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Chapter 26 - Kate Is A Wife

Kate was glad to get back to her own house, and to be more or less alone. She felt a great change was being worked in her, and if it worked too violently, she would die. It was the end of something, and the beginning of something, far, far inside her: in her soul and womb. The men, Ramón and Cipriano, caused the change, and Mexico. Because the time had come. - Nevertheless if what was happening happened too rapidly, or violently, she felt she would die. So, from time to time she had to withdraw from contact, to be alone.

She would sit alone for hours on the shore, under a green willow- tree that hung its curtains of pale-green fronds, on the beach. The lake was much fuller and higher up the shore, softer, more mysterious. There was a smell of the piles of water-hyacinth decaying at the water's edges. Distance seemed farther away. The near conical hills were dotted with green bushes, like a Japanese drawing. Bullock-wagons with solid wheels came rolling to the village, high with sugar cane, drawn by eight oxen with ponderous heads and slowly swinging horns, while a peon walked in front, with the guiding-stick on the cross-beam of the yoke. So slow, so massive, yet with such slight control!

She had a strange feeling, in Mexico, of the old prehistoric humanity, the dark-eyed humanity of the days, perhaps, before the glacial period. When the world was colder, and the seas emptier, and all the land-formation was different. When the waters of the world were piled in stupendous glaciers on the high places, and high, high upon the poles. When great plains stretched away to the oceans, like Atlantis, and the lost continents of Polynesia, so that seas were only great lakes, and the soft, dark-eyed people of that world could walk around the globe. Then there was a mysterious, hot-blooded, soft-footed humanity with a strange civilization of its own.

Till the glaciers melted, and drove the peoples to the high places, like the lofty plateaux of Mexico, separated them into cut-off nations.

Sometimes, in America, the shadow of that old pre-Flood world was so strong, that the day of historic humanity would melt out of Kate's consciousness, and she would begin to approximate to the old mode of consciousness, the old, dark will, the unconcern for death, the subtle, dark consciousness, non-cerebral, but vertebrate. When the mind and the power of man was in his blood and his backbone, and there was the strange, dark inter-communication between man and man and man and beast, from the powerful spine.

The Mexicans were still this. That which is aboriginal in America still belongs to the way of the world before the Flood, before the mental-spiritual world came into being. In America, therefore, the mental-spiritual life of white people suddenly flourishes like a great weed let loose in virgin soil. Probably it will as quickly wither. A great death come. And after that, the living results will be a new germ, a new conception of human life, that will arise from the fusion of the old blood-and-vertebrate consciousness with the white man's present mental-spiritual consciousness. The sinking of both beings, into a new being.

Kate was more Irish than anything, and the almost deathly mysticism of the aboriginal Celtic or Iberian people lay at the bottom of her soul. It was a residue of memory, something that lives on from the pre-Flood world, and cannot be killed. Something older, and more everlastingly potent, than our would-be fair-and-square world.

She knew more or less what Ramón was trying to effect: this fusion! She knew what it was that made Cipriano more significant to her than all her past, her husbands and her children. It was the leap of the old, antediluvian blood-male into unison with her. And for this, without her knowing, her innermost blood had been thudding all the time.

Ireland would not and could not forget that other old, dark, sumptuous living. The Tuatha De Danaan might be under the western sea. But they are under the living blood, too, never quite to be silenced. Now they have to come forth again, to a new connection. And the scientific, fair-and-square Europe has to mate once more with the old giants.

But the change, Kate felt, must not come on her too soon and too suddenly, or it would rupture her and she would die. The old way has its horror. The heavy-footed, a terre spirit of aboriginal Mexico could be so horrible to her, as to make her wicked. The slow, indomitable kind of existing and persisting, without hope or élan, which is in the aboriginal American, sometimes made her feel she would go mad. The sullen will persisting over the slow, dark centuries, counting the individual existence a trifle! A tenacity of demons, less than human. And a sudden ferocity, a sudden lust of death rousing incalculable and terrible.

People who never really changed. Men who were not faithful to life, to the living actuality. Faithful to some dark necessity out of the past. The actual present suddenly collapsing in the souls of the men and the women, and the old, black, volcanic lava bursting up in violence, followed by a lava-rock indifference.

The hope! The hope! Would it ever be possible to revive the hope in these black souls, and achieve the marriage which is the only step to the new world of man?

But meanwhile, a strange, almost torn nausea would come over Kate, and she felt she must go away, to spare herself. The strange, reptilian insistence of her very servants. Blood is one blood. We are all of one blood-stream. Something aboriginal and tribal, and almost worse than death to the white individual. Out of the dark eyes and the powerful spines of these people, all the time the unknown assertion: The blood is one blood. It was a strange, overbearing insistence, a claim of blood-unison.

Kate was of a proud old family. She had been brought up with the English-Germanic idea of the INTRINSIC superiority of the hereditary aristocrat. Her blood was different from the common blood, another, finer fluid.

But in Mexico, none of this. Her criada Juana, the aguador who carried the water, the boatman who rowed her on the lake, all looked at her with one look in their eyes. The blood is one blood. In the blood, you and I are undifferentiated. She saw it in their eyes, she heard it in their words, it tinged their deference and their mockery. And sometimes it made her feel physically sick: this overbearing blood-familiarity.

And sometimes, when she tried to hold herself up, in the proud old assertion: My blood is my own. Noli me tangere, she would see the terrible ancient hatred in their eyes, the hatred which leads them to atrocities and fearful maimings.

They would defer to her spirit, her knowledge, her understanding. They would give her deference, and a sort of grudging reverence for this. She belonged to the ruling races, the clever ones. But back again they demanded her acquiescence to the primeval assertion: The blood is one blood. We are one blood. It was the assertion that

swept away all individualism, and left her immersed, and shared the grand sea of the living blood, in immediate contact with all these men and all these women.

To this she must submit. Or they would persist in the slow revenge.

And she could not submit, off-hand. It had to be a slow, organic process. Anything sudden or violent would destroy her.

Now she understood Ramón's assertion: Man is a column of blood: Woman is a valley of blood. It was the primeval oneness of mankind, the opposite of the oneness of the spirit.

But Kate had always looked upon her blood as absolutely her own, her individual own. Her spirit she shared, in the spirit she communed. But her blood stayed by her in individuality.

Now she was confronted by the other great assertion: The blood is one blood. - It meant a strange, marginless death of her individual self.

Now she understood why Ramón and Cipriano wore the white clothes and the sandals, and were naked, or half-naked, as living gods. It was the acquiescence in the primitive assertion. It was the renewal of the old, terrible bond of the blood-unison of man, which made blood-sacrifice so potent a factor of life. The blood of the individual is given back to the great blood-being, the god, the nation, the tribe.

Now she understood the strange unison she could always feel between Ramón and his men, and Cipriano and his men. It was the soft, quaking, deep communion of blood-oneness. Sometimes it made her feel sick. Sometimes it made her revolt. But it was the power she could not get beyond.

Because, admitting his blood-unison, Ramón at the same time claimed a supremacy, even a godliness. He was a man, as the lowest of his peons was a man. At the same time, rising from the same pool of blood, from the same roots of manhood as they, and being, as they were, a man of the pulsing blood, he was still something more. Not in the blood nor in the spirit lay his individuality and his supremacy, his godhead. But in a star within him, an inexplicable star which rose out of the dark sea and shone between the flood and the great sky. The mysterious star which unites the vast universal blood with the universal breath of the spirit, and shines between them both.

Not the rider on the white horse: nor the rider on the red. That which is beyond the riders and the horses, the inexplicable mystery of the stars whence no horseman comes and to which no horseman can arrive. The star which is a man's innermost clue, which rules the power of the blood on the one hand, and the power of the spirit on the other.

For this, the only thing which is supreme above all power in a man, and at the same time, is power; which far transcends knowledge; the strange star between the sky and the waters of the first cosmos: this is man's divinity.

And some men are not divine at all. They have only faculties. They are slaves, or they should be slaves.

But many a man has his own spark of divinity, and has it quenched, blown out by the winds of force or ground out of him by machines.

And when the spirit and the blood in man begin to go asunder, bringing the great death, most stars die out.

Only the man of a great star, a great divinity, can bring the opposites together again, in a new unison.

And this was Ramón, and this was his great effort: to bring the great opposites into contact and into unison again. And this is the god-power in man. By this power you shall know the god in man. By none other.

Ramón was a man as the least of his peons was a man, with the beating heart and the secret loins and the lips closed on the same secret of manhood. And he was human as Kate was human, with the same yearning of the spirit, for pure knowledge and communion, the soul in the greatness of its comprehending.

But only he had that starry power for bringing together the two great human impulses to a point of fusion, for being the bird between the vast wings of the dual-created power to which man has access and in which man has his being. The Morning Star, between the breath of dawn and the deeps of the dark.

Men had tried to murder him with knives. Carlota would have murdered him with her spirit. Each half separately wanted to commit the murder of him.

But he kept himself beyond. He was the living Quetzalcoatl, and the tiny sparkle of a star was rising in his own men, in his own woman.

The star between the two wings of power: that alone was divinity in a man, and final manhood.

Kate had a message from Cipriano to say he was coming out to stay in the Villa Aragon. The Villa Aragon was the chief house on the lake, in small but rather beautiful grounds with tufts of palm-trees and heavy hedges of jasmine, a garden kept always green by constant watering. The house was built rather like a little castle, absurd, yet its deep, spacious verandas opening on to the slopes and knolls of the tree-clustered garden, above the lake, were pleasant.

Cipriano arrived very pleased, his black eyes shining with the boyish look. He wanted Kate to marry him, go through the Mexican civil marriage, and install herself in the Villa Aragon. She hesitated. She knew she must go back to Europe, to England and Ireland, very soon. The necessity was imperative. The sense of menace that Mexico put over her, and the feeling of inner nausea, was becoming too much to bear. She felt she could not stand it, unless she went away to relax for a time.

This she told to Cipriano. And his face fell.

'It doesn't matter to me very much whether I marry or not, before I go,' she said. 'But I must go soon - soon.'

'How soon?'

'By January.'

His face lightened again.

'Then marry me before you go,' he said. 'Next week.'

She agreed, with curious indifference, and he, his eyes flashing again like a boy's, moved quickly, to make the necessary legal preparations.

She did not care whether she married or not. This was an essential sense, she had married Cipriano already, and swift to come to her, and swift to go. She would always be a good deal alone.

And him alone, just as a man and a soldier, she could marry easily enough. It was this terrible Mexico that frightened her with a sense of doom.

The Quetzalcoatl movement had spread in the country, but sinisterly. The Archbishop had declared against it, Ramón and Cipriano and their adherents were excommunicated. An attempt had been made to assassinate Montes.

The adherents of Quetzalcoatl in the capital had made the Church of San Juan Bautista, which was called the Church of the Black Saviour, their Metropolitan House of Quetzalcoatl. The Archbishop, a choleric man, had summoned his fervent followers to march in procession to this Church of San Juan, now called the House of Quetzalcoatl, and seize it, and restore it to the Catholic Church. The government, knowing it would have to fight sooner or later, arrested the Archbishop and broke up the procession after some bloodshed.

Then a kind of war began. The Knights of Cortés brought out their famous hidden stores of arms, not very impressive, after all, and a clerical mob, headed by a fanatical priest, surged into the Zócalo. Montes had the guns turned on them. But it looked like the beginnings of a religious war. In the streets the white and blue serapes of Quetzalcoatl and the scarlet and black serapes of Huitzilopochtli were seen in bands, marching to the sound of tom-toms, and holding up the curious round banners, made of feather-work, of Quetzalcoatl, and the tall scarlet signs of Huitzilopochtli, long poles with the soft club of scarlet feathers at the top, tufted with a black point. - In the churches, the priests were still inflaming the orthodox to a holy war. In the streets, priests who had gone over to Quetzalcoatl were haranguing the crowd.

It was a wild moment. In Zacatecas General Narciso Beltrán had declared against Montes and for the Church. But Cipriano with his Huitzilopochtli soldiers had attacked with such swiftness and ferocity, Beltrán was taken and shot, his army disappeared.

Then Montes declared the old Church illegal in Mexico, and caused a law to be passed, making the religion of Quetzalcoatl the national religion of the Republic. All churches were closed. All priests were compelled to take an oath of allegiance to the Republic, or condemned to exile. The armies of Huitzilopochtli and the white and blue serapes of Quetzalcoatl appeared in all the towns and villages of the Republic. Ramón laboured ceaselessly. Cipriano appeared in unexpected flashes, in unexpected places. He managed to rouse the most discontented States, Vera Cruz, Tamaulipas, Yucatan, to a sort of religious frenzy. Strange baptisms took place in the sea, and a scarlet and black tower of Huitzilopochtli rose along the shores.

The whole country was thrilling with a new thing, with a release of new energy. But there was a sense of violence and crudity in it all, a touch of horror.

The Archbishop was deported, no more priests were seen in the streets. Only the white and blue and earth-coloured serapes of Quetzalcoatl, and the scarlet and black of Huitzilopochtli, were seen among the crowds. There was a great sense of release, almost of exuberance.

This is why Cipriano came to Kate with those black, flashing, boyish eyes. He was in a strange state of triumph. Kate was frightened, and she felt curiously hollow. Even the queer, new, flashing triumph and the sense of a new thing on the face of the earth could not quite save her. She belonged too much to the old world of Europe, she could not, could not make herself over so quickly. But she felt that if she could go back to Ireland, and let her life and her body PAUSE for a time, then she could come back and take her share.

For it was not her spirit alone which was changing, it was her body, and the constitution of her very blood. She could feel it, the terrible katabolism and metabolism in her blood, changing her even as a creature, changing her to another creature.

And if it went too fast, she would die.

So, she was legally married to Cipriano, and she went to live with him in the Villa Aragon, for a month. After a month, she would sail away, alone, to Ireland. He agreed too.

It was strange, to be married to him. He made her go all vague and quiet, as if she sank away heavy and still, away from the surface of life, and lay deep in the under-life.

The strange, heavy, POSITIVE passivity. For the first time in her life she felt absolutely at rest. And talk, and thought, had become trivial, superficial to her: as the ripples on the surface of the lake are as nothing, to the creatures that live away below in the unwavering deeps.

In her soul, she was still and proud. If only the body had not suffered the unbearable nausea of change. She had sunk to a final rest, within a great, opened-out cosmos. The universe had opened out to her new and vast, and she had sunk to the deep bed of pure rest. She had become almost like Teresa in sureness.

Yet the process of change within her blood was terrible to her.

Cipriano was happy, in his curious Indian way. His eyes kept that flashing, black, dilated look of a boy looking newly on a strange, almost uncanny wonder of life. He did not look very definitely at Kate, or even take much definite notice of her. He did not like talking to her, in any serious way. When she wanted to talk seriously, he flashed a cautious, dark look at her, and went away.

He was aware of things that she herself was hardly conscious of. Chiefly, of the curious irritant quality of talk. And this he avoided. Curious as it may seem, he made her aware of her own desire for frictional, irritant sensation. She realized how all her old love had been frictional, charged with the fire of irritation and the spasms of frictional voluptuousness.

Cipriano, curiously, by refusing to share any of this with her, made it become external to her. Her strange seething feminine will and desire subsided in her and swept away, leaving her soft and powerfully potent, like the hot springs of water that gushed up, so noiseless, so soft, yet so powerful, with a sort of secret potency.

She realized, almost with wonder, the death in her of the Aphrodite of the foam: the seething, frictional, ecstatic Aphrodite. By a swift dark instinct, Cipriano drew away from this in her. When, in their love, it came back on her, the seething electric female ecstasy, which knows such spasms of delirium, he recoiled from her. It was what she used to call her 'satisfaction.' She had loved Joachim for this, that again, and again, and again he could give her this orgiastic 'satisfaction', in spasms that made her cry aloud.

But Cipriano would not. By a dark and powerful instinct he drew away from her as soon as this desire rose again in her, for the white ecstasy of frictional satisfaction, the throes of Aphrodite of the foam. She could see that to him, it was repulsive. He just removed himself, dark and unchangeable, away from her.

And she, as she lay, would realize the worthlessness of this foam-effervescence, its strange externality to her. It seemed to come upon her from without, not from within. And succeeding the first moment of disappointment, when this sort of 'satisfaction' was denied her, came the knowledge that she did not really want it, that it was really nauseous to her.

And he, in his dark, hot silence bring her back to the soft, heavy, hot flow, when she was like a fountain gushing noiseless and with urgent softness from the volcanic deeps. Then she was open to him soft and hot, yet gushing with a noiseless soft power. And there was no such thing as conscious 'satisfaction.' What happened was dark and untellable. So different from the beak-like friction of Aphrodite of the foam, the friction which flares out in circles of phosphorescent ecstasy, to the last wild spasm which utters the involuntary cry, like a death-cry, the final love-cry. This she had known, and known to the end, with Joachim. And now this too was removed from her. What she had with Cipriano was curiously beyond her knowing: so deep and hot and flowing, as it were subterranean. She had to yield before it. She could not grip it into one final spasm of white ecstasy which was like sheer knowing.

And as it was in the love-act, so it was with him. She could not KNOW him. When she tried to know him, something went slack in her, and she had to leave off. She had to let be. She had to leave him, dark and hot and potent, along with the things that ARE, but are not known. The presence. And the stranger. This he was always to her.

There was hardly anything to say to him. And there was no personal intimacy. He kept his privacy round him like a cloak, and left her immune within her own privacy. He was a stranger to her, she to him. He accepted the fact absolutely, as if nothing else were possible. She, sometimes, felt it strange. She had so craved for intimacy, INSISTED on intimacy.

Now she found herself accepting him finally and forever as the stranger in whose presence she lived. It was his impersonal presence which enveloped her. She lived in his aura, and he, she knew, lived in hers, with nothing said, and no personal or spiritual intimacy whatever. A mindless communion of the blood.

Therefore, when he had to go away, it did not matter so very much. His presence was something he left with her, and he took her presence along with him. And somehow, there was no need for emotions.

He had to leave early one morning for Mexico City. The dawn came perfect and clear. The sun was not yet on the lake, but it caught the mountains beyond Tullapan, and they shone magically distinct, as if some magic light were focussed on them. The green furrows of the mountain-sides were as if in her own hand. Two white gulls, flying, suddenly got the light, and glittered. But the full, soft, noiseless dun lake was pallid, unlit.

She thought of the sea. The Pacific was not very far away. The sea seemed to have retreated entirely out of her consciousness. Yet she knew she needed its breath again.

Cipriano was going down to bathe. She saw him walk out on the masonry of the square basin which was their own tiny harbour. He threw off his wrap and stood dark in silhouette against the pale, unlit water. How dark he was! Dark as a Malay. Curious that his body was as dark, almost, as his face. And with that strange archaic fulness of physique, with the full chest and the full, yet beautiful buttocks of men on old Greek coins.

He dropped off the edge of masonry and waded out in the dim, soft, uncanny water. And at that moment the light tipped over the edge of the mountain and spilled gold upon the surface of the lake. And instantly he was red as fire. The sunshine was not red, the sun was too high for that. It was golden with morning. But as it flushed along the surface of the lake it caught the body of Cipriano and he was red as fire, as a piece of pure fire.

The Sons of the Morning! The column of blood! A Red Indian. She looked at him in wonder, as he moved pure red and luminous further into the lake, unconscious. As if on fire!

The Sons of the Morning! She let her effort at knowing slip away from her once more, and remained without effort, within the communion.

It was his race, too. She had noticed before how the natives shone pure red when morning or evening light caught them, rather level. As fires they stood in the water. The Red Indian.

He went away, with his man, on horseback. And she watched him ride over the brow of the road, sitting dark and still on his silky, roan horse. He loved a red horse. And there was a curious motionlessness about him as he rode horseback, an old, male pride, and at the same time the half-ghostly, dark invisibility of the Indian, sitting close upon the horse as if he and it belonged to one birth.

He was gone, and for a while she felt the old nostalgia for his presence. Not for him, exactly. Not even to see him or touch him or speak to him. Only to feel him about.

Then quickly she recovered. She adjusted herself to the presence he left behind with her. As soon as he had REALLY gone, and the act of going was over, his presence came back to her.

She walked a little while by the shore, beyond the breakwater wall. She loved to be alone: a great deal alone, with a garden and the lake and the morning.

'I am like Teresa, really,' she said to herself.

Suddenly before her she saw a long, dark soft rope, lying over a pale boulder. But her soul was softly alert, at once. It was a snake, with a subtle pattern along its soft dark back, lying there over a big stone, with its head sunk down to earth.

It felt her presence, too, for suddenly, with incredible soft quickness, it contracted itself down the boulder, and she saw it entering a little gap in the bottom of the wall.

The hole was not very big. And as it entered it quickly looked back, poising its little, dark, wicked, pointed head, and flickering a dark tongue. Then it passed on, slowly easing its dark length into the hole.

When it had all gone in, Kate could see the last fold still, and the flat little head resting on the fold, like the devil with his chin on his arms, looking out of a loop-hole. So the wicked sparks of the eyes looked out at her, from within the recess. Watching out of its own invisibility.

So she wondered over it, as it lay in its hidden places. At all the unseen things in the hidden places of the earth. And she wondered if it was disappointed at not being able to rise higher in creation: to be able to run on four feet, and not keep its belly on the ground.

Perhaps not! Perhaps it had its own peace. She felt a certain reconciliation between herself and it.