

SWEET REVENGE

BY
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Author of "Chattanooga," "Chickamauga," Etc.

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"By Jove," remarked Beaumont, starting at the approaching troopers, "I'm a prisoner!"

There was a puff of smoke among the retreating guerrillas, the crack of a carbine, and Jack fell into Helen's arms.

Never was the pleasure of hard-earned success more cruelly dashed at the moment of triumph. We had fought these fiends off for days, we had escaped from them to a coveted protection, and now, at the last moment, they had struck us severely. Jaqueline lay on the grass, her head and shoulders resting on Helen's arm, who stanching the blood which flowed from a wound in her side. I bent over her with a groan. Captain Beaumont for a moment seemed fired to chase the man who had shot her, then joined those about the wounded girl, muttering imprecations on the guerrillas and incoherently begging us to save his little Jaqueline.

"A surgeon!" I cried to the troopers, who were sitting on their horses looking on. "Some one go for a surgeon."

"Ride quick!" said the captain in command, turning to the man nearest him, "and bring a doctor and a conveyance from the town." Then to an officer: "Lieutenant, follow those men, and don't come back till you have captured every one of them. Take 20 men with the best horses. With fresh mounts you can run them all down."

A man dashed off toward the town and 20 more after the retreating guerrillas. Jack lay with her head on Helen's shoulder, her eyes closed, her face white as a cloth, we all about her, dreading every moment that the life-blood would run out. Presently she opened her eyes, looked about her, then fainted away.

"Oh, my God!" cried Beaumont, "she's gone!"

"Keep off," cried Helen, "and give her air."

"Jack," cried Buck, terrified at her ghastly appearance, "wake up!"

I, with a soldier's knowledge of the thirst of a wounded person, dashed away in a hunt for water. I found a well in a yard on the outskirts of the town and, drawing the staple to the chain that held a tin cup, brought a plentiful supply. Helen was still supporting her cousin. Buck was striding about nervously, with his hands thrust down into his pockets, while Captain Beaumont was kneeling, his eyes peering into Jack's as though by his gaze he would hold the life that he dreaded was ebbing away. I sprinkled water in her face, and she opened her eyes, looking about her as if unable to understand her surroundings.

"What's the matter?"

Curiously enough, the words were the same as those I had first heard her utter when, wounded, I reclined on a sofa at her home.

"You're hurt, Jack," said Helen.

"Am I going to die?"

"Oh, no, dear, I hope not."

"Don't die," said Beaumont in a broken voice. "Don't leave me. I couldn't bear it."

She looked up into his face sadly. "I have been a bad girl to you, captain. Forgive me."

"Forgive you? I love even your harsh words."

"Oh, Helen," she said, "I hope I won't die!"

"You won't, surely, Jack."

"Because if I do I can't dance any more for the colored people. Who'll look out for 'em, Helen? Papa's away, and no one else cares for 'em as he and I do."

"They'll have you with them for many a year, Jack."

An open wagon appeared in the road and drove up beside us. A doctor with a satchel in his hand got down and approached Jaqueline. Making a hasty examination of the wound, he bandaged it, then told us to lift her into the vehicle. The seats, except the front one, had been removed and their cushions placed on the bottom. Some of the cavalrymen tossed in their blankets, and I smoothed them over the cushions, making a comparatively comfortable bed. We placed little Jack upon it. Helen got in with her, and the rest of us walking beside, the cavalry acting as escort, we bore her to the town and lodged her in a room in the main hotel of the place.

We found the town agog with news of the first day's battle at Pittsburg Landing, and I knew that my general would hold himself ready to co-operate. I determined to join my command at once. Having been assured that Jack's wound would not prove fatal, I arranged for the transportation of the party as soon as she could be moved, then gathered my little force in her room and announced my intended departure.

"I must now bid farewell," I said, "to my little army, every one of whom has become dearer to me than life."

"Like General George Washington," said Buck, "sayin' farewell to his ossifers. There is a picture of it in my American school history."

"Goodby, Buck. Remember to get a book and pencil and break yourself of the habit of saying bad words."

"I will, by thunder!"

"Goodby, little girl," I said to Jack, bending down and kissing her on the forehead.

"Oh, I'm going away," Helen's eyes were gleaming. "Where are you going?" she asked, repeating Jack's question, though in a different tone.

I had managed to keep my connection with the Union army thus far a secret. Now I knew there was no need to keep it longer.

"To the Federal army, where I belong."

The mute agony on Helen's face told what my disclosure had cost her. Extending my arms, I cried one word, "Sweetheart!"

"Renegade!" she hissed.

"Helen, dear love, hear me."

She turned her back upon me and swept out of the room.

"I like you of you're a Yankee," Jack cried after me.

I left the hotel, my brain in a tumult. Coming up the road was a little knot of troopers surrounding the guerrillas whom they had run down and captured. A few hours ago I would have cried out with delight. Now they were no more to me than if I saw them in a dream.

CHAPTER XXII. HUNTING BIG GAME.

IT was the morning of the 11th of April, 1862. I was nearing the spot I occupied at the opening of my story, where the bushwhacker had sought to kill me, though then I was alone, while now I was with an advancing army. Five hundred cavalry, a division of infantry and several batteries of artillery were hurrying down the road toward the beautiful city of Huntsville, lying, tranquil and unsuspecting, a few miles below. The upper edge of the sun was peering above the horizon, gilding the crest of the foothills of the plateau on the east, the tree tops and the roofs of the neighboring houses. The flowers, which a fortnight before were opening, were now in full bloom. They looked innocently from the gardens beside the road, they leaned lovingly against the pillars of the verandas, and from vines trailing over casements they smiled at the rising sun, while the breath of morning was laden with their perfume.

It was the general's purpose to surprise the city, capture the railroad machine shops and the rolling stock concentrated there, then make up trains laden with troops, seize a hundred miles of the Memphis and Charleston railroad on either hand, thus opening communication with the army at Pittsburg Landing on the west and paving the way for future operations in east Tennessee on the east. The enemy must not be given time to move troops to protect the city, for even should we defeat them they would destroy the shops and run off the rolling stock. All depended on celerity and secrecy.

The evening before we had bivouacked ten miles north of the city. Our scouts permitted no one to go south of us, enfolded all they met in order that no news of our approach could reach the place we hoped to surprise. Two



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hours before dawn the command was aroused—not by the life or the bugle, but by whispering officers—and the march was resumed with no sound save the tread of men and horses and the rattle of artillery. Within a few miles of the city detachments of mounted men, armed with telegraph cutting and track tearing implements, dashed to the left and to the right to prevent the enemy from sending for troops or running off the rolling stock. To another detachment which rode among the advance columns was assigned the duty of seizing the telegraph office.

Boom!

Hark, a gun! It comes from the eastward, not half a mile distant, where the railroad runs parallel with the pike. Artillery is driving back a locomotive. The iron monster shrieks like some wild beast that has met its death wound.

Boom!

More whistles all along the track far down to the south, varying in distinctness from a near, loud cry to a distant, faint moan. This is fine hunting—stalking locomotives with cannon. Did any South African sportsman ever strike such game or hunt with such guns?

Boom, boom, boom! Far and near the shotguns speak; far and near the metal monsters cry out in terror.

Boom!

All are bagged, except one more daring than the rest, which runs the gauntlet of artillery and with a round shot flying through its cab speeds out of range.

Meanwhile sashes in the houses along the road are being raised, shutters flung open and heads put out to learn the cause of the commotion. As guns boom, whistles shriek and cavalry clatter along the road, followed by men rapidly marching and artillery horses briskly dragging the guns, many a citizen who the night before had gone

to sleep not dreaming of a foe looks upon the passing armed throng. Listens to the sound of the cannon and the shrieks of the engines and wonders if pandemonium has come.

I am drawing near the Stanfords'. There is the house, with its broad veranda and its peak roof. A knot of people are at the front gate, but I am yet too far to see who they are. Now I can distinguish the turbaned Lib. There is a boy perched on one of the gate posts. It is Buck. That girl, tall and slender, is surely Helen. As I draw nearer I can see Ginger, his broad mouth stretched in a grin of pleasure at sight of Yankee troops. A figure is sitting in a wicker chair on the veranda, dark eyes flashing in a pale face. It is Jaqueline.

Hiding up to the gate, I am out of my saddle almost before my horse has stopped. Buck gives a cry and jumps into my arms. Ginger grasps my hand.

"By Jingo, Mr. Brandystone," cried Buck, "I'm mighty glad to see you! Since I got back after fightin' g'rillas like—"

"Mars, 't's good fo' de eyes t' see yo'!" interrupted Ginger enthusiastically.

"After fightin' g'rillas like a man!"

"What! Mr. Brandystone, and in the uniform of a Federal officer?"

It was Mr. Stanforth. He looked at me, surprised, then put out his hand. But I always suspected the old man to be at heart a Unionist.

Buck kept on. "After fightin' g'rillas like a man I come back!"

"Upon my word!"

Another of the family was expressing surprise to see a former guest with the Union troops. Mrs. Stanforth looked pained, but she had nursed me when I was suffering, and her motherly feelings got the better of her prejudices. I took her hand, and she did not withdraw it.

"I say, Mr. Brandystone," Buck now fairly shouted, "after fightin' g'rillas like a man I come back byar to be followed round by that doggone old Lib!"

It was out at last, and the boy looked relieved. I broke away and, advancing toward Helen, put out my hand.

She turned away from me with contempt.

Fortunately at that moment I espied little Ethel looking at me wistfully and, taking her up, hid my face and my anguish in her tresses. Then, looking up, I saw that Jack was waiting for me, and, going upon the veranda, I took both her hands in mine.

"You're the only Yankee in the world I want to see," she said enthusiastically.

"Golly!" cried Buck behind me. Turning, I saw what had surprised him—the guerrillas riding by as prisoners. They had been conducted to Shelbyville by the company of cavalry which had captured them and were now a part of the procession of men and horses hurrying by. Captain Ringold looked up at us with a melancholy stare. He caught sight of Jack, and I shall remember to my dying day the sad look in his eyes as they rested for a moment upon hers.

The advancing army moved rapidly on and was soon a mingled mass of guns and horses in the distance. The sun touched bayonets and flags flashed for an instant, then were lost in a turn in the road. The region which had so suddenly been enlivened relapsed into the quiet of the country.

Jaqueline begged me to go into the house. I declined. Mr. Stanforth added his invitation.

"Thank you, Mr. Stanforth, but I must rejoin my regiment at once. This is no time for me to be absent."

"You shall come in long enough to drink one glass of wine to show that you are our friend." I saw that he would be not only hurt, but, with his strong southern impulse, angered if I refused, and I reluctantly consented to spare a few minutes to pledge my former host.

I entered the house supporting Jack and was turning into the library, where I had passed my time while wounded, when Jack guided me into the parlor opposite. Helen left us and went into the library. Lib came in bearing a decanter and glasses. I drank to the host and the assembled company, promising that during the occupation by the Union forces I would use my influence to gain them every favor and protection. I had drained my glass and, setting it down, was about to go out to mount my horse when Helen came out of the library and crossed the hall, hand in hand with an officer in Confederate uniform. His forehead was bound with a handkerchief, he walked with difficulty and, I judged, had been severely wounded. Jack sprang forward and seized the other hand.

"Major Brandystone," said Helen, "my brother."

"Great God! Before me stood—my enemy!"

As at night by a flash of lightning one may see for an instant a landscape distinct in all its details, so I saw again the events of the night of the massacre. There were the flashing shotguns, the soldiers coming down the hill, a figure with garments streaming in the wind running to me for protection. And now before me stood the man with the smoking pistol. Involuntarily I put my hand to my revolver.

"I am your prisoner, sir," he said quickly. "You do not need your weapon."

Helen's eyes flashed. "Would you shoot an unarmed man?"

Jack, mute with terror, staggered to the gray clad figure and clung to it, her expressive eyes bent on me, a mingled flame of reproach and wrath.

My hand rested on my holster. I moved not, spoke not, but stood staring at the group that stared at me. This man, whom I had been hunting to kill, whom Helen had stimulated me to pursue, against whom she had even voluntarily pledged herself to aid me in my revenge, had now suddenly ap-

peared as her brother.

"I was wounded," said the officer, "at Fort Donelson and was brought here to my father's house. I am unable to endure the fatigue of flight; therefore I am compelled to surrender."

[TO BE CONTINUED.]

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