

MY LADY OF THE SOUTH



A Fiftieth Anniversary War Story

By RANDALL PARRISH

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CHAPTER VIII. I FACE FATE.

SHE did not scream as she saw me, but her face went instantly white, and her hands were suddenly flung out in startled surprise.

"You—you here? You have been in there—in my room?"

"Is this your room?"

"Yes. Why did you go there?"

"Merely because it was the first door I found unlocked."

"But it was not unlocked. See, I have the key here in my pocket."

"Yet you must have been mistaken, for the door was certainly unlocked when I came, even standing very slightly ajar."

From the expression of her face I doubted if she believed me. I felt obliged to continue speaking.

"I was endeavoring to escape, but now have decided otherwise and ask you to aid me. I feel that you sympathize with me, that you still have faith in my statements. A few moments ago I overheard you attempt my defense in the library."

"I—I do not think I defended you," the color coming back into her cheeks. "What is it you do ask?"

"That you will go with me now directly to those gathered in the library. I want to tell them my story and let them judge as to its truth. We have not known each other long, and I am a Yankee, your war enemy, yet I sincerely desire your good opinion. I cannot run away, leaving you to believe me a coward or worse."

"I—I do not quite understand," she admitted at last, almost reluctantly. "You must not do this believing that I can help you or—that I am even inclined to do so. It was my trick which imprisoned you."

"That has left no sting, Miss Denslow," I returned. "That you unwittingly me was natural enough, and I hold no malice."

My mind was full of a strange conflict as I followed her to the lower hall. Circumstances pointed directly at me as the murderer of that man above, and I realized how exceedingly weak was my defense. Yet this voluntary surrender would surely have weight, even upon those prejudiced minds, and I had faith—strong abiding faith—that Jean Denslow would believe the truth of my statement. Somehow just then to retain the confidence of this girl meant infinitely more to me than all the rest. Stepping softly within the library and drawing slightly to one side so as to reveal me standing erect in the doorway, she announced clearly:

"Lieutenant King."

I caught it all in one swift glance—the book lined walls, the glass front of the cases reflecting back the glow of the gas-jets, the suspended globe on the ceiling; the heavy mahogany cabinet; a wide sofa, with a man and a woman seated upon it, both with dark eyes and hair and strongly resembling each other, the man wearing a Confederate uniform, the woman attired in some clinging brown material; behind the table, sunk low down within his cushioned chair, his deep sunken eyes staring across at me as if he saw a vision, was Judge Dunn, while to his right another man—big, burly, his hair closely cropped and iron gray leant forward as if to spring. Even as the steady weapon flashed dully in the light I spoke, my hands held up.

I am not here as an enemy, gentlemen. If I were I could have easily shot first from the hall. I merely wish to be heard, and as evidence of good faith I will deposit my weapons on the table."

None among them uttered a word, although the judge was sputtering as if endeavoring to gain control of his language.

"No, gentlemen," I said, "I have come to you voluntarily to make a

statement. In one sense I am your prisoner, yet, had I chosen to do so, I could have been well out of your hands by now. I am a Federal officer, detailed upon the staff of General Rosecrans and temporarily in command of scouts. But a short time ago I was ordered to take two men and examine this neighborhood for the purpose of discovering, if possible, the rendezvous of a guerrilla leader known to us as Big Jim Donald. I gazed directly into the eyes of the giant, who was now leaning back in his chair. "Are you the man?"

"You may assume so for sake of argument. Go on."

"Understanding that Judge Dunn had some connection with this band of raiders, I left my men asleep this morning and ventured here alone, hoping to discover opportunity for investigation. In the shadow of the grape trellis I unexpectedly encountered a young lady, who offered to permit my searching the house. While prosecuting that search I was suddenly locked into a storeroom and made prisoner."

The deep voice of Donald interrupted with a question.

"Who were the men with you?"

"Two scouts, Daniels and O'Brien."

"That is why we have doubted your purpose," he explained shortly. "Well, before you go on I will tell you something about Bill Daniels, the sole survivor, quiet, convincing, 'something that possibly may justify our action toward you, if we are guilty of any mistake. Daniels was born into a feud that has cursed this mountain region for many years. My father was involved in it, and it cost him his life. When I grew up to manhood I made every effort in my power to reach a just settlement of the difficulty. I refused to go armed; I refused to retaliate for injuries done my property. I appealed to the courts instead of fighting it out with the rifle. But those fellows couldn't understand that sort of thing; they held me a coward and started in to drive me out of the country. This Daniels was the leader, and he had with him a lot of midnight assassins. Before I learned the uselessness of courts my house was burned, my crops destroyed, and my wife, weakened by the exposure, died. I was twice shot from ambush, and three men allied with my interests had treacherously been done to death. It was then I became a fighting man. It took three years to rid those hills of their vermin; it cost blood and money, but when we were done those mountain roads yonder were safe to travel over. This man Daniels was condemned for murder, with Judge Dunn here on the bench. The atrocity of his crimes was almost beyond belief, and he was sentenced to death. In some way he escaped from prison and disappeared. The war broke out; but, knowing him to be alive, knowing the threats he had made and that the people here required my protection, knowing there still remained in the region those who would, through ties of blood, harbor him if he returned and even assist in his vengeance, I durst not volunteer into the Confederate service. Influence gained me an independent command in this section, thus enabling me to serve both country and friends at the same time. I am Jim Donald, but I am not a guerrilla; I am a commissioned officer under the Confederate government."

I bowed silently, impressed by the man's earnestness. He had not finished.

"Not until yesterday did I know Daniels had actually returned. His presence would not be so serious, but my command is just now badly scattered, and he comes backed by a force of Federals."

"If I had my way," broke in the officer on the sofa, "I'd hang this whole scouting party and have done with it."

I turned and looked at him, instantly recognizing the voice. He was Calvert Dunn.

"A kindly thought," I returned cold-

ly, "and one worthy of a soldier, Miss Denslow. I do not really mean to question what has been said, but should feel better satisfied to hear your corroboration. Is this story true?"

"It is perfectly true," she said simply, "only Colonel Donald has told but a small portion of it."

"Then, colonel, I feel greater confidence in relating the remainder of my own tale. I have absolutely no connection with Daniels except that of command, nor have I any sympathy with lawlessness and murder. You were about to proceed to where I was supposed to be still imprisoned, but first one of your number, a young officer, I judge, went upstairs to procure his revolver."

I paused as though in question, and Judge Dunn said gruffly:

"A friend of my son's, Lieutenant Navarre, and he is a long while about it."

"When this officer disappeared I sought in vain for some available exit from this door. Finding none, I hastily decided to slip up the stairs after him and try a drop from one of the second story windows. Just beyond the head of the stairs one of the rooms was lighted, and I supposed that to be where he was. I turned to the right and tried the first door. I stepped inside; the window was wide open; on the floor at my feet lay the dead body of Lieutenant Navarre."

I could see them leaning forward staring at me with suddenly blanched faces; I heard a sharp cry as Miss Dunn dropped her head upon the arm of the sofa; a bitter oath from the lips of Calvert Dunn as he leaped to his feet, his dark face fairly black from passion.

"You liar!" he shouted, rage choking his utterance. "This is your work! You killed him!"

I thought he would spring at me, but even as I drew back a single step for better defense Jean Denslow came between us.

"No, not that. At least give Lieutenant King a chance to tell his story."

"Aye, be still, boy." And Donna rose to his feet, a massive figure of a man. "You found him lying dead, you say?"

"Yes, resting upon the floor, huddled upon his left side. I turned him over on his back, seeking the wound. It was a knife thrust in the throat, but the blade had been withdrawn. There are marks of blood on the window sill, from whence the assassin must have dropped to the ground."

I sought to read the expression on the face of the girl beside me, but her hands were pressed to her eyes, her form trembling. Then Donald stepped to the open doorway, blocking the only egress from the room.

"Calvert," he said in stern tone of command. "Go up stairs and verify this story. Lieutenant King will remain where he is until your return."

As young Dunn hastily left the room I turned to meet the deep set eyes of his father.

"Why didn't you go on that window also?" he asked bluntly. "You could probably have escaped."

"Yes," I answered, "and you would have believed forever that I was the murderer."

"That wouldn't have hurt you any; the killing of one of the enemy by a scout in time of war is not considered murder. Your army would have protected you."

"I am not that kind of man, Judge Dunn."

"I don't know what sort you may be," he returned slowly, "but in this case it seems to me you are either a fool or a wise knave, and there is not a very wide difference between the two. You evidently expect this voluntary surrender will clear you of all suspicion."

"No; it simply means I intend to remain and face the suspicion. The man upstairs was killed by a knife thrust; I possess no knife. The one who killed him dropped from the window, leaving his bloody finger marks on the sill. The morning will reveal his imprint on the ground beneath. My act is neither that of a fool nor that of a knave; I prefer being a prisoner rather than to have this foul crime charged against me."

We must have waited there for ten minutes, no one speaking, the judge gazing full at me, as if I were a prisoner before his court, the big frame of Donald completely blocking the doorway. Miss Dunn was crying softly, and I thought Jean was beside her, but I did not venture to glance toward them. Suddenly Calvert Dunn came down the hall, holding in his hand a lighted lantern.

"Lieutenant Navarre is lying dead in Jean's room," he said shortly, evidently striving to speak calmly, yet with trembling voice. "He was stabbed in the throat with a knife and apparently given little opportunity for defense, as there are no evidences of struggle. There is a light still burning in his own room, further down the hall, and I believe Navarre was in there, seeking his revolver, when he heard some noise in the front of the house, causing him to investigate. The hidden assassin must have sprung upon him in the dark."

"You found other evidence?"

"Comparatively little. There are marks of blood on the sill of the open window, not finger marks, merely spashes. The roadway is below, and a man dropping from that height would leave no impress on the packed ashes. I found this knife in the bushes, where it could easily have been thrown from the window."

The full meaning of all this burst upon my mind in horror. Instead of clearing me of suspicion, everything tended rather to bind closer the chains of guilt.

"Do you mean?"

"I mean this, Mr. Lie

of the Federal army," and his black eyes blazed into mine with angry insistence. "That you, and you only, are the murderer of Lucius Navarre."

I saw the flash of a revolver in his hand; I felt the iron grip of Big Donald's fingers clutching my arm, yet I have no recollection of moving so much as a muscle. I knew the judge spoke and that Donald answered him; I dimly remember that Calvert Dunn demanded that they immediately take the law into their own hands; some one counseled delay; I saw Jean Denslow's face full of appeal; I think she spoke and that I attempted answering some question. Yet it was all like a dream, a delirium, in which I appeared to have no real part. Suddenly the animal in me returned to life; I could not think, but I could fight these devils. I struck out recklessly at Calvert Dunn, maddened by those black, threatening eyes. I felt the thud of my blow, heard the discharge of his revolver as he went down, and struggled desperately to break loose from the grip of the giant who held me. It was all the work of a wild moment. The next I lay unconscious on the floor.

I came to myself confused by my surroundings, but with mind comparatively clear. I was lying on some blankets in one corner of the cellar. Through a small barred window a bit of daylight streamed in, enabling me to perceive something of the desolate interior. My head throbbled from the blow that had felled me, and was bound about with a linen napkin. Drops of perspiration beaded my forehead as I thought of those accusing facts pointing so directly toward me. I was held a murderer; the word seemed to burn into my brain as though formed of fire; even Jean Denslow could believe in me no longer—not with all that crushing evidence dragging me down to infamy. Her name lingered on my lips in dread as I bowed my head in my hands; then some way it came back as an inspiration.

I sat staring into the darkest corner of the cellar, yet seeing nothing except the vision of that young girl—her slender figure, her bright, earnest face, her light fluffy hair, her gray blue eyes shining beneath the long lashes. She was my wife, my wife; the law said so, and yet I could scarcely persuade myself of the truth. It had never seemed very much to me before, but it did now, the blood tingling through my veins as the recollection returned. Perhaps she would hate me if she knew; beyond question she despised me already; yet to me the memory was like a flame. I would not yield to this fate; there was a chance for fighting yet, and I wanted to live, to clear my name for her sake.

All at once it dawned upon me like a revelation that I loved her; that no other woman in all this world could ever take her position in my heart. Now I must prove to her my innocence of crime.

There was but one way—escape and the running down of the real murderer. How it had been accomplished I could not even guess, but I had one name in my thought—Daniels.

(To Be Continued.)

SUDDEN DEATH IN CALIFORNIA

Husband of a Former Cass County School Teacher Dies Very Suddenly.

Friends of Miss Flora Moreley of Upland, Cal., have just received a letter from her in which she writes of the sad death of the husband of her sister, Lucy, which occurred suddenly on Christmas eve. The good man had preached, as usual, to his people twice that day, and after the evening service assisted his wife in distributing the gifts in the children's stockings, and had laid down on a divan for a few minutes' rest before retiring for the night, when he was attacked with heart failure and died within five minutes.

The bereaved woman's maiden name was Miss Lucy Moreley, and she formerly was a teacher in the schools of this county and has many warm friends here who will sympathize with her in her great sorrow.

When given as soon as the croup cough appears Chamberlain's Cough Remedy will ward off an attack of croup and prevent all danger and cause of anxiety. Thousands of mothers use it successfully. Sold by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Departs for the South.

From Tuesday's Daily.

Dave Amick will depart for Hot Springs, Ark., on the midnight M. P. train tonight, where he will take the baths, with a view of re-creating his health. Dave has not been feeling himself for a month or more and has lost about twenty pounds in weight. Before returning he will look after his real estate interests at Monticello, where he owns a fine piece of land which he purchased a few weeks ago.

The Journal office carries all kinds of typewriter supplies.

Sale on

Woolen - Underwear!

Ladies, Gentlemen and Children if you can't keep warm try some of our nice underwear. We think we have a remedy for this weather. We are showing the best line ever shown in Plattsburgh.

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REPORT A MOST EXCELLENT MEETING

Plattsburgh Representatives Are Highly Elated Over Interest Taken in Good Roads.

From Wednesday's Daily.

President T. H. Pollock and Vice President J. P. Falter of the Commercial club and County Commissioners Friedrich and Heebner were well pleased with what they heard and spoke very highly of the courteous manner in which the Commercial club officials looked after their comfort and entertainment during their visit at the state capital.

When buying a cough medicine for children bear in mind that Chamberlain's Cough Remedy is most effectual for colds, croup and whooping cough and that it contains no harmful drug. For sale by F. G. Fricke & Co.

Married in Omaha Sunday.

Charles Cobb and wife and daughters, Misses Fay and Nylo, were in Omaha Sunday where they attended a double wedding at the home of George Ostler, the contracting parties being Arthur Grow, of Elk City, South Dakota, and Miss Bee Ostler, and B. Cobb, also of Elk City, and Miss Ella Ostler. The ceremony was performed by Rev. Savage of the Peoples' church.

Directors Meet Last Night.

From Tuesday's Daily.

The directors of the Plattsburgh Independent Telephone company met at the company's office in this city last night and declared a quarterly dividend of one-half of one per cent. The directors from out-of-town attending the meeting were H. A. Talcott of Greenwood and M. H. Pollard of Nehawka.

Medicines that aid nature are always most effectual. Chamberlain's Cough Remedy acts on this plan. It allays the cough, relieves the lungs, opens the secretions and aids nature in restoring the system to a healthy condition. Thousands have testified to its superior excellence. Sold by F. G. Fricke & Co.

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6.00 " " " " 3.00	50c caps now... 25c
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11.00 " " " " 5.50	50c golf gloves... 25c
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