

# SWEET REVENGE

BY  
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"We will go together. Here, put your foot in my hand. Once in the saddle, you can ride away, while I can go as fast on foot as you."

"Hark!"  
There were sounds of horses' hoofs coming leisurely from the south, and in another moment a mounted man in Confederate uniform emerged from behind the trees, loitering along, the picture of indolence.

"Look!" said Helen, her eyes fixed eagerly on the advancing figure. "It's—"

"Captain Beaumont, as I live!"  
Never for a moment doubting that he was followed by his troops, and infinitely preferring to fall into his hands rather than into the guerrillas, I hailed him. He reined in, stared at us, recognized us and after sitting for a moment in mute astonishment rode toward us.

"What in the name of—"  
"Your men—where are they?" gasped Helen.

"I have no men. I sent them back yesterday. We have hunted you for—" "Then dismount, captain," I said, "and be quick. There are guerrillas up there. They may murder you as well as us."

"My dear man," he said, dismounting leisurely, "you're always in a hurry. By the bye, where is that fascinating little creature?"

"Oh, captain," cried Helen, "a life—both our lives—are at stake!"  
"What can I do for you?" asked the captain, at last impressed with our excited appearance.

By this time the guerrillas had come up to Jaycox's body and stood alternately looking at it and casting glances into the wood on either side of the road. They raised him, felt of his heart, knew that he was dead and dropped him.

"It's Jaycox," I whispered to the captain. "He kidnapped me today a second time. This brave girl followed and shot him. In a few minutes they will scour the wood. We have but one horse. It will never carry us both swiftly enough for escape."

"I relinquish my horse with pleasure, of course. May I assist?"  
Helen's foot was in my hand and she in the saddle before he could finish. Then I sprang upon the other horse.

"Would you oblige me," the captain called after us as we hurried away, "by informing me where I can find that little beauty?"

"Over there, in a pocket between knolls—half a mile. Tell them we'll join them later."

I can see him now, with his hand on his heart, bowing profoundly, and notwithstanding a shudder at remembering the danger we were in, cannot repress a smile at the comical situation of this man who a few days before had ordered me out to be shot, then had offered to lend me money and now, giving me his horse to save my life, was about to start off hunting for Jaqueline in the Cumberland mountains.

Helen and I, riding side by side, dashed through brush, between trees, over rocks, runnels, rotting trunks of trees, our only thought to put space between us and our enemies. She was riding on a man's saddle, sidewise, luckily supported by a high pommel and holster, keeping her balance as if broed to the "ring." I reached out my hand. She gave me hers to press, and a lover's look, intensified by our danger, shot between us. It was only for an instant, for so rough was the ground, so numerous the obstructions, that we were obliged to keep our eyes constantly fixed ahead. There had been exciting moments since my first abduction, but nothing like the wild exhilaration that thrilled me now. I forgot the barrier that was still between us, thinking only that if this one ride were successful years of happiness might be in store for us.

Wondering if we were followed, I drew rein and listened. We could distinctly hear the brush breaking in our rear. Again we pushed forward.

It occurred to me that we were going directly from our camp and that the greater chance for safety, both immediate and ultimate, would be in hiding, with a view to inducing the guerrillas to pass us, thus affording an opportunity to return and join forces with our friends. Approaching a clump of wood skirted by open ground, a plan flashed through my brain to utilize both in order to elude our pursuers.

"Your bonnet!" I cried to Helen. She tossed it to me.

"Now ride straight for that thicket." Spurring my horse to the utmost, I made a circuit, dropping the bonnet and a trifle farther on my hat. Helen entered the wood, and I, wheeling, dashed in on the farther side and rejoined her. Jerking off my coat, I wrapped it about my horse's ears and eyes to prevent his neighing to those approaching, and Helen, divining my intention, did the same to her own mount with her jacket. Then we stood waiting, not a sound escaping from either us or our horses, even their panting denuded by the covering. It was either life or death, with the chances in favor of death. We stood, hand in hand, looking straight into each other's eyes. In that moment of supreme suspense it was as if but one being waited for the result.

An exclamation—they have seen the

bonnet! A shout—they have come upon the hat! They clatter on. Wait. A man in the rear is coming. He, too, passes, his horse's hoof beats dying in the distance.

Leaving the thicket, we made straight for the camp and in a few minutes dashed in upon our companions.

## CHAPTER XIX. BUCK'S INDISCRETION.

CAPTAIN BEAUMONT had arrived but a few minutes before us and when we appeared was attempting to reassure Jack, who had completely collapsed at finding that both Helen and I had disappeared. He went to Helen and politely offered to assist her to alight.

"We must move out of this at once," I said. "All depends upon our getting down the mountain and into some town, where these villains will not dare follow us. All stay here while I reconnoiter."

I had not dismounted, and spurred my horse a few hundred yards westward, where I paused on the verge of the plateau. The sun was rising at my back and was pouring a flood of light on the lowlands a thousand feet below. I swept my eye over the rolling fields and woodland dotted with towns, villages, hamlets and many a fair plantation, with its manor house surrounded by the butts of the field hands. Far in the distance was a snake-like line in the road, moving forward, it seemed, as a reptile crawls—the cavalry that we had so nearly caught the day before, now on their way back to join the main force. I longed for a speaking trumpet sonorous enough to reach them, but there was no hope for us now in them, and I brushed away disappointment and made a survey of the ground directly before me—nothing but steep incline, so thickly wooded that the character of the ground was completely hidden. On either hand was a mountain spur, between which ran a creek. I hesitated between taking one of these spurs and following the bed of the creek. On the spurs we might be seen; by the creek we would be concealed under the trees. I decided in favor of the latter. Returning to camp, I informed the party of my decision.

"Will you join us, Captain Beaumont?" I asked.

"I've been hunting for you all for days," replied the captain, looking at Jack. "Now I've found you, I'm not likely to part with you! Together we can whip the guerrillas."

"Not a dozen of them. Besides, we've had enough of that."

"What are you going to do with the horses?" asked Helen.

"Mount the ladies," suggested the captain.

"Thank you," observed Jack, "but I don't care to ride on a horse with his nose pointing to China and his tail at the stars."

"No one could ride a horse over such a route," said I. "I'll take care of the stock."

I tethered them in the little pocket we were leaving, knowing that they were less likely to betray our whereabouts to our enemies there than if I turned them loose.

"They'll starve," Jack remonstrated. "I can't help it."

"They shall not!"  
"Come, we have no time to lose."

But Jack set about collecting what little grass was to be had and piling it before them. The captain, seeing her determination, was soon on his knees gathering grass and throwing it in her apron.

"I hope the delay will not cost us our lives," I grumbled. "Now, Ginger, I want you to go off to the right just as far as you can and still keep me in sight. Buck, you go to the left and do the same, but keep close, for it won't do for us to call to each other."

"Jack can make all sorts of noises—cats, an owl or a bird—so you can't tell 'em," Buck volunteered.

"Good! We may have occasion to use her. You girls keep behind about the same distance as our flankers. When we get to the creek, Ginger is to work down it on the right bank, Buck on the left, while I keep as near the creek as possible. Captain Beaumont, will you act as rear guard?"

"With pleasure, sir."

"He'll go to sleep," remarked Jack, "and be left behind."

"Not with you in front," said the captain, looking at her reproachfully.

I gave the order to move. Making as little noise as possible, keeping each other in sight, except occasionally when the trees and underbrush were too thick, we proceeded to the brow of the plateau. Descending, we soon struck the creek and, under cover of the trees, proceeded downward in open order, walking rapidly, keeping a sharp lookout ahead and on the flanks. We had not gone far before an owl hooted behind me, and so natural was the cry that, had I not been expecting it, I should never have suspected it to have come from the throat of Jaqueline. Turning, I saw both girls pointing upward. On the very edge of the declivity and not far from where we had begun our descent a man was looking down from the plateau. We were so protected that he could not see us, for, besides being among the trees, we were in comparative shadow, while the man above stood out boldly in the light. He did not look like a guerrilla, but we hurried on.

Discovering a great advantage in Jack's signals, I called in the flankers and the rear guard and arranged with them that Jack was to travel with me as trumpeter. The hoot of an owl would mean "hide," a woodpecker's rapping "rally on the center," the notes of a thrush "take a back track," a hen's cackling "push forward in haste." These signals being perfectly understood, we opened again and advanced like a central sun and satellites.

We had made the principal part of the descent, when, coming to a convenient spot, I ordered a halt for rest, feeling

ing a confidence that I had not felt since my abduction—a confidence I should not have yielded to, for we were yet far from safety. The place of our halt was a delightful angle in the stream we were following. Jack strolled away in search of wild flowers and was soon joined by Captain Beaumont, whose infatuation prevented him from thinking of aught else, even our common danger. Buck stretched himself under a short mountain oak, clasped his hands under his head, threw one leg over the bent knee of the other and looked straight up into the branches. Helen and I were thus left alone. We sat down on the bank of the creek in view of the bubbling stream. Taking a slender stick in her hand, Helen began to trash the water. I saw that she was troubled, and I knew the cause. The barrier between us, which in a moment of intense excitement had faded out of sight, now loomed up again as ominously as ever. We sat without speaking. Jack and the captain were chatting briskly, every now and again speaking loud enough for us to hear some word that told of the captain's enthrallment. The silence between Helen and myself grew painful. I could say nothing to break the spell. I could but mutely express what I felt. Reaching out, I took her hand and drew her to me.

A shot!

Looking upward to the plateau, I saw a horseman dashing off to the spur north of us, whose ridge led to the level ground we were approaching. It was plain that we had been discovered, that the shot was a signal and the horseman was going to head us off.

The trouble had all come from Buck. I have no doubt we should have given the guerrillas the slip had it not been

for his folly. There are certain idiosyncrasies in boys that are as natural to them as for a duck to swim or a robin to fly. Unfortunately, at a critical moment Buck encountered an incident that called out one of these idiosyncrasies. Gazing into the branches of the tree under which he lay, he espied a bird's nest. Unluckily, he noticed that a rock which admitted of a gradual ascent stood directly under the tree. Climbing the rock, he made his way among the branches and, leaning far out where the bright sun could shine directly on him, grasped for the treasure. Our enemy, who was at the time watching from the plateau, discovered him.

Calling the party together, I gave the order to push forward; not that there seemed to be any object in doing so, for we must expect to meet our pursuers, but we could not go *back* and could not stay where we were. Besides, motion would tend to pull together the faculties of the party, every one of whom was appalled at this relapse into the frightful dangers they had so long endured, though Captain Beaumont showed only irritation at having his tete-a-tete with Jack interrupted.

We had not gone far before we struck a path running parallel with the creek, which led us to a hamlet on a road leading north and south. There were but half a dozen houses in the place, including a small country store and a blacksmith shop. Before entering the town we consulted as to what we should do.

"Get horses," I proposed. "If there is time."

"Or a horse and wagon," said Helen. "I reckon we better hide" was Buck's proposition.

"Let's get clothes," suggested Jack, "and dress up like village people."

I looked at Helen. Jack's proposition appeared to strike her with the same force it struck me. Of all things the guerrillas would expect us to do, disguising ourselves and going about the town as if we belonged there would be the last.

"Done!" I said as we entered the place. "Scatter. Tell the people the guerrillas are after us, and they'll help us. We'll have from 10 to 15 minutes to prepare."

CHAPTER XX.  
A MASQUERADE.

WHAT became of the others I did not attempt to discover. I made straight for the blacksmith shop and found a smith at his forge.

"My good man," I said, "I'm followed by guerrillas. They'll be in the town in a few minutes. Can't you give me your clothes and let me take your place at the forge?"

He stood with his hand on the handle of the bellows looking at me while what I said was slowly making its way through his skull.

"Weel, noo," he said at last.

"Scotch—I knew it. I'll be taken before I can make him understand." Then to him, "Do you want to save me from death by guerrillas?"

"Captain, mon."

"Then take off that apron and give it to me at once. Not a moment to lose." At this juncture the desperate position I was in entered his brain, and he worked quickly enough once he realized what was wanted. I saw a woolen shirt, well begrimed, hanging on a nail and, seizing it, put it on. Then I took the smith's apron, rolled up my sleeves, smeared my arms with cinders and looked into a bit of broken mirror resting against the wooden wall to observe the effect. I was disappointed to see that my face belied my calling.

"Your razor!" I exclaimed to the blacksmith.

He went through a door leading from the shop to his dwelling and returned with a razor, soap and hot water. In five minutes I had shorn my beard, leaving a dark stubble; then, seizing a handful of coke, rubbed out every refined lineament. Taking another look at myself, I was pleased to see that my own mother would not know me. Seizing the handle of the bellows, I began to blow vigorously.

"Weel, weel," laughed the blacksmith, "ye mak' a better lo'kin smith than gentlemoon."

"Play your own part well," I replied, "and I have something nice for you at the end of the performance."

It was fully 15 minutes after we reached the hamlet before there were any signs of the guerrillas, and then three or four rode into the town and asked for our party. Had they seen us? Which way had we gone? and other questions, which the few people they met responded to with a grunt or a shake of the head. I put my head out to see and, recognizing one of them, drew back and began to blow my bellows as if my life depended on it. And it did. Presently one of the outlaws rode up to the shop.

"Hello, thar!" he shouted.

"Waal," I replied, still blowing and keeping my face turned from him.

"Seen a man, two women, a boy an a nigger go through the town?"

"Hain't seen no one."

"Sho?"

"Sho nuff."

He rode off, but I knew the storm had not yet blown over. I went on working the bellows, and it was well I did so, for presently more of the band rode into town, and one of the horses having lost a shoe, its rider dismounted in front of the shop and told me to put it on.

This was something I had not counted on. I knew no more about horse-shoeing than about knitting, but I put a bold face on the matter and went to work.

"What the — yo' doin'?" yelled the man. "Air yo' goin' ter put that shoe on with my trimmin'?"

"Hain't yo' s'pose I know my business?" I cried, bristling. "I was only fittin' it."

With that I seized a knife and began to cut. But I was too excited to pare the hoof even if I had been an expert, and in another moment the man yelled again. "Ef yo' cut that critter's hoof off, I'll brain yo'!"

"Here, Sandy," I cried to the blacksmith within, "come shoe this man's critter. He thinks he knows more'n I do about shoein'."

The blacksmith finished the job, while I, pretending to be greatly irritated, was glad to escape into his dwelling house. Going to a front window and dropping a curtain so that I could look into the road without being seen, I took a view of the situation. The guerrillas were scattered about the town, some riding around the houses hunting for us, others sitting on their horses, questioning the inhabitants as to our whereabouts. Captain Ringold was in command. A negro boy was playing "hopsotch" on the sidewalk. The captain called to him:

"Yo' boy thar, didn't yo' see anybody go this way awhile ago?"

"Two women an a boy 'bout big 's me?"

"An a white man an a colored man?"

"Yes. Which way did they go?"

"Dey's gwine right 'long dar." And he pointed to a path leading across the road westward.

"Here, yo'," cried the captain to two men who were watering their horses at a wooden trough in front of the shop, "strike out on that path."

The men darted away, leaving the captain alone in the road. A little old woman came out of a house opposite and began to gey him in a cracked voice, poking fun at him for not being able to catch a party of women. She talked so familiarly with him that I began to suspect she knew him. I trembled for fear she would betray us.

"You was ain't w'ith a persimmon," she said, "with them critters' legs under yer, yer orter ketch wimmen folks easy."

"We'll catch 'em easy enough. They've gone along thar," pointing to the path his men were just dashing into.

"Th' didn't go that a-way."

"They didn't? Which way did they go?"

"D' yer s'pose I give fac's fo' nothin'?"

A cold chill ran down my back. She was going to tell for pay.

"What do yo' want?"

"Gimme 'nuff fo' a caliker dress, an I'll put yer on th' right track."

"Sho'?"

"Sart'in."

"This'll git it as easy." He drew a revolver and put it to her face. She drew back. But this man, who was above his calling, never could persist in ill treating a woman, and, lowering his weapon, he put his hand in his pocket and pulled out a bill.

"That's the stuff ter git fac's with," said the woman. "Now, yo' uns git right 'long thar," and she pointed up the road northward.

"That won't do," said the captain.

"We just came from up thar."

There was a pause, at the end of which I heard the woman say in a low tone:

"Captain!"

The voice was familiar. I saw the man start, then exclaim, "Great God!"

The old woman went over to him and, taking hold of his bridle rein, began to whisper to him earnestly. Presently I heard the captain say:

"I can't do it."

There was more whispering, and by the woman's attitude I knew she was pleading. Was she pleading for us? If so, who could this good friend be to take so much interest in us?

"I'd do it fo' yo' an' yo' friend, but not the other one."

She fumbled with the rein, she stroked his horse's neck, she laid her hand on his, all the while talking earnestly and looking up into his eyes. I fancied beseechingly, though I could not see her face, for her back was toward me, while the man's head was drooping lower and lower. Her bonnet fell back on her neck, and I knew the old woman was Jaqueline.

"Can yo' refuse when I ask it?" she said loud enough for me to hear.

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

"I'm so tired," she sighed to the woman next door.

"What doin'?"

"I've been the last four hours at the photographer's having an instantaneous picture of the baby taken"—Exchange.

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