

The Devil's Own

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CHAPTER XII—Continued.

"H—, thar ain't really no manner o' risk at all. Yer don't even hav' ter break the law, fer as I know. It's just got fer ter be done on the dead quiet, an' no question asked. I'll tell yer all yer need ter know. Tain't such a long story. This yere Joe Kirby he's a frien' o' mine; I've know'd him a long time, an' he's in a h— of a fix. Here's how it all happened: Thar was an ol' planter livin' down in Missouri at a place called Beaucaire's Landin'. His name was Beaucaire, an' he had a son named Bert, a good-fer-nothing cuss, I reckon. Wal, this Bert runned away a long while ago, an' never cum back; but he left a baby behind him—a gurl baby—which a quadroon slave give birth to. The quadroon's name was Della, an' the kid was called Rene. Gilt them names in yer head. Ol' Beaucaire he knew the gurl was his son's baby, so he brought her up 'long with his own daughter, who was named Eloise. They was both 'bout the same age, an' nobody seemed ter know thar Rene was a nigger. Fer sum reason ol' Beaucaire never set her free, ner the quadroon neither. Wal, Kirby he heard tell o' all this sumwhar down the river. Yer see he an' Bert Beaucaire run together fer a while, till Bert got killed in a row in New Orleans. I reckon he tol' him part o' the story, an' the rest he picked up in Saint Louee. Enyhow, it looked like a d— good thing ter Kirby, who ain't passin' up many bets. Ol' Beaucaire was rich, an' considerable o' a sport; people who hed seed the gurl sed they was both o' em beauties an' Eloise—the white one—hed an independent fortune left her through her mother. So Kirby, he an' a feller named Carver—a tin-horn—planned it out betwixt 'em ter copper ol' Beaucaire's coin, an' pick up them gurls along with it."

"But how cud they do that?"

"Luck mostly, I reckon, an' Kirby's brains. The plan was ter git Beaucaire inter a poker game, ease him 'long a bit, an' then break him, land, niggers, an' all. They didn't figure this wud be hard, fer he was a dead game gambler, an' played fer big stakes. It was luck, though, what giv' 'em their chance. Beaucaire hed sum minin' claims up on the Fevre, an' hed ter go up thar. It's a long, lonesome trip, I reckon, an' so the other two went 'long. They got the ol' chap goin' and comin', an' finally coddled him 'long till he put up his big bet on a sure hand. When he found out whut hed happened the ol' gent got so excited he flung a fit, an' died."

"Leavin' Kirby ownin' all the property?"

"Every plicyune, niggers an' all. It was sum sweep, an' he hed signed bills o' sale. Wa'n't nobody cud git it away from him. Wal' Joe he didn't want fer ter make no fuss, ner scare the gurl none, so he went down ter Saint Louee an' made proof o' ownership afore a judge he know'd. Then, with the papers all straight, he, an' the sheriff, with Tim yere, the deputy, run up the river at night ter serve 'em quietly on the daughter—the white one, Eloise. Kirby he didn't aim ter be seen at all, but just went 'long so thar wudn't be no mistake. Yer see, them papers had ter be served afore they cud take away the niggers. Kirby was goin' ter sell them down river, an' not bother 'bout the land fer awhile, till after hed hed a chance ter shine up ter this yere gurl Eloise. Hed never seen her—but, enyhow, he got the notion in his head."

"She was the daughter; the white one?"

"Sure; he hed the other by law. Wal, when they all got thar, nobody was home, 'cept one o' the gurls, who claimed fer ter be Rene—the one who was a nigger, thar Kirby owned. Nobody know'd which was which, an' so they hed ter take her word for it. They cudn't do nuthin' legal till they found the other one, an' they was sittin' round waitin' fer her ter turn up, when the nigger gurl they was watchin' got away."

"How'd she do that?"

"Don't nobody seem ter know. Damn funny story. Way they tell it, sumbudy must'r knocked Kirby down an' run off with her. Whoever did it, stole the boat in which Kirby an' the sheriff cum up the river, an' just naturally skipped out—the sheriff's nigger an' all. It was a slick job."

"Of course they chased them?"

"Best they cud, not knowin' which way they'd gone. They reckoned the whol' bunch must'r got away together, so the sheriff he started fer Saint Louee, an' the others got onto a troop boat whut happened ter cum 'long, and started north. 'Long 'bout the mouth o' the Illinoy they caught up with a nigger-stealer named Shunk. They hed a fight in an' about his cabin, an' sum killin'. Two o' the women got away, but Kirby an' Tim got hold o' this gurl whut hed claimed ter be Rene, an' a mulatto cook who was a workin' fer Shunk. I reckon maybe yer know the rest."

"I know they was run down by the Adventurer, an' hauled aboard. But how did Kirby learn his prisoner was white? Did she tell him?"

"I should say not. It was the mulatto cook who told him, although, I reckon, he hed his doubts afore thet. I knew she wusn't no nigger the fust minute I got eyes on her—they caln't fool me none on niggers; I was raised 'mong 'em. But so fur's the gurl's concerned, she don't know yet thet Kirby's found out." He emitted a weak laugh. "It sorter skeered Joe ter be caught 'way up yere in this kinty, kidnappin' a white gurl. He didn't know whut the h— ter do till I give him a p'inter."

"You were the one who suggested marriage?"

"Wal, I sed she cudn't do nuthin' 'gainst him onct he was married to her. I thought o' thet right away. Yer see this was how it happened: Kirby sed he'd like fer ter marry her, an' I sez, 'Why not, then? Thar's an ol' bum ov a preacher yere at Yellow Banks, a sorter hanger-on ter one o' them militia companies, whut'll do eny d—n thing I tell him to. I got the goods on him, an' he knows it."

"But she wouldn't marry me," he says; 'yer don't know thet gurl."

"Don't I? I asked sarcastic. 'Wal, thar ain't no gurl ever I see yet thet won't marry a man if the right means are used. How kin she help herself? Yer leave it ter me."

"And he consented?"

"He was d—n glad to, after I told him how it cud be done. But Tim he wudn't go in with us, an' thet's why we got ter have another man. Come on over ter the bar an' have a drink, Moffett; them other fellers are goin' ter eat now."

The diversion gave me opportunity for a moment's thought. The plan was a diabolical one, cold-blooded and desperate, yet I saw no certain way of serving Eloise, except by accepting Rale's offer. I did not even know where she was concealed, or how I could lay hands on Kirby. The genial Rale pushed out a black bottle and we drank together.

"Wal," he said, picking up the conversation where it had ended, quite satisfied with his diplomacy, and wiping his lips on his sleeve. "What ye say, Moffett? Thar's a hundred dollars in this job."

"Whar is the gurl?"

"Oh, I reckon she ain't fur away; we kin find her all right. I got ter know 'bout yer fust. Are yer game?"

"I'm game 'nough, Jack," assuming a familiarity I thought he would appreciate. "Only I don't want'r jump inter this yere thing without knowin' nuthin' 'bout it. What is it yer got lined up fer me ter do?"

He helped himself to yet another liberal drink, and I was glad to note that the fiery liquor was already beginning to have its effect, increasing his recklessness of speech.

"All right, Dan; have another one on me—no? Wal' h—l; I s'pose I might as wal' tell ye fust as last. Thar ain't nuthin' fer eny o' us ter git skeered about. We got it all planned. We don't want this affair talked about none, do we? I reckon not. So we planned it out this way: Thar's a frien' o' mine got a shack down on Bear creek, 'bout twenty mile below yere. He sells red-eye ter barge an' keel-boatmen, what tie up thar nights. Wal', he's all right—a h—l o' a good feller. What we aim ter do is run the gurl down thar tonight, unbekno'st ter enybudy. I reckon yer kin ride a boss?"

"Yes; so thet's my job?"

"Thet's the whole o' it. Yer just got ter stay thar with her till Kirby



Thar's a Hundred Dollars in This Job.

kin git away, without nobody thinkin' enything 'bout it. It's d—n easy money, ter my notion."

I thought swiftly. There were several questions I wanted to ask but dare not. It was better to trust to luck, for I must lull, not arouse suspicion. Thus far the affair had played wonderfully into my hands; if I could maintain my part to the end there ought to be no reason why the girl should not be saved unharmed.

"Why, if thet's all I got ter do fer a hundred dollars," I said gayly, "I'm yer man, Jack. An' how soon will Kirby be comin' down ter this yer place on Bear creek?"

"In a day or two, I reckon. Soon's

thar's sum boat headin' down the river. Yer see, this yer's all camp; thar ain't no fit place whar we kin hide the gurl, an' make her keep her mouth shut. Them blamed soldiers are a-moosin' 'bout everywhar, an' if she onct got talkin' our goose wud be cooked. Fust thing we got ter do is git her outter this camp."

"Ternight, yer sed?"

"'Bout midnight; yer'll go—hey?"

"I reckon; yer got the money?"

With his eyes fastened on the two men eating he counted out some gold pieces on the bar and shoved them over to me, keeping them under cover of his hand.

"Thar's half o' it, an' the rest is yers when ye bring back the hosses."

"How many hosses? Who's a-goin'?"

"Three o' yer. Kirby's fer sendin' the mulattar gurl 'long. She's a free nigger an' might let her tongue wag. Now listen, Moffett: I'm a-goin' out putty soon ter git things ready, an' I'll leave Sal yere ter tend bar. Now git this: thar's a right smart trail back o' the cabin, leadin' straight down ter the creek, with a spring 'bout half way. Thar ain't no guard down thar, an' ye can't miss it, even in the dark. The hosses will be thar et midnight waitin' fer yer. All ye got ter do is just put them two gurls on an' ride away. Yer don't never need ter speak ter 'em. Yer understand? All right, then; have another drink."

I shook my head.

"But how'm I goin' ter git ter this place—whatever it's called?"

"Thar ain't no trouble 'bout thet; all yer got ter do is ride straight south till yer cum ter the creek, an' yer thar. It's Jenkins' crossing yer after."

"I reckon thar ain't eny Indians, er nuthin'?"

"H—, no; they're all t'other direction; nuthin' worse'n wolves. Say, though, yer might have trouble with them gurls—got a gun?"

"No."

He reached back into a small drawer under the shelf and brought out an ugly looking weapon, tried the hammer movement with his thumb, and handed it over to me with a grin.

"Some cannon, an' I want it back. Don't fall at midnight."

"An' thar ain't nuthin' fer me ter do till then?"

"Not a thing; take a nap, if yer want'r. Sal kin wake ye up. I reckon I won't be back till after yer off."

I sat down in a chair and leaned back against the wall, tilting my hat down over my eyes and pretending to fall asleep. Through half-closed lids I managed to see all that transpired in the room, and my mind was busy with the approaching crisis.

Rale bustled himself for some minutes before putting on his hat, counting over some money, and filling his bottles from a reserve stock underneath the shelf. Tim slept peacefully on, but had slightly changed his posture, so that his face was now upturned to the light. The sight of his familiar features gave me an inspiration. He was, undoubtedly, an honest fellow, and had quarreled with Kirby over this very matter, refusing to have any hand in it. He had supposed up to that time that he was doing no more than his duty under the law. If I could arouse him from drunken stupor he might even be willing to work with me in the attempt to rescue Eloise.

Rale disappeared through the rear door, after exchanging a few words with the woman, and did not return. I waited motionless for some time, fearful lest he might come back. Suddenly the front door opened noiselessly and Kirby entered, advancing straight toward the bar. Sal served him, answering his questions, which were spoken so low I could not catch the words. His eyes swept the room, but the hat concealed his face, and he only recognized Tim. He paused long enough to bend above the upturned features of the unconscious deputy, not displeased, evidently, to discover him in that condition.

"The d— old fool," he muttered perhaps not aware that he spoke aloud. "Rale has got him fixed, all right."

CHAPTER XIII.

Kirby and I Meet.

Sal remained seated behind the bar, nodding, and so soon as I felt reasonably assured that she was without interest in my movements, I leaned forward and endeavored to arouse Kennedy. This was by no means easy of accomplishment, and I was compelled to pinch the fellow rather severely before he sat up angrily, blurring out the first words which came to his lips:

"What the devil—"

His half-opened eyes caught my gesture for silence, and he stopped instantly, his lips widely parted.

"Meet me outside," I whispered, warningly. "But be careful about it."

The slight noise had failed to disturb the woman, and I succeeded in slipping through the unlatched door without noting any change in her posture. Tim, now thoroughly awake, and aware of something serious in the air, was not long in joining me without, and I drew him aside into a spot of deeper blackness under the trees. He was still indignant over the pinch-

ing, and remained drunk enough to be quarrelsome. I cut his muffled profanity short.

"That's quite enough of that, Tim," I said sharply, and was aware that he stared back at me, plainly perplexed by the change in my tone and manner. "You are an officer of the law; so am I, and it is about time we were working together."

He managed to release a gruff laugh. "You—you d— bum; h—, that's a good joke—what'r yer givin' me now?"

"The exact truth; and it will be worth your while, my man, to brace up and listen. I am going to give you a chance to redeem yourself—a last chance. It will be a nice story to tell back in St. Louis that you helped to kidnap a wealthy young white woman."



"What the Devil—?"

using your office as a cloak for the crime, and, besides that, killing two men to serve a river gambler. Suppose I was to tell that sort of tale to Governor Clark, and give him the proofs—where would you land?"

He breathed hard, scarcely able to articulate, but decidedly sober.

"What—what's that? Ain't you the feller thet was on the boat? Who—who the devil are yer?"

"I am an officer in the army," I said gravely, determined to impress him first of all, "and I worked on that steamer merely to learn the facts in this case. I know the whole truth now, even to your late quarrel with Kirby. I do not believe you realized before what you were doing—but you do now. You are guilty of assisting that contemptible gambler to abduct Eloise Beaucaire, and are shielding him now in his cowardly scheme to compel her to marry him by threats and force."

"The d—, low-lived pup—I told him whut he was."

"Yes, but that doesn't prevent the crime. He's all you said, and more. But calling the man names isn't going to frighten him, nor get that girl out of his clutches. What I want to know is, are you ready to help me fight the fellow? Block his game?"

"How? What do ye want done?"

"Give me a pledge first, and I'll tell you."

"Did you say ye was an army officer?"

"Yes, a lieutenant; my name is Knox."

"I never know'd yer."

"Probably not, but Joe Kirby does. I was on the steamer Warrior coming down when he robbed old Judge Beaucaire. That was what got me mixed up in this affair. Later I was in that skiff you fellows rammed and sunk on the Illinoy. I know the whole dirty story, Kennedy, from the very beginning. And now it is up to you whether or not I tell it to Governor Clark."

"I reckon yer must be right," he admitted helplessly. "Only I quit cold the minute I caught on ter whut was up. I never know'd she wa'n't no nigger till after we got yere. Sure's yer live that's true. Only then I didn't know whut else ter do, so I got billin' drunk."

"You are willing to work with me, then?"

"Yer kin bet I am; I ain't no gurl-stealer."

"Then listen, Kennedy. Jack Rale told me exactly what their plans were, because he needed me to help him. When you jumped the reservation, he had to find someone else, and picked me. They mean to pull off the affair tonight. Here's the story."

I told it to him, exactly in the form it had come to me, interrupted only in the recital by an occasional profane ejaculation, or some interjected question. The deputy appeared sober enough before I had finished, and fully grasped the seriousness of the situation.

"Now that is the way it stacks up," I ended. "The girl is to be taken to this fellow's shack and compelled to marry Kirby, whether she wants to or not. They either intend threatening her, or else to actually resort to force—likely both. No doubt they can rely on this renegade preacher in either case."

"Jack didn't name no name?"

"No—why?"

"Only thar uster be a bum hangin' round the river front in Saint Louee who hed preacher's papers, an' wore a long-tailed coat. Thar wa'n't no low-down game he wudn't take a hand in

A Romance of the Black Hawk War

By RANDALL PARRISH

Author of "Contraband," "Shoes of the Irish Brigade," "When Wilderness Was King," etc.

ILLUSTRATIONS BY IRWIN MYERS

fer a drink. His name was Gaskins; I hed him up fer mayhem onct. I'll bet he's the duck, for he hung round Jack's place most o' the time. Whatcha want me ter do?"

"It has seemed to me, Tim," I said thoughtfully, "that the best action for us to take will be to let them place the girl in my hands, just as they have planned to do. That will throw them entirely off their guard. Once we succeed in getting her safely away, and remain unknown ourselves, there ought to be very little trouble in straightening out the whole matter. My plan would be to either ride around the camp in the night, and then report the whole affair at headquarters, or else to strike out direct for Fort Armstrong across country. Do you know any place you can pick up a horse?"

"Thar's a slew ov 'em round yere," he admitted. "These fellers are most all hoss-soldiers. I reckon I cud clinch sum sort o' critter. Yer want me s'ong?"

"Perhaps not, Tim. Your disappearance might cause suspicion, and send them after us. My plan is to get away as quietly as possible, and let them believe everything is all right. I want a day or two in which to work, before Rale or Kirby discover we have not gone to Bear Creek. I'll met them alone at the spring down the trail, but shall want you somewhere near by. You see this is bound to mean a fight if I am recognized—likely three against one; and those men wouldn't hesitate at murder."

"I reckon not, an' it wudn't be thet fust one nuther. Looks ter me like yer was takin' a big chance. I'll be thar, though; yer kin bet on thet, an' ready fer a fight er a foot race. This is how I size it up—if thar ain't no row, I'm just ter keep still an' low; an' if a fracas starts I'm ter jump in fer all I'm worth. Is thet the program?"

"Exactly—that's my idea."

"Wal' then, I'm a prayin' it starts; I want just one crack et thet Kirby, the ornary cuss."

We talked the whole matter over in detail, having nothing better to do, and endeavoring to arrange for every probability, yet did not remain together for long.

I felt nervous, anxious, eager for action. The time dragged horribly. What if something unforeseen should occur to change Rale's plan? My God! if I only knew where it was they had concealed the girl.

The two of us explored about the silent cabin, but discovered nothing. There was no light visible in the rear room, nor any sound of movement within. The two windows were closed, and the door locked. We found a convenient stump in the woods and sat down to wait where we could see all that occurred about the cabin.

It was nearly twelve before even the slightest sound near at hand indicated the approach of others. I was already in an agony of suspense, imagining something might have gone wrong, when the dull scuffling of horses' hoofs being led cautiously up the trail to my right broke the intense silence. I listened to assure myself, then shook Tim into wakefulness, leaving him still blinking in the shadow of the stump, while I advanced in the direction of the spring. I saw nothing of Rale until he spoke.

"That yer, Moffett?"

"Yes; whar's yer party?"

I caught a view of his dim outlines, as he stepped slightly forward, reassured by my voice.

"They'll be yere; thar's a bit o' time ter spare yit. I aimed not ter keep 'em waitin'. Here, this is yer hoss, an' yere's the leadin' strap fer the others. Better tie it ter yer pommel, I reckon, so's ter leave both yer hands free—yer might hav' need fer 'em. We'll tend ter mountin' the gurls, an' then all ye'll hav' ter do will be ter lead off. Better walk the hosses till yer git crost the creek, so the sojers won't hear yer. Got that?"

"I reckon I hav', an' sense 'nough ter know it without bein' told. Did yer think I wanted ter be caught on this job?"

"All right, but thar's no harm a tellin' yer. Whar's Tim gone to?"

"I reckon he don't even know his self; he's sure sum drunk."

Rale chuckled, patting the side of the horse next him.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

To Take Baby's Picture.

Anyone who has tried it knows it is a difficult task to take an indoor picture of an active child. By placing the subject near a sunny window, but not in the direct sunlight, and with a sheet fixed at one side, high enough so that it reaches above the subject's head, good results may be obtained. If the child sits on the floor, the sheet will be high enough thrown over two chairs.

Stay in School.

Does it pay to continue your studies? Education means a successful and useful life; it pays the individual. Education means efficient workers; it pays the nation. Show this to your parents and ask them what they think about it. Stay in school.—Colorado Agricultural College News Notes.

IN ANOTHER KEY



HIS POCKET WAS BARE.

Teacher was giving a lesson on good behavior, and wanted to drive it home to the children's mind.

First she sought to point out the wickedness of stealing.

"Johnny," she said to one small boy, "if I put my hand in your pocket and took out a penny, what would I be?"

But instead of replying, "A thief," Johnny looked at her solemnly, and remarked:

"A conjurer!"—London Answers.

Driven to It.

"My boy," said Mr. Grabcohn, "are you getting ready to settle down?"

"Yes, dad. I guess I'll have to."

"A sensible decision, sir."

"Perhaps. Most of the chaps I went to college with are doing some kind of beastly work, and one hates to sit around his club all day with nobody to talk to but the waiters. Ho, hum! I'll have to go into business to amuse myself."



BEGINNING OF A ROMANCE.

Nurse—If you loved me you would give up smoking when you get over your terrible wounds.

Soldier—If you loved me you wouldn't ask me to give it up.

The Producer.

A man worth while, beyond a doubt, That person is, Who does not rant, or roar or shout, But tends to his biz.

A Mean Man.

"Would you mind telling me what the upkeep of your limousine amounts to?"

"Certainly not," replied the prosperous citizen. "But may I ask why you want to know?"

"My wife's been after me to buy a flivver and I'm going to argue against it on a limousine basis."

Wanted Some One Congenial.

The Applicant—As your paid companion, will I be expected to accompany you on week-ends and other short trips?

Mrs. K. Nyne—Oh, I didn't advertise for a companion for myself. It's for my little dog, to keep him from being lonesome while I'm out.

Their Differences.

Hokus—On what grounds were they divorced?

Pukus—Incompatibility of temperament, I believe.

Hokus—Couldn't they agree?

Pokus—No; every time she tried to make him mad he just laughed.—Town Topics.

Well, Well.

"Prices are sky high."

"We all need a raise."

"My boss evidently thinks so."

"Why?"

"Yesterday he raised me a dollar a week."



SOME DINNER.

"Was it much of a dinner?"

"I should say it was. There were seven different kinds of forks at each plate."

Safety First.

A crazy motorist is he, He opens wide the gas, His driving motto seems to be: "They shall not pass!"

Quite Otherwise.

"Your charges are simply outrageous," complained the guest who was at the shore hotel for his health. "Hold on!" protested the landlord. "You forget I'm not at this hotel for the same reason that you are."

Smart, at That.

"I guess my wife thinks I'm a pretty smart man."

"Why?"

"She admits that I am half as smart as she thought I was the day we were married."