

THE WATERS OF CONTRADICTION

BY ANNA C. MINOQUE

Author of "Cardome," "Borrowed From the Night"

CHAPTER V

In the course of time another daughter and a son came to the new home on the hill, and the added lives and attendant cares appeared to separate Lucy from her parents and drive her to the home of Aunt Jenny and Uncle Major when she sought the companionship of older minds. Aunt Jenny resented the apparent neglect of her idol.

"Lil' Miss 'll have to leah to look out foh husef, I tell yoh," she confided to her husband. "Mistah Frasar don't have no thought but foh his boy, an' Mis', she jus' thinks de sun rises and sets on dat baby gyurl. Lil' Miss has got evathing she needs, 'ceptin' love."

"Yoh sut'nly is talkin' in yoh sleep, ole woman!" exclaimed Uncle Major. "If Lil' Miss aint got love, I'd like to know who's got it."

"Yes, she's got love, Lil' Miss hab," said the old negress, "but not de way she want it."

"De yain't nobody gits things jes' de way dey want it," observed Uncle Major reflectively. "De yain't nobody jes' want de way dey want it, least-aways I ain't nevah seen nobody dat did. Yoh membah how twas wif ole Marse? He'd done got evathing—big plantashon, fines' hady in de lan' foh his wife, plenty uv servants an' money an' a likly son to come in afteh him; an' he'd give de lan' an' slaves an' money, an' mebbe his son, foh one lil' gal. 'Majah,' he done said to me, when me'n lil' S'lyly was playin' by de ole cabin doh, 'Majah, dah ain't nuhn on earth an' den I knowed dat my mastoh dat could a-done wif me what he wanted to do, wah jealous uv me, kase I had dat lil' black gal to love me. No'm, yoh don't fine it nowhah dat anybody gits jes' de things he mos' wants. I's an ole man, an' I's seen much, but I ain't nevah yit seen de man oh de woman dat wouldn't giv all dey's got an' dat othah folks thinks is no good, foh some lil' thing dat ain't be'n lowed 'em. So Lil' Miss aint' no wuss off'n de res."

Aunt Jenny sat silent under the philosophizing of her spouse. Perhaps she heard, although it is more likely that she did not, so full was her mind of her "Lil' Miss," who was now enjoining upon a girlhood which promised to be as stormy as her childhood had been. She came in upon the old couple now, a little willow basket in her hand.

"Here are some groceries Mamma sent you, Aunt Jenny, and a cake I baked for you and Uncle Major myself," she said, going to Aunt Jenny's side. The old negress drew the girl to her and Lucy reluctantly submitted to the kisses to which she had never grown quite accustomed.

"Yoh's jus' like an angel, Lil' Miss, an' yoh mammy's anothah," said Aunt Jenny, for though Mrs. Frazier had not her entire approval, her kindness could not be forgotten. "Wha's yoh be'n away so long dat yoh don't come to see us no moh?"

"I was down Wednesday and this is only Saturday," said Lucy, taking a stool and watching Uncle Major, who was lifting a coal of fire to drop it into the tin cup of water which he was on the point of drinking.

"What makes you do that, Uncle Major?" she demanded.

"To het it up, Lil' Miss, a cou'se," he replied, "an' to mek de watah taste good. Dah ain't nuhn bettah'n foh yoh system quite adeen to which a coal uv fish drapped into it."

As they were talking, the door opened, and a young negro boy came in. He pulled off his cap and stood attention, while Lucy surveyed him.

"Dat's my dauty's young' boy," said Major, proudly. "He's come to stay wif us."

"What is your name?" asked Lucy.

"General Joe Jerry Stanton," replied the boy.

"But what do you call yourself?" she demanded.

"Joe," he answered.

"Yeh's be'n tellin' Joe all about wif, Lil' Miss," said Uncle Major, "an' he's be'n mighty anxjus to git to see yoh. He thinks a mighty heap uv yoh. An' I tole Joe he mus' allers membah yoh's his Lil' Miss de same as othah, an' tek ca'h uv yoh de same as we would. An' Joe 'll do it, foh he's gwian to be a good boy."

General Joe Jerry's eyes were bulging with pride as he listened to his grandfather, and generations of loyal attachment to white superiors brought to being in his heart a devotion for the child of the stranger that time was destined to prove after the way it tests most of the affections of humanity.

"I know whah dah's a red-bird's nes', wif fo' yoh 'uns in it," Joe confided as he climbed the hill with Lucy, carrying the basket on his arm. "You musn't touch them," commanded she.

"Why, don't yoh want 'em?" he exclaimed.

"Certainly not!" she answered. "How would mammy feel if some one were to steal the baby?"

"I'll he'p yoh," immediately said Joe. "Oh! I just knew you would, as soon as I saw you," cried the delighted child.

"How soon do yoh want to ride him?" asked Joe, proudly.

"Right now, if I could," she answered. "But I can't, for it is too late, and if papa were to know about it he would forbid me. But to-morrow afternoon, while papa is taking a nap and mamma is reading, and little brother and the baby are asleep we'll do it. They'll think I am playing in the orchard, and won't bother about me. I know how to ride, do you?"

Joe admitted that he did, and Lucy informed him that while she was exercising the sorrel colt, he could mount old Molly.

The following afternoon they rode across the hill, as yet broken only to the bride, into the stable, and after considerable effort, succeeded in getting the bit into his mouth. Then they led him to the fence, and while Joe held him, Lucy climbed the rails and sprang astride his back. On the instant the colt felt her weight, the domestication of centuries was forgotten and the wild nature of more centuries predominated.

With a leap that took away Lucy's breath, he leaped the fence and started across the hill, she clinging with fear-tightened hands to the light chestnut mane.

On he went until the fence separating Mr. Frazier's land from the Stanton plantation was reached. Though high, he took it and plunged down the valley, at the distant head of which gleamed the white walls of the Hall.

It happened this Sunday afternoon, that while his grandmother slept and his pretty mother entertained her now accepted suitor Arthur went forth into the fields with a book under his arm, and as Milly-by his side. It was cool in the valley under the willows that guarded the brook, and he often spent vacation hours there reading, and often Milly accompanied him. They were in their accustomed place when the beat of the colt's feet reached their ears. They sprang up, and as they saw the colt coming toward them in maddened bounds, Lucy caught sight of Arthur, and then will fell her. Her hands lost hold on the long mane. A sickening sensation swept over her, as another leap of the frantic animal flung her into the air. An eternity seemed to pass, during which she felt herself falling, falling—would she never reach earth? Then, unconsciousness.

"It's Lucy Frazier!" exclaimed Arthur. "I reckon she's dead. Hush crying, Milly!"

He caught the weeping Milly by the hand, and held it closely in his, as they ran to the place where Lucy lay motionless in the sunlight. He dropped on his knees beside her, and felt all his strength slipping away from him as he looked on her still, white face. He forgot the weeping Milly. He forgot himself. He touched one of the outstretched hands, and as he did so, he suddenly remembered how his grandmother would feel for his pulse when he complained of feeling ill. With trembling, cold fingers he sought the pulse in the little blue-veined wrist, and finding its faint throbs, something broke in his heart. She was not dead!

"Here, Milly," he cried, taking off his hat, "run down to the brook and get me some water! Run, I tell you! She may die!"

Milly needed no second bidding when Arthur was the speaker, and while her little bare feet carried her through the newly-cut briars, whose sharp thorns pierced them, Arthur bent over the unconscious Lucy. He noted the delicate fairness of her face, the fine outline of her eyebrows, the long curl of her lashes, and the pathetic, appealing droop of the pale lips. This was not the Lucy he had hated, the Lucy to whom he had become indifferent, but another Lucy, one unknown until this hour.

Then the miracle happened. The white lips opened and the blue eyes looked deeply into his. Something seemed to run into the boy's heart, and it flooded his face with light.

"Oh, you're not hurt!" he cried, as she pushed him away and struggled to rise.

"Where's the colt?" she asked, faintly.

"He's gone! We can't catch him."

"I—I think I'll go up to Aunt Jenny's," then said Lucy.

Up the hill ran Milly, the water dripping from the straw hat and the blood oozing from the pierced feet.

"Throw out the water, Milly!" commanded Arthur. "We don't need it."

When she reached his side, he took his moist hat from her hand and said:

"You can get back to the house, Milly. Take my book with you. I have to go up to Aunt Jenny's with Lucy."

It was like a journey through an unreal world to Lucy, that walk to Aunt Jenny's. The familiar hills and trees, the light stream playing in the sunshine, seemed something wholly apart from her life; and further away than heaven to her conscious mind was the log house, dimly seen, toward which they were moving and in which she would find rest from this strange weariness that oppressed her.

She knew that the boy walking by her side was Arthur Stanton, but his voice as he talked to her and hers as she struggled to reply, appeared to come from a great distance; and the things of which he spoke, the rana-

way colt, his surprise and Milly's grief, were as far off from her existence as his words from her ears. Her feet grew heavier with each step, and she was anxious to rest them, but she knew she must reach the log house, so that Arthur could return to his book and Milly could see Aunt Jenny sitting in the shadow cast by the house, in her Sunday white apron and blue calico dress, and Uncle Major lying on the bench where the sunshine fell.

"I suppose Aunt Jenny wonders who we are," Arthur was saying, as the old negress turning her head and beholding the approaching pair, rose slowly from her chair and watched them in amazement.

"I suppose so," said Lucy, faintly, as she dragged herself forward. When she would begin the whirl around her—trees, hills, the log house and white-aproned old woman wadding toward them. Fast they spun and faster, trees flying after hills, Aunt Jenny whirling after the trees, and the log house after its mistress. This was the end of the world, about which she had so often puzzled. She gave a last thought to her mother and little brother, and then the black gulf swallowed her up as Aunt Jenny's arms encircled her.

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swallow she sped to it, filled with the desire to escape from the old negress, prophesying misfortune in the red freight. Panting, she reached the brow of the hill, with its long grey stable and homely barnyard scene—the cows, grouped together, chewing their cud; the horses, the sorrel colt, none the worse for his race, among them, nibbling at wisps of hay; the hogs, noisy as usual, and a few over-diligent hens neglecting the safe roosts for the possible finding of a grain of corn. The milking was done, and she wondered who had held open the gate for her father when he turned back the calves. Who had brought home the colt? Had any one told them of her wild ride that afternoon? Would they punish her for it? Thus she questioned as she hurried to the house, from the kitchen of which came the scent of frying ham, making her suddenly become conscious of the fact that she was hungry.

"Where have you been, Lucy?" asked her mother, as the child entered the kitchen and began to carry the dishes out to the dining-room.

"Down to Aunt Jenny's," she answered.

"Did you see it was getting late? Why didn't you come home?"

"No, ma'am, I didn't see it," said Lucy. "I was asleep in Aunt Jenny's big bed."

A frown showed on Mrs. Frazier's brow.

"Hereafter, Lucy, when you are sleepy, you must come home," she said, and, receiving Lucy's promise to do so, the incident closed.

With the dawn of the morning, however, Lucy caught a better perspective of the previous day, the crowning beauty of which was the complete change in Arthur's feelings toward her. It was well worth being pitched headlong from the colt, and running the risk of a broken neck, to have him for a friend. Her little heart laughed as she remembered his chivalrous conduct, the sacrifice of the book and the devoted Milly to accompany her to Aunt Jenny's. She wished she could recall what he had talked about on that memorable walk, but his words were lost in the strange sleep which had overtaken her. "Wish to Gawd I didn't," cried the old woman, in an anguished voice. "Wish I didn't have to see all de tr'ubbel dat's done come on my family, long a-foh I was born! Dey ain't be'n nuhn but tr'ubbel for de Stantons, all a-cause uv dis yah house, an' de cuss de Injuns put on it. Why couldn't de ole Marse buil' his log house somers else, sides right yah whah de Injuns had dah ch'ch an' prayed evah night to de debil? Mebbe I don't know what I'se talkin' 'bout, an' my gran' daddy sez de haint evah night uv his life! Laz'ness, dat's why he done it!" she exclaimed scornfully, referring to the head of the white family. "Laz'ness is de reason! Dah wusn't no canebrakes to cleah away, an' no big trees to chop down, an' so he goes lan' steals de lan' dey giv to de debil an' de witches, an' make 'em mad 'gainst us foh evah-lasin'. Dey ain't none uv us but what's had trials an' tribulations 'nough to kill us. Look at Mis' Mary, ole Marse's sistah, dyin' uv a broken heart, 'cause Bob Dalton married her cousin!"

"But dat wus Bob's work, not de Injuns," said Uncle Major.

"Bob nuffin!" she ejaculated. "He'd nevah a-thought uv doin' sech a thing if de debil wusn't 'gainst our family. An' look at Marse Jim, shot through de heart by dat furnah when dey hit a duel down to Lexin'an! An' Marse, hissef, dyin' uv tyfoid fevah, brung on by losin' his money when dat man run off wif de drove uv mules he sen down. Souf! An' look at po'r Marse Will comin' home from wuh to die uv consum'shon, an' now his widdier firtin' long wif Cap'n Long, an' ole Mis' at wuh wif en' to hole de place together. No, suh! dey ain't be'n nuhn but misery an' 'fiction foh our family, and po'r Lil' A'thah ain't gwian to 'scape! I knowed it when I seed him comin' up de brookside 'long wif Lil' Miss. It was de debil's gwian to be fren's," observed Uncle Major.

"Course yoh does, yoh ole wurfless Yank-nigger!" she exclaimed. "Reck'n yoh think it was nice foh ole Marse entially to lose two uv his boys fightin' de English 'way up Norf, and kill hissef, fallin' from his boss comin' home in de da'k? An' Mis' Mary to die uv a broken heart, an' Marse Jim to git shot through de breast, an' ole Marse an' Marse Will to die, an' some wuss luck comin' to fall on A'thah?"

"I'd like to know what bad luck's gwian to fall on him, 'cause uv Lil' Miss!" cried Major, angrily.

"An' Lil' Miss ton'! Po'r Lil' Miss!" cried Aunt Jenny, dropping into a chair and covering her face with her hands. "Lil' Miss, what ain't done nuffin, is gwian to be pitched into, all 'cause huh pappy owns de debil's! Po'r Lil' Miss!"

Frightened, she knew not by what, Lucy stood for a second surveying the noisy old woman and silent old man; then she saw the open door toward her right, and sprang through it into the twilight. The change from the brilliant day which she seemed so lately to have left baffled her; but lifting her face, she saw the white path leading up the dazzling hill to her home. Swift as a

log house, and she asked her mother's permission to carry it down to the old couple. Mrs. Frazier, rejoicing to see such consideration in her daughter, readily gave the permission to do so, when the dishes were washed and the baby rocked to sleep. The dishes flew through Lucy's hands, but the baby was not so easily disposed of. At length the eyes so like her own were closed, the prattling voice grew still, and Lucy stole from the room, and taking the remainder of the pie, started for the house in the hollow. As she drew near it, her steps became slower, she began to wish she had not come, then she hoped Arthur was not there.

Thus beset by conflicting emotions, she passed around the corner of the house, and found Arthur sitting on the doorstep, while in his chair by the wall was Uncle Major, entertaining the youth with stories, which, however, had no connection with his four years' service with the Federal army. Both children expressed much surprise at seeing the other. Then, Aunt Jenny hearing the voice she loved above all other sounds on earth, came to the door, and received her gift, without, however, the voluble thanks to which Lucy had grown accustomed.

"Oh, you brought your book along!" said Lucy, taking the proffered plate by his side on the step. "Read some of it to me and Uncle Major," she commanded, ignoring Aunt Jenny, who with utterings of disapproval she could plainly hear, and the meek Joe, lying on the bench in the blistering sunshine. Nothing loath to display his lectionary ability, Arthur obeyed; and while the mother wondered at Lucy's long delay, and Milly roamed sadly through the orchard waiting the return of Arthur, the boy and girl sat in the shadow of the old log house, forgetting duty and others in the pleasure of their companionship.

The following summer days brought strength to the friendship begun that Sunday afternoon. It had, of course, its frequent interruptions, for with natures like theirs cordiality is never far away. Little Milly was sometimes permitted to join them, and always proved a bone of contention. Her absolute surrender of self to Arthur annoyed Lucy, partly because it seemed to show lack of pride on her part, wholly because she—Lucy could never attain such a complete sacrifice as the poor little girl was capable of. There were moments when she felt Arthur, also, divined the difference between them, and his kindness to Milly was in marked contrast to his sometime cruel treatment of herself.

Thus the vacation passed and when September once more brought the scattered children to the schoolhouse, Miss Cora was surprised at the change she beheld, and pleased also, for with this establishment of friendship between Lucy and Arthur, the old harmony was restored to the classroom and playground.

By none was her surprise shared more completely than by Jasper Long. Not having his teacher's larger knowledge of human nature, Jasper was unable to account for the transformation of Arthur, and the small amount of suspicion that lived in his noble nature was aroused.

This change in the boy wore for him a sinister motive, and for weeks he held himself on the alert, ready again to become the defender of the little stranger. But, beholding their many fierce quarrels, invariably followed by renewal of good fellowship, he realized they had advanced to a plane beyond him, the plane of mutual understanding and in which he could be only an intruder. He began to devote himself to the consolation of Milly, who, Annabelle not having returned that term, suffered deeply from the treatment of Lucy and the frequent neglect of Arthur.

But Sylvia Dalton was not disposed to share Jasper's philosophy, and by every means known to the mind of an undisciplined and petted child, she sought to come between the two friends. Sometimes she succeeded by playing cruelly upon Arthur's southern sentiment, sometimes by rousing Lucy's pride in drawing attention to the boy's strong liking for Milly; but always the higher nature of both broke aside the barriers, and, vanquished, Sylvia saw, then friends as before.

Then to Jasper she would hasten, dragging her defeat with her, and always he shook his head and declared he could not understand why she did not want Lucy and Arthur to be friends, since, when they were, everything went along so pleasantly and harmoniously, and they all were so happy. Sylvia, however, owned she was not happy but nobody cared for her. Every one thought more of the Yankee. Her tears would move the tender-hearted boy, and in striving to dry them, he assured her he thought more of her than he did of Lucy.

"But not more than you do of Milly!" asserted the jealous child, and when he could not deny her words, she flung at him the crime of Milly's poverty. Then Jasper realized why Arthur should prefer Lucy, Yankee though she were, to Sylvia Dalton, even if their forefathers had been companions on the long journey to Kentucky, and together had shared the after-dangers of the infant Commonwealth.

TO BE CONTINUED

Though I prefer learning joined with virtue, to all the treasures of kings, yet renown for learning, when it is not united with a good life is nothing else than splendid and notorious infamy.—Sir Thomas More.

ASK AND YE SHALL RECEIVE

By Mary Clark Jacobs

It was early June and the fragrance of roses filled the air. The little birds chirped joyously from the tree tops; the children, on their way to school, romped by shouting and laughing with the sheer happiness of living and breathing on this glorious summer morn. But within the spacious, comfortable home of John Jennings all was quiet, for the Angel of Death hovered very near.

The doctor closed his watch and dropped it into his vest pocket, released the limp wrist and placed it gently upon the covertlet, then glanced questioningly at the white-clad nurse who was inspecting the thermometer she had just removed from the patient's lips.

"The fever is two degrees below normal, doctor."

"Ah! And the heart is perceptibly weaker. Do not leave the room and watch Mrs. Jennings very closely. In case of a sudden sinking, give a hypodermic injection at once and 'phone me."

The man standing at the foot of bed went very white at the doctor's words, and his folded hands clenched until his nails dug deep into his palms, but he was unconscious to physical pain.

"Doctor, you are not giving up all hope? Surely, there is something we can do?"

"I have done all that I can, Mr. Jennings. While there is life we may hope, but your wife is in the hands of God."

A movement of the sick woman brought all quickly to her side. Slowly she opened her eyes, as if with difficulty, and glanced over the room from doctor to nurse. Meeting her husband's anxious face, she smiled wanly, and her eyes moved on as though seeking something more. With an evident effort she raised her hand to the pillows and felt among them. Her face twitched with anguish and her mouth drooped with unutterable sadness.

"Oh! It's—true. It's—true. I—thought—perhaps it—was—but—a—dreadful—dream." She murmured, and with a weary sigh again closed her eyes.

"Hypodermic at once, nurse."

As the doctor worked rapidly he tried not to see the expression of the grief-stricken man beside him. Accustomed as he was to suffering, the intense misery of the young husband called forth all his sympathy.

"Jennings, go out and take a brisk walk. Your wife will rest for an hour or two now, and perhaps we will need you then."

The man dropped upon his knees to kiss the forehead of his wife, and, as he arose, his eyes fell upon a picture of the Sacred Heart of Jesus that hung upon the wall.

"Dear Sacred Heart of Jesus," he breathed, "leave her with me. I need her so."

Following the doctor's advice, he left the house and passed quickly up the street, but his thoughts were back in the sick-room beside the form of the woman he loved, and over and over again he whispered: "Sweet Heart of Jesus, save Margaret and let her live."

Unconscious of direction or surroundings, full of anxiety for his wife and engrossed with earnest prayers for her recovery, he passed the hours of the passing throngs of humanity, until in turning a corner he bumped into two ladies, almost causing one of them to drop the baby that she held in her arms. With a hasty apology for the accident, he stepped aside and permitted them to pass before him. As they walked on, a little gust of wind blew back the cover and the man got a fleeting glimpse of the red, wrinkled, little face of a very young babe. Suddenly he stopped, and for one full moment stood immovable, his soul filled with a wonderful inspiration, his eyes feasting upon the countenance of the infant. Then with frenzied haste he ran after them, and, panting, grasped the woman's arm.

"Please lend me your baby?"

Both women turned to look at him with surprise and suspicion, while the one that held the child pressed it closely to her as though to shield it from all harm.

"Listen! Please let me explain," continued the man. "My wife is very ill. We have been married five years and have been so very happy. All this time Mrs. Jennings has longed and prayed for a child, and when she knew that her prayer was to be granted, she was supremely happy." The man's lips quivered and he went on haltingly. "Our baby lived but a short time, and since its death, three days ago, she has been unconscious most of the time. Perhaps, if you would let me lay your baby in her arms for just a little while, it might give her a new interest in life, and she will recover."

The ladies looked at each other, then the older spoke.

"Perhaps this is the answer to our prayers, Helen." Turning to the man, she continued: "We will be glad to take the baby to your wife, sir, and I trust that the dear little one will be able to accomplish all that you wish. Let us go at once."

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