

Lloyds of London

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done nothing I assure you. I am waiting here to board the packet for Dover in the morning."

An English girl! And the military police had her!

As Jonathan gazed at her lovely, frightened face; as he saw the lieutenant bow curtly and reply in French: "Ten thousand regrets, mademoiselle, but this is war," he was sensible of a feeling, that struck him with the impact of a blow, that something fateful had happened to him. His heart leaped with pity and something else—just what he did not know, nor did he pause to analyze it, for he had not previously been in love.

CHAPTER NINE

In the look of bewilderment that the girl cast upon the smirking French lieutenant, Jonathan Blake realized that the English girl did not speak French. Her next words proved this.

"Is there anyone here who speaks both French and English?" she addressed the crowd in the cafe.

Jonathan rose and approached the group. He bowed to the lieutenant humbly, for he realized that authority lay on this individual as plainly as a blanket on a horse, that the fellow must be soothed by becoming humility on Jonathan's part and a plain recognition of military authority. "Pardon, my captain," he murmured, purposely giving the lieutenant a raise in rank which, doubtless, would not be displeasing to the man, "but this lady has asked if there be, in this cafe, one who speaks both French and English. I have some light knowledge of the English language, acquired during my boyhood in Quebec, now, alas, ravished from our beloved country by the perfidious English. Have I your permission to inform the English lady why she has been arrested?"

"An order reached us from Paris yesterday to arrest all English citizens found on French soil, your reverence. Other than that I know nothing. It is my duty to take his one to headquarters, where, doubtless, she will be enabled to explain satisfactorily her presence in Calais. You have my permission to explain to this hell-cat. I have no desire to quarrel with her or order my men to lay hands on her if she will come peaceably."

"I thank you, my captain," Jonathan turned to the girl. "I speak English," he informed her gently. "You are in arrest in accordance with orders which reached the local military commander from Paris yesterday, instructing him to arrest all English subjects found in his jurisdiction. Other than that this excellent officer who has arrested you knows nothing. He has but done his duty."

The girl's sea blue eyes flashed angrily. "Is it a crime to be English?"

"I fear," he said sadly, "it is."

"But you're English," she countered. "I can tell by your accent."

"Mademoiselle has made a pardonable mistake. My boyhood was spent in Quebec in an English family, where I learned the language as the English pronounce it."

"Do they think I am a spy?"

"There is always that possibility. Precautions must be taken."

"Tell that impudent French officer, if you will be so kind, that I am not a spy."

"He has no authority to free you, even if he is convinced you speak the truth. My advice to you, mademoiselle, is to go with the soldiers quietly before they lose patience and lay their hands on you—an action which this officer would regret. With your permission I shall accompany the party to headquarters where, if I can be of assistance to mademoiselle as an interpreter I shall be delighted to place myself at her service."

"Thank you, I shall be happy to accept."

"What did she say?" the officer demanded, noticing, of course, that the storm had subsided.

Jonathan explained.

"It is not a bad idea for you to accompany us, reverend sir," the lieutenant agreed. "There is no one at headquarters who speaks the vile English language and the commandant will be grateful for your services, I assure you. Let us go."

He placed a hand, none too gently, under the girl's elbow, and the party, followed by Jonathan, descended the stairs to the street. As they emerged a closed carriage, driven by a soldier, drew up at the curb; the lieutenant dismissed the other soldiers after handing the girl into the carriage. "Enter the carriage, father, he ordered."

As Jonathan stepped in he said to the girl: "Move over to the far side, and do not be surprised at anything that happens. I am satisfied now that this officer does not understand English. I am an Englishman and I plan to save you."

He sat down, the lieutenant got in beside him, and a soldier closed the door while the carriage drove briskly away. It had proceeded but a few blocks, when the lieutenant found something cold and hard pressed against his head back of his left ear.

"It is a loaded pistol, my dear fellow," the pseudo priest murmured. "I regret the necessity, but what can one do in time of war? You will order the driver to stop, but do not say more if you value your life."

The driver, at the officer's command, pulled up to a curb in a dark street. "Open the door, Jonathan commanded, and the officer obediently complied. He tepped out when commanded to do so, his hands held high; in an instant Jonathan was at his side and brought his pistol barrel down on the officer's head; the latter subsided quietly into the gutter; with a bound Jonathan was standing on the step and delivering a similar blow to the soldier driver. When the latter collapsed Jonathan hauled him off his seat and laid him alongside the officer; then he closed the carriage door climbed up on the seat took the reins and urged

the horses to a trot.

A mile west he drove, to a stone quay. Here he halted the carriage, soothed the horses into quietness, got down and opened the door. "You may step out, my countrywoman," he said laughingly, and handed her out. Then he turned the horses, gave them a crack of the whip and sent them back driverless the way they had come.

He took the girl's arm and guided her down the quay until they came to a bewildering array of bales and barrels. He walked along striking matches and observing each barrel; presently on the side of a tierce he saw, in chalk, a large X. He removed the head and spoke into the barrel:

"Alphonse!"

A head and shoulders emerged. "Here, sir. I have waited here because the sight of a fisherman on a dock at midnight, where no fisherman should be at that hour, might arouse suspicion if I should be seen. There are spies everywhere. Come, I will lead monsieur to the boat I have provided for him."

"You have brought my clothing from the inn?"

"I forget nothing, sir," Alphonse replied and tossed out a large portmanteau and a heavy great coat. Once out on the quay it developed that he was the same fisherman who had sought the priest's blessing in the cafe.

Jonathan handed him a bag containing money and the man guided them down the quay to a wet and slippery stairway that led down to a sloop around thirty feet over all, bobbing gently against the side of the quay. She was an open boat, a fishing craft of rugged construction. Jonathan handed the girl in and climbed in after her, while the man Alphonse followed and hoisted jib and mainsail.

"There are blankets, sir, and plenty of food and water to last you two weeks. The wind serves two points aft the beam. I will shove off with the boat hook as soon as I get back on the landing stairs; then put your helm down hard and the sails will fill. You have charts and I have outlined the compass course. Farewell, sir, and may God protect you."

Within five minutes the sloop was ghosting out of the harbor. A line-of-battle ship lying off the entrance challenged her right to pass, by tossing a round shot across the sloop's bow, but Jonathan refused to luff up, and broadside after broadside was fired at him. However, the sloop was rapidly lengthening the range and the shots were either short or well over, nor did she long remain visible in the dim starshine.

During the bombardment not a word had passed between Jonathan and his fair passenger; once clear of the harbor the wind blew steady and cold out of the northeast. Jonathan lashed the tiller, shed his wif, priests hat and soutan and donned in their place a fisherman's cap and a heavy jersey.

"That stupid lieutenant forced you to leave your room without giv-

ing you opportunity even to put on a warm wrap," he said then. "Get into this great coat. It's heavy and very warm. You'll find some blankets forward, so make yourself a bed and turn in."

She came aft and he helped her into the great coat. "You have been very kind to a total stranger, sir," she murmured.

"One should lend a helping hand to a country-woman in distress. For some time I have had a suspicion that I might have to leave France in a very great hurry, and tonight, before I met you, I realized that time had arrived. I have kept this craft waiting in anticipation of my need. Each night Alphonse has waited to meet me in the cafe on the ground floor of the hotel. We had a code for communicating in the midst of a crowd. I signalled him tonight that I was in danger and about to leave, so he notified me where I would find him and the boat."

"He is a traitor to his country."

"I have discovered that the loudest patriots have their price, Miss—er—Madam—"

"You may call me Elizabeth."

"Thank you; and you may call me Jonathan. It seems each of us has a reason for remaining anonymous."

"Have you any idea what would have happened to me had you not rescued me?"

"Human life is cheap in France, Elizabeth. Failing to prove you a spy the local authorities would doubtless have handed you over to Mademoiselle Guillotine, just to be on the safe side."

"And you?"

"You observe, Elizabeth, that I am bound for Merry England and not half fast enough to suit me. That is because I have a very great yearning to live out my years. Now, then, to the blankets with you, before you catch cold. For your sake I have cracked two men on the head; for aught I know to the contrary, I may have killed them. That has been trouble enough for the night."

"She held out her little hand. "Goodnight, Jonathan. All of my life I shall owe you a debt I never can repay."

He thought as he took the tiller again, headed the sloop up on her course and thrilled as she lay over and took a bone in her teeth: "I've found her, and with God's help I shall never let her go."

(Continued Next Week.)

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