



C H A P T E R 3 0

SUNDAY EVENING, JUNE 5, 1904—11:15 O’CLOCK. SHE HAS BEEN DEAD two hours. It is impossible. The words have no meaning. But they are true; I know it, without realizing it. She was my life and she is gone.

Only four hours ago I sat by her bedside while Clara and Jean were at dinner and she was bright and cheerful—a rare thing these last miserable weeks—and she *would* talk, although it was a forbidden privilege, because she was so easily tired. She was full of interest in the calls which Jean and I had been making, and asked all about the people, and was like her old self. And smiled! Just her natural smile. It was like sunshine breaking through weeks of cloud. It lifted me up and made me believe the impossible—that she would walk again, be our comrade again. Poor tired child, how she loved her life, how lovingly and eagerly she held fast to it through all these twenty-two months of confinement and loneliness and bodily suffering.

I was deceived by her spirit and liveliness, and far overstayed my visit. Then I blamed myself and said I had done wrong; but she said there was no harm. “You will come back?” and I said, “Yes, to say good night”—meaning at half-past nine, as usual these many months.

For a time I sat in my room, filled with a deep contentment, my heart-burdens strangely gone, my spirit at peace for the first time in so

many heavy months. Then I did a thing which I have hardly done since we lost our incomparable Susy eight years ago—I went to the piano and sang the old songs, the **Negro** hymns no one cared for when I sang them, except Susy and her mother. After a little I went to my room, and it was now getting toward time to go downstairs and say good night; for it was a quarter past nine, and I must not go later than half past. At that moment Livy was breathing her last.

At the head of the stairs I met the nurse, who had come for me. I thought nothing of that; I merely supposed that Livy was tired and ought to be quieting down for the night.

Livy was sitting up in bed, with her head bent forward—she had not been able to lie down for seven months—and Katy was on one side of the bed and the nurse on the other, supporting her; Clara and Jean were standing near the foot of the bed, looking in a state of shock. I went around and bent over and looked into Livy's face, and I think that I spoke to her, I do not know; but she did not speak to me and that seemed strange. I could not understand it. I kept looking at her and wondering—and never dreamed of what had happened! Then Clara said, "But is it *true*? Katy, is it true? It can't be true!" Katy burst into sobbings, and then for the first time I knew.

It was twenty minutes past nine. Only five minutes before, she had been speaking. She had heard me at the piano and had said to the nurse, "He is singing a good-night song for me." They had no idea that she was near to death. She was happy and was speaking—and in an instant she was gone from this life. Five times in the last four months she spent an hour and more fighting violently for breath, and she lived in the awful fear of choking to death. Mercifully she was granted the gentlest and swiftest of deaths—by heart failure—and she never knew, she never knew!

She was the most beautiful spirit, and the highest and the noblest I have known. And now she is dead.