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Carol Richmond

THE MAN WITH THE BLACK GLOVE.

Continued.
There was a look upon his face that none of them could fathom, for it seemed to be a mixture of triumph, cunning, dread, and Heaven only knows what not.

You see I convinced the fool he had made a big mistake, as I told you I would, and he has gone on to Richmond. Some one misled him, but it is all right now, said the Captain.

Lawrence Richmond noticed several things that excited his curiosity.

In the first place the Captain was whither than he had ever seen him before, and seemed to be trembling somewhat.

Then again he had a handkerchief bound around his left hand, and it seemed to have scratched it on a thorn in passing.

He made no comment, though his suspicions were aroused.

The Captain did not seem disposed to renew his assault upon the old man. Indeed what had passed since then seemed to have quieted his spirits in a wonderful manner, and he was even ready to believe the story of Lawrence Richmond in regard to his suspicion that Roger Darrel had been the one who had committed this daring abduction, though, of course, as they had not the slightest proof, they could not do anything in a legal way.

The news seemed to affect the Captain for apparently he hated Roger with an intensity such as is given by the tiger for its prey or its foe, but he did not remain but he did not remain at the house more than a couple of hours.

There is no use of our lingering here, crying over spilled milk. When we are ready for the ceremony again, we will meet once more, and with this the valiant Captain left the house.

It was about midnight, and the moon in the east showed quite a slice off one side, yet her light, though reduced several degrees, was strong enough to show all the paths through the forest.

It was at this time that the strange and wonderful scene was occurring in front of the old mill, and during which Nora Warner fell into the power of her old-time foe, the man most hateful to her on earth—the mad house doctor.

As he left the house the Captain cast several glances over his shoulder in order to make sure that he was not followed.

The very fact of his doing this would seem to indicate that he was bound upon some errand that would not bear inspection.

Once among the trees he made his way rapidly to a point where the shadows lay densest, and there upon the ground lay the form of a man silent and motionless.

It was the mysterious forger.

The Captain had proven too much for even the keen detective, and his manner of convincing the man-hunter of the mistake he had made had been a forcible one. In the struggle, and before Captain Grant had struck a favorable spot with his knife, the detective, whom he held under his knee, having knocked him flat with a sudden and terrible blow, caught two of the fingers of his gloved left hand between his teeth, and almost bit them off at a point below the end joint.

The murdered man lay just where he had fallen, and, realizing this, the Captain vanished among the trees, returning in less than ten minutes, leading a horse already equipped, which he had secreted in the forest to have ready in case of an emergency, for he was one of those men who always make sure of a way to retreat before proceeding any depth into their schemes.

Presently he was mounted upon the horse, with the body of the foreign detective in front of him, and held in such a manner that it looked like a comrade asleep while he rode, with his head hanging upon his breast.

He kept in the densest portion of the forest, for he did not care to be seen by any one, though the chances of such an event at this hour would have been poor enough even upon the public highway, for the negroes were of too superstitious a nature to think of wandering about the country when ghosts and goblins were supposed to be abroad.

Because of his taking such a round-about way, instead of going direct, he was a much longer time in reaching the old mill than Roger had been when carrying Carol there earlier in the night.

Strange how his mind should have been turned to this quarter as a place of hiding. Surely there must have been

something more than chance in it all.

The future will disclose that.

When he found himself in the immediate neighborhood of the haunted mill, Captain Grant brought his horse to a sudden halt, and placed his dead charge upon the ground. Then, securing his horse, he raised the limp form of the murdered detective in his arms, and, by the exertion of tremendous strength, bore it on.

He disappeared inside the old mill.

The moon, finding ingress through the open windows and great gaping holes in the roof, lighted up the interior in a crude manner, but the illumination was quite enough for his purpose.

There was a large chimney at one side of the mill, and, for some purpose or other, a hole had been made in this, the bricks lying upon the floor close by.

It required a herculean strength to raise the dead detective to this opening, but, as he was not a man of over a hundred and thirty pounds in weight, the Captain succeeded in accomplishing it. As he let go his hold he heard the body fall with a thump to the floor. Then all was quiet.

He made no change, not even touching one of the bricks upon the floor, for though it had at first been his intention to brick up the orifice in the chimney, upon second thought he realized it was wiser to leave things just as they were, for fear of exciting suspicion.

As he turned to leave he either saw or fancied he did, the head of a man outlined in one of the windows against the light background.

The idea gave him such a start that he fell over a piece of old machinery that lay rusting upon the floor. This was the racket that had reached the ears of Carol and the widow.

As soon as he could recover he fled hastily from the mill, turning once to look back, as has been said before, and then plunging in among the trees like a hunted stag.

Had there been a witness to the hurried burial? He shuddered at the thought, but found it impossible to decide whether it had been real or a specter of his imagination.

CHAPTER XVII FROM THE JAWS OF DEATH.

It was twilight.

The trees were mooning a requiem for departed day, and the last tinge of red was dying out of the Western sky, when Carol suddenly sat up straight, and her heart seemed to stand still as she heard heavy footfalls outside.

An interval of silence ensued, and then there came a rap, loud and clear, upon the door of the haunted mill.

Carol held her breath.

She could not imagine any one else coming at that hour than Roger, and such had been the intensity of her recent thoughts and feelings toward him that it seemed to her she could not, dared not, meet him face to face, at least until she had time to recover her self-possession.

So she remained back while her mother went to the door.

How eagerly she listened, and yet with what trembling, to hear that well-known and equally well-loved voice. She had not reached a determination even yet, but it seemed to her that there was something wrong with the man she worshiped, for he did not appear as perfect in her eyes as formerly.

To her astonishment it was a strange voice that fell upon her ear—a voice that was full of eagerness and trembling.

I have to beg your pardon for this late visit, madam, but I am looking for a friend of mine, and her continued absence has worried me more than I can tell you. Have you seen Nora Warner?

These were the words she heard.

Carol started, for she realized that this person, whoever he might be, was about to receive a shock. Evidently he was unaware of the terrible fate that had overtaken the poor girl, and that she was by that time, if still alive, confined within the walls of the mad-house that had before been her prison.

Her mother retained her self-possession though she knew full well there was a blow in store for this gentleman whoever he might be.

Step in, sir, and be seated. Do not refuse, for I have that to tell you that will strike a blow at your heart, perhaps, though I know not what relation you bear to Nora Warner she said.

Wonderingly and with a great fear at his heart, he obeyed her request.

Do not keep in suspense, madam. Nora Warner was very dear to me. In Heaven's name tell me what has happened to the poor girl, he pleaded.

You knew something of her former history, I presume? inquired the lady.

She had a double object in view: the idea of finding out what he knew and whether the story of Nora Warner, as told to Carol, were true.

There is nothing of her past that I do not know, madam, and if she has come

to grief I am well aware of the source. Let a hair of her head be injured and her villainous husband Roger Darrel, must settle with me. Delay no longer, I pray you, for every second is torture to me.

There was something frank in the young man's voice and way of speaking that went straight to the lady's heart, and she knew that he was honest and manly; hence she sympathized with him in his sorrow.

I see you are her friend, sir, and as such I shall confide the facts to you, Nora Warner has again fallen into the hands of those from whom she once before escaped. The mad-house doctor has been here.

Why God! is it possible?

There was a gritting of the strong teeth and even in the candle-light she could see that the man's face paled in the comprehensive knowledge of what this meant.

She then went on to tell all that had occurred and he heard the news with the aspect of a man who suffered and yet made no sound.

Curses on his head! he muttered fiercely when she was done; he is the worst devil on earth, and the time will come when retribution will fall upon him and it shall be my hand that deals the blow if he has dared to harm a hair of her head I shall torture the life out of him.

When he became calm he made inquiries, for it seemed that Nora had only told him the circumstances of her past without certain particulars, and he was glad to be shown the torn card which the doctor had left behind him; and which Carol had thoughtfully picked up from the place she had thrown it on the previous night.

He did not despair, for he had right on his side, and moreover was possessed of a certain amount of power which he could bring into play when the occasion demanded it.

Of course this young man was the same whom we saw in the company of Nora Warner at the time when she fought her memorable duel which he had seen before and yet could not place to save his neck.

While they talked, Carol had joined them and her presence was acknowledged by the young man with a polite bow.

He was unable to say what had been Nora's mission in seeking the young girl again, but all he knew was that the poor, deceived wife had discovered something of the utmost importance which must be communicated to Carol without delay if she would save her from years of intense suffering.

This was what she had been trying her best to tell when the brutal keeper checked her further utterance.

The widow had not dared to tell Jack the full particulars of that terrible scene, for she saw that he was of an excitable temperament, and also that he loved Nora Warner, and she feared the result. It was enough for him to know that she was again in the power of those villains, and as he seemed to possess Nora's entire confidence, it might be readily supposed that she had some time in the past given him to understand what manner of man the doctor was, so that he could judge for himself what must have happened when the girl was recaptured.

He did not intend to lose any time, but would start upon the trial at once.

To rescue an inmate of a mad-house was something liable to prove a tough job, but he was a man of great determination, and would in the end accomplish all that he undertook.

He had but a general idea as to where the asylum was located, but once in the neighborhood it would be easy for him to find out all he wished.

While they were yet talking, something very like a muffled shriek reached their ears and caused them all to spring up.

What was that? asked each, in wonder.

They say this place is haunted, because of singular noises heard here at times, but I found they originated in a very common-place manner, for the loft above this mill was occupied by a troop of wild cats and during the night they were wont to indulge in a melee that to superstitious ears sounded like the shrieks of deadly foes, and their falls from rafters that ended each combat was to them a repetition of the old murder that took place here. I remedied all that by shutting up the holes in the window by means of which they gained ingress, and ever since that time I have never been bothered by any unearthly sound. Whatever that was we heard just now, it came from the interior of the mill and will bear investigation; so, if you would do us the favor, sir, the time is at hand.

Jack was perfectly willing, and the three immediately entered the main portion of the mill by means of a door in the back of the widow's humble kitchen. They had lighted a lamp in the place of the dim candle and were thus enabled to look around them in all directions.

The mill was not a very large building, and had been arranged as such edifices generally are, only that the mad miller had attached his house to his mill, living and working under one roof.

When they stood within the mill proper the young man looked around him. He saw but little of interest. The old saw was there, rusted so that it was almost in pieces, and there were gaping holes in the roof through which both rain and sunshine came at intervals according to the time.

A strange party they were.

First of all stood Jack, a lamp in one hand and his revolver in the other. Just

back of him was the little widow holding the heavy kitchen poker, while Carol brought up the rear being armed with that favorite weapon of a woman, a broom.

While they stood thus there came to their ears a plain, unmistakable groan that made them start, and a cold chill ran through their frames.

There was excuse enough for this.

In the first place their surroundings were ghostly in the extreme, and made more so by the halo of haunting romance that was supposed to hang over the old mill.

Then again, they had been talking of a mad-house, and each one had conjectured the terrors of such an institution, so that their minds were full of horror, and ready to receive any new impression much more quickly than usual.

Still they showed no new signs of turning back, and Jack even led them on in the direction from whence he thought the groan had come.

Again it sounded in their ears.

This time his face brightened, for he saw the hole in the great chimney, and striding up to it he cried into the orifice: Hello! where are you?

To be continued.

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