

BOUND to the NORTH

by Harold MacGrath
Illustrated by Henry Jay Lee

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CHAPTER I

It was one of those hot Southern midnights, when the stars themselves seem overtaken with drowsiness and drop from the ranks as weary soldiers do.

Street-lamps threw a circle of light on the pavement; beyond the circle's rim was soft, impenetrable blackness. Out of this a slender young man suddenly emerged and leaned against the lamp-post for a moment, breathing sharp breaths.

A short rest seemed to revive the youth. He straightened, clicked his heels together—and stepped forward. The dim yellow light held his back in view for half a dozen steps. The youth did not reappear in the next circle of light.

The quality of the street was good. The flanking rows of brick residences with their white marble steps, presented a dignified front in the daytime. Into one of these houses the young man had gone. Silently he mounted the stairs to his room, entered and flung himself upon the bed, burying his face deep into the pillows to stifle the wild and passionate sobs he could no longer repress.

Along the road to the north, beyond the grim cordon of sentries, eleven men were racing their horses. They rode like furies.

Death was not only behind them but lay in ambush before them. Death was ready, but the sleeping telegraph operator was not.

By the time he awoke, sensed the message hammering at his key and gave the alarm, the nightriders had slipped through into a passively friendly zone.

As dawn kindled the tree-tops they drew down to a walk. There was no chatter, no jesting, no expression of thankfulness over their escape. Only one made speech. It was a matter of directions, for now each man must go his own way, as once more they were in a hostile country. They divided at the first fork in the road, divided at the next, and so on until each man rode alone.

Ten eventually reached Washington. The eleventh, when he was positive that his comrades were well on their way, wheeled about his horse and returned to the main pike, and in leisurely stages wended his way back to Richmond, through blue lines and butternut, magically.

When the brilliant morning sunshine poured into a certain window in that beleaguered city (for it was in the summer of 1864), it gilded a grimy, tear-stained face, small, grimy hands flung out upon the pillow, and powdered with fine sparks the tousled locks of hair which matched the color of the copper-beech.

The tenant of this room might easily have passed as a boy at night, for the figure was boyish; but in the daylight the male attire could not wholly disguise the delicate contours or the satiny smoothness of the skin.

The tear-stained face did not speak of a higher order of courage; yet Jeanne Beaufort was as brave and daring as any woman in the South. At that time the North knew her neither by name nor by feature; but it had often sensed the danger of her; it had often, through her wit and resource, seen a carefully built campaign tumble like a house of cards in the wind.

So it began to grope for her as one person gropes for another in the dark. So the tears had no bearing upon that attribute called courage.

The room she occupied was in the house of her aunt, her mother's sister, a widow. Mrs. Wetmore never questioned her niece in regard to her mysterious absences.

Upon a lowboy, which served as a dressing-table, stood three photographs. Each rested in a little frame of mourning: Jeanne's father and her two brothers.

Presently the girl on the bed sighed, turned and awoke. She blinked a little, rubbed her eyes and smiled. But the sight of that grimy hand obliterated the smile instantly.

She jumped up and stood in the middle of the room, palsied with terror. With fumbling fingers she felt into the inner pocket of the coat she wore and drew out a crumpled sheet of paper. It was true, then! This thing, this abominable, cowardly thing had happened.

She made a wild gesture as if to tear this dreadful testimony into tatters, and paused. She laid the paper on the dresser, discarded her male attire, bathed, dressed and then sat down on the edge of the bed and studied, not the body of the document, but the hieroglyphics which cascaded from there to the bottom of the sheet.

John Kennedy, D. D.

C-WG-L
A-NK-S
G-RD-A
J-WG-A
F-WG-S
H-RD-M
P-PA-G
J-NK-F
F-BN-S
W-BE-H

What the literal translations were she had not the least idea, but she did know that they were code-names belonging to a free-lance organization known only to the War Office and the Secret Service in Washington.

She had heard of this little band, but never, until last night, had her path and theirs crossed. This organization was composed, with one exception, of young men, educated well-born, daring and reckless beyond belief—in other words, spies who individually performed as many wonders for their cause as she performed for hers.

And for weeks they had been here in Richmond, stealing its heart's blood, drop by drop! They had had the daring to permit her to carry away these code-names! Was it because their work here was really done and that they would now scatter and keep scattered until the war was at an end?

Only one face she had seen, but she would remember that—ah, she would remember that until she died.

Eleven men against one woman—so be it! She took up the gauntlet; and woe to them!

One by one would she track them down, ruthless, without mercy. They had trampled her pride in dust, mocked her; so would she trample upon their honor and mock them.

Not for nothing had she been given beauty and a facile tongue. She placed the paper in the bosom of her dress, rose and went down to breakfast, smiling. She had the strength to do that.

Jeanne Beaufort was the daughter of Lawrence Beaufort, a wealthy Virginia tobacco-planter. There were five in the family: Beaufort, his spinster sister, his two boys and the girl. The mother had been dead since Jeanne's youth.

Father and sister took care of her mind, and the brothers saw to it that she should be sane in body also. She sang and played delightfully; her wit was nimble, in argument she was wise; and her brothers taught her how to walk through a forest without cracking a twig, to break and tame fiery thoroughbreds, to shoot, swim, run.

The plantation was like hundreds of its kind: enormous veranda-pillars and rambling wings and French windows. Below, on the river brim, was a clean little gathering of cabins for the plantation slaves.

Upon the peace and plenty of this happy little duchy fell the thunderbolt of war. Beaufort accepted a colonelcy in a local regiment, and the boys sought glory under Pickett.

When the news came to Jeanne that her father had fallen at Manassas and that his beloved body had been buried there, her grief had been terrible. The death of her two brothers at Cemetery Hill left her outwardly unmoved. She did not close the piano; she did not wear mourning; and when the spinster-aunt mildly remonstrated with this conduct, which she said was lacking in reverence to the dead, the girl whirled upon her: "I'm a woman. I can't shoulder a musket; I can't go forth and demand of the North an eye for eye, a tooth for a tooth. But hear me, Auntie: I'll have that eye, I'll have that tooth!"

A week later Jeanne said: "I am going to Richmond."

"To visit your Aunt Delia; I think it a good plan, child."

"I'll be home from time to time, unless the enemy stands in between. And even then I'll come."

"Shall we win?"

"God knows. But win or lose, the Yankees shall pay a price."

Jeanne knew but little of Richmond. This turned out very well for her later; neither friend nor foe knew anything about the personality of Jeanne Beaufort.

This time, however, she dabbled a little in the frivolous, but all with a grim purpose. Step by step she maneuvered until at last she stood in the presence of the one man she sought.

"But you are so young," he protested—"scarcely twenty."

"I am very, very old," she replied with a dry little smile. "And I am all alone, besides."

"There are terrible risks—death always to face, and perhaps dishonourable death."

"I am ready. I want revenge."

"To play at love, to suffer the touch of men you despise, in order to gain their secrets—that is not a pleasant task for a well-bred woman. War is not always won by bullets; duplicity plays its part."

"You are trying to discourage me. You are wasting time."

"Do you love any man?"

He eyed her exquisite beauty. "Do you expect to go through life without loving?"

"I don't know," she answered frankly. "But I hope that I may. I want revenge. My father, my brothers, whom I loved, have given their lives freely. I wish to add mine."

So young and so terribly serious! "Jeanne Beaufort, you shall have your revenge. Come; I will take you to the President himself. We need women, need their arts and guile. Tomorrow you shall start for Washington. You shall become a member of some family there we trust. Choose some name, and always in Washington be known by it. And find a man by the name of Parson Kennedy. Bring him into our lives, and you will have served the cause to a far greater extent than your father or brothers. Tomorrow I shall give you all your instructions, codes and so forth."

An officer came into the room. He looked like a Creole, Spanish in color and French in gracefulness. He paused, undecidedly.

"Ah, Morgan," said the Secretary: "this is Miss Beaufort. Just a moment, until I see if the President is disengaged."

Henry Morgan fell in love with Jeanne on the spot. Jeanne, on her side, saw a handsome young officer in butternut. She forgot all about him the moment he was gone.

Later she learned something definite regarding Henry Morgan. He gave to the world the impression that he was a rattlepate; vain he really was; but underneath this vanity was a matchless valor. This discovery rather interested her; for no woman is left untouched in the presence of a brave man.

Soon she reconstructed her opinion of him as a whole. His grace was due to muscles as strong and highly tempered as watch-springs; and his rattle-patedness cloaked a mind as sinister and flexible as Machiavelli's. In their frequent encounters in Richmond he fascinated and repelled her at the same time. He was always about to join his regiment at the front, but somehow he never did; and yet for weeks he would disappear completely. When he returned he was always a little thinner, a little harder, a little less effervescent.

When he began to make love to her, she was at first amused. But when she realized that he was in earnest, she broke up his dream somewhat rudely.

That was the last of it, apparently. He disappeared again, and her duties compelled her to return to Washington.

(Second fine installment of this story in the Press next week. Read it every week.)

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