

**THE WATERS OF CONTRADICTION**

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**CHAPTER X**

The attendance at Lucy's party, which, contrary to Arthur's expectations, he had enjoyed, necessitated a call. As he turned in at the gateway a few mornings later to discharge his social debt, he determined this time, not to come hither again. There were in the association elements that might prove dangerous to his future peace of mind, and he ever had considered it the height of folly in a man to risk a possession so essential to his happiness and well-being.

Lucy was sitting on the veranda. The heavy vines draping it hid her from him until he had mounted the steps. Then she spoke, and turning quickly he was conscious of a strange glimmering in her heart as he saw her smiling face looking up at him from the piece of needlework in her hands.

"Mamma has gone to town," she said, rising to make room for him on the bench. Her thimble slipped from her finger and rolled across the floor.

"I am fortunate in finding her industrious daughter at home," he said, and then stooped to pick it up. "Permit me to return your dainty implement," he added, handing the thimble to her.

"It is so loose, for it is mamma's," she complained, slipping it back on her finger. "I lost mine."

"I will fix it so it won't come off," he said. He took a notebook from his pocket, and with her scissors cut a narrow strip of paper. "Now give me your hand," he commanded, and when she held it out, he wrapped the paper around the top of her finger with care and then fitted the thimble. "Now," he said, "that pretty little hand is equipped for its warfare with the needle! Don't grow indignant when I say I never imagined it was a warfare you let it often engage in."

"Why not, pray?" she inquired, taking up the napkin she was hem-stitching.

"Oh, why must a woman always demand a reason for everything?" he exclaimed.

"Because we are so unreasonable," she answered, and then both laughed. And Arthur Stanton swiftly realized that it was pleasant, indeed, to sit here in the vine-covered piazza with Lucy, cool and sweet as the day itself, in her simple muslin dress, with flowers blue as her eyes, scattered lavishly over its snowy ground.

They talked of the party with the zest of youth which finds such joy in the retrospection of happy hours, and argued on the merits of the men and the beauty of the women who had attended it; and then their words were silenced by a mocking bird which broke forth into its rapturous song from his place in the locust tree at the end of the veranda. As they listened in silence, Lucy's eyes were fixed on her bent head, and the little hand swiftly drawing the needle in and out of the white cloth. A strange quietness enveloped her. It touched him with a feeling akin to awe, and the impulse came to him to slip away and leave her to the dreams of peace and joy of girlhood. It was then she lifted her eyes and encountered his. A moment followed of surprise for each. A flashlight had been turned upon their souls, and the wonder of what they felt rather than saw, for the moment was too brief for vision, left them dumb. The rush of joy that came after sent the light into his eyes, the color to her cheeks.

"Isn't it beautiful—his song?" she hastened to say, looking over her shoulder at the tree. "My window opens upon that locust, and oh, to hear him break the still heart of the night with his song! Why, sometimes it overpowers me and—I have to cry."

"Why do you let yourself feel things that way?" he asked, and his voice would have sounded harsh had it not been so muffled.

"I can't help it," she answered. "It is always so. When I am my own true self," she added, looking at him bravely enough now, "I know I would not have it otherwise. Think how deep, how complete is my enjoyment of that bird's song!"

"But there are other things in life besides birds' songs," he rejoined, his eyes dwelling tenderly on her flower-like face. "There is pain, and you'll feel it deeper likewise. It is the penalty paid for the deeper enjoyment."

"I shall not call it too high," she said, lifting her face, which showed a faint smile.

"You can say that now, because you do not know what suffering—real suffering is," he said hastily. "They wouldn't be so glibly spoken, those words, if you had ever felt its iron grasp upon your soul."

"If it were there now, I should still say it," she cried, "say it and believe it true, and find in the very pain something unknown to others."

The words seemed suddenly to draw a veil from some depths of his nature of whose existence he had not dreamed, and the sight perhaps more shocked than surprised him. It set him on his feet, and then he said, excitedly:

"I should like to see those roses of which you spoke a while ago. Did you know I have gone in for horticulture?"

"No," she replied, laying aside her work. "Wait until I get my hat."

She left him alone for a moment, and he had himself well in hand before her return. The garden stood at the south side of the house, and the way to it went between a border of low growing, old-fashioned flowers. Pinks and sweet williams and the innocent face of the phlox looked up at him, as he walked by the side of the girl who had planted them years before, and whose loving hands were now tending them in their maturity. There was a certain precision about the garden that was eloquent of her mother, whom, having met the first time the night of the party, he had straightway disliked. As the walk progressed the personality of the mother grew more pronounced, and with it came, unreasonably, a sense of injustice done to him by her; and he was glad when the tour of inspection was over.

"And where is your special nook?" he asked. "Somehow I can not fail to find it here."

"How keen you are!" she cried. "I love flowers, but not in a garden, and mamma thinks that is the only place for them. I shall now introduce you to my bower."

She led the way toward the orchard. It was heavily set in clover, and the tall crimson heads reaching up touched them as they passed, while over the place was the hum of the bees. At the end of the orchard was an oak tree, under which, perchance, the first of his Kentucky ancestors had often stood, as he surveyed the great estate he would leave to his descendants. The heavy bluegrass, the only unchanging thing the tree found amid a world of changes, grew up its trunk and in places the long slender blades swept the rough bark. Where the tree faced the north, a root protruded somewhat, forming a natural chair, and as she sank down on it and rested her head against the great bole, he quoted some stanzas from "The Talking Oak."

"Whose is that?" she questioned.

"Tennyson's," he answered, throwing himself on the grass beside her, who are your companions under the oak tree?"

"It truly is," she replied. "You know I was so busy reading history in school, that it is only since coming home I got on speaking terms with the poets. And there are so many of them."

"But not too many?" he questioned.

"Am I a barbarian?" she cried.

"Philosophers are not as a rule loyal friends of the bards," he explained, inclining his head toward her with the slight mockery she had come to know in his voice. "And who are your companions under the oak tree?"

"Well," she began, hesitatingly, "there is Keats—"

"Yes, and who else?" he asked, as she paused.

"Why—just Keats," she answered, laughing. "He so loved the green-sward you know, it looks unfriendly not to invite him out here on such days. And then when he begins to sing—well, you forget the others."

"You would not say that if you knew Tennyson," he insisted. "The day after tomorrow—it is Sunday, you know, when I am free from all duty—I am going to come up here to your oak, and bring my Tennyson along. I shall expect to meet you here, prepared to listen to me read my favorite poems to you. Then, if I find you appreciative, you may have my bard for a week. At the end of that period you will be ready to sell all the books that you have, the histories included, to procure a copy."

"The histories were not mine," she said, her laugh rippling her lovely face. "Why do you dislike the histories, Arthur?"

"I don't," he declared. "I love them. If it weren't for the histories we might agree, and that would never do. Had you taken to poetry instead, I might have found you a dreamer, and as I am one myself, two of a kind is one too many. Had you gone in for romance, you would have been a sentimentalist, and that would have wearied me. As you are, you suit me admirably," he finished, the hint of a smile on his face.

"And I suppose I should be glad on that account?" she returned.

"It is your duty to be so," he answered gravely, whereupon she flung at him a clover blossom which she had broken off in passing through the orchard. He picked it up, looked at it for a moment, and then deliberately laid it back on the ground.

"You should not destroy things that way," he admonished. "That clover blossom had as much right to live out its allotted time as you have."

"How do you know but it had done so?" she asked. "That it was its fate to be plucked by me in this very way, in this very hour?"

"That is not nature's method," he answered, "hence I see in your act only a wanton interference with her plans, when, in passing through the orchard, you snapped off this pretty blossom, to toss it from you when it suited your fancy to do so. If you take selfishness, and thoughtlessness, and cruelty out of the world, Lucy, you will find there is very little of Fate left."

"Those things are not Fate," she contradicted. "They may be the means by which Fate often operates, but that is all. Were they not in existence, she would find others through which to work her will upon life. Often those who live surrounded by love are the most helpless victims of her will."

"And who has not found love more often thoughtless, selfish and cruel than not?" he asked, his eyes leaving her face for the tree-belted horizon.

"But you cannot call that love," she exclaimed.

"It is so catalogued," he rejoined, again turning toward her.

"Oh Arthur!" she cried, bending slightly forward, her face glowing with feeling, "you do not call it so? You know that love would suffer itself to shield the loved one, that it lives in the thought of that loved one's happiness, that the sword that finds the loved one has first pierced love's own heart."

"You are talking now of God's love," he said slowly, "not man's."

"And man's love is the reflection of God's," she asserted.

"Perhaps, but the medium is so utterly bad we rarely find a true reflection," he said.

She looked at him, pitying him. Catching her expression, amusement flashed into his eyes.

"You regard me as one of the unredeemed?" he exclaimed, but almost instantly he grew grave. "I do not express those views often, perhaps I strive not to hold them; but a few years in the courtroom, Lucy, if you are a thinking person, do not tend to exalt your ideals of human nature."

"But it is only one portion of human nature you find there," she objected.

"Because there has arisen no occasion calling for the presence of the other portions," he said. "Had there been, we should be asked to examine the same picture of selfishness, thoughtlessness and cruelty—the three cornerstones of humanity."

"And the fourth, is what?" she asked.

"There is no fourth," he rejoined. "But the ground upon which the three stand is ignorance."

"Not always," she hastened to say. "There is wisdom—"

"A mere carving on the completed structure," he interrupted.

"I could never, never subscribe to so heartless a doctrine," she said. "It makes for despair."

"O no!" he cried, looking up, his eyes now cleared of all the gloom brought by the thoughts. "You don't have to finish the house with the rough foundation stones. You can lay on them the trim, shapely bricks, or crown them with a structure of finely chiseled rock, or rear a glittering palace of costly marble. You can adorn it with all the beauty of column and niche and delicate tracery—"

But she shook her head.

"What does it matter what we build for the eyes of the world to see, when the unseen upon which it stands is so unsightly?" she cried.

"I should always have to remember the hideous cornerstone, the dank ground on which they stand."

"Is it not something calling for our respect and admiration, that upon such a foundation we can build so fair a temple?" he asked, his searching eyes on her face.

"I should rather know the foundation were fair," she said sadly.

"But it isn't Lucy," he insisted. "Strike down far enough in the heart of the best of us and you find the primal animal. All that we may be superior to that, is the result of conscious or unconscious effort on our own part and the part of the race in the past."

Her hands were clasped around her knees, the slender figure was bent forward, while the eyes were bent thoughtfully on the green pasture sweeping back to a field of wheat, ripening for the harvest. As he gazed upon her, he felt his opinions beginning to waver, so improbable did it seem that this fair life upon which he looked rested on that foundation. The slip of paper he had placed on it to secure the thimble, was still securely wrapped around the tapering finger. He leaned forward and playfully moved it, and she started from her reveries at the touch of his hand on hers.

"See how it has marked your finger!" he said, holding it up for her inspection. She looked indifferently at the red hand below the nail and drew away her hand in silence. Her silence filled him with vague misgivings, which the troubled expression of her brow quickened. He could not understand it, and the withdrawal of her hand seemed to prohibit a question. But when he left she seemed to go with him to the office, as on that other day she had accompanied him to the field, and always the thought of her was thrusting itself before him when a moment's relaxation from work came. It was a seductive thought, too, one which, young as he was, he perceived had in it the power to gain the ascendancy in his mind, and thus interfere with his work. Work was all that now remained to live out its allotted time as you have."

"How do you know but it had done so?" she asked. "That it was its fate to be plucked by me in this very way, in this very hour?"

"That is not nature's method," he answered, "hence I see in your act only a wanton interference with her plans, when, in passing through the orchard, you snapped off this pretty blossom, to toss it from you when it suited your fancy to do so. If you take selfishness, and thoughtlessness, and cruelty out of the world, Lucy, you will find there is very little of Fate left."

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Frazier's way nor permit a thought of her to bother him. But the prospect of the long afternoon, with its disappointment rose before him, and he hesitated. As he stood there in indecision, the remark made by Uncle Major concerning the girl's loneliness occurred to him. He could readily believe that between her and her self contained mother there was little of that sympathy and comradeship which a nature like Lucy's hungered for, that rather the mother stood above her as a strict mentor and judge, and any lapse from what was held by her to be right would be mercilessly condemned in the daughter. With the idea strong in his mind, he left his place and went to the house; but when Lucy came down the little gleam in her eyes seemed to indicate that he had been mistaken in his opinion of the reason of her absence.

"Don't you think one ought to keep one's appointments?" he asked, trying not to be softened by the appealing loveliness of the face before him.

"Who has not done so?" she asked.

"Weren't we to read Tennyson under the oak tree this afternoon?" he asked.

"You said you would, but I did not promise to fall in with your plan," she replied. "Perhaps it doesn't suit me."

"Why does it not suit you?" he asked playfully, and then it suddenly occurred to him that Lucy was not in a playful mood. The smile on her face was forced, and the light in her eyes was too dry and coy.

"Why must a man always demand a reason for everything?" she exclaimed, repeating his question of the other day.

"Because we are reasonable creatures," he answered, but he did not laugh. "And I am going to read Tennyson to you this afternoon, either here in this room or out there under the tree. Which is your choice?"

"And who said I was to be your audience?" she asked, and the short nervous laugh accompanying the words sounded strange from Lucy.

"I believe I did," he answered, looking into her restless eyes with a sudden feeling that this girl was not the Lucy he knew. "And you will not disappoint me?"

"Would it be a disappointment?" she asked, trying to speak lightly.

"A dreadful one," he rejoined. "It would spoil my whole day. You don't want to do that, I know."

"I can only stay a short while," she said, trying on her hat.

"Why not?" he asked, a sudden thought occurring to him. When she did not speak, he repeated his question and there was a tone in his voice that the girl was not likely to disobey.

"I am going out driving with Jasper's car," she said, with a half-smothered gasp.

He heard only the words, and they made him set his teeth, while a new expression came into his young face. Then he said carelessly:

"Until four we will read Tennyson."

Arthur walked to his home through the fields in a bad frame of mind. He had exerted himself to make the hour one of pure intellectual enjoyment for Lucy, in order that she should contrast it, to Jasper's disadvantage, with the one that was to follow; and promptly at four o'clock he had closed the book, handed it to her, and taken his departure. As his face was turned from her, however, and his steps carried him through her father's land on his way home, the quiet expression that his countenance had worn faded, and in its stead came one of wounded pride.

Some bad epithets he applied to himself while journeying down the hill to the quiet valley, where the log house stood. Reaching the ancient privet bush which his great ancestors had planted near the brook, at the place over which later Uncle Major had built the bridge for his little Miss, he paused, and reconsidered what had occurred, admitted that he had met punishment only adequate to his folly. Against every established rule of conduct, against every principle of pride, he had permitted the sentiments kindled by a girl's pretty face and fanned by an ignorant negro's words to dominate his actions and send him to those whom, according to every traditional feeling, he should avoid. While he had held aloof, he had plainly shown her he recognized as still existing the chain which had formerly been decreed divided them. He, not she, had denied his existence, and she had punished him this afternoon for his ever having admitted it. The thought seemed to burn his brain. He winced under it and in that moment was fully convinced that he hated Lucy Frazier more fiercely than he had done in childhood days. Thus convinced he resolved he would clip the wings of her victory, as he had done once before. There was now, however, no wise and honor-loving friend to point out the way to duty pursued, instead was a nature, lashed to fury by wounded pride and a misapprehended passion. But even in that moment the course it advised was such, it made him hasten to leave the place, sweet with the associations of happier hours of youthful friendship.

TO BE CONTINUED

When you do a good action, have the intention of first pleasing God, and then of giving good example to your neighbor.—St. Alphonsus.

**MARTHA'S DAUGHTER**

Mrs. McNeil, plump and comfortable, seated on the east porch beside a basket piled high with mending, nodded and smiled at the priest who had opened the gate.

"How is Martha's Daughter today?" he asked, returning her greeting. "I'm going over to see Mrs. Hollis' Jimmie, so I can't sit down."

"Mis' Hollis' Jimmie?" Mrs. McNeil rose, her crisp gingham skirt billowing about her, and she started into the house. "Just wait a minute Father. I've got a bottle of raspberry shrub you can take over. You'll tell her he'll find it real coolin' these hot days."

"Martha's Daughter—I thought she would have," said the priest softly, as she departed, "God bless her!"

When he had gone, the bottle of raspberry shrub stowed away in one capacious pocket, the girl in the rocking chair looked up and asked her question eagerly.

"Martha's Daughter?" Mrs. McNeil laughed comfortably. "Yes, they all do call me that considerable, specially Father Kelly. It all begun last year, the time the young ladies got up those 'retreats.' Molly Ferguson came up here with Father—she's a sweet friendly little thing—and I was settin' on this very porch restin' after gettin' my wash out. Ten o'clock Monday mornin' it was, an' you know how you feel after you've done a big wash—all steamy an' just sort of go over your life, same as I do when I plan my preserverin'." So many glasses of grape jelly lasted so long last winter; got to have more this time; that means so many pounds of sugar an' baskets of grapes. Well, you go through your life that way; sort of see what you'd ought to be doin' and what you ain't done; if your goin' to treat God an' your neighbors the way you should. An' the priest that gives the retreat, he helps you all he can. You make your plans an' some good resolutions. If certainly does you good; like a spring house cleanin' of your soul."

"Well," says Molly, "we want you should make it. Us young ladies is awful anxious to have it a success."

"An' I'd just got through that wash an' cleaned house the week before; an' I knew I had a confirmation dress to make for El'nor the next week. So I just looked at her an' says, pretty short:

"Who do you s'pose would keep my house an' look after the children while I went retreatin' around the country? You just wait till you're married, Molly Ferguson, an' got five o' your own to take care of."

"But couldn't Helen' (she's my oldest, you know),—couldn't Helen take care of 'em?" says Molly.

"No," says I, "Helen couldn't. She ain't out o' the academy till next spring; an' even then she won't be responsible enough. An' I've got to make El'nor's dress for confirmation, an' put up the screens, an' see that Frankie passes his examinations, an' get them sweet peas wired, an' hear off the white hen from settin', an' start my strawberry preserverin', an' make sugar cookies for Leo, an' doughnuts for his father, an' ginger-bread for somebody else. An' what's more, I never was no hand for meditati' even when I was a girl in school; an' if you think you can meditate when every other minute you're wonderin' what the baby's into now, or if the biscuits has burned you're welcome to try it—I shan't though."

"An' then I stopped, all out of breath."

"Father Kelly he just leaned back an' laughed an' laughed. Not disagreeable, you know—just a nice, understandin' laugh. So pretty soon I was laughin', too."

"All the same, Father, that's the way I feel," says I.

"You are one of Martha's Daughters, ain't you?" says he.

"You mean Martha in the Bible?" says I, kinda sharp—the Martha that was 'careful about many things'?" Well, let me tell you, Father, a married woman has to go to rack an' ruin; an' her family, too. An' my sympathies has always been with Martha; Mary didn't show much consideration, seems to me."

"Father Kelly give me a look then, 'You don't mean it quite that way,' says he. 'You know Our Lord was rebukin' Martha's worryin' over her dinner, and thinkin' He cared more for it than to talk to her. An' you don't want to forget that when it says a little further along, 'Now, Jesus loved Martha, and Mary, her sister,' it mentions Martha first. What our Lord wanted was that Martha should stop frettin' for fear the biscuits would burn, and pay a little 'tenshun to 'the one thing necessary.'"

"All the same," says I, stubborn as you please, "I shan't make no retreat, an' there's an end of it!"

"Well, they hadn't more than gone when over cross-lots come little Marietta Veronica Farrington. Mis' Farrington had been dead a year an' a month, an' I declare I know she

turned over in her grave that mornin', Marietta was such a sight. She's the palest, pimpest little thing ever was, anyway; an' that day her hair was stragglin' all down her back, an' her dirty little petticoat showed below her torn dress, an' one stocking was down over the top of her shoe; an' her face was as white as skim milk."

"For the land's sake, Marietta Veronica," says I, "fasten up that stockin'!"

"Marietta just looked at me. 'It's busted,' she says, an' went on with-out takin' breath; an' her poor little eyes bulgin' out of her head, she was that scared. 'Mis' McNeil,' says she, 'won't you come over to our house, please right now? I'm afraid something dreadful's goin' to happen. My papa's walked up an' down, up an' down all night; an' Hughie, he's cleanin' his revolver; an' Ingeborg's gone, an' we ain't had no breakfast—"

"I got on my feet then, an' got a pin an' fixed her stockin'. Then I grabbed up the baby an' put him an' his sand bucket an' shovel right over the fence into Mis' O'Farrell's backyard."

"You tend to him, I call; an' stop Frankie an' El'nor on their way home an' give 'em some dinner, if you will. I got to go over to Judge Farrington's right off."

"I knew Mis' O'Farrell would; she's the salt o' the earth. An' before she got her mouth open to answer, I was halfway home with Marietta, an' gettin' the rest of her story out of her a piece at a time."

"Hughie (that's her brother) hadn't been home at all the night before. Seventeen he was, an' not to say wild—just curious an' high-spirited, the kind that's got to touch the stove to see if it's hot. You'll know when you get a boy of your own, my dear. An' when the Judge finally found him an' brought him home, both of 'em was lookin' like thunder clouds. Marietta heard something about killin' an' everlastin' disgrace, an' that was all; but I could guess pretty near where Hughie had been. There's a pool hall down street a ways, that ain't any too respectable; an' the police around there get a spasm o' morality every once in a while, an' raid it. I knew they'd done it the night before, an' I could surmise that that boy had been down there seein' if the stove was hot."

"Now, the Judge is a good Catholic, but he's one of these proud men that's harder'n rock with their own, and his wife's death hadn't helped him any. An' when Marietta told me that Ingeborg, the kitchen girl, had up an' gone the mornin' without gettin' him so much as a cup of coffee, I knew just about the mood he'd be in."

"Well, I give Marietta some milk and crackers in the kitchen, an' sent her right back across-lots after the pan of ginger-bread I'd made for lunch."

"My dear, such a lookin' house you never saw! If that lazy girl had ever touched a broom to it, I don't know when it was. Every dish was sticky, the silver spoons was in the garbage can, the milk picher was so sour you could smell it way out on the porch; an' flies! My land! you could hardly breathe there; so thick. I could hear the Judge pacing up an' down the library, but of Hughie there wasn't a sign. Locked in his room, he was, an' still as the grave."

"Now, maybe you know—but, not bein' married, I s'pose you don't—there ain't a thing that'll set a family snarl'n' at each other quicker than a dirty house an' poor food; an' when I went through that pantry I didn't need no one to tell me that they hadn't had a decent meal in that house since Ingeborg had been there. There's a plain, old-fashioned name used to be given that kind of woman. It ain't han'some, but it's truthful. We used to call 'em 'sluts.' An' that's what Ingeborg was. There's only one thing worse, to my mind, an' that's the pizen neat kind. The Judge's oldest sister was like that—her that kept the house the first six months after Mis' Farrington died. So, all in all, I didn't wonder that Hughie an' his father was quarrelin' like Kilkenny cats."

"Says I to myself: 'Here's where they need Martha's Daughters, every last one of 'em.' An' I rolls up my sleeves an' jumps in."

"The coffee I sent them men folks came back without bein' tasted, but do you think that phased me? Not much! I cleaned the kitchen enough so I could turn round without stickin' to anything; then I took Marietta Veronica an' got out clean clothes for her, an' packed her off to take a bath. An' let me tell you I never prayed harder in my life than I did all the time I was mendin' that child's little stockings. 'Dear Lord, I keep sayin', 'show me something to do quick before the Judge sends that poor, head-strong boy off to his ruin! Show me something to do!' Blessed Mother, help me!"

"It come to me while I was out in the hen-yard killin' a couple o' frys, though I didn't dream the Lord had answered my prayer. I just thought I was plannin' dinner. Just come into my mind like that: 'I'll make a lemon pie.' Mis' Farrington an' me, we used to be pretty near neck an' neck in the lemon pie race, so I knew the family liked 'em. An' I hustled right in and went after it—an' I made a plate of tarts, too, while I was about it. 'Marietta Veronica' like these, says I. Poor little Marietta Veronica! If anybody'd thought of what she liked an' didn't like since her mother died, the child certainly didn't show it."

"I set the back stair open, so the smell would stir Hughie up a little; an' while that pie was bakin' I gave

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