



# For Her Sake; The Murder in Furness Wood.

## CHAPTER XL

Lady Cameron had purchased a very beautiful pearl brooch; it lay among the other presents until the night before the wedding, and then her ladyship found it on her dressing-table, with the one word "Declined" written in Diana's firm clear hand-writing.

Lady Cameron said nothing; she understood the girl's intention of not taking into her new life anything that could remind her of her step-mother.

On the night before the wedding there was the most sumptuous dinner ever given at Furness. Sir Royal was there, and after the feast he asked Diana to find a few minutes for him. She led the way to the terrace.

"Come here, Royal," she said, "where we have spent so many happy hours together."  
He stood by her side for some few minutes in silence. The "child Diana" had long been dead to him; the beautiful willful young girl, so charming and graceful, had died also. By his side stood a proud cold woman, on whose fair moonlit face there was not the shadow of a smile.

"Diana," he began, "I want to explain about my present to you."  
"I hope," she said, interrupting him hurriedly, "that you have not sent one."  
"No—not as other people have. I could not and would not send anything to lie on those tables there, labeled as coming from me. I have brought you a present; but it is not a wedding-present—it is a gift from me to you. Look, Diana, I am sure you will like it. Let me fasten it round your neck, dear."

"He showed her a diamond heart, consisting of stones of the first water—a gift worthy of a prince, but in his eyes not good enough for her."  
"The shadow of parting lies heavily on me," said Sir Royal. "After to-night I shall see the 'child Diana' and the slim young maiden no more. Lady Claironald may return; but I shall never gaze upon the child I have loved so dearly. Let me fasten this diamond heart round your neck, Diana."  
She bent her fair head toward him, and he tied his gift, which was attached to a band of black velvet, round Diana's white throat; and, as he did so, a deep sigh escaped from his lips.

"Wear it for my sake, Diana," he said, "and think of my heart, which is all yours, whenever you see it. My love for you is clear and bright as these jewels. When you look upon it, remember also that, whatever befalls, I am your staunch friend."  
She felt the warm tears from his eyes on her hands, and she knew not how to comfort him.  
"My child, my love," he said, "is it all too late?"  
"Yes, too late," she sighed. "Royal, do not grieve; I am not worthy of your generous, devoted love. I am a proud, wicked girl!"

"Always remember, Dian, that my life is yours, and that, if ever you need it, I will give it gladly."  
"You will be with me to-morrow?" she said, anxiously. "Oh, Royal, let me have one true heart near me!"  
"I will be with you, Diana," he promised; and to himself he added that it would be better for her if he were going to her funeral than to her wedding.

## CHAPTER XL

When Sir Royal left her, Diana wandered away. She was to leave the beloved home on the morrow, and she wished to visit some of her favorite haunts once more. She wished to stand beside the fountain in the conservatory, where Sir Lisle had kissed her and the happiest hour of her life had passed. She wished to dream for one short half hour of the dark, handsome face as she had seen it then, to forget the terrible present, with its load of misery and remorse.

There could have been no more beautiful picture than that of the tall slender girl with her fair face and head bent over the rippling water, the light falling softly on her pale rose velvet and sparkling diamonds. Once more she dipped her white hand in the glistening fountain. How well she remembered the night Sir Lisle had found it there—how tenderly he had drawn it from the water! Where was he now? Whether had her pride and vengeance driven him? She must not think of him; to-morrow was her wedding-day! But in this brief retrospect her pride gave way. She fell upon her knees by the pretty fountain, and her tears mingled with the rippling water.

"Oh, my love, my love," she cried, "what have I done—what have I done?"

To her excited, despairing fancy it seemed as though he were there, that he raised her in his arms, that he kissed her and held her to his heart, that he cried out to her that it was all a wretched dream, that it had passed, and he was there to love her—love her always.

A few minutes later Lord Claironald stood beside her, looking into her face, his own inflamed with wine. With a gasping sigh she came back to the stern reality.

"Diana," said the thick voice of her future lord, "I have been looking everywhere for you. Why did you steal off here alone? You wanted me to follow you, I am sure!"  
Of what use to raise her fair head with queenly dignity and deny it? He only laughed a coarse, loud laugh.

"What a grand evening!" he continued. "But this is the best part of it. Why did you not tell me you were coming here? I should have been here before you."  
Diana looked at him, her brows knit, her eyes cold and clear.

"Do you really believe," she said, "that I came here hoping you would follow me?"  
"Certainly—and very natural too," he replied, with another laugh. "We are going to be married to-morrow; we ought therefore to have a few loving words to say to each other. Diana," he cried suddenly, "give me a kiss!"  
There, on the very spot where Sir Lisle had stood when he gave her the kiss she had looked upon as a betrothal—there, where the one happy hour of her life had passed!

"A man has a right to kiss his future wife," said Lord Claironald.  
"Not unless the future wife chooses; and I do not choose," replied Diana, proudly.  
"You ought to kiss me, considering that we are to be married to-morrow," said his lordship.  
He had taken just a little too much champagne; otherwise he would not have had the courage to speak as he did to the one he loved yet feared.

"I decline," said Diana, haughtily, "to do anything of the kind."  
Lord Claironald looked at her with something like wonder.  
"If you cannot kiss me you do not love me," he said. "If you do not love me, why are you going to marry me? I flatter myself that I have put that very neatly, Diana."  
She saw that it would be useless to argue or contend with him. She was going to marry him on the morrow, and he would be the arbiter of her destiny. She crushed down the rebellious feeling that rose in her heart against him, and held out her slim, cool hand for him to kiss.  
"There," she said—"now we are friends."  
"I shall have what I want," he told her, sullenly, "or nothing at all;" and he bent down and kissed the half-averted face. "I do not understand this coldness," he added. "I hope you love me, or the future will not be very pleasant for either of us."  
She saw on his face the sullen expression that occasionally appeared there, she heard him mutter some angry words, and that was the memory she had to take with her on her wedding-day.

They were all asleep now—father, lover, friends, and foes—all dreaming, most likely, of the grand pasport of the morrow. But no rest came to Diana.

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might had the onerous duties of the toilet before them; Lady Cameron, with the great mansion filled with guests had not one moment to spare. Every one was busy engaged except the bride herself; and she, even while the May sun shone into her room and the May birds filled the air with their tuneful songs—ever then she slept on. Susanna did not like to wake her, she looked so pale and tired; and the maid had some shrewd ideas connected with her young mistress' marriage.

"It is not like waking a happy bride for a happy wedding-day," she thought to herself, "I will let her sleep as long as possible."

When Diana woke, with a heavy head and a heavy heart, Susanna was standing by her side. In her first momentary confusion she looked questioningly at the pretty smiling maid.

"What is it, Susanna?" she asked.

"It is your wedding-day, miss," she answered.

O blessed sleep that had enabled her to forget! O bitter waking that brought her misery back with redoubled force! With a low moan she turned on her pillow. Her wedding-day? Would that she were dead!

"It is such a bright beautiful day, miss," said Susanna, trying to cheer her young mistress.

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