

Aubrey's Revenge.

CHAPTER VIII.
"Tulliver!" called Kelpie. "Tulliver, what are you doing?"
There was not a sound in answer.
Kelpie rapped sharply on the door. "Tulliver, Tulliver, are you asleep?"
Not a sound still, but the silence of death within.
"Oh, Tom!" whispered Kelpie, "I'm afraid he's dead!"
"No danger of that," said Tom, but his face was anxious and his voice a trifle hoarse. "Let me unlock the door, Kelpie."
Obediently, the girl moved aside, and Tom turned the key and opened the door.
It was as dark as the grave in the small room, and as silent.
"Tulliver!" called Tom. "Come out of there, if you want to, Tulliver!"
Receiving no answer, he took out his match case and Kelpie struck a light.
"Hold the light higher, and I'll go down," he said.
She obeyed, and the assistant keeper went down the short flight of steps.
"Oh, Tom, what has happened?" cried Kelpie, in an agony of suspense. "Is he dead?"
"No, he isn't down here," was Tom's answer.

CHAPTER IX.
"Oh, Tom, I see a boat putting out from Thatcher's Rock!" cried Kelpie. "I do, indeed. Oh, it's daddy—I'm sure it's daddy. I'm so glad, so glad!"
Then the brave girl, who had not shed a tear during the perils and terrors of the past night, dropped the spyglass, and, sitting down on the deck, covered her face with her hands and wept like a child.
"Well, I wouldn't cry about it, little woman," said Tom, tenderly. "Let me take a look, and I'll soon tell you whether it's the cap'n or not."
And, picking up the glass, he swept the distant shores with an eagle glance.

"Yes, it's the cap'n!" he cried out, "and he's heading direct for New Castle Light; so you may dry your tears, little woman."
But Kelpie's tears flowed all the faster.

"How can I dry my tears, Tom," she exclaimed, "when I am crying for joy? Oh, I am so glad—so glad! It has been dreadful without him, and I've worried myself to death thinking he had perished in the storm. But he's coming home, and—oh, Tom, he should be so happy if we could only find out what has become of Tulliver. Tom, how do you suppose he managed to get out?"

"Heaven knows, Kelpie," replied Tom, with a bewildered look. "It is a great puzzle, but I dare say the cap'n will be able to explain it when he comes home."
A swift blush warmed Kelpie's cheeks, and her eyes flashed.

"I don't think you have any right to ask me such a question, Tom," she replied.
"Well, I dare say you are right, and I beg your pardon. I've got a message for you," he added, "from the young man."
Kelpie started violently and the color deepened in her cheeks.

"What young man are you talking about, Tom?"
"Oh, don't pretend you don't know! The city chap, of course. He sent you this."
Tom took the dainty little chain from his pocket and held it up before her eyes.

"He sent me this, Tom?" the girl repeated, taking the chain in her fingers. "Why, what a lovely little locket! Oh!—a happy light glowing in her eyes—it's got my name on it. Tom, where did you see this young man?"
"I haven't seen him at all, Kelpie."
"Well, how did you come by this?"
"Fate sent it, I suppose," he answered bitterly. "I was standing on the parapet last night, and a white bird that had beaten its breast out against the lantern glass fell fluttering at my feet. I picked it up, and

by mere chance found the chain fastened about its neck. I removed the chain, and the bird died in my hand!"
"Oh, poor bird! What became of it, Tom?"
"Heaven knows. It was only a moment later that Tulliver rushed out and threw me over the parapet."
Kelpie held up the chain to the light and then took the locket in her fingers, her eyes radiant and the color of a wild rose in her cheeks.

"How wonderful!" she said softly. "How strange the poor bird should fly against the lantern! I can scarcely believe it."
"It happened all the same."
"Do you think the strange young man put this chain about the bird's neck, Tom?"
"I can't tell, Kelpie. It seems natural to hang ropes and other rubbish on, but you're mistaken. It holds a sliding panel in place."
"And what's the use of the sliding panel, daddy?" put in Kelpie.
"It shuts in a small door, from which an iron ladder, leading down to the base of the tower, is suspended."
"Why, how funny!" cried Kelpie. "Why, in the world, daddy, haven't you told us about this before?"
"Oh, I don't know," the old man replied; "it's a ticklish sort of contrivance, and I thought it better to say nothing about it."
"For what purpose do you suppose it was put there, sir?" asked Tom.
"I've never quite made up my mind. Tom, to be used in case of some great emergency, I suppose. I'll admit that it has always struck me as being a useless appendage. I was keeper here a number of years before I found out that such a place existed."
"Well, I never heard of such a thing. How did you find out about it, daddy?" asked Kelpie.
"The man who was here before me told me a very strange story on his deathbed about the secret passage, and afterward I searched and found it."
"A story, Tom, do you hear?" cried Kelpie breathlessly, "and the keeper told it on his deathbed. Oh, daddy, how could you keep it to yourself all this time?"
"I'm half sorry now that I've mentioned it," replied the old man, with a heavy sigh. "I'd better have kept the secret to myself. The first thing I know you'll be climbing down the iron ladder and breaking your neck."
"No danger of breaking my neck, daddy; but do tell us the story. I shan't sleep a wink to-night if you don't."
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"Of course, he will. Daddy always explains everything. Oh, Tom"—clapping her hands like a child—"if it weren't for that poor, crippled arm of yours, wouldn't we have a jolly dance to-night?"
"I see nothing to hinder us, Kelpie," answered Tom. "I don't use but one arm when I waltz."
"Who said anything about waltzing, I'd like to know?" demanded Kelpie, with a toss of her pretty head.

The young assistant regarded her with adoring eyes; then all at once his handsome face clouded and he turned abruptly away.
"What's the matter, Tom?"
"No matter, little woman. Come sit here beside me. I've got something to tell you, and I want to get it over and done with before the cap'n gets here."
"Why, Tom, what in the world can you have to tell me?" said Kelpie, sitting down by his side.

"The poor fellow was silent for a moment. He took the girl's soft little hand, petting and caressing it between both his own, and at last pressing it to his lips.
"Don't be foolish, Tom," said Kelpie. "I'd like to know what you're kissing my hand for?"
Tom had never spoken a word of love to Kelpie, and she shut his teeth hard together, determined not to betray himself now.

"I kissed your hand because it has done so many kind services for me," he replied.
"You great, big, dear, foolish fellow! What is it you've got to tell me? I'm waiting to hear."
"I'm going to ask you a question first. Do you think that city chap whose life we saved that night—Carroll Fitzhugh he called himself, I believe—do you think he'll ever come back to New Castle Light?"
"How can I tell you, Tom?"
"Would you like to have him come back, Kelpie?"

A swift blush warmed Kelpie's cheeks, and her eyes flashed.
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"Many a time, sir."
"Well, you think, no doubt, as I did at one time, that it was set in the wall to hang ropes and other rubbish on, but you're mistaken. It holds a sliding panel in place."
"And what's the use of the sliding panel, daddy?" put in Kelpie.
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