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**FLORABEL'S LOVER**  
By LAURA JEAN LIBBEY

Author of "When Lovely Maiden Stoops to Folly," "A Broken Betrothal," "Parted by Fate," "Parted at the Altar," etc., etc.

CHAPTER XI—(Continued.)

"Do not look at me with such horror in your eyes, Florabel. I have repented it. But, alas! the way of the transgressor is hard. I am hounded down. I would be shown little mercy, even though I made restitution dollar for dollar.

"Now you know why I dared not openly claim you as my sister, Florabel darling, and why I am in disguise in name as well as in appearance. They are on the outlook for Arthur Dean. I tremble at the sound of a footstep. My heart almost stops beating at the sound of a strange voice. There is no sensation in life more terrible than the knowledge that a man has a price set upon him; the feeling that he is hunted like a wild beast; that the man who gives him food and drink would surely betray him if he knew who he was. There is no hell so terrible to a man as the reproach of his own conscience. Be kind to me, Florabel. I have thrown myself unreservedly upon your mercy. You will not betray me?"

She looked up into the white, handsome face. "No, brother," she said, slowly, "I will not betray you. Would to Heaven the knowledge of all this had been spared to me! It has shadowed and darkened my life." "I could not be near you without the fear, in some unguarded moment, impulse might overcome judgment. If I had stooped to kiss you or take you in my arms, you would have shrieked aloud—alarmed your husband; then my identity would have been revealed; and you know what that would mean."

At her husband's name a low cry came from Florabel's lips. What a web of sorrow, shame and disgrace was woven about her! A felon's daughter! The sister of a forger! God pity her! Max would surely leave her if he knew that.

"Florabel," said Arthur, sadly, "let me hear you speak my name once. Say God bless you, brother Arthur, before we part; for I leave the villa to-night. I have already said good-bye to its inmates."

She turned her fair, sad face toward him, and he never forgot it as he saw it then. The breath of the summer wind was not more faint than the voice that said: "God bless you, Arthur! My unhappy brother, farewell!"

He dared not clasp her in his arms, pillowing the drooping, golden head on his breast—wipe away her tears and comfort her; he felt that in her sweet innocence and guileless purity she was as far above him as an angel from heaven. He could have knelt at her feet, but he dared not clasp her in his arms.

"If you had sent me from you in anger and disgust, dear, I should have gone straight to the bad," he murmured, "but for your sake I will try to live a new life—I will, indeed, Florabel."

Neither of them saw the dark figure of a woman, stealing as stealthily as a shadow down the path that led from the rose arbor to the house. It was Inez Clavering; she had seen Florabel steal from the house, and had followed her, seeing the meeting between herself and Arthur Hurlhurst.

It must be admitted she was not above listening; but they talked so low, not a word was audible from where Inez stood, concealed by the flowering plants.

Suddenly a cruel thought came to her. She would go and fetch Max. He should witness their clandestine meeting, and if it parted them, so much the better.

She acted upon the thought at once. She found him smoking on the western terrace. She glided up to him, noiselessly, and laid a little, white jeweled hand on his arm.

"Oh, it's you—is it, Miss Clavering?" he said, rising hastily, and courteously placing a seat for her. "I thought it was Florabel, my wife. I had almost forgotten that she went up to her room with a sick headache,

with the avowed intention of not joining us this evening."

CHAPTER XII.

"Max," said Miss Clavering, declining the proffered seat and taking a step nearer him—"I wonder if I should be accused of interfering, if I were to tell you of something I observed a few days since, and which seems to have led to quite an unlooked-for climax to-day."

"By no means," he declared; he should be only too pleased to listen.

"She is so very young and knows so little of the world, I feel it my duty to speak, that you may warn her against any step which might seem—well, a little imprudent."

"What has Florabel been doing?" asked Max, with a smile. "Has she broken some terribly severe law of etiquette?"

"It is not that—but of our late visitor, Mr. Hurlhurst, I would speak. He was a very handsome young man, and one who could fascinate where he chose."

"Well, and what can that have to do with Florabel's shortcomings?" demanded Max Forrester, surprisedly.

"On the first day of his arrival we all remarked how much he seemed struck with Florabel. Mind, I insinuate nothing against him. He is only a man of the world, but I believe he has been trying to get up a sentimental friendship with her."

"What makes you think so?" asked Max, indifferently, for he saw nothing remarkable in any one admiring his beautiful young wife.

"I noticed a little circumstance which struck me rather unpleasantly," replied Inez. "I saw him on two occasions slip a note into her hand."

"You must be mistaken, Miss Clavering," declared Max, his face flushing hotly. "My wife would never receive a letter from any one."

"It is true," said Inez. "I repeat, I saw it." She saw his face grow dark.

"If that fellow has dared to write nonsense to my wife, I would follow him and thrash him," he cried. "I can see how it is. Florabel did not mention these notes. She was afraid I would quarrel with him."

"I think I can make a pretty accurate guess at the contents of the last one," said Inez, quietly. "It must have been an appointment to meet him in the rose arbor to say good-bye; for she has gone there, and there they have met. She is not in her room, but in the rose arbor now. I am sure there can be nothing wrong. With a few well-chosen words you can put her on her guard. She is so very young and inexperienced. If he had requested her to meet him, she would go, not knowing how to refuse."

Max Forrester sprang to his feet, and, with one bound, had cleared the terrace, and was flying over the lawn to the rose arbor, his foot-falls making no sound on the long, green grass.

As he neared the arbor he heard voices—low, whispered voices—and the next instant two figures stepped out into the white, bright moonlight. At the first fatal glance he saw that

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Inez's words were true. It was indeed Arthur Hurlhurst and Florabel, and the sight struck him motionless and dumb. He had come to a sudden halt, standing there like a statue, stunned and bewildered.

What were they doing here—his handsome friend and Florabel? Had the skies fallen at his feet he could not have been more startled or amazed.

He had believed in Florabel so implicitly, in her guileless truth, her freedom from every taint of the world's treachery, sin or deceit. Ah, God! what could it mean?

He tried to spring forward and confront them, but his limbs refused to move. He stood watching them like one paralyzed, unable to speak or move.

He saw Arthur Hurlhurst hold out his hands to Florabel, and he heard him say:

"It shall not be farewell forever, dear little Florabel. I shall soon come back to you, and then—"

The wild moaning of the wind among the trees drowned the rest of the sentence.

He tried to call out to them with mighty fury, but the words he would have uttered died away in his throat, leaving no sound. He could only stand there like a man turned to stone, incapable of action, hidden from them by the trees, while they passed down the path, and out of sight.

After parting with Arthur, Florabel hurried to the house. She stood for a moment panting in the corridor, leaning against a marble Clytie, her hand pressed tightly over her heart to stop its wild throbbing, ere she dared enter the drawing room where she expected to find Max.

He must not notice her agitation. By a supreme effort she controlled it, and threw open the door. Max was not there. Nor was he smoking his cigar, out on the terrace, as was his custom, at about this time.

What if he had walked out into the grounds, tempted by the beauty of the night, and by any horrible chance saw her at the entrance of the rose arbor with Arthur!

Her heart almost ceased to beat as the thought flashed through her brain. Then she put it from her with a shuddering cry. Ah, no, fate would be too kind to her to allow anything like that to happen.

(To be continued.)

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LOST.—In this city on the evening of the 1st inst, a dark green wallet with a sum of money. Finder will be suitably rewarded by leaving it at this office.

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