

men, — if there are others. He would call the Englishmen his brothers, and be taught of them how to rule, and who to pray to” —

“Let Opechancanough go with me to-day to Jamestown,” I said. “He hath the wisdom of the woods; let him come and gain that of the town.”

The Emperor smiled again. “I will come to Jamestown soon, but not to-day nor to-morrow nor the next day. And Captain Percy must smoke the peace pipe in my lodge above the Pamunkey, and watch my young men and maidens dance, and eat with me five days. Then he may go back to Jamestown with presents for the great white father there, and with a message that Opechancanough is coming soon to learn of the white men.”

I could have gnashed my teeth at that delay when she must think me dead, but it would have been the madness of folly to show the impatience which I felt. I too could smile with my lips when occasion drove, and drink a bitter draught as though my soul delighted in it. Blithe enough to all seeming, and with as few inward misgivings as the case called for, Diccon and I went with the subtle Emperor and the young chief he had bound to himself once more, and with their fierce train, back to that village which we had never thought to see again. A day and a night we stayed there; then Opechancanough sent away the Paspaheghs, — where we knew not, — and taking us with him went to his own village above the great marshes of the Pamunkey.

## CHAPTER XXXII

IN WHICH WE ARE THE GUESTS OF AN EMPEROR

I HAD before this spent days among the Indians, on voyages of discovery, as conqueror, as negotiator for food, exchanging blue beads for corn and turkeys. Other Englishmen had been with me. Knowing those with whom we dealt for sly and fierce heathen, friends to-day, to-morrow deadly foes, we kept our muskets ready and our eyes and ears open, and, what with the danger and the novelty and the bold wild life, managed to extract some merriment as well as profit from these visits. It was different now.

Day after day I ate my heart out in that cursed village. The feasting and the hunting and the triumph, the wild songs and wilder dances, the fantastic mummeries, the sudden rages, the sudden laughter, the great fires with their rings of painted warriors, the sleepless sentinels, the wide marshes that could not be crossed by night, the leaves that rustled so loudly beneath the lightest footfall, the monotonous days, the endless nights when I thought of her grief, of her peril, maybe, — it was an evil dream, and for my own pleasure I could not wake too soon.

Should we ever wake? Should we not sink from that dream without pause into a deeper sleep whence there would be no waking? It was a question that I asked myself each morning, half looking to find another hollow between the hills before the night should

fall. The night fell, and there was no change in the dream.

I will allow that the dark Emperor to whom we were so much beholden gave us courteous keeping. The best of the hunt was ours, the noblest fish, the most delicate roots. The skins beneath which we slept were fine and soft; the women waited upon us, and the old men and warriors held with us much stately converse, sitting beneath the budding trees with the blue tobacco smoke curling above our heads. We were alive and sound of limb, well treated and with the promise of release; we might have waited, seeing that wait we must, in some measure of content. We did not so. There was a horror in the air. From the marshes that were growing green, from the sluggish river, from the rotting leaves and cold black earth and naked forest, it rose like an exhalation. We knew not what it was, but we breathed it in, and it went to the marrow of our bones.

Opechancanough we rarely saw, though we were bestowed so near to him that his sentinels served for ours. Like some god, he kept within his lodge with the winding passage, and the hanging mats between him and the world without. At other times, issuing from that retirement, he would stride away into the forest. Picked men went with him, and they were gone for hours; but when they returned they bore no trophies, brute or human. What they did we could not guess. We might have had much comfort in Nantauquas, but the morning after our arrival in this village the Emperor sent him upon an embassy to the Rappahannocks, and when for the fourth time the forest stood black against the sunset he had not returned. If escape had been possible, we would not

have awaited the doubtful fulfillment of that promise made to us below the Uttamussac temples. But the vigilance of the Indians never slept; they watched us like hawks, night and day. And the dry leaves underfoot would not hold their peace, and there were the marshes to cross and the river.

Thus four days dragged themselves by, and in the early morning of the fifth, when we came from our wigwam, it was to find Nantauquas sitting by the fire, magnificent in the paint and trappings of the ambassador, motionless as a piece of bronze, and apparently quite unmindful of the admiring glances of the women who knelt about the fire preparing our breakfast. When he saw us he rose and came to meet us, and I embraced him, I was so glad to see him. "The Rappahannocks feasted me long," he said. "I was afraid that Captain Percy would be gone to Jamestown before I was back upon the Pamunkey."

"Shall I ever see Jamestown again, Nantauquas?" I demanded. "I have my doubts."

He looked me full in the eyes, and there was no doubting the candor of his own. "You go with the next sunrise," he answered. "Opechancanough has given me his word."

"I am glad to hear it," I said. "Why have we been kept at all? Why did he not free us five days ago?"

He shook his head. "I do not know. Opechancanough has many thoughts which he shares with no man. But now he will send you with presents for the Governor, and with messages of his love to the white men. There will be a great feast to-day, and to-night the young men and maidens will dance before you. Then in the morning you will go."

"Will you not come with us?" I asked. "You are ever welcome amongst us, Nantauquas, both for your sister's sake and for your own. Rolfe will rejoice to have you with him again; he ever grudgeth you to the forest."

He shook his head again. "Nantauquas, the son of Powhatan, hath had much talk with himself lately," he said simply. "The white men's ways have seemed very good to him, and the God of the white men he knows to be greater than Okee, and to be good and tender; not like Okee, who sucks the blood of the children. He remembers Matoax, too, and how she loved and cared for the white men and would weep when danger threatened them. And Rolfe is his brother and his teacher. But Opechancanough is his king, and the red men are his people, and the forest is his home. If, because he loved Rolfe, and because the ways of the white men seemed to him better than his own ways, he forgot these things, he did wrong, and the One over All frowns upon him. Now he has come back to his home again, to the forest and the hunting and the warpath, to his king and his people. He will be again the panther crouching upon the bough" —

"Above the white men?"

He gazed at me in silence, a shadow upon his face. "Above the Monacans," he answered slowly. "Why did Captain Percy say 'above the white men'? Opechancanough and the English have buried the hatchet forever, and the smoke of the peace pipe will never fade from the air. Nantauquas meant 'above the Monacans or the Long House dogs.'"

I put my hand upon his shoulder. "I know you did, brother of Rolfe by nature if not by blood! For-

get what I said; it was without thought or meaning. If we go indeed to-morrow, I shall be loath to leave you behind; and yet, were I in your place, I should do as you are doing."

The shadow left his face and he drew himself up. "Is it what you call faith and loyalty and like a knight?" he demanded, with a touch of eagerness breaking through the slowness and gravity with which an Indian speaks.

"Yea," I made reply. "I think you good knight and true, Nantauquas, and my friend, moreover, who saved my life."

His smile was like his sister's, quick and very bright, and leaving behind it a most entire gravity. Together we sat down by the fire and ate of the sylvan breakfast, with shy brown maidens to serve us and with the sunshine streaming down upon us through the trees that were growing faintly green. It was a thing to smile at to see how the Indian girls manœuvred to give the choicest meat, the most delicate maize cakes, to the young war chief, and to see how quietly he turned aside their benevolence. The meal over, he went to divest himself of his red and white paint, of the stuffed hawk and strings of copper that formed his headdress, of his gorgeous belt and quiver and his mantle of raccoon skins, while Diccon and I sat still before our wigwam, smoking, and reckoning the distance to Jamestown and the shortest time in which we could cover it.

When we had sat there for an hour the old men and the warriors came to visit us, and the smoking must commence all over again. The women laid mats in a great half circle, and each savage took his seat with perfect breeding; that is, in absolute silence and with a

face like a stone. The peace paint was upon them all, — red, or red and white; they sat and looked at the ground until I had made the speech of welcome. Soon the air was dense with the fragrant smoke; in the thick blue haze the sweep of painted figures had the seeming of some fantastic dream. An old man arose and made a long and touching speech with much reference to calumets and buried hatchets. When he had finished a chief talked of Opechancanough's love for the English, "high as the stars, deep as Popogusso, wide as from the sunrise to the sunset," adding that the death of Nemattanow last year and the troubles over the hunting grounds had kindled in the breasts of the Indians no desire for revenge. With which highly probable statement he made an end, and all sat in silence looking at me and waiting for my contribution of honeyed words. These Pamunkeys, living at a distance from the settlements, had but little English to their credit, and the learning of the Paspaheghs was not much greater. I sat and repeated to them the better part of the seventh canto of the second book of Master Spenser's "Faery Queen." Then I told them the story of the Moor of Venice, and ended by relating Smith's tale of the three Turks' heads. It all answered the purpose to admiration. When at length they went away to change their paint for the coming feast Diccon and I laughed at that foolery as though there were none beside us who could juggle with words. We were as light-hearted as children — God forgive us!

The day wore on, with relay after relay of food which we must taste at least, with endless smoking of pipes and speeches that must be listened to and answered. When evening came and our entertainers

drew off to prepare for the dance, they left us as wearied as by a long day's march.

The wind had been high during the day, but with the sunset it sank to a desolate murmur. The sky wore the strange crimson of the past year at Weyanoke. Against that sea of color the pines were drawn in ink, and beneath it the winding, threadlike creeks that pierced the marshes had the look of spilt blood moving slowly and heavily to join the river that was black where the pines shadowed it, red where the light touched it. From the marsh arose the cry of some great bird that made its home there; it had a lonely and a boding sound, like a trumpet blown above the dead. The color died into an ashen gray and the air grew cold, with a heaviness beside that dragged at the very soul. Diccon shivered violently, turned restlessly upon the log that served him as settle, and began to mutter to himself.

"Art cold?" I asked.

He shook his head. "Something walked over my grave," he said. "I would give all the pohickory that was ever brewed by heathen for a toss of aqua vitæ!"

In the centre of the village rose a great heap of logs and dry branches, built during the day by the women and children. When the twilight fell and the owls began to hoot this pile was fired, and lit the place from end to end. The scattered wigwams, the scaffolding where the fish were dried, the tall pines and wide-branching mulberries, the trodden grass, — all flashed into sight as the flame roared up to the topmost withered bough. The village glowed like a lamp set in the dead blackness of marsh and forest. Opechancanough came from the forest with a score of

warriors behind him, and stopped beside me. I rose to greet him, as was decent; for he was an Emperor, albeit a savage and a pagan. "Tell the English that Opechancanough grows old," he said. "The years that once were as light upon him as the dew upon the maize are now hailstones to beat him back to the earth whence he came. His arm is not swift to strike and strong as it once was. He is old; the warpath and the scalp dance please him no longer. He would die at peace with all men. Tell the English this; tell them also that Opechancanough knows that they are good and just, that they do not treat men whose color is not their own like babes, fooling them with toys, thrusting them out of their path when they grow troublesome. The land is wide and the hunting grounds are many. Let the red men who were here as many moons ago as there are leaves in summer and the white men who came yesterday dwell side by side in peace, sharing the maize fields and the weirs and the hunting grounds together." He waited not for my answer, but passed on, and there was no sign of age in his stately figure and his slow, firm step. I watched him with a frown until the darkness of his lodge had swallowed up him and his warriors, and mistrusted him for a cold and subtle devil.

Suddenly, as we sat staring at the fire we were beset by a band of maidens, coming out of the woods, painted, with antlers upon their heads and pine branches in their hands. They danced about us, now advancing until the green needles met above our heads, now retreating until there was a space of turf between us. Their slender limbs gleamed in the fire-light; they moved with grace, keeping time to a plaintive song, now raised by the whole choir, now fallen

to a single voice. Pocahontas had danced thus before the English many a time. I thought of the little maid, of her great wondering eyes and her piteous, untimely death, of how loving she was to Rolfe and how happy they had been in their brief wedded life. It had bloomed like a rose, as fair and as early fallen, with only a memory of past sweetness. Death was a coward, passing by men whose trade it was to out-brave him, and striking at the young and lovely and innocent. . . .

We were tired with all the mummery of the day; moreover, every fibre of our souls had been strained to meet the hours that had passed since we left the gaol at Jamestown. The elation we had felt earlier in the day was all gone. Now, the plaintive song, the swaying figures, the red light beating against the trees, the blackness of the enshrouding forest, the low, melancholy wind, — all things seemed strange, and yet deadly old, as though we had seen and heard them since the beginning of the world. All at once a fear fell upon me, causeless and unreasonable, but weighing upon my heart like a stone. She was in a palisaded town, under the Governor's protection, with my friends about her and my enemy lying sick, unable to harm her. It was I, not she, that was in danger. I laughed at myself, but my heart was heavy, and I was in a fever to be gone.

The Indian girls danced more and more swiftly, and their song changed, becoming gay and shrill and sweet. Higher and higher rang the notes, faster and faster moved the dark limbs; then, quite suddenly, song and motion ceased together. They who had danced with the abandonment of wild priestesses to some wild god were again but shy brown Indian maids

who went and set them meekly down upon the grass beneath the trees. From the darkness now came a burst of savage cries only less appalling than the war whoop itself. In a moment the men of the village had rushed from the shadow of the trees into the broad, firelit space before us. Now they circled around us, now around the fire; now each man danced and stamped and muttered to himself. For the most part they were painted red, but some were white from head to heel,—statues come to life,—while others had first oiled their bodies, then plastered them over with small bright-colored feathers. The tall head-dresses made giants of them all; as they leaped and danced in the glare of the fire they had a fiendish look. They sang, too, but the air was rude, and broken by dreadful cries. Out of a hut behind us burst two or three priests, the conjurer, and a score or more of old men. They had Indian drums upon which they beat furiously, and long pipes made of reeds which gave forth no uncertain sound. Fixed upon a pole and borne high above them was the image of their Okee, a hideous thing of stuffed skins and rattling chains of copper. When they had joined themselves to the throng in the firelight the clamor became deafening. Some one piled on more logs, and the place grew light as day. Opechancanough was not there, nor Nantauquas.

Diccon and I watched that uncouth spectacle, that Virginian masque, as we had watched many another one, with disgust and weariness. It would last, we knew, for the better part of the night. It was in our honor, and for a while we must stay and testify our pleasure; but after a time, when they had sung and danced themselves into oblivion of our presence, we

might retire, and leave the very old men, the women, and the children sole spectators. We waited for that relief with impatience, though we showed it not to those who pressed about us.

Time passed, and the noise deepened and the dancing became more frantic. The dancers struck at one another as they leaped and whirled, the sweat rolled from their bodies, and from their lips came hoarse, animal-like cries. The fire, ever freshly fed, roared and crackled, mocking the silent stars. The pines were bronze-red, the woods beyond a dead black. All noises of marsh and forest were lost in the scream of the pipes, the wild yelling, and the beating of the drums.

From the ranks of the women beneath the reddened pines rose shrill laughter and applause as they sat or knelt, bent forward, watching the dancers. One girl alone watched not them, but us. She stood somewhat back of her companions, one slim brown hand touching the trunk of a tree, one brown foot advanced, her attitude that of one who waits but for a signal to be gone. Now and then she glanced impatiently at the wheeling figures, or at the old men and the few warriors who took no part in the masque, but her eyes always came back to us. She had been among the maidens who danced before us earlier in the night; when they rested beneath the trees she had gone away, and the night was much older when I marked her again, coming out of the firelit distance back to the fire and her dusky mates. It was soon after this that I became aware that she must have some reason for her anxious scrutiny, some message to deliver or warning to give. Once when I made a slight motion as if to go to her, she shook her head and laid her finger upon her lips.

A dancer fell from sheer exhaustion, another and another, and warriors from the dozen or more seated at our right began to take the places of the fallen. The priests shook their rattles, and made themselves dizzy with bending and whirling about their Okee; the old men, too, though they sat like statues, thought only of the dance, and of how they themselves had excelled, long ago when they were young.

I rose, and making my way to the werowance of the village where he sat with his eyes fixed upon a young Indian, his son, who bade fair to outlast all others in that wild contest, told him that I was wearied and would go to my hut, I and my servant, to rest for the few hours that yet remained of the night. He listened dreamily, his eyes upon the dancing Indian, but made offer to escort me thither. I pointed out to him that my quarters were not fifty yards away, in the broad firelight, in sight of them all, and that it were a pity to take him or any others from the contemplation of that whirling Indian, so strong and so brave that he would surely one day lead the war parties.

After a moment he acquiesced, and Diccon and I, quietly and yet with some ostentation, so as to avoid all appearance of stealing away, left the press of savages and began to cross the firelit turf between them and our lodge. When we had gone fifty paces I glanced over my shoulder and saw that the Indian maid no longer stood where we had last seen her, beneath the pines. A little farther on we caught a glimpse of her winding in and out among a row of trees to our left. The trees ran past our lodge. When we had reached its entrance we paused and looked back to the throng we had left. Every back seemed turned to us, every eye intent upon the leaping figures

around the great fire. Swiftly and quietly we walked across the bit of even ground to the friendly trees, and found ourselves in a thin strip of shadow between the light of the great fire we had left and that of a lesser one burning redly before the Emperor's lodge. Beneath the trees, waiting for us, was the Indian maid, with her light form, and large, shy eyes, and finger upon her lips. She would not speak or tarry, but flitted before us as dusk and noiseless as a moth, and we followed her into the darkness beyond the firelight, well-nigh to the line of sentinels. A wigwam, larger than common and shadowed by trees, rose in our path; the girl, gliding in front of us, held aside the mats that curtained the entrance. We hesitated a moment, then stooped and entered the place.