

My Lady of the North

THE LOVE STORY OF A GRAY JACKET

By Randall Parrish

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SYNOPSIS.

CHAPTER I.—The story opens in a tent of the Confederate army at a critical stage of the Civil War. Gen. Lee instructs the Cavalry to capture a secret message to the Union, upon the delivery of which the great secret weapon, Arc-en-Ciel, will be revealed. Wayne, an old army scout, is sent to find the message.

CHAPTER II.—The two messengers make a wide road, dodging squads of soldiers, and finally find the message and deliver it within the lines of the enemy. Wayne is captured and the message is taken.

CHAPTER III.—Remembering a small party of soldiers in the distance, Wayne is taken for a prisoner and is accepted as a Confederate, and a young boy is entrusted to his charge.

CHAPTER IV.—The female companion of the two soldiers is a northern girl, and she becomes aware of their true identity. Wayne tries to tell her what and attempts to escape but fails.

CHAPTER V.—One of the horses gets lost, and Wayne orders Craig to go through with the dispatches to Longstreet. He and his "Lady of the North" are left alone in a rocky gorge.

CHAPTER VI.—The Confederate officer and the Union girl thread the maze of the woods. He discovers a lovely hut, and entering it in the dark a huge masked attack is made. The girl shoots the brute out in time.

CHAPTER VII.—The owner of the hut, a Red Ranger, appears and he and his wife give the captain a welcome. Suddenly a party of horsemen are observed coming down the road.

CHAPTER VIII.—They are led by a man claiming to be Red Lowrie, who orders Mrs. Bungalow to give them food, and her husband to act as a guide. The woman discovers the man to be a disguised impostor, attacks the intruder and there is a general melee.

CHAPTER IX.—The disguised leader proves to be Major Brennan, a Federal officer whom the Union girl recognizes. He orders the arrest of Wayne as a spy. The girl protests and says she will appeal to General Sheridan.

CHAPTER X.—Wayne held prisoner in a cave, sees files of Confederates pass the road in a distance and knows that Craig has delivered the message.

CHAPTER XI.—The captive is brought before General Sheridan who refuses to set him free unless he reveals the secret message.

CHAPTER XII.—Captain Wayne is led to an orchard where the woman he admires is hidden. He tells her the story of his capture and she promises to help him.

CHAPTER XIII.—Wayne is freed from his prison by the girl. He escapes and goes to the house of the woman he loves.

CHAPTER XIV.—The woman and her husband are captured by the Confederates. Wayne is taken to the house of the woman he loves.

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floor with a stranger. However, I shall always be glad to give you a character to any of my friends."

"I sincerely thank you," I returned in the same spirit, "and I can certainly return the compliment most heartily. It is so long since I was privileged to dance with a lady that I confess to having felt decidedly awkward at the start, but your grace proved so accommodating that I became at once at home, and enjoyed the waltz immensely. I fail to discover any seats in the room, or I should endeavor to find one vacant for you."

"Oh, I am not in the least tired." She was looking at me with so deep an expression of interest in her eyes that I dimly wondered at it.

"Did I understand rightly," she asked, playing idly with her fan, "that Major Monsoon introduced you to me as Colonel Curran of General Halleck's staff?"

What the dance am I up against now? I thought, and my heart beat quickly. Yet retreat was impossible, and I answered with assumed carelessness.

"I am, most assuredly, Colonel Curran."

"From Ohio?"

This was certainly coming after me with a vengeance, and I stole one quick glance at the girl's face. It was devoid of suspicion, merely evincing a polite interest.

"I have the honor of commanding the Sixth Artillery Regiment from that State."

"You must pardon me, Colonel, for my seeming thoughtlessness," and her eyes sparkled with demure mischief. "Yet I cannot quite understand. I was at school in Connecticut with a Miss Curran whose father was an officer of artillery from Ohio, and naturally, I at once thought of her when the Major pronounced your name, yet it certainly cannot be you—you are altogether too young, for Myrtle must be eighteen."

I laughed, decidedly relieved from what I feared might prove a most awkward situation.

"Well, yes, Miss Minor, I am indeed somewhat youthful to be Myrtle's father," I said at a venture, "but I might serve as her brother, you know, and not stretch the point of age over-much."

She clasped her hands on my arm with a gesture of delight.

"Oh, I am so glad! I knew Myrtle had a brother, but never heard he also was in the army. Did you know, Colonel, she was intending to come down here with me when I returned South, at the close of our school year, but from some cause was disappointed. How delighted she would have been to meet you! I shall certainly write and tell her what a splendidly romantic time we had together. You look so much like Myrtle I wonder I failed to recognize you at once."

She was rattling on without affording me the slightest opportunity to slip in a word explanatory, when her glance chanced to fall upon some one who was approaching us through the throng.

Oh, by the way, Colonel, there is another of Myrtle's old schoolmates present tonight—a most intimate friend, indeed, who would never forgive me if I permitted you to go without meeting her."

She drew me back hastily.

"Edith," she said, touching the back of a young woman who was slowly passing. "With just a moment's delay, this is Colonel Curran—Major Curran's brother, you know, Colonel Curran, Mrs. Brennan."

CHAPTER XVI.

The Woman I Loved.

The crucial moment had arrived, and I think my heart actually stopped beating as I stood gazing helplessly into her face. I saw her eyes open wide in astonished recognition, and then a deep flush swept over throat and cheek. For the instant I believed she would not speak, or that she would give way to her excitement and betray everything. I dared give no signal of warning, for there existed no tie between us to warrant my expecting any consideration from her. It was an instant so tense that her silence seemed like a blow. Yet it was only an instant. Then her eyes smiled into mine most frankly, and her hand was extended.

"I am more than delighted to meet you, Colonel Curran," she said calmly, although I could feel her lips tremble to the words, while the fingers I held were like ice. "Myrtle was one of my dearest friends, and she chanced to be in my mind even as we met. That was why," she added, turning toward Miss Minor, as though she felt her momentary agitation had not passed unobserved, "I was so surprised when you first presented Colonel Curran."

"I confess to having felt strangely myself," returned the other, archly, "although I believe I concealed my feelings far better than you did, Edith. Really, I thought you were going to faint. It must be that Colonel Curran exercises some strange occult influence over the weaker sex. Perhaps

he is the seventh son of a seventh son; are you, Colonel? However, dear, I am safe for the present from his mysterious spell, and you will be compelled to face the danger alone, as here comes Lieutenant Hammersmith to claim the dance I've promised him."

Before Mrs. Brennan could interfere, the laughing girl had placed her hand on the Lieutenant's blue sleeve, and with a mocking good-bye flung backward over her shoulder, vanished to the crowd, leaving us standing there alone.

The lady waited in much apparent indifference, gently tapping the floor with her neatly shod foot.

"Would you be exceedingly angry if I were to ask you to dance?" I questioned, stealing surreptitiously a glance at her proudly averted face.

"Angry? Most assuredly not," in apparent surprise. "Yet I trust you will not ask me. I have been upon the floor only once tonight. I am not at all in the mood."

"If there were chairs here I should venture to ask even a greater favor—that you would consent to sit out this set with me."

She turned slightly, lifted her eyes meaningfully to mine, and her face lightened.

"No doubt we might discover seats without difficulty in the anteroom," she answered, indicating the direction by a glance. "There do not appear to be many 'bitters' at this ball, and the few who do are not crowded."

The apartment contained, as she prophesied, but few occupants, and I conducted her to the further end of it, where we found a comfortable divan and no troublesome neighbors.

As I glanced at her now, I marked a distinct change in her face. The old indifference, so well assumed while we were in the presence of others, had utterly vanished as by magic, and she sat looking at me in anxious yet impetuous questioning.

"Captain Wayne," she exclaimed, her eyes never once leaving my face, "what does this mean? this masquerade? this wearing of the Federal uniform? this taking of another's name? this being here at all?"

"If I should say that I came hoping to see you again," I answered, scarce knowing how best to proceed or how far to put confidence in her, "what would you think?"

"If that is true, that you were extremely foolish to take such a risk for so small a reward," she returned calmly. "Nor, under these circumstances, would I remain here so much as a moment to encourage you. But it is not true. This is no light act; your very life must lie in the balance, or you could never assume such risk."

"I would trust you gladly with my life or my honor," I replied soberly. "If I had less faith in you I should not be here now. I understand that I am condemned to be shot as a spy at daybreak."

"Shot? On what authority? Who told you?"

"On the order of General Sheridan, my informant was Lieutenant Eaton, who was with me."

"Shot? As a spy? Why, it surely cannot be! Frank said— Captain Wayne, believe me, I knew absolutely nothing of all this. Do you think I should ever have rested if I had dreamed that you were held under so false a charge? I promised you I would see General Sheridan on your behalf. Frank—" she bit her lip impatiently—"I was told, that is, I was led to believe that you were—had been sent North as a prisoner of war late last night. Otherwise I should have insisted upon seeing you—on pleading your cause with the General himself. The major and I breakfasted with him this morning, but your name was not mentioned, for I believed you safe."

She did not appear to realize, so deep was her present indignation and regret, that my hand had found a resting place upon her own.

"You must believe me, Captain Wayne; I could not bear to have you feel that I could prove such an ingrate."

"You need never suppose I should think that," I replied, with an earnestness of manner that caused her to glance at me in surprise. "I confidently expected to hear from you all day, and finally when no word came I became convinced some such misconception as you have mentioned must have occurred. Then it became my turn to act upon my own behalf if I would preserve my life; yet never for one moment have I doubted you or the sincerity of your pledge to me."

She waited quietly while a couple passed us and sought seats nearer the door.

"Tell me the entire story," she said gently.

As quickly as possible I reviewed the salient events which had occurred since our last meeting. Without denying the presence of Major Brennan during my stormy meeting with General Sheridan, I did not dwell upon it, nor mention the personal affair that had occurred between us. Even had I not supposed the man to be her husband I should never have taken advantage of his treachery to advance

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my own cause. As I concluded there was a tear glistening on her long lashes, but she seemed unconscious of it, and made no attempt to dash it away.

"You have not told me all," she commented quietly. "But I can understand and appreciate the reason for your silence. I know Frank's impetuosity, and I saw very well, Captain Wayne, to spare my feelings, but you must not remain here; your moment of delay increases your danger. Sheridan and those of his staff would surely recognize you were expected back before this, and they appear at any moment—yet how can you get away? how is it possible for me to assist you?"

There was an eager anxiety in her face that plied me. Like most lovers I chose to give it a wrong interpretation.

"You are anxious to be rid of me?" I asked, ashamed of the words even as I uttered them.

"That remark is unworthy of you," and she arose to her feet almost haughtily. "My sole thought in this is the terrible risk you incur in remaining here."

"Your interest then is personal to me, may I believe?"

"I am a loyal woman," proudly, "and would do nothing whatever to hamper the cause of my country; but your condemnation is unjust, and I am, in a measure, responsible for it. I assist you, Captain Wayne, for your own sake, and in response to my individual sense of honor."

"Have you formulated any plan?" she asked quickly, and her rising color made me feel that she had deciphered my struggle in my eyes.

"Only to walk out under protection of this uniform, and when once safe in the open to trust that some good fortune which has thus far befriended me."

She shook her head doubtfully, and stood a moment in silence, looking thoughtfully at the moving figures in the room beyond.

"I fear it cannot be done without arousing suspicion," she said at last, slowly. "I chance to know there are unusual precautions being taken to-night, and the entire camp is doubly patrolled. Even this house has a cordon of guards about it, but for what reason I have not learned. No," she spoke decisively, "there is no other way. Captain Wayne, I am going."

(To be continued.)