

## CHAPTER IX

### IN WHICH TWO DRINK OF ONE CUP

WAITING for us in the doorway we found Master Jeremy Sparrow, relieved of his battered armor, his face wreathed with hospitable smiles, and a posy in his hand.

"When the Spaniard turned out to be only the King's minion, I slipped away to see that all was in order," he said genially. "Here are roses, madam, that you are not to treat as you did those others."

She took them from him with a smile, and we went into the house to find three fair large rooms, something bare of furnishing, but clean and sweet, with here and there a bow pot of newly gathered flowers, a dish of wardens on the table, and a cool air laden with the fragrance of the pine blowing through the open window.

"This is your demesne," quoth the minister. "I have worthy Master Bucke's own chamber upstairs. Ah, good man, I wish he may quickly recover his strength and come back to his own, and so relieve me of the burden of all this luxury. I, whom nature meant for an eremite, have no business in kings' chambers such as these."

His devout faith in his own distaste for soft living and his longings after a hermit's cell was an edifying spectacle. So was the evident pride which he took in his domain, the complacence with which he pointed

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out the shady, well-stocked garden, and the delight with which he produced and set upon the table a huge pasty and a flagon of wine.

"It is a fast day with me," he said. "I may neither eat nor drink until the sun goes down. The flesh is a strong giant, very full of pride and lust of living, and the spirit must needs keep watch and ward, seizing every opportunity to mortify and deject its adversary. Goodwife Allen is still gaping with the crowd at the fort, and your man and maid have not yet come, but I shall be overhead if you need aught. Mistress Percy must want rest after her ride."

He was gone, leaving us two alone together. She stood opposite me, beside the window, from which she had not moved since entering the room. The color was still in her cheeks, the light in her eyes, and she still held the roses with which Sparrow had heaped her arms. I was moving to the table.

"Wait!" she said, and I turned toward her again.

"Have you no questions to ask?" she demanded.

I shook my head. "None, madam."

"I was the King's ward!" she cried.

I bowed, but spoke no word, though she waited for me.

"If you will listen," she said at last, proudly, and yet with a pleading sweetness, — "if you will listen, I will tell you how it was that I — that I came to wrong you so."

"I am listening, madam," I replied.

She stood against the light, the roses pressed to her bosom, her dark eyes upon me, her head held high. "My mother died when I was born; my father, years ago. I was the King's ward. While the Queen lived she kept me with her, — she loved me, I think; and



the King too was kind, — would have me sing to him, and would talk to me about witchcraft and the Scriptures, and how rebellion to a king is rebellion to God. When I was sixteen, and he tendered me marriage with a Scotch lord, I, who loved the gentleman not, never having seen him, prayed the King to take the value of my marriage and leave me my freedom. He was so good to me then that the Scotch lord was wed elsewhere, and I danced at the wedding with a mind at ease. Time passed, and the King was still my very good lord. Then, one black day, my Lord Carnal came to court, and the King looked at him oftener than at his Grace of Buckingham. A few months, and my lord's wish was the King's will. To do this new favorite pleasure he forgot his ancient kindness of heart; yea, and he made the law of no account. I was his kinswoman, and under my full age; he would give my hand to whom he chose. He chose to give it to my Lord Carnal."

She broke off, and turned her face from me toward the slant sunshine without the window. Thus far she had spoken quietly, with a certain proud patience of voice and bearing; but as she stood there in a silence which I did not break, the memory of her wrongs brought the crimson to her cheeks and the anger to her eyes. Suddenly she burst forth passionately: "The King is the King! What is a subject's will to clash with his? What weighs a woman's heart against his whim? Little cared he that my hand held back, grew cold at the touch of that other hand in which he would have put it. What matter if my will was against that marriage? It was but the will of a girl, and must be broken. All my world was with the King; I, who stood alone, was but a woman, young

and untaught. Oh, they pressed me sore, they angered me to the very heart! There was not one to fight my battle, to help me in that strait, to show me a better path than that I took. With all my heart, with all my soul, with all my might, I *hate* that man which that ship brought here to-day! You know what I did to escape them all, to escape that man. I fled from England in the dress of my waiting maid and under her name. I came to Virginia in that guise. I let myself be put up, appraised, cried for sale, in that meadow yonder, as if I had been indeed the piece of merchandise I professed myself. The one man who approached me with respect I gulled and cheated. I let him, a stranger, give me his name. I shelter myself now behind his name. I have foisted on him my quarrel. I have — Oh, despise me, if you will! You cannot despise me more than I despise myself!"

I stood with my hand upon the table and my eyes studying the shadow of the vines upon the floor. All that she said was perfectly true, and yet — I had a vision of a scarlet and black figure and a dark and beautiful face. I too hated my Lord Carnal.

"I do not despise you, madam," I said at last. "What was done two weeks ago in the meadow yonder is past recall. Let it rest. What is mine is yours: it's little beside my sword and my name. The one is naturally at my wife's service; for the other, I have had some pride in keeping it untarnished. It is now in your keeping as well as my own. I do not fear to leave it there, madam."

I had spoken with my eyes upon the garden outside the window, but now I looked at her, to see that she was trembling in every limb, — trembling so that I



thought she would fall. I hastened to her. "The roses," she said, — "the roses are too heavy. Oh, I am tired — and the room goes round."

I caught her as she fell, and laid her gently upon the floor. There was water on the table, and I dashed some in her face and moistened her lips; then turned to the door to get woman's help, and ran against Diccon.

"I got that bag of bones here at last, sir," he began. "If ever I" — His eyes traveled past me, and he broke off.

"Don't stand there staring," I ordered. "Go bring the first woman you meet."

"Is she dead?" he asked under his breath. "Have you killed her?"

"Killed her, fool!" I cried. "Have you never seen a woman swoon?"

"She looks like death," he muttered. "I thought" —

"You thought!" I exclaimed. "You have too many thoughts. Begone, and call for help!"

"Here is Angela," he said sullenly and without offering to move, as, light of foot, soft of voice, ox-eyed and docile, the black woman entered the room. When I saw her upon her knees beside the motionless figure, the head pillowed on her arm, her hand busy with the fastenings about throat and bosom, her dark face as womanly tender as any English mother's bending over her nursling; and when I saw my wife, with a little moan, creep further into the encircling arms, I was satisfied.

"Come away!" I said, and, followed by Diccon, went out and shut the door.

My Lord Carnal was never one to let the grass



"COME AWAY!" I SAID



grow beneath his feet. An hour later came his cartel, borne by no less a personage than the Secretary of the colony.

I took it from the point of that worthy's rapier. It ran thus: "SIR, — At what hour to-morrow and at what place do you prefer to die? And with what weapon shall I kill you?"

"Captain Percy will give me credit for the profound reluctance with which I act in this affair against a gentleman and an officer so high in the esteem of the colony," said Master Pory, with his hand upon his heart. "When I tell him that I once fought at Paris in a duel of six on the same side with my late Lord Carnal, and that when I was last at court my Lord Warwick did me the honor to present me to the present lord, he will see that I could not well refuse when the latter requested my aid."

"Master Pory's disinterestedness is perfectly well known," I said, without a smile. "If he ever chooses the stronger side, sure he has strong reasons for so doing. He will oblige me by telling his principal that I ever thought sunrise a pleasant hour for dying, and that there could be no fitter place than the field behind the church, convenient as it is to the graveyard. As for weapons, I have heard that he is a good swordsman, but I have some little reputation that way myself. If he prefers pistols or daggers, so be it."

"I think we may assume the sword," said Master Pory.

I bowed.

"You'll bring a friend?" he asked.

"I do not despair of finding one," I answered, "though my second, Master Secretary, will put himself in some jeopardy."



"It is *combat à outrance*, I believe?"

"I understand it so."

"Then we'd better have Bohun. The survivor may need his services."

"As you please," I replied, "though my man Diccon dresses my scratches well enough."

He bit his lip, but could not hide the twinkle in his eye.

"You are cocksure," he said. "Curiously enough, so is my lord. There are no further formalities to adjust, I believe? To-morrow at sunrise, behind the church, and with rapiers?"

"Precisely."

He slapped his blade back into its sheath. "Then that's over and done with, for the nonce at least! Sufficient unto the day, etcetera. 'S life! I'm hot and dry! You've sacked cities, Ralph Percy; now sack me the minister's closet and bring out his sheris. I'll be at charges for the next communion."

We sat us down upon the doorstep with a tankard of sack between us, and Master Pory drank, and drank, and drank again.

"How's the crop?" he asked. "Martin reports it poorer in quality than ever, but Sir George will have it that it is very Varinas."

"It's every whit as good as the Spanish," I answered. "You may tell my Lord Warwick so, when next you write."

He laughed. If he was a timeserver and leagued with my Lord Warwick's faction in the Company, he was a jovial sinner. Traveler and student, much of a philosopher, more of a wit, and boon companion to any beggar with a pottle of ale, — while the drink lasted, — we might look askance at his dealings, but

we liked his company passing well. If he took half a poor rustic's crop for his fee, he was ready enough to toss him sixpence for drink money; and if he made the tenants of the lands allotted to his office leave their tobacco uncared for whilst they rowed him on his innumerable roving expeditions up creeks and rivers, he at least lightened their labors with most side-splitting tales, and with bottle songs learned in a thousand taverns.

"After to-morrow there'll be more interesting news to write," he announced. "You're a bold man, Captain Percy."

He looked at me out of the corners of his little twinkling eyes. I sat and smoked in silence.

"The King begins to dote upon him," he said; "leans on his arm, plays with his hand, touches his cheek. Buckingham stands by, biting his lip, his brow like a thundercloud. You'll find in to-morrow's antagonist, Ralph Percy, as potent a conjurer as your cousin Hotspur found in Glendower. He'll conjure you up the Tower, and a hanging, drawing, and quartering. Who touches the King's favorite had safer touch the King. It's *lese-majesté* you contemplate."

He lit his pipe and blew out a great cloud of smoke, then burst into a roar of laughter. "My Lord High Admiral may see you through. Zooks! there'll be a raree-show worth the penny, behind the church to-morrow, — a Percy striving with all his might and main to serve a Villiers! Eureka! There is something new under the sun, despite the Preacher!" He blew out another cloud of smoke. By this the tankard was empty, and his cheeks were red, his eyes moist, and his laughter very ready.

"Where's the Lady Jocelyn Leigh?" he asked.



"May I not have the honor to kiss her hand before I go?"

I stared at him. "I do not understand you," I said coldly. "There's none within but Mistress Percy. She is weary, and rests after her journey. We came from Weyanoke this morning."

He shook with laughter. "Ay, ay, brave it out!" he cried. "It's what every man Jack of us said you would do! But all's known, man! The Governor read the King's letters in full Council an hour ago. She's the Lady Jocelyn Leigh; she's a ward of the King's; she and her lands are to wed my Lord Carnal!"

"She was all that," I replied. "Now she's my wife."

"You'll find that the Court of High Commission will not agree with you."

My rapier lay across my knees, and I ran my hand down its worn scabbard. "Here's one that agrees with me," I said. "And up there is Another," and I lifted my hat.

He stared. "God and my good sword!" he cried. "A very knightly dependence, but not to be mentioned nowadays in the same breath with gold and the King's favor. Better bend to the storm, man; sing low while it roars past. You can swear that you did n't know her to be of finer weave than dowlas. Oh, they'll call it in some sort a marriage, for the lady's own sake; but they'll find flaws enough to crack a thousand such mad matches. The divorce is the thing! There's precedent, you know. A fair lady was parted from a brave man not a thousand years ago, because a favorite wanted her. True, Frances Howard wanted the favorite, whilst this beauty of yours" —

"You will please not couple the name of my wife with the name of that adulteress!" I interrupted fiercely.

He started; then cried out somewhat hurriedly: "No offense, no offense! I meant no comparisons; comparisons are odorous, saith Dogberry. All at court know the Lady Jocelyn Leigh for a very Britomart, a maid as cold as Dian!"

I rose, and began to pace up and down the bit of green before the door. "Master Pory," I said at last, coming to a stop before him, "if, without breach of faith, you can tell me what was said or done at the Council to-day anent this matter, you will lay me under an obligation that I shall not forget."

He studied the lace on his sleeve in silence for a while; then glanced up at me out of those small, sly, merry eyes. "Why," he answered, "the King demands that the lady be sent home forthwith, on the ship that gave us such a turn to-day, in fact, with a couple of women to attend her, and under the protection of the only other passenger of quality, to wit, my Lord Carnal. His Majesty cannot conceive it possible that she hath so far forgotten her birth, rank, and duty as to have maintained in Virginia this mad masquerade, throwing herself into the arms of any petty planter or broken adventurer who hath chanced to have an hundred and twenty pounds of filthy tobacco with which to buy him a wife. If she hath been so mad, she is to be sent home none the less, where she will be tenderly dealt with as one surely in this sole matter under the spell of witchcraft. The ship is to bring home also — and in irons — the man who married her. If he swears to have been ignorant of her quality, and places no straws in the way of the King's



Commissioners, then shall he be sent honorably back to Virginia with enough in his hand to get him another wife. *Per contra*, if he erred with open eyes, and if he remain contumacious, he will have to deal with the King and with the Court of High Commission, to say nothing of the King's favorite. That's the sum and substance, Ralph Percy."

"Why was my Lord Carnal sent?" I asked.

"Probably because my Lord Carnal would come. He hath a will, hath my Lord, and the King is more indulgent than Eli to those upon whom he dotes. Doubtless, my Lord High Admiral sped him on his way, gave him the King's best ship, wished him a favorable wind — to hell."

"I was not ignorant that she was other than she seemed, and I remain contumacious."

"Then," he said shamelessly, "you'll forgive me if in public, at least, I forswear your company? You're plague-spotted, Captain Percy, and your friends may wish you well, but they must stay at home and burn juniper before their own doors."

"I'll forgive you," I said, "when you've told me what the Governor will do."

"Why, there's the rub," he answered. "Yearley is the most obstinate man of my acquaintance. He who at his first coming, beside a great deal of worth in his person, brought only his sword hath grown to be as very a Sir Oracle among us as ever I saw. It's 'Sir George says this,' and 'Sir George says that,' and so there's an end on't. It's all because of that leave to cut your own throats in your own way that he brought you last year. Sir George and Sir Edwyn! Zooks! you had better dub them St. George and St. Edwyn at once, and be done with it. Well, on

this occasion Sir George stands up and says roundly, with a good round oath to boot: 'The King's commands have always come to us through the Company. The Company obeys the King; we obey the Company. His Majesty's demand (with reverence I speak it) is out of all order. Let the Company, through the treasurer, command us to send Captain Percy home in irons to answer for this passing strange offense, or to return, willy nilly, the lady who is now surely his wife, and we will have no choice but to obey. Until the Company commands us we will do nothing; nay we can do nothing.' And every one of my fellow Councilors (for myself, I was busy with my pens) saith, 'My opinion, Sir George.' The upshot of it all is that the Due Return is to sail in two days with our humble representation to his Majesty that though we bow to his lightest word as the leaf bows to the zephyr, yet we are, in this sole matter, handfast, compelled by his Majesty's own gracious charter to refer our slightest official doing to that noble Company which owes its very being to its rigid adherence to the terms of said charter. Wherefore, if his Majesty will be graciously pleased to command us as usual through the said Company — and so on. Of course, not a soul in the Council, or in Jamestown, or in Virginia dreams of a duel behind the church at sunrise to-morrow." He knocked the ashes from his pipe, and by degrees got his fat body up from the doorstep. "So there's a reprieve for you, Ralph Percy, unless you kill or are killed to-morrow morning. In the latter case, the problem's solved; in the former, the best service you can do yourself, and maybe the Company, is to walk out of the world of your own accord, and that as quickly as possible. Better a cross-roads and a stake



through a dead heart than a hangman's hands upon a live one."

"One moment," I said. "Doth my Lord Carnal know of this decision of the Governor's?"

"Ay, and a fine passion it put him into. Stormed and swore and threatened, and put the Governor's back up finely. It seems that he thought to 'bout ship to-morrow, lady and all. He refuseth to go without the lady, and so remaineth in Virginia until he can have his will. Lord! but Buckingham would be a happy man if he were kept here forever and a day! My lord knows what he risks, and he's in as black a humor as ever you saw. But I have striven to drop oil on the troubled waters. 'My lord,' I told him, 'you have but to possess your soul with patience for a few short weeks, just until the ship the Governor sends can return. Then all must needs be as your lordship wishes. In the meantime, you may find existence in these wilds and away from that good company which is the soul of life enduring, and perhaps pleasant. You may have daily sight of the lady who is to become your wife, and that should count for much with so ardent and determined a lover as your lordship hath shown yourself to be. You may have the pleasure of contemplating your rival's grave, if you kill him. If he kills you, you will care the less about the date of the Santa Teresa's sailing. The land, too, hath inducements to offer to a philosophical and contemplative mind such as one whom his Majesty delighteth to honor must needs possess. Beside these crystal rivers and among these odoriferous woods, my lord, one escapes much expense, envy, contempt, vanity, and vexation of mind.'"

The hoary sinner laughed and laughed. When he

had gone away, still in huge enjoyment of his own mirth, I, who had seen small cause for mirth, went slowly indoors. Not a yard from the door, in the shadow of the vines that draped the window, stood the woman who was bringing this fate upon me.

"I thought that you were in your own room," I said harshly, after a moment of dead silence.

"I came to the window," she replied. "I listened. I heard all." She spoke haltingly, through dry lips. Her face was as white as her ruff, but a strange light burned in her eyes, and there was no trembling. "This morning you said that all that you had — your name and your sword — were at my service. You may take them both again, sir. I refuse the aid you offer. Swear what you will, tell them what you please, make your peace whilst you may. I will not have your blood upon my soul."

There was yet wine upon the table. I filled a cup and brought it to her. "Drink!" I commanded.

"I have much of forbearance, much of courtesy, to thank you for," she said. "I will remember it when — Do not think that I shall blame you" —

I held the cup to her lips. "Drink!" I repeated. She touched the red wine with her lips. I took it from her and put it to my own. "We drink of the same cup," I said, with my eyes upon hers, and drained it to the bottom. "I am weary of swords and courts and kings. Let us go into the garden and watch the minister's bees."