

# RED EVE

BY H. RIDER HAGGARD

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### SYNOPSIS.

RIDER HAGGARD'S romance, "Red Eve," is laid in the period of the battle of Crecy and of the scourge of the black death, both of these events playing important parts in the story.

"Red Eve" opens with a prologue, which is placed in Cathay and is a fanciful and yet gruesome picture depicting the embarking of Murgh, god of death, on his passage from China, which he has devastated with the plague, to the western lands, over which he is about to lay his scourging hand and its blight.

From this prologue the scene passes to Blythburgh, in Suffolk, a village near to the seaport of Dunwich, in which places dwell the families of the Claverings and their cousins, the De Cressis. The Claverings, of whom the head is Sir John Clavering, are large feudal land owners, and the De Cressis are wealthy wool merchants at Dunwich.

Sir John Clavering has two children—a son, John, and a daughter, Eve, the Red Eve of the story, so called because of her fancy for wearing crimson, which sets off her dark beauty.

Eve, a lady of great character, is in love with Hugh de Cressi, the younger son of the merchant, a young man of many parts but small fortune, with whom she has grown up from childhood.

Sir John Clavering, however, will have none of the match, partly because of a feud that has arisen between his house and that of the De Cressis and still more because he wishes his lovely daughter to marry a great lord, half Norman and half English, who is named Sir Edmund Acour in England, Count de Noyon in France and the Seigneur Catrina in Italy, in all three of which countries he has possessions.

This Acour, a handsome but false hearted noble, is at the time of the opening of the story staying with the Claverings under pretext of visiting his English estates, but really as a spy of King Philip of France and to make arrangements for the invasion of England.

The opening of the story describes the secret meeting of Red Eve with her sweetheart, Hugh de Cressi, in Blythburgh fen, upon a winter day. Hugh is accompanied by one of the main characters of the tale, his henchman, Gray Dick, or Richard Archer, so called for his marvelous skill with the bow, a fatherless and misanthropic man, who is supposed to be of the De Cressi blood and who certainly loves Hugh like a brother.

Their meeting is interrupted by Sir John Clavering, Eve's father; John, her brother, and Sir Edmund Acour, with a posse of knights and serving men, who finally fire the reeds in order to drive out the sweethearts, whom they can not find.

Hugh and Eve's brother John have a desperate fight, rolling over each other, but too close to stab. The flurry in the snow was at an end. John lay on his back; De Cressi knelt on him and lifted his short sword.

"Do you yield?" men heard him say. "Nay," answered Clavering. Then suddenly Hugh rose and suffered his adversary to do likewise.

"I'll not stick you like a hog," he said, and some cried, "Well done!" for the act seemed noble. Only Acour muttered "Fool!"

Next instant they were at it again, but this time it was Hugh who attacked and John who gave back right to the river's edge, for skill and courage seemed to fall him at once.

"Turn your head, lady," said Dick, "for now one must die." But Eve could not.

The swords flashed for the last time in the red light. Then that of De Cressi vanished. Clavering threw his arms wide and fell backward. A splash as of a great stone thrown into water, and all was done.

The sweethearts, escaping, swim the Blyth in flood in an effort to find sanctuary in the preceptory at Dunwich.

After an exciting and perilous passing of the river Eve and Hugh are joined by Gray Dick, who when asked the outcome of the fight tells them he shot three and slew three men, but the fourth time he missed. "Whom?" asks Eve. "The Frenchman who means to marry you," is Gray Dick's answer.

Arriving at the preceptory of the Knights Templar at Dunwich, Eve and Hugh hid themselves given sanctuary by an old priest, Sir Andrew Arnold, who is in charge of the preceptory, the Knights Templar having been dissolved.

Sir Andrew is of high degree and has a famous record as a warrior. Also he is Red Eve's confessor and Hugh's godfather.

He tells the tale of slaughter and love and in turn tells a fantastic story of his experience in his youth with Murgh, the god of death.

Early in life Sir Andrew had traveled to Cathay. He it was who met Murgh in a marvelous temple. Murgh in a remarkable interview bestowed on Sir Andrew some of his weird wisdom.

After this recital and the demand of Red Eve and Hugh that they be forgiven and married, Hugh's father reaches the preceptory, learns of the fight in the marshes and praises his son for his courage. He regrets that a feud is now established between the Claverings and the De Cressis, but proceeds nevertheless to protect his son's life, while showing pride in the fact that the old Norman blood in his veins is shown in his courage.

While father and son talk Sir Andrew takes action by announcing that as part of Hugh's penance he is to ride to London on an errand that shall save his neck. The father grants permission for Hugh to undertake the perilous ride, but asks, "To whom does he go?"

He is told that Hugh is to visit none other than King Edward III, to whom he is to carry proofs of the treachery of Acour. Eve is to be left in charge of Sir Andrew. Accompanied by Gray Dick and his men, Hugh reaches Windsor and is graciously received by the king.

Queen Philippa hears from Hugh the story of his love for Red Eve and becomes interested. She learns of the battle on Blythburgh heath, and the king then grants a full pardon to Hugh and puts in his hand a royal warrant calling for either the capture or death of Acour.

Gray Dick then amazes the king and his retinue with an exhibition of archery, at the conclusion of which the monarch exclaims, "We do not see such shooting every day."

Meantime Red Eve is decoyed out of the sanctuary by a tale of her father's illness. She finds him not ill, but violently angry at the turn of affairs.

### CHAPTER VI (Continued) THE SNARE

THE chaplain cringed and bowed, rubbing his thin hands together.

"I thought you wished to speak of the English, my lord, otherwise I should not have ventured—but as to the Lady Eve, a thought comes to me. Why does she stay in sanctuary who herself has committed no crime? Is it not, such as her madness, because she would be out of reach of you and your endearments? Now, if she believed you gone far enough away, let us say to France, and knew that her father lay ill, why then?"—and he paused.

"You mean that then she might come out of sanctuary of her own accord?"

"Yes, lord, and we might set a spring to catch this bird so rare and shy, and though she'd flutter, flutter, flutter and peck, peck, peck, what could she do when you smoothed her plumage with your loving hand and a priest was waiting to say the word which should cause her to forget her doubts and that merchant bumptin?"



He watched her come, but said no word, and the look of him frightened her somewhat.

"Ah! Nicholas, you have a good wit, and if all goes well you shall certainly be an abbot. But would her father, do you think?"

"Lord, that beef eating knight is in such a rage that he would do anything. What did he say just before the stroke took him? That you were to marry her by fair means or by foul. Yes, and he told me an hour ago that if only he knew that she was your wife he would die happy. Oh! you have his warrant for anything you do to bring about this end, though in truth there is no need to tell him too much lest it should cause his good name to be aspersed by the vulgar, many of whom, it seems, love this Red Eve for her high spirit and are friends to the De Cressis, an open handed race who know how to bind folk to them. Listen how it must be done."

That day it was given out that Sir Edmund Acour, those of his knights who remained alive and all his following were about to leave for London and lay their cause before the king, having learned that Hugh de Cressi had gone thither to prejudice his grace on his own behalf. Moreover, it was added that they would not return to Suffolk, but proposed when they had found justice or the promise of it to take ship at Dover for France. Next morning accordingly they rode away from Blythburgh manor and passed through Dunwich with much pomp, the citizens of that town, who were friends of the De Cressis, staring at them with no kind eye. Indeed, one of them as they crossed the market place called to them to be careful not to meet Hugh de Cressi and Gray Dick upon their journey, lest there should be more midnight burials and men at arms turned into foot soldiers, whereat all about him laughed rudely.

But Acour did not laugh. He ground his teeth and said into the ear of Nicholas:

"Register this vow for me, priest, that in payment for that jest I'll sack and burn Dunwich when our army comes and give its men and children to the sword and its women to the soldiers."

"It shall be done, lord," answered the chaplain, "and should your heart soften at the appointed time I'll put you in memory of this solemn oath."

At the great house of the mayor of Dunwich Sir Edmund drew rein and demanded to see him. Presently this mayor, a timid, uncertain looking man, came in his robes of office and asked anxiously what might be the cause of this message and why an armed band halted at his gate.

"For no ill purpose, sir," answered Acour, "though little of justice have I found at your hands, who, therefore, must seek it at the court of my liege lord, King Edward. All I ask of you is that you will cause this letter to be delivered safely to the lady Eve Clavering, who lies in sanctuary at the preceptory of St. Mary and St. John. It is one of farewell, since it seems that this lady who was my affianced, by her own will and her father's, wishes to break troth, and I am not a man who needs an unwilling bride. I'd deliver it myself only that old knave, half priest and half knight, but neither good!"

"You'd best speak no ill of Sir Andrew Arnold here," said a voice in the crowd.

"Only the master of the preceptory," went on Acour, changing his tone somewhat, "might take fright and think I wished to violate his sanctuary if I came there with 30 spears at my back."

"And no fool, either," said the voice, "seeing that they are French spears and his an English sanctuary." "Therefore," continued Acour, "I pray you, deliver the letter. Perchance when we meet again, Master Mayor," he added, with a venomous glance of his dark eyes, "you will have some boon to ask of me and be sure I'll grant it—if I can."

Then without waiting for an answer, for the mob of sturdy fishermen, many of whom had served in the French wars, looked threatening, he and his following rode away through the Ipswich gate and out on

to the moorlands beyond, which some of them knew but too well.

All the rest of that day they rode slowly, but when

years to remember that you had bid him no farewell. If he recovers or is harsh with you it will be easy for you to seek sanctuary again."

would be an ill task for me to stand between sire and child. Enter then, for I am sure that the saints and your own innocence will protect you from all harm, and at the worst you can come or send to me for help."

So they parted, and, the bridge having been lowered, Eve walked boldly to her father's sleeping chamber, where she was told he lay. As she approached the door she met several of the household leaving it with scared faces, who scarcely stayed to salute her, among them being two servants of her dead brother John, men whom she had never liked, and a woman, the wife of one of them, whom she liked least of all.

Pushing open the door, which was shut behind her, she advanced toward Sir John, who was not, as she had thought, in bed, but standing, clad in a furred robe, by the hearth, on which burned a fire. He watched her come, but said no word, and the look of him frightened her somewhat.

"Father," she began, "I heard that you were sick and alone?"

"Aye," he broke in, "sick, very sick here," and he laid his hand upon his heart. "where grief strikes a man, and alone, since you and your fellow have done my only son to death, murdered my guests and caused them to depart from so bloody a house."

Now Eve, who had come expecting to find her father at the point of death and was prepared to plead with him, at these violent words took fire as was her wont.

"You know well that you speak what is not true," she said. "You and your Frenchmen strove to burn us out of Middle Marsh; my brother John struck Hugh de Cressi as though he were a dog and used words toward him that no knave would bear, let alone one better born than we are. Moreover, afterward once he spared his life, and Gray Dick, standing alone against a crowd, did but use his skill to save us. Is it murder, then, to protect our honor and to save ourselves from death? And am I wrong to refuse to marry a fine French knave when I chance to love an honest man?"

"And, pray, am I your father, girl, that you dare to scold at me thus?" shouted Sir John, growing purple with wrath. "If I choose a husband for you, by what right do you refuse him, saying that you love a Dunwich shop boy? Down on your knees and beg my pardon, or you shall have the whipping you have earned."

Now Eve's black eyes glittered dangerously. "I'll would it go with any man who dares to lay a hand upon me," she said, drawing herself up and grasping the dagger in her girdle. "Yes, very ill, even though he were my own father. Look at me and say am I one to threaten? Aye, and before you answer bear in mind that there are those at my call who can strike hard, and that among them I think you'll find the king of England."

She paused. "What hellish plot is this that you hatch against me?" asked Sir John, with some note of doubt in his voice. "What have I to fear from my liege lord the king of England?"

"Only, sir, that you consort with and would wed me to one who, although you may not know it, has, I am told, much to fear from him, so much that I wonder that he has ridden to seek his grace's presence. Well, you are ill and I am angered and together we are but as steel and flint, from the meeting of which comes fire that may burn us both. Therefore, since being better than I thought, you need me not and have only cruel words for greeting, I'll bid you farewell and get me back to those who are kinder. God be with you and give you your health again."

"Ah!" said or rather snarled Sir John. "I thought as much and am ready for the trick. You'd win back to sanctuary, would you, and the company of that old wizard, Andrew Arnold, thence to make a mock of me? Well, not one step do you take upon that road while I live," and, pushing past her, he opened the door and shouted aloud.

Apparently the men and the woman whom Eve had met in the passage were still waiting there, for instantly they all reappeared.

"Now, fellows," said Sir John, "and you, Jane Mell, take this rebellious girl of mine to the prisoners' chamber in the tower, whence I think she'll find it hard to fly to sanctuary, and there lock her fast, feeding her with the bread and water of affliction to tame her proud spirit and suffering none to go near her save this woman, Jane Mell. Stay, give me that bodkin which she wears lest she, who has learned bloody ways of late, should do some of you or herself a mischief."

As he spoke one of the men deftly snatched the dagger from Eve's girdle and handed it to Sir John, who threw it into the farthest corner of the room. (To Be Continued.)

### CHAPTER VII THE LOVE PHILTER

SO it came about that on the morrow Eve and Sir Andrew, accompanied only by a single serving man, fearing no guile, since it seemed certain that the Frenchmen were far away, rode across the moor to Blythburgh. At the manor house they found the drawbridge up, and the watchman at the gate said that his orders were to admit none, for, the Frenchmen being gone, there were but few to guard the place.

"What, good fellow," asked Eve, "not even the daughter of the house who has heard that her father lies so sick?"

"Aye, he lies sick, lady," the man replied, "but such are his orders. Yet if you will bide here a while I'll go and learn his mind."

So he went and returned presently, saying that Sir John commanded that his daughter was to be admitted, but that if Sir Andrew attempted to enter he should be driven back by force.

"Will you go in or will you return with me?" asked her companion of Eve.

"God's truth!" she answered, "am I one to run away from my father, however bad his humor? I'll go in and set my case before him, for, after all, he loves me in his own fashion and when he understands will, I think, relent."

"Your heart is your best guide, daughter, and it

night came, having halted their horses at a farm and given it out that they meant to push on to Woodbridge, they turned up a bylane on the lonely heath and unseen by any made their way back through the darkness to a certain empty house in the marshes not far from Becclestown. This house, which was called Frog hall, was part of Acour's estate, and because of the ague prevalent there in autumn had been long untenanted, nor did any visit it at this season of the year, when no cattle grazed upon these salt marshes.

Here, then, he and his people lay hid, cursing their fortunes, since, notwithstanding the provisions which they had conveyed thither in secret, the place was icy cold in the bitter easterly winds that tore over it from the sea and so lonely that the Frenchmen swore that their comrades slain by Gray Dick haunted them at nights, bidding them prepare to join the number of the dead. Indeed, had not Acour sworn that he would hang the first man who attempted to desert some of them would have left him to make the best of their way back to France, for always as they crouched by the smoking hearth they dreamed of Gray Dick and his terrible arrows.

Sir Edmund Acour's letter came safely into the hands of Eve, brought by the mayor himself. It read thus:

"Lady: You will no more of me so however much you should live to ask it I will have no more of you. I go hang your merchant lout, and afterward away to France, who wish to have done with your cold Suffolk, where you may buy my lands cheap if you will. Yet, should Master Hugh de Cressi chance to escape me, I counsel you to marry him, for I can wish you no worse fate, seeing what you will be, than to remember what you might have been. Meanwhile it is my duty as a Christian to tell you, in case you should desire to speak with him ere it be too late, that your father lies at the point of death from a sickness brought on by his grief at the slaying of his son and your cruel desertion of him, and calls for you in his ravings. May God forgive you all the evil that you have wrought, which, perhaps, is not done with yet, as I try to do. Unless fate should bring us together again, as for aught I know it may, I bid you farewell forever. Would that I had never seen your face, but well are you named Red Eve, who, like the false Helen in a story you have never heard, were born to bring brave men to their death. Again farewell,

"De NOYON."

"Who is this Helen?" asked Eve of Sir Andrew when the letter had been read.

"A fair Grecian, daughter, over whom nations fought when the world was young, because of her beauty."

"Ah, well! she did not make herself beautiful, did she, and, perchance, was more sinned against than sinning, since women, having but one life to live, must follow their own hearts? But this Helen has been dead a long while, so let her rest, if rest she may. And now it seems that Acour has gone and that my father lies very sick. What shall I do, return to him?"

"First I will make sure that the Frenchman has gone, and then we will see, daughter."

So Sir Andrew sent out messengers, who reported that it was true that Acour had ridden away to London to see the king and then sail from Dover. Also they said that no Frenchmen were left at Blythburgh save those who would never leave the place again and that Sir John Clavering lay sick in his bed at the manor.

"God fights for us," said Sir Andrew, with a little laugh. "This Acour's greeting at court may be warmer than he thinks, and, at the least, you and Dunwich are well rid of him. Though I had sooner that you stayed here, tomorrow, daughter, you shall ride to Blythburgh, since should your father die, as I think he will ere long, it might grieve you in the after



"Who is this Helen?" asked Eve of Sir Andrew