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The Man From Brodney's

By George Barr M. Cutcheon



"I love you."

"What he is a thief!"

"No more so than Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme, who unquestionably cheated the natives out of the very treasure we have seen carried away. I am not a constable nor a chief catcher. I am a soldier of the defense, not an officer of the crown. At this stage of the game. Today I shall contrive to send word to Rasula that Von Blitz has stolen the treasure chests. Mr. Von Blitz will have a sad time explaining this little defection to his friends. We must not overlook the fact that Lady Deppingham and Robert Browne are quite willing to take everything from the islanders. Everything that Taswell Skaggs and John Wyckholme possessed in this island belongs to them under the terms of the will."

They were at the top of the second flight of stairs by this time and quite a distance from the treasure chamber. His coolness, the absence of any sign of returning sentiment, was puzzling her sorely. Half an hour before she had been carried away, rendered helpless, by the reason that swayed him. Now he spoke and looked as if he had forgotten the result of his storming. Strangely enough, she was piqued.

When they came into the well lighted upper corridor he proceeded ruthlessly to upset all of her harsh calculations. He stopped suddenly, stepping directly in front of her. As she drew up in surprise he reached down and took both of her hands in his. For the moment she was amazed to oppose this sudden action. She looked up into his face, many emotions in her own—reproof, wonder, dismay, hauteur, joy.

"Wait," he said gently. "They were quite alone. She saw the most wonderful light in his gray eyes. Her lips parted in quick, timorous confusion. 'I love you. I am sorry for what I did down there. I couldn't help it. I couldn't you. Yet I took a cruel advantage of you. I know what you've been thinking too. You have been saying to yourself that I wanted to see how far I could go. Don't speak, I know! You are wrong. I've absolutely worshiped you since those first days in Thorberg, wildly, hopelessly, day and night. I was afraid of you—yes, afraid of you because you are a princess. But I've got over all that. Geneva. You are a woman a living, real woman, with the blood and the heart and the lips that were made for men to crave. I want to tell you this here in the light of day, not in the darkness that hid all the truth in me except that which you might have felt in my kiss."

"Please—please don't," she said once more, her lip trembling, her eyes full of the softness that the woman who loves cannot hide. "You shall not go on! It is wrong!"

"It is not wrong!" he cried hotly. "My love is not wrong. I want you to understand and to believe. I can't hope that you will be my wife. It's too wildly impracticable. You are not for such as I. You are pledged to a man of your own world, your own exalted world. But listen, Geneva. See, my eyes call you darling even though my lips dare not. Geneva, I'd give my soul to hear you say that you will be my wife. You do understand how it is with me?"

"The delicious sense of possession thrilled her. She glowed with the return of her self esteem, in the restoration of that quality which proclaimed her a princess of the blood. She was sure of him now. She was sure of herself. She had her emotions well in hand. And so, despite the delicious warmth that swept through her being, she chose to reveal no sign of it to him.

"I do understand," she said quietly, meeting his gaze with a directness that hurt him sorely. "And you, too, understand. I could not be your wife. I am glad, yet sorry, that you love me, and I am proud to have heard you say that you want me. But I am a sensible creature, Mr. Chase, and, being sensible, am therefore selfish. I have seen women of my unhappy station venture outside of their narrow confines in the search for lifelong joy with men who might have been kings had they not been born under happier stars—men of the great wide world instead of the soulless, heartless patch which such as I call a realm. Not one in a hundred of those women found the happiness they were so sure of grasping just outside their prison walls. It was not in the blood. We must marry and live and die in the sphere to which we were born. We must go through life unloved and uncherished, bringing princes into the world, seeing happiness and love—far beyond our reach all the time. We are bound by chains no force can break—the chains of prejudice."

She had withdrawn her hands from his. He was standing before her as calm and unmoved as a statue.

"Just the same," he went on gently, "you love me as I love you. You kissed me. I could feel love in you then. I can see it in you now. You will marry Prince Karl in June, and all the rest of your life will be bleak December. You will never forget this month of March—our month." He paused for a moment to look deeply into her incredulous eyes. His face writhed in sudden pain. Then he burst forth with

"The other grinned amiably. 'Well, you just wait, as the boy says.' After satisfying themselves that there was no possibility of the enemy ever being able to enter the chateau through the collapsed passage the trio returned to the upper world.

Robert Browne and Lady Agnes were seated on the edge of the fountain in Apollo's grotto, conversing earnestly, even eagerly, with Mr. Bowles, who stood before them in an untimely attitude of indecision and perturbation. Deppingham gave Chase a look which plainly revealed his uneasiness.

"You don't mean to say, Lord Deppingham, that you're afraid the heirs will follow the advice of that rattle-headed Saunders," said Chase, with a laugh. "Why, it wouldn't hold in court for a second. Ask Britt."

Britt cleared his throat. "Not for half a second," he said. "I'm only wondering if Bowles has authority to grant divorces."

"I dare say he has," said Deppingham, tugging at his mustache. "He's—he's a magistrate."

"It doesn't follow," said Chase, "that he has unlimited legal powers."

"But what are they ragging him about down here, Chase?" blurted out the unhappy Deppingham.

"Come in and have a drink," said Chase suddenly. Deppingham was shivering. "You've got a chill in that damp cellar. I can assure you positively as representative of the opposition that the grandchildren of Skaggs and Wyckholme are not going to do voice or marry anybody while I'm here. Britt and Saunders and Bowles to the contrary. And Lady Deppingham is no fool. Come on and have something to warm the cockles."

"All right, old chap," Deppingham said, with a laugh. "I am chilled to the bone. I'll join you in a few minutes." To their surprise, he started across the terrace in the direction of the consulting trio.

"Just the same, Chase," said Britt after a long silence, "he's worried, and not about marriage or divorce either. He's nervous. I didn't believe it was in him."

"See here, Britt; you've no right to stir him up with those confounded remarks about divorce. You know that's not it. Don't do it."

"My dear Chase," said Britt, waving his hand wearily. "I can't help laughing at the position you're in at present. It doesn't matter what you get on to in connection with our side of the case, you're where you can't take advantage of it without getting killed by your own clients. Horrible paradox, eh?"

When Deppingham rejoined them, he was pale and very nervous. His wife, who had been weeping, came up with him, while Browne went off toward the stables with the ex-banker.

"What do you think has happened?" demanded his lordship, addressing the two men, who stood by irresolutely. "Somebody's trying to poison me! Lady Deppingham's dog is dead—poisoned, gentlemen!" He was wiping the moisture from his brow.

"I'm sorry, Lady Deppingham," said Chase earnestly. "He was a nice dog. But I hardly think he could have eaten what was intended for any of us. If he was poisoned, the poison was meant for him and for no one else but one of the stable boys yesterday. If—"

"That may all be very true, Chase," protested his lordship, "but don't you see it goes to show that some one has a stock of poison on hand, and we may be the next to get it. He died half an hour after eating, after eating a libel that was intended for me! It's—it's damned uncomfortable, to say the least."

"I'm sure you need the brandy after all this. Come along. Will you join us, Lady Deppingham?" said Chase.

"No. I'm going to bed!" She started away, then stopped and looked at her husband, her eyes wide with sudden comprehension. "Oh, Deppy, I should have died! I should have died!"

"My dear?"

"I couldn't have lived if—"

"But, my dear, I didn't eat it—and here we are, God bless you!" He turned abruptly and walked off beside her, ignoring the two distressed Americans. As they passed through the French window Deppingham put his arm about his wife's waist. Chase turned to Britt.

"I don't know what you're thinking, Britt, but it isn't so, whatever it is."

"Good Lord, man, I wasn't thinking that!"

There was not the slightest doubt in the minds of those conversant with the situation that the poison had been intended for either Lord or Lady Deppingham. The drug had been subtly, skillfully placed in one of the sandwiches which came up to their rooms at 11 o'clock, the hour at which they favorably drank off a cup of bouillon.

Drusilla Browne was jesting, no doubt, but it is doubtful if any one grasped the delicacy of her humor when she observed, in mock concern, addressing the assembled mourners, that she believed the heirs were trying to get rid of their in-laws by poisoning them after the Borgia fashion and that she would never again have the courage to eat a mouthful of food so long as she stood between her husband and a hyemeral fortune.

"You know, my dear," she concluded, turning to her husband, "that I might have had Lord Deppingham's biscuit. His wife asked me to take it. Goodness, you're a dreadful Borgia person, Agnes," she went on, smiling brightly at her ladyship. Deppingham was fumbling nervously at his monocle. "I should think you would be nervous, Lord Deppingham."

The most rigid questioning elicited no information from the servants. Balfour's sudden, involuntary look of suspicion, directed toward Lady Agnes

and Robert Browne, did not escape the keen eye of Hollingsworth Chase.

"Impossible!" he said, half aloud. He looked up and saw that the princess was staring at him questioningly. He shook his head without thinking.

Despair settled upon the white people. They were confronted by a new and serious peril—poison. At no time could they feel safe.

One of the stable boys volunteered to carry a note from Chase to Rasula, asking the opportunity to lay a question of grave importance before him. Chase suggested to Rasula that he should meet him that evening at the west gate, under a flag of truce. The tone of the letter was more or less peremptory.

Rasula came, sullen but curious. At first he would not believe, but Chase was firm in his denunciation of Jacob von Blitz. Then he was pleased to accuse Chase of duplicity and double dealing, going so far as to charge the deposed American with plotting against Von Blitz to further his own ends in more ways than one. At last, however, he agreed to follow the advice of the American—gradually, to be sure, but none the less determined.

"You will find everything as I have stated it, Rasula," said Chase. "I'm sorry you are against me, for I would be your friend. I've told you how to reach the secret cave. The chests are here. The passage is closed. You can rap him in the attempt to rob the ank. I could have taken him red-handed and given him over to Lord Deppingham, but you would never have known the truth. Now I ask you to judge for yourselves. Give him a fair trial, Rasula—as you would any accused of crime—and be just. If you need a witness—my eyewitness—all on me. I will come, and I will swear against him. I've been honest with you. I am willing to trust you to be honest with me."

CHAPTER XXIV.
DEPPINGHAM YIELDS HIS.

THAT evening Lord Deppingham looked to his bed with violent chill. He shivered and burned by turns and spent a most distressing night. Bobby Browne came in twice to see him before retiring. For some reason unknown to any one but himself, Deppingham refused to be treated by the young man, notwithstanding the fact that Browne had claimed to a physician's certificate and professed to be especially successful in breaking up "the ague." Lady Agnes entreated her hedge lord to submit to the doses, but Deppingham was resolute to intransigence.

"A Dover's powder, Deppy, or a few grains of quinine. Please be sensible. You're just like a child."

"What's in a Dover's powder?" demanded the patient, who had never been ill in his life.

"Precise and opium, sugar of milk or sulphate of potash. It's an anodyne, diaphoretic," said Browne.

"Opium, eh?" came sharply from the couch. "Good Lord, an overdose of it would—"

He checked the words abruptly and gave vent to a nervous fit of laughter.

"Don't be a fool, George," commanded his wife. "No one is trying to poison you."

"Who's saying that he's going to poison me?" demanded Deppingham shortly. "I'm objecting because I don't like the idea of taking medicine from a man just out of college."

"I've just given my wife a powder old man. She's got a nervous head ache," urged Browne tolerantly.

"Your wife?" exclaimed Deppingham, sitting up. "The devil!" He looked hard at Browne for a moment. "Oh, I say, now, old chap, don't you think it's rather too much of a coincidence?"

Browne arose quickly, a flash of resentment in his eyes. "See here, Deppingham."

"I apologize, Browne," said Deppingham hastily. "I'm not afraid of your medicine. I'm only thinking of my wife. If I should happen to die, don't you know, there would be people who might say that you could have cured me. See what I mean?"

"You dear old goose!" cried his wife. "I fancy Sallim or Bullo or even Bowles knows what a fellow does himself with when he's bowled over by one of these beastly island ailments. Oblige me, Agnes, and send for Bowles."

He immediately recommended an old-fashioned Dover's powder, and ventured the opinion that a "good sweat" would soon put his lordship on his feet, "better than ever." Deppingham kept Bowles beside him while Browne generously prepared and administered the medicine.

Later in the night the princess came to see how the patient was getting on. He was in a dripping perspiration.

Genevra drew a chair up beside his couch and sat down. Lady Agnes was yawning sleepily over a book.

"Do you know, I believe I'd feel better if I could have another chill," he said. "I'm so beastly hot now that I can't stand it. Aggy, why don't you turn out on the balcony for a bit of fresh air? I'm a brute to have kept you moping in here all evening."

Lady Agnes sighed prettily and stepped out into the murky night.

"I say, Genevra, what's the news?" demanded his lordship. "Where is Chase?"

Now, the princess, it is most distressing to state, had willfully avoided Mr. Chase since early that morning.

"I'm sure I don't know. I had dinner with Mrs. Browne in her room. I fancy he's off attending to the guard. I haven't seen him."

"Nice chap," remarked Deppingham. "Isn't that he now speaking to Agnes out there?"

Genevra looked up quickly. A man's voice came in to them from the balcony, following Lady Deppingham's soft laugh.

"No," she said, settling back calmly. "It's Mr. Browne."

"Oh," said Deppingham, a slight shadow coming into his eyes. "Nice chap, too," he added a moment later. "I don't like him," said she, lowering her voice.

"I've no doubt Agnes is as much to blame as he," said his lordship at last.

"Why don't you marry him?"

"She's made a fool of more than one man, my dear. She rather likes it."

"He's behaving like a brute. They've been married less than a year."

"It really doesn't amount to anything, Genevra," he argued. "It will blow over in a fortnight. Aggy's always doing this sort of thing, you know."

"I know, Deppy," she said sharply. "But this man is different. He's not a gentleman. Mr. Skaggs wasn't a gentleman. Blood tells. He will boast of this flirtation until the end of his days."

"Aggy's had dozens of men in love with her—really in love," he protested. "She's not!"

"They've come and gone, and she's still the same old Agnes, and you're the same old Deppy. I'm not thinking of you or Aggy. It's Drusilla Browne."

"I see. Thanks for the confidence you have in Aggy. I dare say I know how Drusilla feels. I've—I've had a turn or two myself lately, and—"

He never mind. By the way, what does Chase say about it?" he asked suddenly.

She started and caught her breath. Mr. Chase? He hasn't said anything about it," she responded lamely. "He's—he's not that sort."

"Ah," reflected Deppingham, "he is a gentleman!"

Genevra flushed. "Yes, I'm sure he is."

"I say, Genevra," he said, looking straight into her rebellious eyes, "you're in love with Chase. Why don't you marry him?"

"You—you are really delicious, Deppy," she cried. "The fever has!"

"He's good enough for any one—even you," went on his lordship coolly. "He may have a wife," said she, collecting her wits with rare swiftness. "Who knows? Don't be silly, Deppy."

"Unhush! Haven't you stuffed Aggy and me full of the things you found out concerning him before he fit Thorberg, and afterward—the letters from the ambassador's wife and the glowing things you St. Petersburg friends have to say of him, eh? Besides, he'd give his head to marry on—having already lost it."

"You are very amusing, Deppy, when you try to be clever. Is there a lause in that silly old will compelling me to marry any one?"

"Of course not, my dear princess, but I fancy you've got a will of your own. Where there's a will there's a way. You'd marry him tomorrow if—"

"If I were not amply prepared to contest my own will?" she supplied drily.

"No. If your will was not wrapped in a convention three centuries old. You don't marry Chase because you are a princess. I'm awfully sorry for you, Genevra."

"Sorry for me? Dear me!"

"You're tremendously gone on him."

"Nonsense! Why, I couldn't marry Mr. Chase," she exclaimed, irritated at last. "Don't put such things into my head—I mean don't get such things into that ridiculous old head of yours. Are you forgetting that I am to become Karl's wife in June? You are babbling, Deppy."

"Well, let's say no more about it," he said, lying back resignedly. "It's too bad, that's all. Chase is a man. Karl isn't. You loathe him. I don't wonder that you turn pale and look frightened. Take my advice—take Chase."

"Don't!" she cried, a break in her voice. She arose and went swiftly toward the window. Then she stopped and turned upon him, her lips parted as if to give utterance to the thing that was stirring her heart so violently. The words would not come. She smiled plaintively and said instead: "Good night! Get a good sleep."

"The same to you," he called feverishly.

"Deppy," she said firmly, a red spot in each cheek, her voice tense and strained to a high pitch of suppressed decision, "I shall marry Karl Bratetz. That will be the end of your Mr. Chase."

(To be Continued)

The other grinned amiably. "Well, you just wait, as the boy says." After satisfying themselves that there was no possibility of the enemy ever being able to enter the chateau through the collapsed passage the trio returned to the upper world.

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"I say, Genevra, what's the news?" demanded his lordship. "Where is Chase?"

Now, the princess, it is most distressing to state, had willfully avoided Mr. Chase since early that morning.

"I'm sure I don't know. I had dinner with Mrs. Browne in her room. I fancy he's off attending to the guard. I haven't seen him."

"Nice chap," remarked Deppingham. "Isn't that he now speaking to Agnes out there?"

Genevra looked up quickly. A man's voice came in to them from the balcony, following Lady Deppingham's soft laugh.

"No," she said, settling back calmly. "It's Mr. Browne."

"Oh," said Deppingham, a slight shadow coming into his eyes. "Nice chap, too," he added a moment later. "I don't like him," said she, lowering her voice.

"I've no doubt Agnes is as much to blame as he," said his lordship at last.

"Why don't you marry him?"

"She's made a fool of more than one man, my dear. She rather likes it."

"He's behaving like a brute. They've been married less than a year."

"It really doesn't amount to anything, Genevra," he argued. "It will blow over in a fortnight. Aggy's always doing this sort of thing, you know."

"I know, Deppy," she said sharply. "But this man is different. He's not a gentleman. Mr. Skaggs wasn't a gentleman. Blood tells. He will boast of this flirtation until the end of his days."

"Aggy's had dozens of men in love with her—really in love," he protested. "She's not!"

"They've come and gone, and she's still the same old Agnes, and you're the same old Deppy. I'm not thinking of you or Aggy. It's Drusilla Browne."

"I see. Thanks for the confidence you have in Aggy. I dare say I know how Drusilla feels. I've—I've had a turn or two myself lately, and—"

He never mind. By the way, what does Chase say about it?" he asked suddenly.

She started and caught her breath. Mr. Chase? He hasn't said anything about it," she responded lamely. "He's—he's not that sort."

"Ah," reflected Deppingham, "he is a gentleman!"

Genevra flushed. "Yes, I'm sure he is."

"I say, Genevra," he said, looking straight into her rebellious eyes, "you're in love with Chase. Why don't you marry him?"

"You—you are really delicious, Deppy," she cried. "The fever has!"

"He's good enough for any one—even you," went on his lordship coolly. "He may have a wife," said she, collecting her wits with rare swiftness. "Who knows? Don't be silly, Deppy."

"Unhush! Haven't you stuffed Aggy and me full of the things you found out concerning him before he fit Thorberg, and afterward—the letters from the ambassador's wife and the glowing things you St. Petersburg friends have to say of him, eh? Besides, he'd give his head to marry on—having already lost it."

"You are very amusing, Deppy, when you try to be clever. Is there a lause in that silly old will compelling me to marry any one?"

"Of course not, my dear princess, but I fancy you've got a will of your own. Where there's a will there's a way. You'd marry him tomorrow if—"

"If I were not amply prepared to contest my own will?" she supplied drily.

"No. If your will was not wrapped in a convention three centuries old. You don't marry Chase because you are a princess. I'm awfully sorry for you, Genevra."

"Sorry for me? Dear me!"

"You're tremendously gone on him."

"Nonsense! Why, I couldn't marry Mr. Chase," she exclaimed, irritated at last. "Don't put such things into my head—I mean don't get such things into that ridiculous old head of yours. Are you forgetting that I am to become Karl's wife in June? You are babbling, Deppy."

"Well, let's say no more about it," he said, lying back resignedly. "It's too bad, that's all. Chase is a man. Karl isn't. You loathe him. I don't wonder that you turn pale and look frightened. Take my advice—take Chase."

"Don't!" she cried, a break in her voice. She arose and went swiftly toward the window. Then she stopped and turned upon him, her lips parted as if to give utterance to the thing that was stirring her heart so violently. The words would not come. She smiled plaintively and said instead: "Good night! Get a good sleep."

"The same to you," he called feverishly.

"Deppy," she said firmly, a red spot in each cheek, her voice tense and strained to a high pitch of suppressed decision, "I shall marry Karl Bratetz. That will be the end of your Mr. Chase."

(To be Continued)