



The Man on the Box

By HAROLD MacGRATH
Author of "The Grey Cloak," "The Puppet Crown."

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CHAPTER XIII.—CONTINUED.

And what do you suppose the rascal did—with nobody but Dick to watch him? Why, he did what any healthy young man in love would have done; pressed his lips to the girl's hair, his eyes filling and half a sob in his parched throat. He dolefully pictured himself a modern Antiochus, dying of love and never confessing it. Then he kissed her hair again; only her hair, for somehow he felt that her lips were as yet inviolable to his touch.

Fainting is but transitory; by and by she opened her eyes and stared vaguely into the face above her. I do not know what she saw there; whatever it was caused her to struggle to her feet. There was color enough in her cheeks now; and there was a question, too, in her eyes. Of Warburton it asked. "What did you do when I lay there unconscious?" I'm afraid there was color in his face, too. Her gaze immediately roved up the road. There was no Pirate, only a haze of dust. Doubtless he was still going it, delighted over the trouble he had managed to bring about. Warburton knelt at the girl's side and brushed the dust from her skirt. She eyed him curiously. I shan't say that she smiled; I don't know, for I wasn't there.

Meanwhile she made several futile attempts to put up her hair, and as a finality she braided it and let it hang down her back. Suddenly and unaccountably she grew angry—angry at herself, at James, at the rascally horse that had brought her to this pass. Warburton saw something of this emotion in her eyes, and to avoid the storm he walked over to Dick, picked up the reins, and led him back.

"If you will mount Dick, Miss," he said, "I'll lead him home. It's about five miles, I should say."

The futility and absurdity of her anger aroused her sense of the ridiculous; and a smile, warm and merry, flashed over her stained face. It surprised her groom.

"Thank you, James. You were right. I ought not to have ridden Pirate. I am punished for my conceit. Five miles? It will be a long walk."

"I shan't mind it in the least," replied James, inordinately happy; and he helped her to the saddle and adjusted the left stirrup.

So the journey home began. Strangely enough, neither seemed to care particularly what had or might become of Pirate. He disappeared, mentally and physically. One thing



KNELT AT THE GIRL'S SIDE, dampened the journey for Warburton. His "game leg" ached cruelly, and after the second mile (which was traversed without speech from either of them), he fell into a slight limp. From her seat above and behind him, she saw this limp.

"You have hurt yourself?" she asked gently.

"Not to-day, Miss."—briefly. "When he ran away with you?" "No. It's an old trouble."

"While you were a soldier?" "Yes."

"How?"

He turned in surprise. All these questions were rather unusual. Nevertheless he answered her, and truthfully.

"I was shot in the leg by a drunken Indian."

"While on duty?"

"Yes." Unconsciously he was forgetting to add "Miss", which was the patent of his servility. And I don't think that just then she noticed this subtraction from the respect due her.

It was eleven o'clock when they arrived at the gates. She dismounted alone. Warburton was visibly done up.

"Any orders for this afternoon, Miss?"

"I shall want the victoria at three. I have some shopping to do and a call to make. Send William after Pirate. I am very grateful for what you have done."

He made no reply, for he saw her father coming down the steps.

"Betty," said the colonel, pale and worried, "have you been riding Pirate? Where he is, and what in the world has happened?"—noting the dust on her habit and her tangled hair.

She explained. She told the story rather coolly Warburton thought, but she left out no detail.

"You have James to thank for my safety, father. He was very calm and clear-headed."

Calm and clear-headed! thought Warburton.

The girl then entered the house, humming. Most women would have got out the lavender salts and lain down the rest of the day, considering the routine of a fashionable dinner, which was the chief duty of the evening.

"I am grateful to you, James. My daughter is directly in your care when she rides, and I give you full authority. Never permit her to mount any horse but her own. She is all I have, and if anything should happen to her—"

"Yes, sir; I understand."

The colonel followed his daughter; and Warburton led Dick to the stables, gave orders to William, and flung himself down on his cot. He was dead tired. And the hour he had dreaded had come! He had to drive her through the shopping district. Well, so be it. If any one exposed him, very good. This groom business was decidedly like work. And there was that confounded dinner-party, and he would have to limp around a table and carry soup plates! And as likely as not he would run into the very last person he expected to see.

Which he did.

CHAPTER XIV.

AN ORDEAL OR TWO.

Mr. Robert vows that he will never forgive me for the ten minutes' agony which I gratuitously added to his measure. It came about in this wise. I was on my way down Seventeenth street that afternoon, and it was in front of a fashionable apartment house that I met him. He was seated on his box, the whip at the proper angle and his eyes riveted on his pair's ears. It was the first time I had seen him since the day of the episode at the police-station. He was growing thin. He did not see me, and he did not even notice me till I stopped and the sounds of my heels on the walk ceased. Arms akimbo, I surveyed him.

"Well?" I began. I admit that the smile I offered him was a deal like that which a cat offers a cornered mouse.

He turned his head. I shall not repeat the word he muttered. It was very improper, though they often refer to it in the Sabbath-schools, always in a hushed breath, however, as though to full-voice it would only fan the flames still higher.

"What have you to say for yourself?" I went on.

"Nothing for myself, but for you, move on and let me alone, or when I get the opportunity, Chuck, I'll punch your head, glasses or no glasses."

"Brother-in-law or no brother-in-law."

"Chuck, will you go on?"—hoarsely, "I mean it."

I saw that he did. "You don't look very happy for a man who has cracked so tremendous a joke."

"Will you go along?"

"Not till I get good and ready, James. I've told too many lies on your account already not to make myself a present of this joyful reunion. Has Miss Annesley any idea of the imposture?"

He did not answer.

"How did you like waiting in Scott Circle the other night?"

Still no answer. I have half an idea that he was making ready to leap from his box. He ran his fingers up and down the lines. I could see that he was mad through and through; but I enjoyed the scene nevertheless. He deserved a little roasting on the gridiron.

"I am given to understand," I continued, "that you act as butler, besides, and pass soup around the table."

Silence. Then I heard a door close, and saw a look of despair grow on his face. I turned and saw Miss Annesley and Mrs. Chadwick coming down the steps.

"Why, how do you do, Mr. Henderson?" Mrs. Chadwick.

"I have already had the pleasure of meeting this famous young orator," purred Mrs. Chadwick, giving me her hand. She was a fashionable, not to say brilliant, intrigante. I knew her to have been concerned indirectly with half a dozen big lobby schemes. She was rather wealthy. But she was seen everywhere, and everywhere was admired. She was as completely at home abroad as here in Washington. She was a widow, perhaps 38, handsome and fascinating, a delightful raconteur, and had the remarkable reputation of never indulging in scandal. She was the repository of more secrets than I should care to discover.

I recall one night at a state function when she sat between the French ambassador and that wily Chinaman, Li Hung Chang. She discoursed on wines in French with the ambassador and immediately turned to the Chinaman and recited Confucius in the original Chinese.

Not until recently did I learn that at one time Karloff had been very attentive to her.

"Where are you bound?" asked Miss Annesley.

"I am on the way to the war department."

"Plenty of room; jump in and we shall drop you there, James, drive to the war department."

Ordinarily I should have declined, as I generally prefer to walk; but in this instance it would be superfluous

to say that I was delighted to accept the invitation. I secretly hugged myself as I thought of the driver.

"How is Miss Warburton?" asked Miss Annesley, as she settled back among the cushions.

"Beautiful as ever," I replied, smiling happily.

"You must meet Miss Warburton, Grace,"—speaking to Mrs. Chadwick, who looked at me with polite inquiry. "One of the most charming girls in the land, and as good as she is beautiful. Mr. Henderson is the most fortunate of young men."

"So I admit. She was greatly disappointed that you did not meet her younger brother." First shot at the groom.

"I did expect to meet him, but I understand that he has gone on a hunting expedition. Whom does he resemble?"

"Neither Nancy nor Jack," I said. "He's a good-looking beggar, though, only you can't depend upon him for five minutes at a time. Hadn't seen the family in more than two years. Spends one night at home, and is off again, no one knows where. Some persons like him, but I like a man with more stability. Not but that he has his good points; but he is a born vagabond. His brother expects to get him a berth at Vienna and is working rather successfully toward that end." I wondered how this bit of news affected the groom.

"A diplomat?" said Mrs. Chadwick. "That is the life for a young man with brains. Is he a good linguist?"

"Capital! Speaks French, German and Spanish, besides I don't know how many Indian sign-languages." Now I was patting the groom on the back. I sat facing the ladies, so it was impossible to see the expression on his face. I kept up this banter till we arrived at the department. I bade the ladies good day. I do not recollect when I have enjoyed ten minutes more thoroughly.

An hour in the shopping district, that is to say, up and down Pennsylvania avenue, where everybody who was anybody was similarly occupied, shopping, nearly took the spine out of our Jehu. Everywhere he imagined he saw Nancy. And half a dozen times he saw persons whom he knew, persons he had dined with in New York, persons he had met abroad. But true to human nature, they were looking toward higher things than a groom in livery. When there was no more room for bundles, the women started for Mrs. Chadwick's apartments.

Said Mrs. Chadwick in French: "where, in the name of uncommon things, did you find such a handsome groom?"

"I was rather lucky," replied Miss Annesley in the same tongue. "Don't you see something familiar about him?"

Warburton shuddered.

"Familiar? What do you mean?"

"It is the groom who ran away with us."

"Heavens, no!" Mrs. Chadwick raised her lorgnette. "Whatever possessed you?"

"Mischievous as much as anything."

"But the risk!"

"I am not afraid. There was something about him that appeared very much like a mystery, and you know how I adore mysteries."

"And this is the fellow we saw in the police-court, sitting among those light o' loves?" Mrs. Chadwick could not fully express her surprise.

"I can't analyze the impulse which prompted me to pay his fine and engage him."

"And after that affair at the carriage-door! Where is your pride?"

"To tell the truth, I believe he did make a mistake. Maybe I hired him because I liked his looks." Betty glanced amusedly at the groom, whose neck and ears were red. She laughed.

"You always were an extraordinary child. I do not understand it in the least. I am even worried. He may be a great criminal."

"No, not a great criminal," said Betty, recollecting the ride of that morning; "but a first-class horseman, willing and obedient. I have been forced to make James serve as butler. He has been under the hands of our cook, and I have been watching them. How I have laughed! Of all droll scenes!"

So she had laughed, eh? Warburton's jaws snapped. She had been watching, too?

"I rode Pirate this morning—"

"You rode that horse?" interrupted Mrs. Chadwick.

"Yes, and he ran away with me in fine style. If it hadn't been for the new groom, I shouldn't be here, and the dinner would be a dismal failure, with me in bed with an arm or leg broken. Heavens! I never was so frightened in all my life. We went so fast against the wind that I could scarce breathe. And when it was all over, fainted like a niddy."

"Fainted! I should have thought you would. I should have fallen off the animal and been killed. Betty, you certainly have neither forethought nor discretion. The very idea of your attempting to ride that animal!"

"Well, I am wiser, and none the worse for the scare . . . James, stop, stop!" Betty cried suddenly.

When this command struck his sense of hearing, James was pretty far away in thought. He was wondering if all this were true. If it was, he must make the best of it; but if it was a dream, he wanted to wake up right away, because it was becoming nightmarish.

"James!" The end of a parasol tickled him in the ribs and he drew up somewhat frightened. What was going to happen now? He was soon to find out. For this was to be the real

climax of the day; or, at least, the incident was pregnant with the possibilities of a climax.

"Colonel, surely you are not going to pass us by in this fashion?" cried the girl. They were almost opposite the Army and Navy club.

"Why, is that you, Miss Betty? Pass you by? Only when I grow blind!" roared a lion-like voice. "Very glad to see you, Mrs. Chadwick."

That voice, of all the voices he had ever heard! A chill of indescribable terror flew up and down my Jehu's spine, and his pores closed up. He looked around cautiously. It was he, he of all men; his regimental colonel, who possessed the most remarkable memory of any army man west of the Mississippi, and who had often vowed that he knew his subalterns so well that he could always successfully prescribe for their livers!

"I was just about to turn into the club for my mail," declared the colonel. "It was very good of you to stop me. I'll wager you've been speculating in the shops,"—touching the bundles with his cane.

"You win," laughed Betty. "But I'll give you a hundred guesses in which to find out what any one of these packages contains."

"Guessing is a bad business. Whatever these things are, they can add but little to the beauty of those who will wear them; for I presume Mrs. Chadwick has some claim upon these bundles."

"Very adroitly worded," smiled Mrs. Chadwick, who loved a silken phrase.

"We shall see you at dinner to-night?"

"All the battalions of England could not keep me away from that festive board," the colonel vowed. (Another spasm for the groom!) "And how is that good father of yours?"

"As kind and loving as ever."

"I wish you could have seen him in the old days in Virginia," said the colonel, who, like all old men, continually fell back upon the reminiscence. "Handsomest man in the brigade, and a fight made him as happy as a bull-pup. I was with him the day he met your mother,"—softly. "How she humiliated him because he wore the blue! She was obliged to feed him—fortunes of war; but I could see that she hoped each mouthful would choke him."

"What! My mother wished that?"

Mrs. Chadwick laughed. The groom's chin sank into his collar.

[To Be Continued.]

Let Cleveland Have His Way.

Ex-President Cleveland used to fish and shoot in the Barnegat Bay district. John Camburn, a guide, says that one cold, wet night Mr. Cleveland got lost. He wandered through the rain and darkness, trying to find his party, but not a house could he see, not a light, nor a road.

Finally he struck a narrow lane, and in due course a house appeared. It was now late. Mr. Cleveland was cold and tired. He thought he could go no farther, so he banged at the door till a window on the second floor went up, and a gruff voice said:

"Who are you?"

"A friend," said Mr. Cleveland.

"What do you want?"

"I want to stay here all night."

"Stay there, then."

And the window descended with a bang, and Mr. Cleveland shouldered his gun again and wearily resumed his journey.—Boston Herald.

"Or," Not "And."

People who have had a wide experience with the ordinary summer boarding-house in a place where the season is short and hay must be made while the sun shines have learned not to expect too much. There are, however, certain limits beyond which economy seldom goes. These limits are evidently unknown or disregarded in a mountain resort to which a meek Bostonian lately strayed. On the morning after her arrival she seated herself at the breakfast-table with hope stirring in her heart of a meal more generous than the last night's supper. The neat, stern featured waitress brought her a small saucer of breakfast food, and bent over her. "We have Graham muffins or white biscuit, ham or eggs," she said with a distinctness of articulation which left no doubt of her meaning.—Youth's Companion.

Chickens Paid for the Doctor.

A farmer's wife who had heard the adage of "imperial Caesar turned to clay stopping a hole to keep the wind away," thought of making practical use of her husband who was helplessly ill with typhoid fever. The old man was having persistently high temperature, and she considered that as his degree of temperature was just the same as that generated by a sitting hen it presented a favorable opportunity to hatch out some fertile eggs which lacked the requisite maternal attention. Accordingly she packed several dozens of eggs around the body of the patient, who, at the termination of the time usually taken by the hens, hatched out a numerous progeny of stalwart chicks, whose monetary value went to pay the bill presented by the attending physician.

His Reasons.

A southerner was telling of an old colored man in his neighborhood who first joined the Episcopal Church, then the Methodist, and next the Baptist where he remained. Questioned as to the reason for his church travels, he responded: "Well, suh, hit's dis way: De 'Piscopal's is genman, suh, but I couldn't keep up wid de answerin' back in dey church. De Methodist's, dey al-ways holdin' inquiry meetin's, and I don't like too much inquirin' into. But de Baptist's, suh, dey jus' dip' an are done wid hit. I's a Baptist, I is."—Washington Star.

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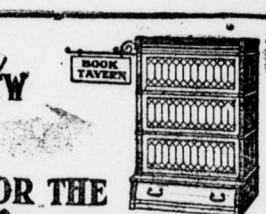
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