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The Water That
Has Passed



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Uncle Josh, 4 acts, 2¼ hrs. (25c)		8	3
Under Blue Skies, 4 acts, 2 hrs.	(25c)	7	10
Under the Laurels, 5 acts, 2 hrs.		6	4
When the Circus Came to Town, 3 acts, 2¼ hrs. (25c)		5	3

T. S. DENISON & COMPANY, Publishers, 154 W. Randolph St., Chicago

THE WATER THAT HAS PASSED

A PLAY IN ONE ACT

BY

EDGAR MORETTE

AUTHOR OF

"Let Love But Hold the Key," Etc.



CHICAGO
T. S. DENISON & COMPANY
PUBLISHERS

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THE WATER THAT HAS PASSED

CHARACTERS.

PROLOGUE AND THE AWAKENING.

MALCOLM TEARLE.

FLEMING.

HIGGINS.

MRS. LUCY VAN ORDEN, NEE NEVILLE.

THE DREAM.

MALCOLM TEARLE.

DOCTOR MORROW.

VAN ORDEN.

LUCY NEVILLE.

GUESTS AT THE DINNER.

PLACE—*The Home of Tearle's Aunt in New York City.*

TIME—*The Present.*

TIME OF PLAYING—*About Thirty-five Minutes.*

NOTICE.—Production of this play is free to amateurs, but the sole professional rights are reserved by the author, who may be addressed in care of the Publishers.

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FEB 26 1917

STORY OF THE PLAY.

After a long absence in Brazil, Malcolm Tearle returns to his aunt's house in New York. The family is away, but instructions have been left with the old butler for his reception. In the course of a call from his friend Fleming, Tearle is reminded that exactly fifteen years have elapsed since their last meeting, the occasion of which was a dinner party given to celebrate Tearle's betrothal to Lucy Neville. Tearle recalls that the guests at this dinner were pledged to meet again on this very night in this very house. Fleming, like Tearle, had forgotten the promise, and he is unable to remain. Tearle does not expect any of the other guests to make their appearance; in fact most of them are dispersed or dead—nevertheless he decides to delay dinner until the appointed hour. As he dozes before the library fire there passes before his vision the scene of the engagement dinner and of his quarrel with Lucy, which led to the breaking off of the match and to his going away from New York. He is awakened by the arrival of Lucy herself—now a widow—who, not knowing of his arrival, has called to see his absent aunt. Tearle, who has never ceased to love Lucy, proposes to her, and, for the second time, is accepted. Almost immediately the two lovers find themselves on the verge of a quarrel, and, convinced that Tearle is in love with his memory of her, rather than with herself, Lucy finally declines to marry him, preferring to retain her place in his heart as an ideal rather than to risk the loss of his love as his wife.

CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES.

MALCOLM TEARLE—Forty years old, wears moustache, hair gray at temples. In dream scene, twenty-five years old, brown hair, clean shaven.

LUCY—Thirty-five years old. In dream scene, twenty years old.

FLEMING—Forty years old, clean shaven.

HIGGINS—Sixty years old, gray hair.

DOCTOR MORROW—About sixty-five, white hair and moustache, bushy eyebrows.

VAN ORDEN—Thirty years old.

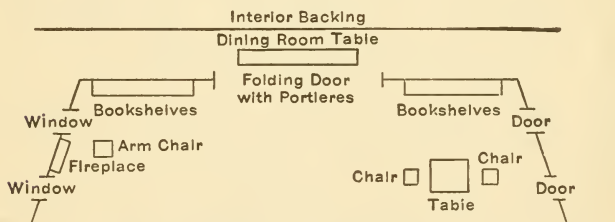
DUMMY to impersonate TEARLE during the dream scene.

Modern evening dress for all the characters except FLEMING, who wears an ordinary business suit.

PROPERTIES.

In drawer of table, paper containing signed agreement. Watch, cigars, matchbox and matches, paper and pencil for Tearle. Engagement ring for Lucy.

STAGE SETTING.



NOTE.—The transparent drop, or gauze curtain, mentioned in the stage directions on page 9, can be omitted by amateurs if desired.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means right of the stage; *C.*, center; *R. C.*, right center; *L.*, left; *R. D.*, right door; *L. D.*, left door, etc.; *1 E.*, first entrance; *U. E.*, upper entrance, etc.; *D. F.*, door in flat or scene running across the back of the stage; *1 G.*, first groove, etc. The actor is supposed to be facing the audience.

THE WATER THAT HAS PASSED

SCENE: *Library of a house on Riverside Drive. Folding doors at rear covered by portieres and opening into a dining-room in which a table set for dinner can be seen when the doors are open. Doors L. U. E. and L. 1 E. Windows R. U. E. and R. 1 E. Log fire in open fireplace between the windows R. Bookshelves against walls. Table L. C.*

At rise, front door bell rings. Enter HIGGINS from folding doors and exit leisurely L. U. E., re-entering with TEARLE, who is in evening dress.

TEARLE. Higgins, you are a shameless flatterer. If you had met me on the street, I don't believe you would have known me from Adam. You think you recognized me; but then you expected me, you see. Well, let that pass; but when you have the nerve to tell me that I have not changed—good heavens! Higgins, do you realize that it is fifteen years since I left New York, and that I had turned my twenty-fifth birthday before I sailed. Add fifteen to twenty-five and then dare to tell me that I have not changed. It is you, Higgins, who have discovered the secret of perpetual—middle age. I am glad to find you here and well, Higgins.

HIGGINS. Thank you, sir.

TEARLE. Am I late for dinner? The steamer docked less than an hour ago. I had to dress on board.

HIGGINS. Dinner will be served whenever you please, sir.

TEARLE. But how about the ladies? Have they dined?

HIGGINS. Mrs. Ferguson and the young ladies are at Palm Beach, sir.

TEARLE. My aunt and cousins away?

HIGGINS. They decided last Friday, sir, to go down for a couple of weeks.

TEARLE. Then my aunt did not receive the message I sent her by wireless from the boat?

HIGGINS. Your telegram was forwarded to her, sir. Mrs. Ferguson called me up on the long distance phone to give me her instructions. Your room is ready, sir, and dinner is to be prepared for six. Mrs. Ferguson thought that maybe you would like to invite some one, seeing that you might be lonely.

TEARLE. Lonely! That was thoughtful of Aunt Katherine; but I should be hard put to it to discover five people whom I could invite at such short notice. All my friends—if I ever had any—have died or married—or arrived.

HIGGINS. Then you will dine alone, sir?

TEARLE. I suppose so, Higgins.

HIGGINS. Very well, sir. (*Bell rings.*) That's the front door, sir; are you at home, sir?

TEARLE. At home, Higgins? Why, man, I am hungering for the sight of any being on two legs who understands English as she is spoke. Show them up, Higgins, irrespective of race, color or previous condition of servitude.

HIGGINS. Very well, sir. (*Exit L. U. E. TEARLE looks about him reminiscently, opens portieres and looks into dining-room.*)

Re-enter HIGGINS ushering in FLEMING.

HIGGINS. Mr. Fleming. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

TEARLE. Fleming, old man. This is good of you!

FLEMING. I missed you at the boat. I thought I would just drop in to welcome you home.

TEARLE. You couldn't have come at a more opportune moment, my dear boy. I was seriously considering the advisability of going back to the Brazilian wilderness to escape this solitude. But now, my dear Fleming, you are going to take pity on me and stay to dinner.

FLEMING. I am sorry, old chap, but—

TEARLE. I'll not take "No" for an answer. There's no one here but me, you know—and the table is set for six.

FLEMING. I should like nothing better, Tearle, but you see—a previous engagement—Mary made it before I knew you were coming—you understand?

TEARLE. Yes, of course. I had almost forgotten that

you are a benedict. How is Mary? The same beautiful girl as ever, you lucky dog?

FLEMING. Oh, Mary's very well, thank you—too well, she says. She is growing—er—a trifle stout—like her mother, you know. Of course you can't expect the mother of four children—and, then, think of the time. How long is it since we met?

TEARLE. Fifteen years. What's the date to-day?

FLEMING. Twenty-third.

TEARLE. That's a coincidence, then—fifteen years, day for day.

FLEMING. Is that so? I had forgotten the date, but it was in this very house. Do you remember?

TEARLE. Remember! Yes, old man, I remember, although I have spent most of the intervening years in trying to forget. Do you happen to recall the occasion of that meeting?

FLEMING. Let me see—it was a supper—given by your aunt—

TEARLE. To celebrate the engagement of two young people, of whom I happened to be one.

FLEMING. Oh, yes. Now I remember—your engagement to Lucy Neville. It was very soon after that, that the engagement was broken off, wasn't it?

TEARLE. That same evening. I sailed the next day.

FLEMING (*after a pause*). Van Orden is dead, you know?

TEARLE. No, I had not heard.

FLEMING. Yes, Lucy has been a widow these three years. And you are not married yet, eh?

TEARLE. Oh, I am immune—now.

FLEMING. My dear fellow, no man is immune to love until he is dead.

TEARLE (*laughing*). Immune! The word reminds me of Doctor Morrow's cynical definition of love that night in his speech.

FLEMING. Doctor Morrow? He is dead too.

TEARLE. Is he? Funny old chap, wasn't he? "Love," he said, "a dangerous, though seldom fatal, cardiac disorder; highly infectious, though not always contagious, caused by

the fortuitous propinquity of two individuals of opposite sex—specific, marriage.” A tactful remark to make at an engagement dinner, wasn’t it?

FLEMING. I remember you intimated something of the kind in your speech.

TEARLE. Ah! My speech—my maiden effort, carefully rehearsed beforehand and completely forgotten in the excitement of the moment. I fear that in my youthful intolerance I was not gentle with the old cynic. Something had happened in the course of the evening to ruffle me—and he sat there calm as a stone image with a superior and irritating smile which drove me farther than I meant to go.

FLEMING. I remember. You challenged him to come back to witness for himself the refutation—

TEARLE. Of his “libel on love.” I think that is what I called it, and he had the effrontery to accept the challenge and the invitation. I remember I made every one present take note of the date and sign an agreement—wait a minute. I have that agreement stowed away somewhere in this room. (*Goes to table and finds the paper in drawer.*) Here it is. I say, old man, the engagement was for this very day.

FLEMING. For to-night?

TEARLE. Yes. Poor old Morrow! I only wish he could come back to receive my apologies. To think that I had forgotten! But, see here, Fleming. How about you and Mary? You were both signers of the bond. *There’s* a previous engagement for you—

FLEMING. I am awfully sorry, old man. You see, I had completely forgotten. I hope you understand?

TEARLE. Don’t mention it, old chap. Of course I understand. Hadn’t I forgotten it myself? Besides, it isn’t as if anyone would come. If anyone should, he or she will be welcome, but—(*FLEMING rises to take his leave.*) Must you go?

FLEMING. Come and see us soon.

TEARLE. I will. Give my regards to Mary.

FLEMING. I’ll not fail. Good-bye.

TEARLE. Au revoir. (*Exit FLEMING L. U. E.* TEARLE

seats himself in armchair near the fire and falls into a reverie.)

Enter HIGGINS.

HIGGINS. Are you ready for dinner, sir?

TEARLE. Wait a minute, Higgins. Let me see. (*Consults paper containing dinner agreement.*) Eight o'clock. (*Looks at his watch.*) It is now only seven. I'll wait until eight. I find that some people were invited to dine here to-night. I don't think they will come, but if they should it would be awkward not to have waited for them. (*Seats himself in armchair near the fire with his back to the audience and lights a cigar.*)

HIGGINS. If anyone comes am I to show them up, sir?

TEARLE (*laughing*). By all means. It is not at all likely, however.

HIGGINS. Very well, sir.

TEARLE. You may turn off the lights, Higgins.

HIGGINS. Very well, sir. (*Turns off lights.*) If anyone comes, what shall I do, sir?

TEARLE. Turn them on again, of course.

HIGGINS. Very well, sir. Thank you, sir. (*Exit L. U. E.*)
(*While the stage is in darkness a dummy takes the place of TEARLE in the armchair to enable him to take part in the dream scene. There need be little change in TEARLE'S make-up besides the removal of his moustache and a change of wig. After an interval, hubbub of voices and laughter is heard outside back; then lights are turned on revealing through transparent back drop a dinner party in the dining-room, TEARLE, MORROW, VAN ORDEN, LUCY, FLEMING and GUESTS. Young TEARLE is on his feet, speaking. Shouts, laughter and applause. Cries of "Hear, hear!" "Go on!"*)

TEARLE. And therefore, with due deference to Doctor Morrow's superior wisdom, and without in the least presuming to question the accuracy of his scientific observations or the logic of his deductions, I make bold to suggest that the field of a physician's experience is limited. He sees us at our worst; when we are ailing, distressed, querulous, anxious, abnormal. I venture to assert that at such times

our conduct and actions do not fairly represent our true selves. Be that as it may, Miss Neville and I intend to refute Doctor Morrow's aspersions on love and marriage. (*To LUCY, who is absorbed in an animated conversation with VAN ORDEN.*) Don't we, Lucy?

LUCY (*aside to her neighbor, unconscious that she has been spoken to*). And so they agreed to disagree?

VAN ORDEN. Yes; she divorced him, don't you see?

LUCY. Well, I think it served him just right. (*They both laugh heartily, then suddenly become aware that every one is watching them.*) What is it? What is the matter?

DOCTOR MORROW. Miss Neville appears to be discussing another branch of our subject, Mr. Tearle.

LUCY. Were you speaking to me?

TEARLE (*nettled*). Doctor Morrow holds that marriage is a specific for love, and I want—with your sanction and my aunt's—to invite him and all our other friends here present to meet us again after a lapse of years to judge for themselves whether his libel—

LUCY (*coldly*). Why, of course; invite our friends by all means.

TEARLE. Thank you, Lucy. How long a period of probation will satisfy you, Doctor Morrow?

DOCTOR MORROW. I might remind our young friend that the exception proves the rule, and that a man's chance of spoiling his life and that of other people ceases only when his life—as well as theirs—is done. But let us not be too exacting. I hope in four or five years to find Mr. and Mrs. Malcolm Tearle in a never waning honeymoon.

TEARLE. To make assurance doubly sure, our invitation is for fifteen years, day for day, from to-night. (*Laughter, applause, cries of "Hear, hear!"*) Doctor Morrow—and all of you, my friends—may we count upon the pleasure of your company for that evening?

DOCTOR MORROW (*after applause has subsided*). My dear young friend, in fifteen years from to-night—if I am still living—I shall be in my seventy-eighth year. Nevertheless I accept your invitation. If my colleagues have not previ-

ously killed me, or if I find it possible to bribe Charon to ferry me back to the land of the living, I shall attend your feast. (*Laughter and applause.*)

TEARLE. Thank you, my friends. Lest we forget, I ask each one of you to make a note of this engagement, and in token of your promise to sign your names to the paper which I shall now hand around. (*Shouts, laughter, general conversation while TEARLE prepares the paper. The guests write in their notebooks or on their cuffs or tie knots in their handkerchiefs. TEARLE starts the paper around for signatures. Lights go out. After an interval lights are turned up, revealing TEARLE and LUCY alone in the library in C. of stage.*)

LUCY. Well, you had no business to embarrass me before all those people.

TEARLE. Embarrass you? I hadn't the slightest intention to do so. Did you want me to let Doctor Morrow's aspersion pass without—

LUCY. What have Doctor Morrow's opinions to do with us?

TEARLE. A great deal, apparently, since they are causing us to quarrel.

LUCY. It is you who are quarreling. I am only saying that I object to being made a public laughing stock.

TEARLE. A laughing stock?

LUCY. Yes, a laughing stock. Do you suppose a girl likes to have her intimate sentiments discussed in public? Besides, it was perfectly silly the smug way you went on before all those people.

TEARLE (*offended*). I am afraid, Lucy, that you made a mistake when you consented to marry me.

LUCY. I begin to suspect that I did if you are going to—

TEARLE. The remedy is simple and entirely in your hands, Lucy.

LUCY. You want to break off our engagement? Is that what you mean?

TEARLE. That is not what I said.

LUCY. It is what you implied.

TEARLE. If you will excuse my saying so, it is nothing of the sort. It is you, evidently, who are tiring of your bond. I have suspected it for some time.

LUCY. Suspected? What do you mean by that?

TEARLE. Oh, you needn't think I have been blind to the way you have been flirting and carrying on with that young jackanapes, Van Orden.

LUCY. Oh! Flirting and carrying on!

TEARLE. Yes, flirting and carrying on. Everybody has noticed it.

LUCY. Oh! you—you—

TEARLE. Even just now at the dinner, when I was foolishly standing up for you—

LUCY. Oh, this is too much! You needn't think I mean to accept your insults any longer. You want to break off our engagement? Very well, then, I release you. (*Takes off her engagement ring and throws it down on the floor.*) There's your ring. Take it to someone else who is willing to be ridiculed and flouted and—and insulted. That's the end—you understand—the end. (*Exit angrily L. U. E.*)

TEARLE. Lucy! Lucy! (*Starts to follow her, then returns to C., picks up ring, looks at it wistfully for an instant, then with an angry gesture puts it into his pocket. Lights off. TEARLE takes his place again in the armchair. Changes to original make-up. After an interval ring at front doorbell.*)

Enter HIGGINS, L. U. E.

HIGGINS. Are you there, Mr. Tearle?

TEARLE (*in his sleep*). Lucy!

HIGGINS. Mr. Tearle!

TEARLE (*waking with a start*). Eh? What? What is it? I think I must have dozed.

HIGGINS. Beg pardon, sir, you said if anyone came I was to show them up, sir.

TEARLE. Yes, yes; of course. Who is it, Higgins? Turn on the lights. Show him up, whoever he is. (*HIGGINS turns on the lights. Exit L. U. E.*)

Re-enter HIGGINS, followed by LUCY.

HIGGINS. Mrs. Van Orden. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

TEARLE (*starts up and stands staring at LUCY until HIGGINS is gone.*) Lucy!

LUCY. Malcolm!

TEARLE. Then you—you remembered?

LUCY. Remembered? Did you think I would not know you? Remembered what? What do you mean?

TEARLE. Then you had forgotten?

LUCY. Forgotten what?

TEARLE. May I ask to what I owe the honor and pleasure of your visit, my dear Mrs. Van Orden?

LUCY. You? Oh, you thought—?

TEARLE. I hoped—

LUCY (*laughing*). Oh, I see. I am sorry, but you flattered yourself, my dear Malcolm. I hadn't the faintest idea that you were in this part of the world. How long have you been back?

TEARLE (*looks at his watch*). An hour and thirty-five minutes. Then your call—?

LUCY. I have come to whisk your aunt and cousins off to the opera. I hope that Mrs. Ferguson will invite me to dinner; or, if she cannot be prevailed upon to do that, that she will let me take her off somewhere to—there is room for you, you know. I hope you can join our party.

TEARLE. You are very kind—

LUCY. You accept?

TEARLE. No, I am sorry, but a previous engagement—

LUCY. Say no more. I prefer you frank.

TEARLE. Frank? But I assure you—as for my aunt—

LUCY. Oh, come; you have answered for yourself; that is all you are entitled to do. I will take Mrs. Ferguson's answer from her own lips, if you please.

TEARLE. As you wish. Have you her telephone number? If not, Higgins doubtless has.

LUCY. Her telephone number?

TEARLE. My aunt and cousins are at Palm Beach. They left last Friday. Probably she didn't have time to write you.

LUCY (*rising*). Why, then, there is nothing more to be said, except good-night, unless—can't I prevail upon you to change your mind about coming to the opera with me?

TEARLE. I should be delighted; but, as I told you—

LUCY. Oh, yes, I had already forgotten that previous engagement. How "previous" did you say it was?

TEARLE. I don't think I said. It is of long standing.

LUCY. Let me see. You have been in New York an hour and—

TEARLE (*looks at his watch*). Thirty-nine minutes, to be precise.

LUCY. So the engagement must be over an hour old?

TEARLE. It dates back to the night I last saw you, Lucy—fifteen years ago.

LUCY. Fifteen years—

TEARLE. Yes, do you remember it?

LUCY. The day? Of course.

TEARLE. The engagement?

LUCY. You mean—

TEARLE. No, not ours. I mean this engagement. (*Hands her paper. LUCY reads it, then sits in armchair and remains thoughtful while TEARLE observes her.*) You had forgotten?

LUCY. Yes; and you remembered?

TEARLE. No. To be candid, I, too, had forgotten. It was only by accident that it all came back to me. But you see why I cannot go to the opera with you.

LUCY. But of course no one will come—no one will remember.

TEARLE. Probably not. Nevertheless—at all events, since you are here it is your obvious duty to stay and help me entertain—

LUCY. Those who will not come?

TEARLE. Well, at any rate, that one who is here.

LUCY. Meaning yourself?

TEARLE. Precisely.

LUCY. Of course I cannot do that.

TEARLE. Pray enlighten my denseness. Why "of course"?

LUCY. My dear Malcolm, it is evident that you have long dwelt in the part of the world in which Mrs. Grundy is unknown.

TEARLE. Oh! The proprieties? You think that your dining here—

LUCY. With you, en tête-à-tête? Decidedly.

TEARLE. Oh! en tête-à-tête! You forget that the table is set for six.

LUCY. Mrs. Grundy would remember only that I had dined and spent the evening unchaperoned with the still young, still handsome, still—dangerous Malcolm Tearle, who once upon a time—of course Mrs. Grundy would not know how completely you had forgotten that time.

TEARLE. Forgotten? I?

LUCY. Didn't you candidly admit that you had?

TEARLE. Never. The only thing I had forgotten was the fact that I had ever been the simpleton who truculently cast his callow optimism in the face of experience; that I had once had the temerity to invite that wise old cynic, Doctor Morrow, to come here to-night to witness the felicity of a perfect marriage. No, I have not forgotten, Lucy. How often have I wished that I could forget!

LUCY. You still hate me?

TEARLE. Hate you? I never hated you.

LUCY. Are you sure of that?

TEARLE. Perfectly. Moreover, who are you? Do I even know you?

LUCY. That's most unkind. Have I changed so completely?

TEARLE. You have scarcely changed at all. And yet I do not feel that I know you. I once knew—or thought I knew—a girl who looked wonderfully like you. I loved that girl, Lucy, as I never shall love again.

LUCY. Do you expect me to believe that in all these years—

TEARLE. I expect nothing. The fact, remains, however, that I have loved no other woman, because—well, because I could not forget.

LUCY. You speak of "that girl" as if she were dead.

TEARLE. Whether she is dead or has never lived, I don't know. Be that as it may, she has dwelt in my heart ever since, and I want her to remain there—always. (*Pause.*) See here, Lucy, do you mean to say that suddenly, after that last evening, you stopped caring even one little bit?

LUCY. Caring? I cried my eyes out.

TEARLE. But you never manifested the slightest regret.

LUCY. To you? Why should I? Hadn't you deliberately taken yourself out of my life?

TEARLE. There was precious little deliberation about my going. Moreover, I merely took you at your word.

LUCY. Literalness was ever your besetting—virtue, Malcolm.

TEARLE. Lucy! Do you mean to say that you didn't intend—

LUCY. Who knows what I intended? *I* didn't then. How can I now? (*A pause.*)

TEARLE. Moreover, I wrote you on board the steamer. I gave my letter to a fellow passenger to mail at our first port of call. He was a young Russian, I remember.

LUCY. I judged so from the fact that the letter was post-marked St. Petersburg.

TEARLE. St. Petersburg? But it was at Havana he landed.

LUCY. Your friend was probably absent-minded as well as Russian. The letter reached me over a year after it was written.

TEARLE. He had forgotten to mail it!

LUCY. Let us be just. He remembered—a year too late, that is all. I had then been married nearly a month. (*Long pause.*)

TEARLE. That's why you never answered?

LUCY. That's why I never mailed any of my answers. I wrote at least a dozen. What was there to say or do? "The mill will never grind again with the water that has passed." (*Long pause.*)

TEARLE (*fervently*). Lucy!

LUCY (*tremulously*). Yes, Malcolm.

TEARLE. Whatever may be true of the past, the future is ours to make or mar.

LUCY. Yes, Malcolm; to make or mar,

TEARLE. You loved me once, dear, and I have loved you always. Don't you think you could, if you tried, love me again—a little?

LUCY. Ah! Malcolm dear! But ought I? Would that make or mar?

TEARLE. Lucy, if only you love me—

LUCY. I do, Malcolm; that's just it. I love *you*. But are you sure that you love *me*, and not only the girl who looks so wonderfully like me—the girl who has lived in your heart all these years, and who never was I?

TEARLE. Who *was* you, Lucy—who *is* you—who will always be you! (*Takes her in his arms.*) Ah, Lucy, when I think of the years we have wasted! (*Takes from his pocket an engagement ring and holds it up to her.*) It is the same one, dear.

LUCY. The engagement ring you gave me!

TEARLE. I have carried it about me ever since you returned it to me that night.

LUCY. It shall never leave me again.

TEARLE (*slipping ring upon her finger*). Till death do us part. (*Pause.*) When shall it be, my darling?

LUCY. What, dear?

TEARLE. Our marriage. After all these years you will not keep me waiting any longer than is absolutely necessary?

LUCY. No, dear. It shall be as soon as you like.

TEARLE. At once, then.

LUCY. I must, of course, have time to get ready. I must have clothes.

TEARLE. Clothes? I am sure you have plenty of clothes. What need to wait for more?

LUCY. You dear, impractical boy! Your wife must be presentable. I cannot have you ashamed of her.

TEARLE. Presentable? I mean to bear you off into the wilderness where I can have you to myself—where I can

make up for the lost years. There will be no one to present you to.

LUCY. What do you mean?

TEARLE. We'll go into the Canadian wilds for our honeymoon, and after that—when my leave of absence expires—you will come back with me to Brazil, won't you?

LUCY. The Canadian wilds? Brazil?

TEARLE. Yes, dear. I shall of course have to go on with my work. What is the matter, darling?

LUCY. Oh, I never could do that.

TEARLE. What do you mean, Lucy?

LUCY. Live in the wilderness. Of course, if you cared very much to camp out for a short time in Canada, I should try for your sake to like it. But Brazil—

TEARLE. Of course it would not always be possible for you to accompany me into the jungle; but then you would live in the nearest town, and I should come back to you as often as possible.

LUCY. Oh, I couldn't. And besides, there are the children.

TEARLE. The children, dear?

LUCY. Yes, my children—Tom and Agnes. You knew, didn't you?

TEARLE. No, I didn't know.

LUCY. I could not take them into the wilderness, and of course I could not leave them. What's the matter, Malcolm? You are not vexed?

TEARLE. No, of course not; but—

LUCY. You see, don't you, that I couldn't go with you to Brazil? Besides, I could never be happy, for any length of time, away from New York.

TEARLE. Not even with your husband, Lucy?

LUCY. But don't you see, my husband wouldn't be with me most of the time? You would have your work when you were away. But what would remain to me in a frontier town in a foreign country?

TEARLE. But, darling, what have you to propose?

LUCY. Don't you think you could find a position here?

TEARLE. Give up my life's work? Impossible, dear. Besides, I am under contract for five years—

LUCY. Would the breaking of that contract involve so serious a pecuniary loss that—

TEARLE. A pecuniary loss! It's my personal honor that is involved.

LUCY (*hurt*). Oh, of course, beside that nothing else counts, I suppose.

TEARLE. Of course not. What do you mean, Lucy?

LUCY. Oh, nothing. Only after listening to your protestations I was foolish enough to think—

TEARLE. That I would commit a dishonorable act?

LUCY. To think that your alleged love for me would have some slight weight in the balance.

TEARLE. But, Lucy, don't you see?

LUCY. Oh, yes; I see all too plainly that you do not really care for me.

TEARLE. Lucy, how can you say that?

LUCY. If you did—

TEARLE (*bitterly*). It is you who are unwilling to make the slightest sacrifice—

LUCY. The slightest sacrifice! My children! While all I ask of you—

TEARLE. Is my life's work as well as my honor. (*Pause.*)

LUCY. Malcolm, dear.

TEARLE. Yes, Lucy.

LUCY. Don't let us quarrel again.

TEARLE. No, Lucy. Forgive me, darling. I ought not to have said—

LUCY. Ah! My dear! I have nothing to forgive you. But don't you see, Malcolm, this is not a lover's quarrel, to be patched up by a kiss?

TEARLE. Don't say that, Lucy.

LUCY. Yes, dear, we have made a mistake. Fortunately it is not too late. (*Removes the engagement ring and holds it out to him.*)

TEARLE. Lucy! Don't! I can't lose you again. Any sacrifice is better than that. I will do as you wish.

LUCY. No, dear. I can't accept that sacrifice.

TEARLE. But I will gladly make it.

LUCY. Malcolm dear, it is beyond your power to make it without reserve. It would surely come between us in time and destroy our happiness.

TEARLE. Lucy, I assure you—

LUCY. I don't doubt your sincerity, Malcolm. But I know, dear. Believe me, it is better so. (*Forces the ring into his hands.*)

TEARLE. Lucy!

LUCY. You see I want you to continue to love that girl of the long ago who looks so wonderfully like me, and whom you would soon forget if I were to take her place; for she is not I, dear. You would soon discover that, and—and—I don't want you to.

TEARLE (*holds out his arms to her*). Lucy!

LUCY (*evades him*). No, dear. You will come to see that it is best. Good-bye. (*Exit L. U. E.*)

TEARLE. Lucy! My darling! (*Stands C. as if dazed. Sees ring in his hand, looks at it wistfully, then holds it to his lips and puts it in his pocket. Slowly makes his way to the armchair and sits staring into the fire. Reaching out his arms toward the fire.*) Lucy! Lucy!

Enter HIGGINS, L. U. E.

HIGGINS. Did you call, sir?

TEARLE. Eh? What? No, Higgins. I didn't call you.

HIGGINS. Beg pardon, sir; thought you did, sir. Dinner is served, sir. (*Exit back into dining-room.*)

TEARLE (*rises to follow HIGGINS*). "The mill will never grind again with the water that has passed."

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