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Twice a Traitor

Washington's Birthday Story

By CLARISSA MACKIE

Obadiah Lampson's great kitchen smelled of frying bacon. His pretty niece and housekeeper, Hope Marshall, was bending over the fire peering into a steaming kettle of corn dumplings. At one end of the room was a square table covered with a homespun cloth and set with blue and white china. The windows were wide open, for it was August, and the weather was warm. There were the buzzing of bees in the honeysuckle vines outside and the song of birds from the nearby orchard.

As Hope leaned against the window sash listening to the bees and birds a quick step sounded on the pebbled path and there came into view Mary Baldwin, Tenny's mother. The color deepened in Hope's cheeks. She had heard of Tenny's visit home the night before.

"Well, Hope, my girl," said Mrs. Baldwin briskly as she entered the room and sank down in a rush bottomed chair near the open door, "dinner well under way?"

"Yes, Aunt Mary. Won't you stay and eat some of my corn dumplings?" "Not today, thank you. I came to say that Tenny is home for a few hours, and we want you to come over and eat dinner with us. I saw Obadiah down in the field and bade him come too."

"I'm afraid Cousin Tenny wouldn't enjoy it," said Hope coldly. "He knows my sympathies are not with the Continentals."

Dame Baldwin ruffled immediately. "Not in sympathy, indeed, minx!" she cried. "What are you but the obedient niece of a Whig?"

"I am a Tory," was Hope's obstinate reply.

"Then it pleases me as well that you do not come, for my boy is growing too fond of you, Mistress Hope Marshall."



His hand flew to his sword. As a Tory maiden I could never make you welcome as my son's wife."

"What, Hope! Not going to dine at your aunt's?" asked her Uncle Obadiah sternly as he entered the kitchen. "I would rather not, Uncle Obadiah," pleaded Hope.

"What silly excuse have you now?" Hope's blue eyes lifted reluctantly until they met his honest gray ones. Suddenly her face broke into a smile, and she kissed him on his ruddy cheek.

"Please don't ask me to go, uncle," she pleaded.

Obadiah broke into a chuckle. "Very well, Hope, my dear." Obadiah made a few changes in his dress, and, with a grave kiss on the lips of his beloved niece and adopted daughter, he went away. He listened to Hope's political opinions much as he would have looked upon the gambol of a playful kitten. Nevertheless, he was grieved and incensed at the girl's obstinacy concerning them. He believed that it was a veil to hide her coldness for Tenny Baldwin.

Hope bolted the back door after his departure and then sat down to her delayed dinner.

All at once she paused and listened. Up through the orchard came the sound of horse's feet and in another moment they were plainly heard in the back dooryard. There came a rap upon the kitchen door.

Hope went to the window. A horse-man was there, a man wrapped in a long dark cloak with a dark cocked hat on his powdered wig.

"Good day, fair mistress," he smiled down at her. "Will you give me a drink of water and please tell me if I am on the right road to the camp of the American army?"

Hope courtesied and brought the water in a large glass goblet. As he quaffed it gratefully she thought rapidly. This man was not of the Americans; that she could guess by his air of nobility and grace of manner. He must be a Britisher—perhaps a titled officer who did not consider it beneath

his rank to spy upon the movements of the enemy.

"I am a Tory," Hope repeated to herself, but somehow the words that must set him on the right road to the enemy's path would not come to her lips. The only thing she could think of at that moment was that this stranger was Tenny Baldwin's enemy.

"I cannot direct you, sir," she said, with pale lips.

"That is too bad, for I am tired and hungry," he said, with a winning smile. "I wonder if your larder is quite empty?"

"No, indeed, sir; you are quite welcome to the best we have," assured Hope, feeling traitorous indeed to entertain the enemy in her uncle's house. What if Obadiah should return ere the stranger had departed!

"I must tell you that my uncle is an ardent Whig," she said as he dismounted.

"So much the better!" he cried heartily and followed the silent Hope into the great kitchen.

While she fried more bacon and baked a johnnycake before the still glowing coals the stranger, still wrapped in his cloak despite the heat of the day, scanned a package of papers with knitted brow.

At last he sat down to the best meal Hope could prepare at short notice, and, having made friends with Wolf, he ate hungrily.

Hope slipped from the room and out of the little used front door. She went down the road with flying feet and ran straight into the arms of her cousin, Tenny Baldwin, who was strolling toward her.

"Well, fair cousin," he cried teasingly, subduing the lovelight in his fine eyes, "have you changed your mind about dining with us today?"

"No, no, Cousin Tenny! I have eaten dinner, but I have something to tell you." Hope was breathing quickly, and a delicate color came and went in her cheeks as she withdrew herself from his grasp and smoothed her ruffled hair.

"Come to tell me goodbye, Hope?" he asked gently. "I may never come back to bother you."

"Nay, Tenny; you have never bothered me," she assured him, with a troubled look in her eyes. "I—I—you know I am a Tory at heart."

There was a quizzical look in his eyes. "I know thou sayest so, Hope," he said gravely. "I am not afraid of Tories."

"There is a British officer eating in our kitchen this very minute. He asked me the way to the American lines, but I would not tell him."

"Then you are a traitor to your own cause, Hope."

"Somehow I couldn't tell him that, Cousin Tenny. And it does not seem loyal to Uncle Obadiah and you to entertain him there in uncle's house, so I came to tell you."

"Thank you, dear," said Tenny soberly. "Stay you here, Hope, and tell my mother I will return shortly." He hastened up the road toward Obadiah's house.

Hope was after him in an instant. "I am going with you, Tenny," she cried, keeping pace with his rapid stride.

"But, Hope, there may be bloodshed," he protested, touching his sword.

"Then you will need me the more," she said valiantly, and he made no further objection.

The stranger's horse still cropped the grass in the dooryard as Hope led the way through the front door. There was the tinkle of china from the kitchen.

"He is still there," whispered Hope, opening the door into the room the merest trifle.

Tenny Baldwin stood beside her and applied his eye to the same crack. He uttered a sudden exclamation, opened the door wider and entered the room boldly.

The stranger rose quickly, and his hand flew to his sword. His look of stern inquiry changed to one of pleasant recognition as Tenny Baldwin respectfully saluted him.

"Ah, Captain Baldwin!" cried the stranger, holding out his hand.

"Your excellency!" murmured Tenny Baldwin, for indeed it was the commander in chief of the American army.

Hope Marshall leaned against the wall in the shadows, half frightened, half relieved at the situation. As she listened to the murmur of their voices and realized that the stranger was none other than the great General Washington, come down to overlook his forces on Long Island, a revulsion of feeling came to her. These men, her Cousin Tenny and Washington, were fighting for their lives, for the lives of their dear ones, for liberty, for ultimate peace. She chided herself for an ignorant girl—a graceless one indeed—to have sung her Tory ditty in the faces of her kinspeople.

At that instant Hope Marshall turned traitor to the Tory cause, and her traitor heart leaped gladly as she thought that she need offer no opposition to Tenny Baldwin's love.

Tenny Baldwin had explained the situation to General Washington, and as they laughed he brought forward Hope Marshall.

"This is my fair Tory cousin, your excellency," he said, smiling gravely.

"Nay, I am no longer a Tory, your excellency," stammered Hope, her cheeks aflame. "I have turned traitor to my own cause."

"Indeed?" asked the general with a kind smile as he held her little hand. "May I ask why you have turned traitor?"

Involuntarily Hope's eyes turned to those of her handsome Cousin Tenny. "Oh, because—"

"'Tis a most proper reason," teased the general, discreetly turning his back while Tenny took swift tell from his cousin's tender lips.

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