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## IONE: A BROKEN LOVE DREAM

BY LAURA JEAN LIBBEY

Author of "A Broken Betrothal," "Parted by Fate," "Parted at the Altar," "Heiress of Cameron Hall," "Miss Middleton's Lover," Etc., Etc.

"Then why do you not go to him and ask him, my dear?" suggested Miss Rochester, mildly.

But her eyes looked troubled as she said it.

"I will find out," cried Elaine, with flashing eyes.

All that day Elaine brooded over her terrible discovery; for to her jealous heart this knowledge seemed terrible indeed.

"Surely," she cried, starting to her feet, and pacing excitedly the length of her beautiful boudoir, "Ione Lawrence cannot be the one!"

The more she thought of it, the more a score of trifling incidents went to confirm it.

"I will find out for myself," she cried, hurrying to her wardrobe, and taking out a carriage costume.

"Are you going out, my lady?" asked Patricia, the little maid.

"Yes," returned Elaine. "Get me ready as quickly as possible. Do not mention that I have gone out."

"To No. — Lexington Avenue," she directed the driver.

She did not see the sunlit streets, the crowds of pedestrians, or the blue, over-arching sky above her as the carriage rolled along. Her heart was bitter with tumultuous thoughts.

"I shall soon find out if it is she whom he loved. If it is I shall hate her with a hatred more bitter than death. I shall not accept half a heart. I want a whole heart or none."

Let those who read of the tragedy that followed remember how different poor, wilful, misguided Elaine's life had been to that of other girls. Her mother had died in her infancy; she had grown up without a mother's guidance, without a sister's kindly admonition. Her own will was her law. No one had counseled her against the bitter fires of jealousy, the sinfulness of hatred and thirst for revenge.

It was quite a surprise to Ione when, half an hour later, Elaine's card was brought up to her.

"Why does this girl thrust her friendship on me?" she sobbed. "It will be cruel torture for me to smile kindly into the face of the girl Arthur Rochester loves—the girl whom he is to make his bride."

For a moment, bitter sobs shook her frame; then she rose calmly, and dried her eyes. The calm that followed the tempest had come.

"I must not rail at Heaven for taking him from me and giving him to her," she murmured, "since it was God's will."

Her step faltered slightly, and the slender figure trembled as she walked down the drawing-room.

"Miss Granger," she said, huskily, extending her hand.

Elaine took it, and they stood for a moment gazing steadily into each other's eyes—Elaine, the girl who was destined to be her bitterest foe, and all for love's sake—love for the same man.

CHAPTER XXV.

"This is quite an unexpected pleasure, Miss Granger," said Ione, constrainedly, as she took a seat opposite her visitor.

"I have thought of little else save myself ever since we met at the ball," returned Elaine, "and I took the opportunity of calling as soon as possible. Do you know," she went on, lightly, "your face actually 'gave me'?"

"I cannot shake off the impression that we have met before."

As she spoke she looked keenly into the lovely face opposite her. She expected a reply, but Ione only smiled none. After a few moments of indifferent conversation, Elaine turned suddenly to Ione with the query:

"Did you know Mr. Rochester before the evening of the ball, Miss Lawrence?"

"She saw the lovely face flush, then pale; then Ione lifted her dark eyes, and frankly answered:

"Yes."

How Elaine longed to ask the question that fairly burned her lips: If she was the Ione Arthur Rochester had loved? But there was a certain dignity about her that forbade questioning.

"The name is uncommon," she remarked.

"I do not know that I have ever heard it before. I had almost forgotten the real object of my visit," Miss Lawrence, she said, laughing. "I am thinking of getting up a garden party in your honor, if you—"

The sentence never was finished. A gasping cry fell from Ione's lips. She drew her chair closer to Elaine's and took her hands impulsively in her own.

"Do not think me rude," she said, hastily, "but I hope you will abandon the idea."

"You must have a reason for declining, and a very strong one," said Elaine. "Would you mind telling me why you do not care for it?"

Ione's lips quivered. How could she say that it would be but a cruel torture to her to cross Arthur Rochester's threshold to look upon his face again—to hear him speak tender words, just as he used to speak to her, to this girl who was soon to be his wife, if report spoke truly.

"Because I care so little for so-

test that they loved each other still. "I shall never feel safe until I am Arthur Rochester's wife," she muttered, clenching her little jeweled hands together so tightly that the soft, pink palms were bruised, while tears fell from her eyes like rain.

"If she crosses my path I cannot answer for what might happen," she told herself, bitterly.

That evening, when Arthur entered the drawing-room, he found Elaine standing by the lace-draped window, looking thoughtfully out into the moonlight.

"In a day-dream, Elaine?" he asked, quietly, "I am in the way. I ought not to have disturbed you."

"You are never in the way, Arthur," she replied, and the girl's lips to note how very indifferent he was to her. He would as soon have thought of flying as offering her one caress. "Does he think me a block of marble, never to long for any warmer greetings than this?" she thought.

Where were all the gay spirits, the bright repartees with which she was wont to keep him amused? He wondered. It was something unusual to see Elaine with a serious expression on her face.

"What are you thinking of, Elaine?" he asked at last, drawing nearer to her.

"Do you really wish to know?" she queried, falteringly.

"Yes," he answered.

"I was thinking of you, Arthur, as usual," she responded, "wondering if you really love me. Do you?"

"Is it not rather late to ask that question, Elaine?" he answered, evasively.

"But do you?" she persisted.

"Yes," he said, huskily; but he would not pain her by adding: "But it is with a brother's love, rather than a husband's. Will you tell me why you ask me, Elaine?"

"I have been reading a book of poems," she replied, "and one of them affected me deeply. It was of a maiden who wedded a lover whose love she found to be a cruel mockery, and who died. Tell me, Arthur, did you ever love any other woman?"

A spasm of pain crossed his handsome face. He took both her hands in his as he said, slowly:

"I will be frank with you, Elaine; it is your due. Now that you have asked me a straightforward question, I will tell you that which I have been summing up courage to tell you for some time past: I have loved before, but I found that the woman to whom I had given all the deep love of my heart was as false as she was fair. I cannot say more about her, Elaine, for the very memory of the past is painful. The wound is not quite healed even yet, though I do my best to try to forget. I should have told you this on the day I asked you to become my wife, Elaine, but I could not. But it is better late than never. You do not think the less of me for it, I hope?"

For answer, she burst into tears, murmuring:

"But now, and for all time to come, your love is mine, Arthur."

"I shall devote my whole life to you, Elaine," he answered. "You shall be happy if I can make you so."

Even in that moment she noticed, with bitter jealousy, he never spoke of loving her. When she reached her own room, she threw herself down in a velvet arm-chair, with bitter cries.

"Another girl's image is in his heart—not mine!" she sobbed. "Oh, how am I to bear it, but fan the flame? It must! If she were but out of the way, his heart would turn to me!"

It was a pitiful thought, but she brooded over it night and day, and there was danger in this constant brooding. It was the smouldering flame which was soon to burst into a raging fire.

But from the hour in which Elaine had discovered beyond a doubt that Ione Lawrence was Arthur's first love, Ione had a strange fascination for her. With the keen eyes of jealousy she noted, too, that although Ione Lawrence was soon to marry Mr. Lyons, there was no love between them.

"There is something back of all this," Elaine would find out what it was, at any cost.

Another month dragged its slow length by, and at the end of that time a thrilling event happened.

## CHAPTER XXVI.

It so happened that Ione and Elaine had both been invited to a yachting party which was to take place the following week, and each not expecting the other—had accepted the invitation.

To be Continued.

Packing Fruit.

"Any old thing" will not do in these days—the package must be neat, clean and attractive. The grower of fruit must put it in such packages as his customers like if he expects to make fruit growing a financial success.

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