

THE RED STORM

Or the Days of Daniel Boone

By JOEL ROBINSON

CHAPTER XIX.

Rosalthe clasped her hands and looked imploringly at Otter-Lifter, who stood motionless in the path.

"What would Star-Light and her cousin of the Wyandots do?" asked the chief, coldly.

"White-Cloud and the maiden they call Star-Light do not like cruelty; they seek to save this pale captive from death," replied Wassahauza.

"And was not Otter-Lifter worthy of the confidence of Star-Light and White-Cloud?" replied the chief, in a tone of mild reproach.

"Otter-Lifter of the red race of the Cherokees is humane; but this captive was not taken by a war party of his, and he might have feared to offend the young warriors who brought her away from Harrodsburg," answered Star-Light.

"Wassahauza speaks of fear. When was Otter-Lifter afraid? When did he fail to raise his voice against cruelty? Who can say that he ever tortured a prisoner, or made war on women and children? Not a person living!" said the chief, with dignity.

"Then why does such a gentle-hearted leader stand still when his help is needed? Does he not see this trembling girl suffering the terrors of death? Has he not a hand to use, as well as a tongue to talk?" exclaimed Star-Light.

"The speech of Star-Light is bitter; she wounds the heart of the chieftain who is ready to die in her service," returned Otter-Lifter, mournfully.

Fanny Harrod recovered her consciousness, and stood clinging to Star-Light and our heroine. She fixed her burning eyes on the placid face of Otter-Lifter in silent agony of spirit; for she felt that it was he who was to decide her fate. There was a short period in which no words were spoken. The captive read no emotions of pity in the features of the chief.

He gave back her appealing look with one apparently as impassive as hers had been earnest. A faint smile at length played over his lips; he spoke, and Fanny Harrod and Rosalthe bent forward to catch his words with breathless attention.

"The Pale-Lily has been condemned to death by the ordeal of fire, but she shall live," said Otter-Lifter.

"It is well," answered Star-Light, loftily.

"She shall live," repeated the chief, "even if the sum of her freedom be the life of Otter-Lifter. Yes, he will perish, before a single hair of her head shall be scathed by the devouring fire."

"It is enough," replied the Indian girl. "This way," continued Otter-Lifter. The latter moved on, and the three maidens followed him without a question. Leaving the little village, he led the way to the deep and dark forest, through the umbrage of which the pale moonlight with difficulty crept. He stopped at length a few hundred yards from the encampment.

"Stay here," he said, "till I return," and immediately left them.

Rosalthe was now about to reveal herself to Miss Harrod, but Star-Light sternly bade her be silent.

"If you would save her, be silent," she said.

The time of Otter-Lifter's absence seemed long indeed to the expectant captive. A thousand fears and wild conjectures had birth in her mind. Perhaps the chief had been detected in his purpose, and the plan had failed. It was possible that he had not sufficient influence among the other chiefs and warriors to save her, and innumerable other fancies of this kind passed in quick succession through her mind to revive her terrors.

After the lapse of half an hour steps were heard approaching. Fanny and Rosalthe simultaneously uttered a cry of surprise and alarm; for, instead of seeing Otter-Lifter, they beheld half a dozen warriors mounted upon horses. Star-Light remained calm and undisturbed.

"Peace! peace, foolish maidens! Otter-Lifter is with them!" she exclaimed.

Rosalthe looked again at the advancing Indians, and beheld the chief in the midst of them, leading a horse. She kissed Miss Harrod's pale cheeks, and wept for joy. Without speaking, Otter-Lifter placed Miss Harrod upon the animal which had been provided for that purpose. The chief then turned to the young men.

"Conduct this maiden to Harrodsburg," he said, in a voice of command. "Otter-Lifter has pledged his word that she shall live and return to her friends. Go; and remember that your lives shall answer for hers if harm befall her."

"Come here, Star-Light," said Fanny, in a subdued voice. The proud Indian girl stepped to her side, and Miss Harrod, bending forward, imprinted a kiss upon her lofty forehead. "It is all I can give you," she added.

Star-Light smiled faintly, and seemed to look lovingly at the young girl. For a moment her haughty beauty was softened into a mildness almost angelic.

"It is well that you have been called Star-Light, for I behold reflected from your stary eyes serene rays of mercy and truth!" said Miss Harrod, enthusiastically.

Wassahauza gazed more fixedly at Fanny, and her expression became more benignly softened.

Otter-Lifter gazed at her with a kind of mute idolatry discernible in his eloquent eyes, and then turned abruptly

from the scene, as if afraid to trust himself longer.

Star-Light moved softly away, and Rosalthe took Miss Harrod's hand. When the latter stooped to kiss her forehead, she half-formed the resolution to whisper his name; but a single glance at the changed and gentle expression of Star-Light made her reject the idea; and in an instant Fanny and her escort were moving toward Harrodsburg.

Rosalthe threw her arms about Star-Light and embraced her tenderly; all her unfavorable impressions were completely removed by the recent scene.

This spontaneous act of friendship the Cherokee maiden neither repelled nor encouraged, but suffered it as a statue of marble might receive the same indications of gratitude. The parties returned to the village, Otter-Lifter leading the way in silence.

CHAPTER XX.

It was on the ensuing morning that Star-Light visited the lodge where the interview already mentioned took place between her and Allan Norwood.

There was a great commotion at the village when it was known that Fanny Harrod had escaped. A council was immediately called to see what should be done. While they were gravely smoking the pipe, as an indispensable preliminary, Otter-Lifter appeared among them. One warrior arose and advised that the warriors be punished who had been appointed to watch over the captive, which duty they had not faithfully performed. Another recommended that a small war party be instantly dispatched in pursuit of the captive. Otter-Lifter arose calmly to his feet and looked deliberately around upon the faces of the assembled chiefs and warriors.

"It was my hand that liberated the young white woman," he said. "I rejoice that I did so, because it is a deed that will give me pleasure whenever I think of it. I sent the Pale-Lily under an escort of my warriors; and by this time she is far beyond pursuit. If these wise chiefs and these brave warriors are angry, let them turn their displeasure on me. I am strong, and can die like a man; but she was a weak young girl, whom it was our duty, as brave men, to protect, and not to inhumanly torture. I have spoken."

Otter-Lifter sat down, and there was a deep silence among the chiefs and warriors. At length a chief who had more than reached the period allotted to human life—three-score years and ten—arose and said, in a voice of deep solemnity:

"The young chief has uttered words that have reached my heart. The spirit of Monedo rests upon the young man; he is worthy to be a chieftain among the red children of the Cherokees. I shall pass away, and the grave will hide me; but he will live to be great, and his name will be known among the nations. Young warriors and chiefs, imitate the bright example of Otter-Lifter; it is the advice of an old man whose way is toward the receptacle of death, and to whose eyes the scenes of the happy hunting-grounds already open."

The old man took his seat and the assembled warriors were deeply affected. The current of opinion was changed. The council broke up; the warriors and chiefs pressed around Otter-Lifter to shake hands with him and speak some words of applause; for their noble nature had been touched, and the man "who cared only for his word, his rifle and his honor" was never so popular among his people as then. It is thus that a noble act frequently raises the actor in the estimation of those whom, in all human judgment, it would have deeply offended.

About the same time that the above scene was transpiring, Star-Light and White-Cloud were walking in the forest, upon the margin of the Indian village.

"I have seen one of your people," said Star-Light.

"Who was it?" returned our heroine, looking anxiously at her companion.

"A young man, and he was seeking you. He was tall and handsome, with black hair and eyes," returned Star-Light.

"Did you ask him his name?" rejoined Rosalthe, with an earnestness that she made no attempt to render less apparent.

"I cared nothing for his name; but I told him to go back to Boonesborough and tell your friends you were safe, and would be with them before another moon."

"I thank you for that," exclaimed Rosalthe.

Before the Indian girl had time to reply, a rapid footstep was heard, and Allan Norwood stood before the maidens. The suddenness of his appearance caused Rosalthe to recoil a few paces, but Star-Light remained unmoved.

"What brings you here? have you worn your scalp so long that you have got tired of it, and wish to lose it?" asked Star-Light.

"I have come to seek the maiden I spoke of, and I will never go back till I know what her situation is, and I have some proof that you have told me the truth," replied Allan.

"I never speak falsely; it is the pale-faces that lie!" she replied with dignity.

"I demand proof!" returned Norwood. "Again I ask, what is the young woman to you?" said the Indian girl.

"She is much—everything, and yet

nothing," answered the young man, with much feeling.

"That is strange! Much, everything, nothing—the young man has taken much strong water," replied Star-Light, with a contemptuous curl of her lip.

While this conversation was going on our heroine stood partly behind Star-Light, partly concealed by her person; and the effect of the young man's words may be imagined by the reader. She had no difficulty in recognizing him as the man who had interposed to save her from the impertinence of Le Bland. She stood like one spell-bound and listened to his words with intense interest.

"She is much to me, because I love her, and nothing to me, because she does not know me and reciprocate the sentiment which a single chance meeting called up," he added.

"You have met her then? Why did you not tell her this pleasant story?" resumed the Indian maiden.

"I did not even address her," said Norwood. "I gazed upon her beauty only a moment, and she passed away from my sight like a fair but delusive vision of the night."

"You will tell her this pretty tale if you find her?" added Star-Light, looking at him with a scornful smile.

"Not until she is safely restored to her friends," replied Allan firmly.

"Listen—let your ears be open—the White-Cloud already loves!"

The young hunter grew deadly pale and pressed his hand to his forehead, as if it were stricken with a sudden pain.

Rosalthe's fortitude gave way, and the intensity of her emotions overpowered her. With a faint cry she sank into the arms of Star-Light, and her perceptions grew so confused that the past, present and future were mingled in chaotic confusion.

CHAPTER XXI.

Innis McKee cast a lingering and anxious look at the scout, and then languidly resumed her seat by the dim and fitfully blazing fire. She reflected upon her own isolated and friendless condition. She wondered if the woodsman really felt an interest in such an untaught being as she felt herself to be. He had given utterance to sentiments that had sounded most pleasantly to her ears; she had never had such words addressed to her before.

While she recalled his earnest manner and subdued tones, she felt herself less wretched, and encouraged a trembling hope of a brighter future to come at some very distant day. The kindly words of the scout were like so many notes of music elicited from what appeared to her the disordered harp of human society.

Restless and uneasy, she sat until the clouds were crimson with the dawning. Her mother awoke from her heavy slumber and looked about the dim and gloomy cavern with a dull and vacant stare. Her eyes wandered mechanically to the spot where Ballard had been left by her husband; her apathy was gone—she was fully awake.

"He is gone," said Innis, in answer to her startled and inquiring look. "He's free."

"And you—"

"Assisted him," added the girl. No more was said by either party. Mrs. McKee produced a pipe, and exhaled column after column of smoke with Indian stoisim; and Innis endeavored to imitate her indifference.

"This mode of life does not please me, and I care but little what happens," said the latter, after a long interval of the deepest silence.

Mrs. McKee made no rejoinder, but buried herself in the fumes of the tobacco.

"The young women at Boonesborough lead a better life; they have been taught many things which I know nothing about. I shall go there and see them, perhaps."

Innis ceased speaking, for she heard her father's footsteps. The color forsook her face, and she instinctively pressed closer to her mother's side. But the latter remained unmoved, and continued to emit dark wreaths of smoke.

As McKee drew nearer, however, she threw down the pipe, and folding her arms, calmly awaited the storm. The renegade's eyes wandered quickly to the spot where he had left his victim.

"Where is he?" he asked, with a brow already clouded with wrath.

"Gone! He's a brave man, and I gave him his liberty," replied the Indian spouse.

McKee's nostrils dilated with fury; he retreated a few steps and drew a pistol from his belt.

"Hold! stay your brutality!" exclaimed Innis, advancing until the leveled weapon covered her own person. "I alone am guilty of this deed. These hands released the scout while she slept."

Innis stood erect and firm before her father. She seemed like an accusing spirit. Her form did not tremble nor her voice falter.

"You!" said McKee; and returning the pistol to his belt, he raised his hand to strike.

"Beware!" cried his wife, in a threatening voice. "Be guarded in what you do. Remember that my father is a powerful chief among the Shawnees. I have only to lift my finger thus, and you will be swept from the face of the earth. Strike, if you dare!"

The man's arm sunk suddenly to his side. Fear for his own safety restrained him from acts of unmanly violence; but the demon was still raging within him. (To be continued.)

Happy Ignorance.

"As you make your bed so must you lie in it," quoted Aunt Matilda to her butterfly niece.

"Then it's lucky I never learned to make beds," came the frivolous response.—Cleveland Plain Dealer.

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"AW—beg pardon—er—why—"

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