



The Devil's Own

A Romance of the Black Hawk War

By
Randall
Parish

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"When Wilderness was King," etc.

Illustrated by Lewis Myers

I permitted him to lead me, his voice never ceasing as we followed the dim trail. I made out little of what he said, nor did I question him. The trail ended before a two-room log cabin, so deeply hidden in the woods as to be revealed merely by a glimmer of light shining out from within through chinks in the walls. Tim fumbled for the latch and finally opened the door, lurching across the threshold, dragging me along after him. There were two men at a sloppy table, a disreputable looking white woman stirring the contents of a pot hung over the open fire, and a fellow behind the bar, attired in a dingy white apron. It was all sordid enough, and dirty—a typical frontier grogshop; but the thing of most interest to me was the proprietor. The fellow was the same red-mustached individual whom I had watched disembark from the steamer that same afternoon, slipping in the yellow mud as he surmounted the bank, dragging his valise along after him. So it was this fellow passenger who had given these fugitives refuge; it was his presence in these parts which had decided Kirby to make the venture ashore. He glanced up at our entrance, the glare of light overhead revealing a deep, ugly scar across his chin and a pair of deep-set, scowling eyes.

"Back in time for supper, hey, Kennedy," he growled, none too cordially. "Who's yer friend?"

"A feller what's goin' ter enlist. He's all right, Jack," the deputy hiccupped thickly. "Le's liquor, an' then we'll eat. I'm payin' the bill—so what's it ter yer?"

"Nuthin' tall; any friend o' yers gits ther best I have."

He set out a squat bottle on the bar, and thinking it best to humor the both of them I poured out a stiff drink, fully aware that Rale was observing my features closely.

"Seen yer afore sumwhar, ain't it?" "I reckon," I replied indifferently, watching Tim fill his glass. "I worked my way up on the boat; saw yer on board."

"Sure; that's it; 'tain't in my line fer ter forgit a face. Yer ain't enlisted yet?"

"No; I reckon I'll wait till maunin', an' clean up a bit first. How 'bout sum soap an' water 'fore I eat—an' yer cuden't loan me a razor, cud ye?"

"Wal' I got plenty o' water, an' maybe cud scare up sum soap. Tim yere he's got a razor, an' if he's a friend o' yers, I reckon he mought lend it ter yer."

The deputy gulped down his drink, and smacked his lips, clinging with one hand to the bar, regarding me lovingly.

"Sure; he's a friend o' mine. Shave him myself soon's I git sober. What's thet? Yer can't wait? Oh, all right, then, take it yerself. Mighty fin' razor, ol' man."

Rale found me a tin basin, water, a bit of rag for a towel, and a small, cracked mirror, in which my reflection was scarcely recognizable. He was a man of few words, contenting himself with uttering merely a dry comment on Kennedy, who had dropped back into a convenient chair and buried his face on the table.

"Tim's a good fellow, an' I never saw him so blame drunk afore," he said, regretfully. "He an' Kirby hed a row, an' I reckon thet's what started him drinkin'."

"A row; a quarrel, you mean?" forgetting myself in surprise. "Who's Kirby?"

"Joe Kirby; yer sure must know him if yer a river man. Slim sorter feller, with a smooth face; slickest gambler ever was, I reckon."

"Why, of course," getting control of myself once more. "We picked him up, long with Tim, down river. Hed two women with 'em, didn't they? run-away niggers?"

Rale winked facetiously, evidently rather proud of the exploit as it had been related to him.

"Wal', ther way I understan', they wa'n't both o' 'em niggers; however, that was the story told on board. This yere Joe Kirby is pretty slick, let me tell you. One o' 'em's a white gurl, who just pretended she was a nigger. I reckon thet even Kirby didn't catch on ter her game at first; an' when he did he was too blame smart ter ever let her know. She don't think he knows yet, but she's liable fer ter find out mighty soon."

"But he cannot hold a white woman," I protested stoutly.

"Can't, hey! Wal', I reckon there are ways o' even doin' thet, an' if thar be, Kirby'll find it. I reckon she won't find no chance ter raise a holler fore he's got her tied good an' strong."

"Do you mean," I asked, horrified, "that he will compel her to marry him?"

"Sum smart little guesser, ain't yer? I reckon she's in a right smart way ter do it, et thet."

"And was this the cause of the quarrel between Kirby and Kennedy?"

"Wal', I reckon it was; leastwise Tim wudn't be mixed up in the affair none. They hed it pritty blame hot, an' I reckon thar'd bin a dead deputy if hedn't bin fer me. Tim thought I

was a pritty gud thar an' cum over yere ter liquor, an' eat. Ther joke ov it is, he never know'd thet Joe hed told me all 'bout the fix he wuz in, afore we cum ashore. H—, it wuz all fixed up what wuz ter be done—only we didn't expect the steamer wuz goin' on north. Thar's sum boys wantin' a drink; see yer agin."

I finished hastily, making no attempt to hurry, busily thinking over this new situation. In the first place why had Rale told me all this? I felt convinced the man had some purpose in his conversation, and that he had not finished all he intended to say, when the entrance of customers compelled his return to the bar. His parting words implied that. Perhaps the revolt of the deputy made it necessary for the conspirators to select another helper to properly carry out their nefarious scheme; and Rale had decided that I might answer. I hoped this might prove the explanation and determined to seek the earliest opportunity to impress upon that individual the fact that I was desperately in need of money, and decidedly indifferent as to how it was obtained.

The two soldiers, whose entrance had interrupted our talk, remained at the bar drinking until after I had completed my toilet, and were still there listening to a story Rale was telling when the slatternly white woman announced that supper was ready to serve. Tim slept soundly, while the other men remained engrossed in their game of cards. Rale glanced about at these as though to reassure himself that they were intent on their play then, removing his apron, he crossed the room and drew up a chair opposite me.

"All right, Sal," he grunted shortly. "Bring on what yer got."

He remained silent, staring moodily at the fire, until after the woman had spread out the dishes on the table before him. Then his eyes fell upon the fare.

"Nice looking mess that," he growled, surveying the repast with undisguised disgust. "No wonder we don't do no business with that kind o' a cook. No, yer needn't stay—go an' make up them beds in the other room. I'll watch things yere."

I judged the fellow had come over intending to resume our interrupted conversation, but hardly knew what he had best venture. I decided to give him a lead.

"I ain't got no money, myself," I began to explain, apologetically. "But Tim thar 'ed he'd pay my bill."

"Sure, that's all right; I ain't a worryin' none. Maybe I might put yer in an easy way o' gettin' hold o' a little coin—that is if ye ain't too blame particular."

"Me!" I laughed. "Well, I reckon I don't aim fer ter be thet. I've bin ten years knockin' 'bout between New Orleans an' Saint Louis, steamboatin' mostly. Thet sort o' thing don't make no saint out' any kind o' man, I reckon. What sort's job is it?"

He eyed me cautiously, as though not altogether devoid of suspicion.

"Yer don't somehow look just the same sort o' chap, with them ther whiskers shaved off," he acknowledged soberly. "Yer a sight better lookin' then I thought yer was, an' a sight younger. What was it yer cum frum?"

"Frum Saint Louis, on the boat, if thet's what yer drivin' at."

"Tain't what I'm drivin' at. Whar else did yer cum frum afore then? Yer ain't got no bum's face."

"Oh, I see; well, I can't help that, kin I? I was raised down in Mississippi, an' run away when I was fourteen. I've been a driftin' 'long ever since. I reckon my face ain't goin' ter hurt none so long as the pay is right."

"No, I reckon maybe it won't. I've seed sum baby faces in my time thet sure hed the devil behind 'em. What's yer name?"

"Moffett—Dan Moffett."

He fell silent, and I was unpleasantly aware of his continued scrutiny, my heart beating fiercely, as I endeavored to force down more of the food as an excuse to remain at the table. What would he decide? Finally he spoke



I Was Unpleasantly Aware of His Continued Scrutiny. What Would He Decide?

once more, but gruffly enough, leaning

forward, and lowering his voice to a hoarse whisper.

"Wal' now see yere, Moffett, I'm goin' fer ter be d— plain with yer. I reckon yer whut yer say ye are, fer thar ain't no reason, fer as I kin see, why we should lie 'bout it. Yer flat broke, an' need coin, an' I'm takin' ye at yer own word—that ye don't cure overly much how yet git it. Thet true?"

"Just 'bout—so it ain't no hangin' job."

"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 friend 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 wuz an' planter livin' down in Missouri at a place called Beaucalre's Landin'. His name wuz Beaucalre, an' he hed a son named Bert, a good-fer-nothin' 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 wuz Della, an' the kid was called Rene. Git them names in yer head. Ol' Beaucalre he knew the gurl wuz his son's baby, so he brought her up 'long with his own daughter, who was named Eloise. They wuz both 'bout ther same age, an' nobody seemed ter know thet Rene was a nigger. Fer sum reason ol' Beaucalre 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 Beaucalre 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 Louis. Enyhow, it looked like a d— good thing fer Kirby, who ain't passin' up many bets. Ol' Beaucalre wuz rich, an' considerable o' a sport; people who hed seed the gurl seed they wuz both o' 'em benuties 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' Beaucalre's coin, an' pick up them gurls along with it."

"But how cud they do thet?"

"Lack mostly, I reckon, an' Kirby's brains. The plan wuz ter git Beaucalre 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 wuz a dead game gambler, an' played fer big stakes. It wuz luck, though, what giv' 'em their chance. Beaucalre hed sum minin' claims up on the Fevre, an' hed ter go up thar. It's a long, lonesom' trip, I reckon, an' so the other two they 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 plenyone, niggers an' all. It wuz suta sweep, an' he hed signed bills o' sale. Wa'n't nobody cud git it away frum him. Wal' Joe he didn't want fer ter make no fuss, ner scare the gurl none, so he went down ter Saint Louis 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 hed ter be served afore they cud take away the niggers. Kirby wuz 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 thet notion in his hed."

"She wuz the daughter; the white one?"

"Sure; he hed the other by law. Wal, when they all got thar, nobody wuz home, 'cept one o' the gurls, who claimed fer ter be Rene—the one who wuz a nigger, thet Kirby owned. Nobody know'd which wuz 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 wuz sittin' round wulin' fer her ter turn up, when the nigger gurl they wuz watchin' got away."

"How'd she do thet?"

"Don't nobody seem ter know. Damn funny story. Way they tell it, somebody must've 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 wuz a slick job."

(To Be Continued.)

HORSE HAD A TEMPERAMENT

At Least Animal Seemed to Prove That It Had the Ability to Think for Itself.

Prima donnas and high-strung artists are temperamental, but it is not often that such a trait is found in a horse, as was the case in an incident which occurred on one of the uptown streets the other afternoon, says the New York Times. The horse was attached to a delivery wagon. Mr. Horse evidently thought that he had done enough work for the day, so without further ceremony he lay down across the tracks of one of the trolley lines. A crowd soon collected, followed by the usual excitement with a glowing

motorman and a call for the police. A woman who said that she knew something about horses, said the animal was overcome by hard work, and she gave instructions to the driver as to what he should do. After a few minutes had passed a veterinary stepped out of the crowd and took a look at the horse. The veterinary turned to the cop and the others and said: "There is nothing the matter with this horse. He is tired and he just made up his mind to take a rest. You know when a horse gets tired, he is not particular as to where he stretches his bones. My word for it, he will be all right in a few minutes and be on his way."

The woman did not agree with him and insisted that something be done to alleviate the animal's suffering. She and the veterinary got into a heated argument, when the horse without further ado decided that the street was not the best place in the world to stretch his bones on, so he got up on all fours and shook himself. The driver hitched him to the wagon, and Mr. Horse started off on his labors as if nothing had happened. One man in the crowd said that he'd be darned if he ever knew until then that a horse could think.

ENTERTAINERS IN HARD LUCK

But to Put It Mildly, They Were Unfortunate in Their Selection of "Enlivening" Song.

While writing a book at Northampton, Mass., and a neighbor of Professor Whitney, Raphael Pumpelly tells in his reminiscences, Miss Alice Whitney told him the following at once humorous and pathetic story:

"They had as guests staying with them a missionary and his wife from the south seas. The woman was tall and of stern aspect; the man, her second husband, was a small and timid creature. One evening, in an attempt to introduce a little liveliness into the solemnity, Mrs. Whitney asked her sons, just home from college, and her daughter to sing some college songs. So gathering around the piano, with their backs to the audience, the young people began 'The King of the Cannibal Islands.' As the song progressed the missionary lady grew more and more erect and severe, and when it came to the serving up of roast missionary she rose in anger, and with her black silk skirts rustling she walked solemnly out of the room, followed finally by her shrinking little husband."

"Then Mrs. Whitney burst out with: 'Oh, children, children, what have you done? Her first husband was eaten by cannibals!'"

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