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## Chapter 12 - Arnold

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MEANWHILE Arnold remained shut up in the head-waiter's pantry--chafing secretly at the position forced upon him.

He was, for the first time in his life, in hiding from another person, and that person a man. Twice--stung to it by the inevitable loss of self-respect which his situation occasioned--he had gone to the door, determined to face Sir Patrick boldly; and twice he had abandoned the idea, in mercy to Anne. It would have been impossible for him to set himself right with Blanche's guardian without betraying the unhappy woman whose secret he was bound in honor to keep. "I wish to Heaven I had never come here!" was the useless aspiration that escaped him, as he doggedly seated himself on the dresser to wait till Sir Patrick's departure set him free.

After an interval--not by any means the long interval which he had anticipated--his solitude was enlivened by the appearance of Father Bishopriggs.

"Well?" cried Arnold, jumping off the dresser, "is the coast clear?"

There were occasions when Mr. Bishopriggs became, on a sudden, unexpectedly hard of hearing. This was one of them.

"Hoo do ye find the paintry?" he asked, without paying the slightest attention to Arnold's question. "Snug and private? A Patmos in the weelderness, as ye may say!"

His one available eye, which had begun by looking at Arnold's face, dropped slowly downward, and fixed itself, in mute but eloquent expectation, on Arnold's waistcoat pocket.

"I understand!" said Arnold. "I promised to pay you for the Patmos--eh? There you are!"

Mr. Bishopriggs pocketed the money with a dreary smile and a sympathetic shake of the head. Other waiters would have returned thanks. The sage of Craig Fernie returned a few brief remarks instead. Admirable in many things, Father Bishopriggs was especially great at drawing a moral. He drew a moral on this occasion from his own gratuity.

"There I am--as ye say. Mercy presairve us! ye need the sillier at every turn, when there's a woman at yer heels. It's an awfu' reflection--ye canna hae any thing to do wi' the sex they ca' the opposite sex without its being an expense to ye. There's this young leddy o' yours, I doot she'll ha' been an expense to ye from the first. When you were coortin' her, ye did it, I'll go bail, wi' the open hand. Presents and keep-sakes, flowers and jewelery, and little dogues. Sair expenses all of them!"

"Hang your reflections! Has Sir Patrick left the inn?"

The reflections of Mr. Bishopriggs declined to be disposed of in any thing approaching to a summary way. On they flowed from their parent source, as slowly and as smoothly as ever!

"Noo ye're married to her, there's her bonnets and goons and under-clothin'--her ribbons, laces, furbelows, and fallals. A sair expense again!"

"What is the expense of cutting your reflections short, Mr. Bishopriggs?"

"Thirdly, and lastly, if ye canna agree wi' her as time gaes on--if there's incompatibeelity of temper betwixt ye--in short, if ye want a wee bit separation, hech, Sirs! ye pit yer hand in yer poaket, and come to an aimicable understandin' wi' her in that way. Or, maybe she takes ye into Court, and pets \_her\_ hand in your poaket, and comes to a hostile understandin' wi' ye there. Show me a woman--and I'll show ye a man not far off wha' has mair expenses on his back than he ever bargained for." Arnold's patience would last no longer--he turned to the door. Mr. Bishopriggs, with equal alacrity on his side, turned to the matter in hand. "Yes, Sir! The room is e'en clear o' Sir Paitrick, and the leddy's alane, and waitin' for ye."

In a moment more Arnold was back in the sitting-room.

"Well?" he asked, anxiously. "What is it? Bad news from Lady Lundie's?"

Anne closed and directed the letter to Blanche, which she had just completed. "No," she replied. "Nothing to interest \_you\_."\_"

"What did Sir Patrick want?"

"Only to warn me. They have found out at Windygates that I am here."

"That's awkward, isn't it?"

"Not in the least. I can manage perfectly; I have nothing to fear. Don't think of \_me\_--think of yourself."

"I am not suspected, am I?"

"Thank heaven--no. But there is no knowing what may happen if you stay here. Ring the bell at once, and ask the waiter about the trains."

Struck by the unusual obscurity of the sky at that hour of the evening, Arnold went to the window. The rain had come--and was falling heavily. The view on the moor was fast disappearing in mist and darkness.

"Pleasant weather to travel in!" he said.

"The railway!" Anne exclaimed, impatiently. "It's getting late. See about the railway!"

Arnold walked to the fire-place to ring the bell. The railway time-table hanging over it met his eye.

"Here's the information I want," he said to Anne: "If I only knew how to get at it. 'Down'-'Up'-'A. M.'-'P. M.' What a cursed confusion! I believe they do it on purpose."

Anne joined him at the fire-place.

"I understand it--I'll help you. Did you say it was the up train you wanted?"

"What is the name of the station you stop at?"

Arnold told her. She followed the intricate net-work of lines and figures with her finger--suddenly stopped--looked again to make sure--and turned from the time-table with a face of blank despair. The last train for the day had gone an hour since.

In the silence which followed that discovery, a first flash of lightning passed across the window and the low roll of thunder sounded the outbreak of the storm.

"What's to be done now?" asked Arnold.

In the face of the storm, Anne answered without hesitation, "You must take a carriage, and drive."

"Drive? They told me it was three-and-twenty miles, by railway, from the station to my place--let alone the distance from this inn to the station."

"What does the distance matter? Mr. Brinkworth, you can't possibly stay here!"

A second flash of lightning crossed the window; the roll of the thunder came nearer. Even Arnold's good temper began to be a little ruffled by Anne's determination to get rid of him. He sat down with the air of a man who had made up his mind not to leave the house.

"Do you hear that?" he asked, as the sound of the thunder died away grandly, and the hard pattering of the rain on the window became audible once more. "If I ordered horses, do you think they would let me have them, in such weather as this? And, if they did, do you suppose the horses could face it on the moor? No, no, Miss Silvester--I am sorry to be in the way, but the train has gone, and the night and the storm have come. I have no choice but to stay here!"

Anne still maintained her own view, but less resolutely than before. "After what you have told the landlady," she said, "think of the embarrassment, the cruel embarrassment of our position, if you stop at the inn till to-morrow morning!"

"Is that all?" returned Arnold.

Anne looked up at him, quickly and angrily. No! he was quite unconscious of having said any thing that could offend her. His rough masculine sense broke its way unconsciously through all the little feminine subtleties and delicacies of his companion, and looked the position practically in the face for what it was worth, and no more. "Where's the embarrassment?" he asked, pointing to the bedroom door. "There's your room, all ready for you. And here's the sofa, in this room, all ready for \_me\_. If you had seen the places I have slept in at sea--!"

She interrupted him, without ceremony. The places he had slept in, at sea, were of no earthly importance. The one question to consider, was the place he was to sleep in that night.

"If you must stay," she rejoined, "can't you get a room in some other part of the house?"

But one last mistake in dealing with her, in her present nervous condition, was left to make--and the innocent Arnold made it. "In some other part of the house?" he repeated, jestingly. "The landlady would be scandalized. Mr. Bishopriggs would never allow it!"

She rose, and stamped her foot impatiently on the floor. "Don't joke!" she exclaimed. "This is no laughing matter." She paced the room excitedly. "I don't like it! I don't like it!"

Arnold looked after her, with a stare of boyish wonder.

"What puts you out so?" he asked. "Is it the storm?"

She threw herself on the sofa again. "Yes," she said, shortly. "It's the storm."

Arnold's inexhaustible good-nature was at once roused to activity again.

"Shall we have the candles," he suggested, "and shut the weather out?" She turned irritably on the sofa, without replying. "I'll promise to go away the first thing in the morning!" he went on. "Do try and take it easy--and don't be angry with me. Come! come! you wouldn't turn a dog out, Miss Silvester, on such a night as this!"

He was irresistible. The most sensitive woman breathing could not have accused him of failing toward her in any single essential of consideration and respect. He wanted tact, poor fellow--but who could expect him to have learned that always superficial (and sometimes dangerous) accomplishment, in the life he had led at sea? At the sight of his honest, pleading face, Anne recovered possession of her gentler and sweeter self. She made her excuses for her irritability with a grace that enchanted him. "We'll have a pleasant evening of it yet!" cried Arnold, in his hearty way--and rang the bell.

The bell was hung outside the door of that Patmos in the wilderness--otherwise known as the head-waiter's pantry. Mr. Bishopriggs (employing his brief leisure in the seclusion of his own apartment) had just mixed a glass of the hot and comforting liquor called "toddy" in the language of North Britain, and was just lifting it to his lips, when the summons from Arnold invited him to leave his grog.

"Haud yer screechin' tongue! " cried Mr. Bishopriggs, addressing the bell through the door. "Ye're waur than a woman when ye aince begin!"

The bell--like the woman--went on again. Mr. Bishopriggs, equally pertinacious, went on with his toddy.

"Ay! ay! ye e'en ring yer heart out--but ye won't part a Scotchman from his glass. It's maybe the end of their dinner they'll be wantin'. Sir Paitrick cam' in at the fair beginning of it, and spoilt the collops, like the dour deevil he is!" The bell rang for the third time. "Ay! ay! ring awa! I doot yon young gentleman's little better than a belly-god--there's a scandalous haste to comfort the carnal part o' him in a' this ringin'! He knows naething o' wine," added Mr. Bishopriggs, on whose mind Arnold's discovery of the watered sherry still dwelt unpleasantly.

The lightning quickened, and lit the sitting-room horribly with its lurid glare; the thunder rolled nearer and nearer over the black gulf of the moor. Arnold had just raised his hand to ring for the fourth time, when the inevitable knock was heard at the door. It was useless to say "come in." The immutable laws of Bishopriggs had decided that a second knock was necessary. Storm or no storm, the second knock came--and then, and not till then, the sage appeared, with the dish of untasted "collops" in his hand.

"Candles!" said Arnold.

Mr. Bishopriggs set the "collops" (in the language of England, minced meat) upon the table, lit the candles on the mantle-piece, faced about with the fire of recent toddy flaming in his nose, and waited for further orders, before he went back to his second glass. Anne declined to return to the dinner. Arnold ordered Mr. Bishopriggs to close the shutters, and sat down to dine by himself.

"It looks greasy, and smells greasy," he said to Anne, turning over the collops with a spoon. "I won't be ten minutes dining. Will you have some tea?"

Anne declined again.

Arnold tried her once more. "What shall we do to get through the evening?"

"Do what you like," she answered, resignedly.

Arnold's mind was suddenly illuminated by an idea.

"I have got it!" he exclaimed. "We'll kill the time as our cabin-passengers used to kill it at sea." He looked over his shoulder at Mr. Bishopriggs. "Waiter! bring a pack of cards."

"What's that ye're wantin'?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, doubting the evidence of his own senses.

"A pack of cards," repeated Arnold.

"Cairds?" echoed Mr. Bishopriggs. "A pack o' cairds? The deevil's allegories in the deevil's own colors--red and black! I wanna execute yer order. For yer ain saul's sake, I wanna do it. Ha' ye lived to your time o' life, and are ye no' awakened yet to the awfu' seenfulness o' gamblin' wi' the cairds?"

"Just as you please," returned Arnold. "You will find me awakened--when I go away--to the awful folly of feeing a waiter."

"Does that mean that ye're bent on the cairds?" asked Mr. Bishopriggs, suddenly betraying signs of worldly anxiety in his look and manner.

"Yes--that means I am bent on the cards."

"I tak' up my testimony against 'em--but I'm no' telling ye that I canna lay my hand on 'em if I like. What do they say in my country? 'Him that will to Coupar, maun to Coupar. And what do they say in your country? 'Needs must when the deevil drives.' " With that excellent reason for turning his back on his own principles, Mr. Bishopriggs shuffled out of the room to fetch the cards.

The dresser-drawer in the pantry contained a choice selection of miscellaneous objects--a pack of cards being among them. In searching for the cards, the wary hand of the head-waiter came in contact with a morsel of crumpled-up paper. He drew it out, and recognized the letter which he had picked up in the sitting-room some hours since.

"Ay! ay! I'll do weel, I trow, to look at this while my mind's runnin' on it," said Mr. Bishopriggs. "The cairds may e'en find their way to the parlor by other hands than mine."

He forthwith sent the cards to Arnold by his second in command, closed the pantry door, and carefully smoothed out the crumpled sheet of paper on which the two letters were written. This done, he trimmed his candle, and began with the letter in ink, which occupied the first three pages of the sheet of note-paper.

It ran thus:

"WINDYGATES HOUSE, \_August\_ 12, 1868.

"GEOFFREY DELAMAYN,--I have waited in the hope that you would ride over from your brother's place, and see me--and I have waited in vain. Your conduct to me is cruelty itself; I will bear it no longer. Consider! in your own interests, consider--before you drive the miserable woman who has trusted you to despair. You have promised me marriage by all that is sacred. I claim your promise. I insist on nothing less than to be what you vowed I should be--what I have waited all this weary time to be--what I \_am\_ in the sight of Heaven, your wedded wife. Lady Lundie gives a lawn-party here on the 14th. I know you have been asked. I expect you to accept her invitation. If I don't see you, I won't answer for what may happen. My mind is made up to endure this suspense no longer. Oh, Geoffrey, remember the past! Be faithful--be just--to your loving wife,

"ANNE SILVESTER."

Mr. Bishopriggs paused. His commentary on the correspondence, so far, was simple enough. "Hot words (in ink) from the leddy to the gentleman!" He ran his eye over the second letter, on the fourth page of the paper, and added, cynically, "A trifle caulder (in pencil) from the gentleman to the leddy! The way o' the world, Sirs! From the time o' Adam downwards, the way o' the world!"

The second letter ran thus:

"DEAR ANNE,--Just called to London to my father. They have telegraphed him in a bad way. Stop where you are, and I will write you. Trust the bearer. Upon my soul, I'll keep my promise. Your loving husband that is to be,

"GEOFFREY DELAMAYN."

WINDYGATES HOUSE, \_Augt.\_ 14, 4 P. M.

"In a mortal hurry. Train starts at 4.30."

There it ended!

"Who are the parties in the parlor? Is one o' them 'Silvester?' and t'other 'Delamayn?' " pondered Mr. Bishopriggs, slowly folding the letter up again in its original form. "Hech, Sirs! what, being intairpreted, may a' this mean?"

He mixed himself a second glass of toddy, as an aid to reflection, and sat sipping the liquor, and twisting and turning the letter in his gouty fingers. It was not easy to see his way to the true connection between the lady and gentleman in the parlor and the two letters now in his own possession. They might be themselves the writers of the letters, or they might be only friends of the writers. Who was to decide?

In the first case, the lady's object would appear to have been as good as gained; for the two had certainly asserted themselves to be man and wife, in his own presence, and in the presence of the landlady. In the second case, the correspondence so carelessly thrown aside might, for all a stranger knew to the contrary, prove to be of some importance in the future. Acting on this latter view, Mr. Bishopriggs--whose past experience as "a bit clerk body," in Sir Patrick's chambers, had made a man of business of him--produced his pen and ink, and indorsed the letter with a brief dated statement of the circumstances under which he had found it. "I'll do weel to keep the Document," he thought to himself. "Wha knows but there'll be a reward offered for it ane o' these days? Eh! eh! there may be the warth o' a fi' pun' note in this, to a puir lad like me!"

With that comforting reflection, he drew out a battered tin cash-box from the inner recesses of the drawer, and locked up the stolen correspondence to bide its time.

The storm rose higher and higher as the evening advanced.

In the sitting-room, the state of affairs, perpetually changing, now presented itself under another new aspect.

Arnold had finished his dinner, and had sent it away. He had next drawn a side-table up to the sofa on which Anne lay--had shuffled the pack of cards--and was now using all his powers of persuasion to induce her to try one game at \_Ecarté\_ with him, by way of diverting her attention from the tumult of the storm. In sheer weariness, she gave up contesting the matter; and, raising herself languidly on the sofa, said she would try to play. "Nothing can make matters worse than they are," she thought, despairingly, as Arnold dealt the cards for her. "Nothing can justify my inflicting my own wretchedness on this kind-hearted boy!"

Two worse players never probably sat down to a game. Anne's attention perpetually wandered; and Anne's companion was, in all human probability, the most incapable card-player in Europe.

Anne turned up the trump--the nine of Diamonds. Arnold looked at his hand--and "proposed." Anne declined to change the cards. Arnold announced, with undiminished good-humor, that he saw his way clearly, now, to losing the game, and then played his first card--the Queen of Trumps!

Anne took it with the King, and forgot to declare the King. She played the ten of Trumps.

Arnold unexpectedly discovered the eight of Trumps in his hand. "What a pity!" he said, as he played it. "Hullo! you haven't marked the King! I'll do it for you. That's two--no, three--to you. I said I should lose the game. Couldn't be expected to do any thing (could I?) with such a hand as mine. I've lost every thing now I've lost my trumps. You to play."

Anne looked at her hand. At the same moment the lightning flashed into the room through the ill-closed shutters; the roar of the thunder burst over the house, and shook it to its foundation. The screaming of some hysterical female tourist, and the barking of a dog, rose shrill from the upper floor of the inn. Anne's nerves could support it no longer. She flung her cards on the table, and sprang to her feet.

"I can play no more," she said. "Forgive me--I am quite unequal to it. My head burns! my heart stifles me!"

She began to pace the room again. Aggravated by the effect of the storm on her nerves, her first vague distrust of the false position into which she and Arnold had allowed themselves to drift had strengthened, by this time, into a downright horror of their situation which was not to be endured. Nothing could justify such a risk as the risk they were now running! They had dined together like married people--and there they were, at that moment, shut in together, and passing the evening like man and wife!

"Oh, Mr. Brinkworth!" she pleaded. "Think--for Blanche's sake, think--is there no way out of this?"

Arnold was quietly collecting the scattered cards.

"Blanche, again?" he said, with the most exasperating composure. "I wonder how she feels, in this storm?"

In Anne's excited state, the reply almost maddened her. She turned from Arnold, and hurried to the door.

"I don't care!" she cried, wildly. "I won't let this deception go on. I'll do what I ought to have done before. Come what may of it, I'll tell the landlady the truth!"

She had opened the door, and was on the point of stepping into the passage--when she stopped, and started violently. Was it possible, in that dreadful weather, that she had actually heard the sound of carriage wheels on the strip of paved road outside the inn?

Yes! others had heard the sound too. The hobbling figure of Mr. Bishopriggs passed her in the passage, making for the house door. The hard voice of the landlady rang through the inn, ejaculating astonishment in broad Scotch. Anne closed the sitting-room door again, and turned to Arnold--who had risen, in surprise, to his feet.

"Travelers!" she exclaimed. "At this time!"

"And in this weather!" added Arnold.

"\_Can\_ it be Geoffrey?" she asked--going back to the old vain delusion that he might yet feel for her, and return.

Arnold shook his head. "Not Geoffrey. Whoever else it may be--not Geoffrey!"

Mrs. Inchbare suddenly entered the room--with her cap-ribbons flying, her eyes staring, and her bones looking harder than ever.

"Eh, mistress!" she said to Anne. "Wha do ye think has driven here to see ye, from Windygates Hoose, and been overtaken in the storm?"

Anne was speechless. Arnold put the question: "Who is it?"

"Wha is't?" repeated Mrs. Inchbare. "It's joost the bonny young ledly--Miss Blanche hersel'."

An irrepressible cry of horror burst from Anne. The landlady set it down to the lightning, which flashed into the room again at the same moment.

"Eh, mistress! ye'll find Miss Blanche a bit baulder than to skirl at a flash o' lightning, that gait! Here she is, the bonny birdie!" exclaimed Mrs. Inchbare, deferentially backing out into the passage again.

Blanche's voice reached them, calling for Anne.

Anne caught Arnold by the hand and wrung it hard. "Go!" she whispered. The next instant she was at the mantle-piece, and had blown out both the candles.

Another flash of lightning came through the darkness, and showed Blanche's figure standing at the door.