

From the full length play:

Night of the Macabre

By Tracy Wells (excerpt adapted from *The Red Room* by H.G. Wells)

FRANCES, *a visitor to a strange, and perhaps haunted inn*

FRANCIS

This must be it.

(holds up the candle and looks around)

A red room, indeed.

(walks around, holding the candle up to various objects)

It must have been some time since anyone has had the nerve to stay here.

(runs her finger along the table and looks at it)

Dust everywhere....one might call this the gray room, it's so thickly coated with dirt and grime and neglect.

(stops in the center of the room and holds up the candle)

The great Red Room of Lorraine Castle, in which the young duke had died...or rather, in which he had begun his dying.

(crosses to where she had entered)

He must have met his death down there, falling headfirst down the stairs I just ascended, ending his own attempt at staring down the superstitions of this room.

(a little uneasy)

I hope the same fate does not befall me.

(looks around the room)

It's no wonder so many tales of ghosts cling to this room...so many legends have sprung from this darkness. The blood red walls and dark corners practically beg one's imagination to wander.

(thinks)

The darkness...yes, that's it! The darkness is where the stories hold their power.

(looks around, sees sconce near mirror and crosses to it, lighting the candle and looking at her own reflection)

My own reflection...pale as a ghost. Have I allowed my mind to be so open that those three old caretakers have filled it with nonsense?

(looks around)

And yet...there is an undeniable presence...something lurking in the shadows...

(resolved)

I must drive it away. The truth is in the light!

(crosses to a grouping of candles and uses her own to light them, one by one)

That's better already.

(sees more candles)

I must light them all. Then I can finally put all this foolishness about ghosts and spirits to rest...and maybe get some rest of my own.

(She walks around the room and lights all the candles, one by one. When she is done, she surveys the room, pleased with herself, then chuckles.)

If I'm being honest, I let the musings of my hosts get to me...I could feel my nerves rising the moment I entered this room. But now, in the light of these candles, I can see with certainty that there are no spirits or ghosts inhabiting this room.

(Suddenly, one of the candles goes out. FRANCIS notices.)

My goodness! There must be a draft in here.

(picks up the box of matches)

No matter. I can just relight it.

(She crosses quickly to the candle and relights it. As she turns around, two more candles go out.)

Odd. I must have been walking so quickly that I stirred up a breeze which put out those candles. Luckily, I have plenty of matches.

(She crosses to the candles. As she does, two more candles in two different locations go out. She stops.)

This won't do.

(lights one of the candles)

What are these? Faulty candles?

(another candle goes out; on edge)

What's going on here? Is this some sort of trick?

(crosses to another candle and tries to light a match but her hands are shaking)

My hands are shaking so much I can scarcely light this match!

(lights the candle then several more go out)

What kind of dastardly deceit is this?

(more candles go out; she looks around the room, frantic)

Is that you, Duke? Are you the one extinguishing my candles?

(lights another candle, another goes out)

Were the caretakers right all along? Is this Red Room haunted?

(more candles go out)

What is happening here?

(holds her hands up in frustration and fear)

What do you want from me?

To read the rest of this play, please email tracywellsplaywright@gmail.com