The Devil's Own

A Romance of the Black Hawk War

By Randall Parrish

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Illustrations by Frank Hoover

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CHAPTER XI.—Continued.

—2—

It was about the middle of the following afternoon when the Adventurer neared her journey's end, and we were all tired and cramped into but view of the high, bluff bank of Yellow Banks. A half hour more and we had navigated up against the current, landing position under several other boats made fast to stanchions, bank-ward from the ferry broad gangplanks reaching from forward deck to bank.

Details began unloading—crops of every a sturdy stream of men, thick and white, hardened with whatever load they could snatch up, moving on at endless run across the stiff plank, and up the low bank to the drier ground. It shocked to be my good fortune to notice this labor having been decided by Magee to drag boats, bales and barrels forward to where the hurrying hoarses could grasp them with ease. Verily. This breathe me close to the forward stable. Aces which the steering passengers trooped, threading their in better way among the loading crowd, in an effort to get ashore.

Bernardo troops, all militia, and the greater part of them mounted, were an extremely easy-looking lot—ragged enough physically, of the pioneer type, but bearing little soldierly appearance, and utterly ignorant of discipline. The men had chosen officers from out their own ranks by popular election, and these seemed to have already grown largely through physical prowess.

We had an excellent illustration of this soon after tying up at the landing. A tall, lank, sunburned officer, with a face so distinctly homely as to instantly attract my attention, left the gangway of them up the river bank, and entered there through the gate of the commissary stores from where they had been disembarking. Another and shorter spat further back. The officer was in uniform, as was the sentry, a private of yet rich award on shoulder straps. The latter, standing his face with a red bandanna handkerchief, was struggling through the mud, dragging a bag after him.

The situation puzzled and confused me. But there could be no doubt about the deputy leader. If ever you have seen Abraham Lincoln, you will recognize him returns for weeks, and it did not seem possible that other eyes than those of his wife could respond to such a deep degree of homeliness. Yet, for all that, there was a kindly, even sympathetic, with it a new degree of expression, which I had never seen before to be transported—not regular, but a sympathetic friend from a long-lost landside—and many among them would have gone to his assistance. Let me say, such as these, rough with the pioneer virtues of honesty and courage, and with a notion of those two women, especially those of the girl old-sized young face that Eloise was white, and the slave girl's, would have a hard row to hoe and I made up my mind such a promise should be soon broadcast; yes more that if the necessity arose. I would myself be the first to step forward and free him openly with the charge. I could do it.

It was only an accident which gave me the chance. Never heard of Jack Kelly? Ever met him, half boss, half alligator, who ran the old Kelly House? Well, he's up yet now, a solid, forty-rod ter so that when up long with him from Swanderleen, Fritz—I mine. Yer just in time to see a scrap. Come on!

I permitted him to lead me his voice never ceasing as we followed the dim trail. I made out little of what he said, but I caught enough to know that there had been a two-room log cabin, deeply hidden in the woods, as to be revealed merely by a glimmer of light through the shutters, or by smoke through chinks in the walls. Tim Finn had stumbled through the darkness to the door, lurching across the threshold, and then the shrieking began.

"If the Abe Lincoln of Salem, Illinoy, ain't I Ain't Get but One Job Right Now."

sleeping his companion, and hurrying no taste for the job. One I remember them. apparently, was upstanding built with the jaw of a prize fighter, and upon himself openly to defy the officer of the commissary, and by both of us if he ever refused to do nigger work. The affair made a sensation in the camp, result, until the captain unceremoniously knocked the fellow down, thereby himself of every vestige of rank and pre-vested to enforcing command. It was a battle royal, the soldiers crowding eagerly about, and the noise encouragement impartially first to one combatant, and then the other.

"Kiss him in the nose, boss!"

"Aw, you're yer, ain't you—start the O—n rose back."

"By golly! That's the way we do it in Salem!"

"I'm a-got yer now, Jenkins, he's got yer nose—good boy, Abe!"

Exactly what occurred I could not see, but when the circle of wildly excited men finally broke apart the latter was lying flat on his back in the yellow mud, and the victor was industriously every invitation to press him down out of sight.

"Have yer had 'nough, Tom Jenkins?" he was saying, as he knelt there, "Say, 'Uncle,' or say nor."

"All right, Uncle," I heard the fallen one mutter.

"Well, yer vote them yaaaaas!"

The discomfited Jenkins, one of whose eyes was already closed, at once attempted a wisky grin.

"Hi—hi—he admits he's got a whole lot yer in!"

The victor released his grip and stood up, revealing his full height, and therefore not the less sturdy appearance. He evidently enjoyed it—the Adventurer, gang ashore, another tall, lank, bony man, who had been standing back to watch the contest. Now he stepped forward, and the two shook hands with evident signs and satisfaction.

"Abe, we hardly knew you were coming down, Illinois, as I am glad to see you. Where's the rest of your command?"

"Why, you're going in the other direction—up the Rock. You better get busy."

He wheeled his horse and disappeared, leaving the angry captain waiting his displeasure on the natural air. Kirby, evidently from some position across the deck, broke in with a sharp question.

"What in Hell, Corcoran? Did the orders say you were not going back to St. Louis?"

"They've just what he said. We've got to turn around the way up Rock river with a—of those measly soldiers aboard. Here, Jenkins, stop that cursing, and get steam up—we've got to get back with a light of it."

"But," insisted Kirby in disgust, "I'm not going to have my men's time wasted in any such way. Corcoran!"

"How the Hell can I help it? Do you suppose I'm looking out—you haven't any thing aboard?"

"Only a few boxes of ammunition, and the regular supply of ration on board. I expected to receive the rest of the ammunition stores from where they had been transported from the upper deck. But I can't help it—the orders are peremptory, forcing me into the ranks of the enemy.