

# 13.

## Lucia's Trial

After the June 13 apparition, Maria Carreira “always went to the Cova da Iria...I began to clean up a bit round the tree, and make a little clearing. I took away the gorse and prickles and cut paths with a pruning saw. I took away some of the stones and hung a silk ribbon on one of the branches of the tree. It was I who put the first flowers there.”<sup>1</sup>

She did more. With the help of her husband she erected a monument: two squared off tree trunks attached to the ground, with another beam laid horizontally atop them. A cross was mounted on the horizontal beam, and two lanterns were suspended, which Maria kept lit. Finally, she erected a short stone wall around the holm oak tree, with an opening that could be closed by a wooden gate.

Maria was an exception. Most people simply didn't believe the Blessed Virgin was coming to the Cova da Iria. The topic had entertainment value, however, and mockery of the children became commonplace. Maria Rosa joined in, complaining to her neighbors that Lucia “was nothing but a fake who is leading half the world astray.”<sup>2</sup> Each apparition made Lucia's mother more incensed. On the afternoon of June 13 she declared to Lucia:

“Tomorrow we're going to Mass, the first thing in the morning. Then you are going to the Reverend Father's house. Just let him compel you to tell the truth, no matter how he does it; let him punish you; let him do whatever he likes with you, just so long as he forces you to admit that you have lied; and then I'll be satisfied.”<sup>3</sup>

The next morning Maria Rosa and Lucia walked to Mass in stony silence. During Mass Lucia offered her distress to God. Afterwards they walked up the steps to the priest's rectory. Maria Rosa spun around to face Lucia:

“Don't annoy me anymore! Tell the Reverend Father

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now that you lied, so on Sunday he can say in the church that it was all a lie, and that will be the end of the whole affair. A nice business this is! All this crowd running to the Cova da Iria, just to pray in front of a holm oak bush!"<sup>4</sup>

Father Manuel Marques Ferreira was a large, broad shouldered man, but Lucia would have been frightened if he were a midget. "I was trembling at the thought of what was going to happen," she said later. But Father Ferreira was calm and kind, and put Lucia at ease — until the end of the interview. Although he was satisfied with Lucia's sincerity, he was dubious about the apparitions.

"It doesn't seem to me like a revelation from Heaven," he told Lucia and Maria Rosa. "It is usual in such cases for Our Lord to tell the souls to whom He makes such communications to give their confessors or parish priest an account of what has happened. But this child, on the contrary, keeps it to herself as far as she can. This may also be a deceit of the devil. We shall see. The future will show us what we are to think about it all."<sup>5</sup>

The possibility that the beautiful Lady could be "a deceit of the devil" threw Lucia into a confusion that not even the reassurances of Francisco and Jacinta could dispel. "I lost all enthusiasm for making sacrifices and acts of mortification, and ended up hesitating as to whether it wouldn't be better to say that I had been lying, and so put an end to the whole thing."<sup>6</sup>

A nightmare turned her confusion into an agony.

"I saw the devil laughing at having deceived me, as he tried to drag me down to hell. On finding myself in his clutches, I began to scream so loudly and call on Our Lady for help that I awakened my mother...I was so paralyzed with fear that I couldn't sleep any more that night.

"This dream left my soul clouded over with real fear and anguish. My one relief was to go off by myself to some solitary place, there to weep to my heart's content. Even the company of my cousins began to seem burdensome, and for that reason, I began to hide from them as well.

"The 13<sup>th</sup> of July was close at hand, and I was still doubtful as to whether I should go. I thought to myself, 'If it's

## *Sister Lucia*

the devil, why should I go to see him? If they ask me why I'm not going, I'll say I'm afraid it might be the devil who is appearing to us, and for that reason I'm not going. Let Francisco and Jacinta do as they like. I'm not going back to the Cova da Iria anymore.' My decision made, I was firmly resolved to act on it."<sup>7</sup>

Far from Lucia's mind was the beautiful Lady's assurance: "Do not lose heart. My Immaculate Heart will be your refuge..." Gone was the light the Lady revealed in Lucia's heart revealing the immensity of God, and His plans for Lucia and her cousins. Lucia was equal parts fear and dread as July 13 grew closer, and there was no adult to calm her or soothe her fears. Quite the opposite. When Maria Rosa found Lucia hiding from her friends, she ridiculed her.

"A fine plaster saint you are, to be sure! All the time you have left from minding the sheep, you do nothing but play, and what's more you have to do it in such a way that nobody can find you!"<sup>8</sup>

Her trial ended on the morning of July 13. Lucia suddenly felt a strong urge to go to the Cova. "Impelled by a strange force that I could hardly resist," she went to see Francisco and Jacinta. They were kneeling beside a bed, crying. Lucia's two cousins had gone through a separate ordeal. Although they had told Lucia they would go to the Cova without her, when it came down to it they were too afraid to go there all alone without Lucia, who was their leader. They had been up most of the night praying she would change her mind and take them to the Cova with her.

"Aren't you going?" asked Lucia.

"Not without you," they replied. "Do come."

"Yes," said Lucia. "I'm going."

The Father of Mercies had tried the three seers, allowing them each to go through a personal anguish in addition to the taunting and incomprehension of their neighbors. Then, when it was time for them to go to the Cova, an "irresistible force" guided their footsteps. The light from Heaven that had fallen on them on June 13 had revealed their vocations, and Heaven won out over human concerns. Lucia, Francisco, and Jacinta walked to the Cova to meet the beautiful Lady who, in just a short while, would reveal to them the Fatima Secret.

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### Notes

1. TWTAF, Vol. I, op. cit., p. 178.
2. Second Memoir, p. 71.
3. The meeting was actually Father Ferreira's idea. He suggested it to Maria Rosa on June 13, after the apparition. Second Memoir, p. 68.
4. Second Memoir, p. 68.
5. Ibid., pp. 68-69.
6. Ibid., p. 69.
7. Ibid., pp. 69-70.
8. Ibid., p. 70.