

'Just when the curtain goes up at the theatre!' cried Lucy. 'I should die of fear.'

'Not if you knew there wasn't a thing to be afraid of,' said the weaver with a kind smile. 'Nothing ever happens here, and my silver and precious stones won't get me my throat cut.' She looked about the room whimsically, yet contentedly.

'It seems dreary, but it is better than thinking you have something to trust to, to depend on, and have it fail. It is better to be quite alone than to be lonely with someone who has failed you.' The bitterness of disillusion was in Lucy's young voice, and her inexperience was loudly proclaimed by the worldly wisdom of her manner.

The weaver glanced at her with smiling eyes—eyes that were dim from constant use in a poor light and dull with the blankness of their life-outlook, but they had seen enough to be able to smile at youthful folly.

'Well, I don't know about other folks' failing so much as we think they do,' she said slowly, remembering what she had read in the distance as she watched Jim and Lucy climb the hill, and wondering how she might help them. 'I kind o' think we fail ourselves, mostly, expecting what isn't reasonable, and not being ready enough to take what is there. You see lots of folks don't love anyone well enough to let 'em be themselves. They keep fixing up in their own minds what other people ought to do, and how they ought to act, and when the others don't run on that track they get hurt; it's more'n likely all the time that the other folks don't even rightly understand what's expected of 'em. How can they, when words don't sound the same to different ears, and lots of folks is—well, if not color blind, at least color dim-sighted?'

'There you are!' cried Jim emphatically.

'Oh, it takes a weaver to understand what qucer things people'll stick to, sure they're right!' laughed the old woman. 'Look at this very piece of carpet I'm working on now. The woman I'm weaving it for said she dyed these rags herself to be sure and have the right shade o' pink to go with the roses on her painted set, and nothing anyone'd say would make her believe 'twas a fiery red.' She pointed to the vivid scarlet stripes with a chuckle. 'Now, let me tell you, my dear,' the weaver continued, pulling her chair closer to Lucy's and bending forward earnestly, 'weaving makes a body see how life gets woven. Don't you know we cut up our own material, dye 'em, too, lots of times? And then we get 'em woven by someone else, but it's always out of our own rags, cut up by us, and our own dyeings. You see, I'm all alone, but I guess I needn't have been. Once I had a fine strong warp to get woven in with my rags, a fine, strong warp! True blue 'twas, but I got to thinking maybe 'twas some other color—partly that, and partly I wanted to dye it all over to suit myself. I tell you, young folks, love is awful exacting. I thought I loved this dear man I was going to marry, but—well, I did love him, but not enough, not near enough! We don't love enough till we're ready to make allowances for everything that isn't a sin, and it isn't love that makes us get offended and unforgiving—or if 'tis, it's love o' self. Things went wrong between us; little things at first, then bigger ones, till we had real quarrels, and at last we parted. I'm a Catholic, my dears, and we think a promise to marry is a solemn thing—'

'We are Catholics,' said Lucy, and Jim looked up for the first time, as he sat studying the cracks in the floor, with a glimmer of light in his gloomy eyes at Lucy's 'we.'

'Is that so? Well, then, you know all about it,' said the weaver heartily. 'I felt widowed when my Jim left me—'

'Jim!' cried Lucy, involuntarily.

The weaver nodded. 'Jim, my dear, true, patient, good Jim,' she said unsteadily. 'The man I was going to marry. I felt widowed when we parted, but I wouldn't send for him and do what I wanted to do, just cry on his shoulder and tell him I knew I was in the wrong! He'd have come if I'd sent; he'd sure have come! There wasn't a mean, small thing in all Jim's six foot of manhood; he wasn't one to hold a grudge, Jim wasn't. He'd made up and been glad

to, any minute. But I never sent. I used to grieve and cry, but I wouldn't give in. And then one day he died. There was a sudden thaw, and another man—a poor, good-for-nothing, hardly ever sober—started out across the pond on the ice, and it broke. Jim saw it, and went out after him. He got the man up, and the chill had sobered him, so he held on to the ice and scrambled out; but Jim was hit on the head by a sharp piece of ice, and—well, Jim didn't get out. He died to save that poor imitation of a man; big, noble Jim! Well, no one knows why God weaves as He does. But they said the poor creature repented and lived decently after that, and Jim never had done anything really bad to repent of, so maybe that was why he died to give the other a chance. When I went to see him—I was ready enough to go to see him then! I'd have followed him gladly into the next world to beg his pardon and be with him, if I could have gone. Pride seems a pretty small thing when death comes! When I went to see him, and he lay there so strong, so quiet, uncomplaining, just as he always had been, then I knew what I'd done, what I'd lost. And the real loss wasn't when he died, mind you, but remembering that I had hurt him, parted from him, been headstrong. So then I did what I'd ought to have done before it was too late—laid my head down on that kind shoulder and told him to forgive me. He never moved, nor noticed, and nothing could have showed me he was dead like that, for that was not like Jim. That's why I live alone, my dears, and why I weave and weave, with no one to do for me! And that's why I see life in my weaving and the color-blindness of lots of folks, and the snarled warp they tangle for themselves, just as I did—just as I did, and wouldn't pick out the snarl till too late, when God had cut my thread.'

The second Jim, Lucy's lover, sprang up as the story ended 'Lucy!' he cried stretching out his arms.

But Lucy had anticipated him. Tears were streaming down her face as she ran towards him. 'Oh, Jim! dear old Jim, forgive me! I've been a horrid little wretch, but I'm sorry, Jim; I was sorry all the time!'

Jim kissed her tenderly. 'I'm not going to have anyone call you names, little Lu, not even you!' he said.

The weaver had gone back into the corner and seated herself at her loom. A gentle smile rested on her sad lips and satisfaction lighted up her age-beaten face as she tied a fresh ball of brown warp to the end of her weaving and set the treadle in motion.

Lucy ran over to her and stopped her work with a hand on each bent shoulder as she kissed her.

'How did you happen to tell us this story? Did you guess?' she cried.

'I wanted to tell it,' said the weaver. 'I watched you coming up the hill, and I saw you had got your warp tangled. I didn't want to see your weaving spoiled—you're both so young and look such nice children.'

'You've untangled us!' cried Lucy delightedly. 'You're a wonderful weaver!'

Jim shook both the gnarled hands that he had taken from the loom into his own. 'I'm mighty grateful to you. I wonder if another Jim mayn't be allowed to prove his gratitude?' he said.

The old woman looked up and smiled at him. 'You're a dear boy,' she said simply. 'Maybe you came this way to be woven into my pattern. I'd like to have you take an interest in me; I need it. We never know what materials God is bringing us to weave. I'm sort of glad I'm a weaver; it seems to show me a lot, and weaving, warp and woof, may mean most anything.'—*Catholic Home Annual*.

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