



CHAPTER XXII. While Uncle Ben was slowly progressing along the frozen and slippery highway...

"He did?" "Yes, sub, an den Miss Sunshine cum out to me wid her face as white as snow...

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"What yo' mean?" asked the old man, who was badly upset over the sudden attack. "We mean just this: We've been following two Yankee spies along the mountain nearly all day..."

"No, s'ar, nebber! I told yo' de troof, I mabber did meet up wid nobody sence I started from de house!"

"From what house?" "Dat house back dar which belongs to Missus Percy. Mabe yo' knowed de Percy of Winchester?"

"Yes, sah, an de only one dat's left." "And where were you going?"

"Down to Harrisonburg, sah, to git news 'bout dat battle dey foug dar de odder day. I haint seed a single person no de road, an if yo' want to kill me I den couldn't tell yo' nuffin 'bout no Yankee!"

"They had looked upon it as just a chance that Uncle Ben had encountered the men they were after, and that various measures were intended to frighten the information out of him..."

"Now, then," said the leader of the band, "yo' hays had a powerful close call, and yo' want to remember it! Niggers have no business away from home after dark..."

"Now, yo' make a beeline for home and don't stop to rest on the way! If any other prowling niggers ask yo' about that battle at Harrisonburg, yo' 'll him yo' was in it and got licked! Gee-up!"

As the old man headed for Rest Haven the gang of men rode in the other direction. He stepped out at a lively pace until hidden by the darkness and then stopped and turned to shake his fist and whisper:

"Whits man, I see only a pure ole nigger, but somebody has got to bleed for dis! Nobody eiber put a whip on Uncle Ben befo' sence he was a pickaninny, an I'll kill yo' fur dat as shore as I eiber git de chance!"

He at first thought of resuming his journey toward Harrisonburg, but a moment's reflection convinced him that if he fell into the hands of the same party again his life would be in peril...

"Thank God!" she whispered as she raised her clasped hands to the bright stars in the winter sky.

"But dar's trouble, Miss Sunshine—heaps o' trouble! Dey was tryin to git ober yo' when some gorillas reckoned dey was Yankee spies an den shotted Mars Kenton. He haint dead, but he's had hurt, an he's lyin in de break an rocks down yere 'bout a mile. I met dat Steve Brayton, an he dun tole me all 'bout it."

"Royal Kenton wounded—badly hurt and lying in the break this winter's night!" moaned Marian as she grasped Uncle Ben by the arm.

"Hut dar!" he cautioned. "We unsn't woked up de missus or dat Baxter woman. Now, den, yo' be brave. Yo's got to be! Steve Brayton he dun said I was to bring back blankets an bandages an sunthin to eat. We must step around mighty softly an pick 'em up!"

"And I will go back with you! God grant that his life may be spared!" "Hush, chile! Yo' can't go wid me tonight, but tomorrow, Dat's what Steve Brayton dun said. When I git back dar, I'll see Mars Kenton wid my own eyes, an I'll tell him all 'bout yo, an I'll stay right dar all night an nuss him."

"Oh, Uncle Ben, but I feel that I must go to him!" "Hush! Yo' jess git all dem fings what I spoke of packed up fur me as quick as yo' kin an let me go back! If yo' want dem gorillas to finish Mars Kenton, yo' jess make a fuss so dat Mrs. Baxter will open dem big ears o' hern an find out de news!"

"Do they uns live nigh yere?" "Bout a mile away, sah."

"And whar war yo' goin when yo' met up with that crowd?" "I'd dun started for Harrisonburg to git news 'bout dat big battle. Dat Cap'n Wyle he was long yere today, an told Miss Sunshine dat Mars Kenton was killed ober dar!"

"What's dat?" "He's dead, but he's had hurt, an he's lyin in de break an rocks down yere 'bout a mile. I met dat Steve Brayton, an he dun tole me all 'bout it."

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[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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Scranton Tribune, Scranton, Pa., April 24, 1894.

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