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Dunston's Revenge

An Evil Intention
Changed to a Good
One

By

CLARISSA MACKIE

A man and a woman were riding on horseback over the broad acres of a western ranch. As they cantered on the girl chatted pleasantly, while the man listened, making brief replies. He was thinking of another matter than the one of which she was speaking. Suddenly he reined in his horse and facing her said, more as if in anger than in love:

"Rose, I love you. I've loved you a long while. Will you be my wife?"

The girl, startled at such a proposal made in such a tone, drew back. "I can't, Ralph. I can't. I would if I could, but I don't love you."

"You can love me if you want to," he replied bitterly. "Indeed, I can't."

"Then there isn't a chance for me?" asked Ralph Dunston hoarsely as he looked away.

Rose's brown eyes grew very pitiful, and she laid her little gloved hand on Dunston's bridle rein.

"I'm sorry, Ralph," she whispered in a distressed tone. "I'm sorry."

"That's enough," he interrupted sharply. "I suppose it's Bert Slater. But I'll see he doesn't get you!"

"Well, honey, what's bothering you tonight?" asked Rufus Weldon of his daughter, as she sat in dreamy silence before the fire.

Rose sighed and then dashed a smile at her father. She went over and knelt beside his chair, leaning her dark head against his shoulder.

"Nothing much, dad," she answered after long silence—"only—only—only—well, father, it's Bert Slater!"

"The deuce!" exploded Rufus in pretended surprise. "You don't mean to say my foreman has the nerve"—Rose's hand covered his lips.

"I love him, father," she whispered. His arms went around closely, and it was thus Bert Slater found them. When he came in Rufus extended a hand to include him in the little circle.

"The matter seems settled, son," said Rufus humorously.

The period of Rose Weldon's engagement to Bert Slater was marked by anxious days and nights. She had not told her lover of Dunston's threat, nor had she confided in her father, for in either case one or both of them would have gone forth to administer punishment to the disappointed cowboy.

Then suddenly one day Rufus Weldon met death, and the horse that had thrown him had to be shot. Left alone on the ranch, with her nearest relatives some maiden aunts in Massachusetts, Rose gave heed to Bert Slater's pleading, and soon they were married. Slater had invested some money in the ranch, and as Rose was her father's sole heir, husband and wife carried on the business in the same thrifty manner that had made Rufus Weldon comfortably rich as compared to many of his neighbors.

Of Ralph Dunston they saw little. When they did meet him Rose was all a-quiver with anxiety lest the dark browed man engage her good tempered husband in an argument that might foment trouble and end in the gun play that would give Dunston his long cherished opportunity to put an end to Bert's life and thus carry out his scheme of revenge.

But Dunston held himself well in hand. If he had little to say no one could marvel at his taciturnity in the presence of his successful rival, for the whole county knew that Ralph Dunston had loved Rose to distraction, and many people said that he had had a fair chance to gain her affections had not Slater come on from the east to join Rufus Weldon in the business.

But it had been a banner year in the cattle raising country, and every one was so happy and contented that no one gave heed to Ralph and his cherished revenge. Outwardly he was gay and careless, and no one knew that his insouciance covered a heart brooding blackly over his coveted revenge.

As the months dragged by Rose gradually forgot Dunston's threatened revenge, and she dismissed it entirely from her mind when they placed her baby in her arms. Rufus Weldon Slater they named the little one, and in the joy of motherhood Rose included the whole world in her great warm heart.

When Dunston heard about the little Rufus he went for a long ride through the purple sagebrush, and when he came back his lips were smiling, but murder lurked in his black eyes.

The snow was falling thickly on that winter evening when Ralph Dunston set out to encompass his revenge. It was the very night for his purpose.

Two halfbreed Indians slouched after him on wiry horses, and one of these blanketed rascals was to draw Bert Slater from the house on some fictitious errand while the other kidnaped Rose's little son. It was a very crudely planned affair, after all, and showed the effect of long months of brooding over his fancied wrongs. Ralph was desperate now. He felt that by depriving Rose and Slater of their first-born he could cause them greater pain than by simply taking Bert's life. He wanted Slater to suffer, too, and in death there was only release.

A light burned in the house, and a shadow flitted across the window shade. The bunkhouse was in total darkness. Dunston had chosen his night well, for it was the occasion of a big ball at Red Top, and there was not a soul about the place save the two Chinese cooks, and they were audibly asleep in the little hut which they occupied together near the corral.

Just as Dunston rode up to the doorstep to peer into the window the door was flung wide open, and he started back.

Rose Slater stood in the doorway peering up at him like one distracted.

"Oh, Ralph," she cried in a relieved tone, "I am so glad it is you! I was afraid it might be some one I couldn't trust. Bert has broken his leg. There isn't a man about the place, and baby has the croup. He will die if you can't get the doctor here. Oh!" She leaned against the doorpost as Dunston slipped from his horse and rushed past her into the house.

"Come in and shut the door," he commanded gruffly.

"Where's the baby?" he asked curiously.

She pointed to the sofa drawn close to the fire and then snatched the bundle to her breast, rocking to and fro in helpless fear. From the bundle came hoarse, choking sounds.

Ralph Dunston had been the oldest of twelve children, and he had seen his mother handle croupy babies in the distant past. It is remarkable how tenacious these home memories are in the breasts of the hardest of men.

"Don't you know what to do for the baby?" he asked sharply.

"I've given him croup medicine," began Rose helplessly, when the big man tossed his hat into a corner and strode into the kitchen, where Hop Sing's fire was carefully laid for the next morning. A copper kettle of water on the stove was quite warm, and in a trice Dunston had lighted the kindling in the stove and drawn the big kettle over the flames. He sought and found the baby's tin bathtub and placed it on two chairs before the sitting room fire, just as he had seen his mother do in that faraway past.

Once he stepped outside to send the wondering halfbreeds scurrying back to Red Top for the doctor, and once he ran upstairs and took a look at Bert Slater, who was lying white and still on the bed. He examined the injured leg and found that Rose had put it in splints formed of an umbrella and two of her father's heavy canes. It would do until the doctor came. The baby needed first attention.

He held the baby while at his direction the distracted mother flew here and there, gathering flannels and mustard. Then the hot water was poured into the bath and the mustard added, as Dunston had watched his mother do, and finally the choking and gasping baby was gently lowered into the bath.

Half an hour later little Rufus was sleeping soundly, wrapped in warm blankets. Ralph Dunston awkwardly held the soft bundle while Rose, crying softly with relief, put away the bath and then went to attend to her husband.

The doctor came while Ralph still sat there.

"Hello, Dunston—helping out? That's a good fellow," was the doctor's greeting. Then Rose told the physician of the sudden attack and of the opportune appearance of Ralph Dunston. Dr. Finch nodded gravely, examined the baby and then patted Dunston on the shoulder.

"Good, work, Dunston; you saved the baby's life! Noble work, my man," he said significantly as he turned away, for he, too, knew Dunston's secret.

Dunston flushed and bent his face above the baby's rosy cheek. Rufus turned his head sleepily, sighed and tucked a velvety hand in Ralph's neck. The young man sat there, paralyzed with fear lest the baby should remove the trustful little fingers. Little trickles of warmth ran around his heart and seemed to melt all the hardness and the bitterness that had bound it in an icy crust. Desire for revenge vanished never to return: love for Rose Slater became an almost forgotten incident. The Slater baby seemed to fill the horizon. Just to hold that wonderful little form close to his heart, just to feel the little helpless fingers clutch him confidently, just to know that the little breathing atom of humanity needed him, might grow to love him in time, was enough for Ralph Dunston.

Rose came back to the room, her eyes shining softly, as she saw Ralph Dunston's transformed countenance. He smiled upon her impersonally. She was only the baby's mother!

"How is Bert?" he asked.

"Doing splendidly. The doctor says

he must be careful and that it means a good many weeks of illness. Bert wants me to ask you if you can't help him out here. Some one must take charge. He needs some one he can trust. He says if you can, why, when he gets around once more he would like you to stay on as foreman. Will you?"

"Will it?" Dunston unconsciously repeated the question. He told himself that if he remained he must confess to Slater his evil intentions that night—he would start clear with him. Well, that would be hard, but he could do it. Then, there was the baby. He could see Rufus every day—could ride him on his back—play with him—later, teach him to ride a pony.

"Sure, I'll stay," he said heartily, and as he spoke he bent his head and his lips swept the pure cheek of the little one.

"I'm so glad," said Rose softly, as she took the baby from him. "I know he's going to be awfully fond of his Uncle Ralph!"

And Ralph Dunston tiptoed out of the house, as one who leaves a sacred shrine.

CURIOUS MEALS.

Elephants Are Gormandizers, and Giraffes Have Queer Tastes.

Elephants, at least captive elephants, have queer tastes, says Pearson's Weekly in an entertaining article about the peculiarities of four legged gourmets. One memorable day in 1908 Sufia Cull, the mighty and popular Indian elephant at the zoo, ate his bed. A thirty-six pound truss of straw had been put down on the floor for his comfort, and when the keeper went round in the morning not even the bands of the truss remained.

Sufia Cull followed it up during the day by eating three trusses of hay, weighing 150 pounds. Finally some one brought a number of Christmas puddings into the elephant house. Sufia Cull swallowed his pudding without even opening the cardboard box that contained it.

A zoo keeper once kept a tally of the number of hot cross buns an elephant took down. For six hours on end one fine Good Friday it swallowed buns at the rate of 400 an hour!

The average giraffe loves nothing better in the world than a good square meal of flowers. It has not the slightest idea, however, of the difference between artificial and real flowers.

Some years ago when "garden hats" were all the rage the giraffe at the zoo made a day of it. In that glorious twelve hours it accounted for no fewer than seventeen hats, the majority of which were chewed beyond recognition before they could be rescued.

One of the funniest mistakes a giraffe ever made—funny for lookers-on, that is to say—was when a peacock strolled into its paddock. The peacock's tall caught the giraffe's eye, and evidently the animal mistook it for a gigantic and luxuriant species of flower. At any rate, before any one could interfere down came the giraffe's long neck, and, seizing the peacock by the tail, he hoisted it in midair. It was not long before bird and tail said good-by to each other, and the peacock fluttered away, screaming with indignation. Although a trifle astonished at the proceedings of the newly discovered flower, the giraffe chewed the tail with great gusto.

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Summons

In the Circuit Court of the State of Oregon, for Linn County.

Charles White,

Plaintiff

vs.

Lillian M. White,

Defendant

SUMMONS

TO LILLIAN M. WHITE, the above named defendant.

In the name of the State of Oregon, you are hereby required to appear and answer the complaint of the above named plaintiff in the above entitled Court now on file with the Clerk of said Court, within six weeks from the date of the first publication of this summons, and you are hereby notified that if you fail to appear and answer said complaint as is hereby required, the plaintiff will apply to the said Court for the relief prayed for in the complaint, to-wit:

For a decree of the said Court dissolving the bonds of matrimony now existing between the plaintiff and defendant, and for such other and further relief as the Court may deem proper in the premises.

This Summons is published by virtue of an order made by Honorable Perry R. Kelly, Judge of the above entitled Court, duly made and entered of record in the above entitled Court and cause on the 25th day of April, 1916, which order specifies that Summons be published for six consecutive weeks in The Scio Tribune, that the date of the first publication shall be May 4, 1916, and the date of the last publication shall be June 18, 1916.

Weatherford & Weatherford,
Attorneys for Plaintiff