and keep him off of her. It had the opposite effect. He was now chasing her all through the house even in front of the servants.

After weeks of cooking and crying and cooking so more, Catherine felt she was as ready as she would ever be. She prepared her first dish without the poison, just to get him hooked on her cooking. She served him some bean and garlic dip, which he said he enjoyed, but in fact, it was horrendous. But he ate it anyway, so as to not hurt her feelings. When she was sure that he would not suspect a thing, she began the garlic parade.

He never suspected any foul play, mainly because she was such a bad cook. The first dish he tasted which included the poison was some hummus and oyster pate`. He noticed that it tasted even worse than the dip he sampled a few nights earlier, but he chalked it up to her not being a good cook. Being a bad cook actually worked in her favor.

Over the next several weeks, she continued the garlic feast with garlic-stuffed mushrooms, broiled deviled tomatoes, mandarin orange spiced chicken, grilled flank steak with pecans, black beans and chiles and many other dishes which all smelled and tasted like rotten eggs.

In time, he began to show signs of acute systemic toxicity. Methyl parathion interferes with the way the nerves and brain function. He started suffering symptoms, which included confusion, dizziness and headaches. In time, he also began to experience respiratory problems including breathing difficulties, wheezing and tightness in his chest. During the final stages of his life he would slip in and out of consciousness until he died of suffocation in his bed three weeks after her first dose of poison.

The coroner pronounced him dead and after conducting several toxicological tests reported that the cause of death was due to accidental poisoning from insecticides.

“Home free”, Catherine thought. Just show myself as the grieving widow at the funeral; wait thirty days for the reading of the will and it’s off to the South of France, after of course selling the estate and the corporation that Winston started over thirty years ago.

She had the funeral only hours after the coroner released the body. No since putting off tomorrow what you can do today. To save money, she had the body buried in the backyard with the official permission from the township government. The plot was approximately a hundred feet from the house, clearly seen from the upstairs bedroom window. But she wasn’t expecting to be looking at it much longer.

When the mourners gathered for the funeral, she played the grief stricken widow to perfection. When the minister had finished the eulogy, he invited Catherine to have one last look at the body before the coffin would be shut and his body would be lowered into the ground.

After the minister had spoken, she had an idea that would seal her performance in the minds of everyone who was watching her. She walked over to his coffin, touched his face and said, “You will not suffer anymore, my dear sweet man”. Then she added one more final touch as she looked tearfully at the minister and said, “I must have a remembrance of him”. She then reached into the coffin and removed his silver belt buckle, gripped it with both hands and turned away in tears.

They lowered the coffin into the ground and that was the end of Winston Prescott...or so everyone thought.

She woke up the next morning smiling. She was about to become a major player in the social scene and she only had to wait a month for her dreams to become a reality.

Suddenly she was startled by a knock on the bedroom door. It was the upstairs maid who was frantic over something that was going on outside. Catherine could not make sense of what the frightened woman was saying, so she put on her bedroom slippers and followed her out into the backyard.

She wondered why the woman was walking toward the grave, until from several feet away, what she saw caused her to gasp. The desert sands that covered the grave had the ever so slight appearance of a face emerging from the sand. After a few moments of astonishment, Catherine told the maid that this was nothing more than an anomaly and that she was superstitious to be concerned about it. Catherine told the gardener to rake over the gravesite and she went about her day without giving it another thought.

The next morning she was awakened by another knock at the door this time by the butler. She put on her robe and slippers and followed him downstairs once again to look at the gravesite. When she approached the grave the face in the sand had returned this time twice as large as the

day before. One could arguably say that the face looked like Winston, however the semblance was only slight.

Once again, she asked the gardener to rake over the grave, until there was not even a trace of the image. The servants of the house began to talk amongst themselves about the strange and mysterious appearances of the face in the sand. Catherine had hoped that by now she could begin to relax, but she had become unsettled about the twice appearance of this vague outline of the face on the grave.

She could not sleep well during the following night and spent some of the time at the window overlooking the gravesite. The moonlight lit up the backyard and nothing seemed to be abnormal so she finally went to bed.

The next day, she awoke to an exceedingly bright morning. It was a half hour before the servants were about their duties and so she rushed to the window to see if there was anything unexpected. When she moved the curtain back, horror gripped her as she witnessed the sun shining brightly over the backyard, illuminating the grave where the face had reappeared now four times larger than the previous day. She ran downstairs and outside to the backyard in her bare feet, wearing only her nightgown. When she approached the grave, the face was six feet wide and eleven feet long and very definitely the image of her former husband Winston.

She ran to the garden supply house and fumbled around looking for a rake but finding a shovel instead. She went back to the grave and hurriedly started shoveling until the face was replaced by heaps of sand.

Each day, the face reappeared over the grave twice as large as the day before. Before long, the word of this strange happening began to spread throughout the township. Helicopters would fly over the gravesite and take pictures for the local newspapers. In a week, the face had grown forty-two feet wide and seventy-seven feet long. The face now had definition and was clearly the image of the deceased, looking exactly the way he looked when he was buried, eyes closed and a frown on his lips.

Catherine was in a state of shock and thought her dead husband was coming back from the grave to haunt her. If the face kept growing at this rate, it would fill the entire estate in a week.

The police stopped by one day to ask Catherine some questions pertaining to a black market dealer who they had recently arrested. They had confiscated his account book, which had her name and address on it and the name of the insecticide she purchased. When she was made aware of this, she went into hysterics, mumbling that her husband was coming back from the grave to exact revenge on her for poisoning him. They handcuffed her and took her to jail to await trial.

The next day, there were thunderclouds above and fierce lightning over the Preston estate. The servants were discharged since there was no one left to work for and the house became empty.

A helicopter for a local news station was flying over the Preston's backyard on there way back from filming a story, when they flew over the gravesite where the face was now a half a mile wide. The rain was pouring down hard and was beginning to wash away the image of the face of Winston Prescott, this time permanently. As the news photographer zoomed in to take a shot, he noticed something different about the countenance of the face. This time...he was smiling.

The End

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