

# The WANTED MAN by Harris Dickson

**THE STORY THUS FAR.**  
 On opposite sides of Lake Marston, in Mississippi, are two large cotton-plantations, owned by Maj. Kenneth Stark, and Marston property of Gen. Bob Clayton. Following a bitter feud, Gen. Clayton has fled to Salamanca, Central America, with his son Stuart. Stuart returns on a mysterious mission after many years and on the day opens federal detection are hunting him. Uncle Nat, Maj. Stark's good servant, goes to Marston to warn Stuart, but is greeted so coldly he suspects the youth is an impostor. Barbara, Maj. Stark's beautiful daughter, and her fiancée Adelaide, wife of Florian Razzie, a justice of the peace, keep a tryst at the Lone Oak with a mysterious horseman in love with Barbara, who has told him she is "Adelaide." Uncle Nat reveals his suspicions regarding Stuart, with the result Barbara greets Stuart, who is the mysterious horseman, coldly when he arrives. He clasps her in his arms, and to escape him she tells a falsehood—that she is married. The girls flee as Razzie approaches. Uncle Nat bows up again and this time recognizes Stuart, who gives him a note for "Adelaide" and arranges a rendezvous in an old graveyard near Bennington.

## FIFTH INSTALLMENT.

Creole Jealousy.

**B**RIBBON, hurried, and direct, they admitted of no two constructions that "Adelaide" had been meeting the writer in secret, and had left him saying that she had something more to tell, so Clayton employed her to meet him again at once, as he must leave the United States that night and might never return. He would come to see at any hour, anywhere, and she could trust Nat with her answer.

He covered the entire open space on the envelope and left room at the bottom for a stamped signature, "Stuart Clayton." No man of sense would sign his real name to such a paper, which he folded and wrote on the other side a single word, "Adelaide."

Clayton did not think, but the envelope already bore his typewritten address, "Stuart Clayton, El Jucaro de los Minas, Salamanca." This he scratched out with his pencil.

"Now, Uncle Nat," he cautioned, "be careful with this. It might cause trouble."

"Especially so, especially," Nat grimaced, experienced knowledge of such affairs. "I make it a point never to stir up no trouble for white folks."

"Be sure that nobody sees you give this to the lady. You know Mrs. Florian Razzie?"

"Mrs. Razzie?" Nat exclaimed, and his eyes bulged like a crow's. "Dis note ain't for her?"

"Yes, for Mrs. Razzie. Make no mistake. But," he protested, "I loved you was courtin' Miss Barbara?"

"I am not courtin' anybody," and at his tone Uncle Nat shut up.

"Bring me her answer," Clayton ordered, "at once, to the old Pearce graveyard. I'll be waiting there."

"Lawd Gawd, Mister Stuart!" the Negro begged, "don't you come dat night to Bennington on no such business as dis."

"Do as I tell you."

"Suttinly, sir, especially."

"I'll take care not to be seen. You can beat those skills to Bennington. Here's your note. Deliver it."

"Suttinly, sub. Give it to Mrs. Razzie. An' don't let nobody see-me?" Especially, sub, especially."

Nat caught the envelope by one corner as it was hot and started off.

"Hold on, Uncle Nat. Take this. Buy you a good cigar." A ten dollar bill, accompanied by a smile of comradship, was not scorned like the silver dollar flung to him on the Marston porch.

"Mister Stuart," he turned and said, "I'm pow'tul skeered of dis note, but I know you wouldn't see me do nothin' wrong."

Old Nat hustled toward his dugout, then halted to make another suggestion.

"O, Mister Stuart, if it's de same wid you, couldn't you git to dat graveyard before sundown? I hates to go prankin' around no such place in de dark."

"Yes," Clayton reassured him, "I'll be there."

This business of transporting high explosive gave Uncle Nat the idea that as he shoved off his dugout and started for home before Major Stark could get near enough to send him on some other errand. The dangerous note scratched his hide, and he awaited to get rid of it. With all charity for the skyraking propensities of young men—and being somewhat of a philosopher himself—the Negro knew that certain breeches could not be tolerated. Once a daring youngster tried it, and wrote to a married lady—but niggers had better keep their mouths shut about what happened to him.

"O, Nat! Nat!" the major shouted, "tell Neezer to come and tow us home."

"Suttinly, sub, suttinly," Nat called back, and his paddle flew. With every stroke he cocked his head from one side to the other, cogitating like a wise old owl. But the nearer he drew to Bennington, the colder grew his feet.

Neezer did not suspect him as he delivered the major's message at the wharf; the fat cook let him pass her kitchen without a question; and the hazy pointer dog gazed into a quiet and virtuous confidence that such an innocent appearing old person would never act as a go-between. Yet his guilt was manifest in every furtive movement as Nat sneaked around the north side of the house, where he discovered Mrs. Razzie and Miss Barbara on the front gallery, sitting jammed up together in the wains, and talking excitedly. He could not make heads or tails of what they were whispering about, because they hushed when Uncle Nat settled himself upon the steps and opened both ears. The most that Nat caught on to was that Mrs. Razzie seemed riled about something, while Miss Barbara kept saying it was all right, and trying to pacify her. So far as Nat could see there wasn't any chance to slip Mister Stuart's note to Mrs. Razzie without Miss Barbara catching him. By some hook or crook he was obliged to get them separated.

The ladies had not yet changed their clothes, which was always the first thing that Miss Barbara did when she came in from a dusty ride; and this omission justified Nat's hunch that something important must have happened.



"Madame, here is a note from your lover."

"Pow'tul warm dis event," he remarked pleasantly, sitting down and fanning with his hat, while that burning message in his breast pocket kept the sweat trickling in the gutters of his back.

"Very sorry," Miss Barbara agreed. "We are dying for a pitcher of ice water."

"Suttinly, Miss Barbara, suttinly."

"Very well, Go fix it."

"Yes'm."

As the reluctant Negro made a balk to get up, Barbara changed her mind and suggested: "No. You'd better make some lemonade. Aunt Calline will give you the lemonade."

The old man dropped back and refused to budge, knowing perfectly well that she did not want the lemonade, except to get rid of him. And Barbara could not imagine why Uncle Nat should be so stubborn.

"O, Uncle Nat!" she sat up straight with a brilliant inspiration. "Here's the idea. I want you to make Mrs. Razzie one of your justly celebrated sangarees. Everybody's crazy about your sangarees. Use half a cup full of claret to that big pitcher, and—"

"I know 'cisely how you stir it," Nat's dat big pitcher."

The obstinate Negro might have continued to sit, if the reverse end of Barbara's proposition hadn't swung round and hit him. Up he jumped with roused enthusiasm and suggested:

"Dat's de ve'y thing, Miss Barbara. Jes' dis mornin' de major he say to me, 'Nat, I 'sres you to show Mrs. Razzie how you makes dem sangarees, so she kin tell her N'Yawleens folks. Nobody can't beat Uncle Nat when it comes to makin' sangarees. Nat, you got to show Mrs. Razzie how you medjers yo' claret, an' how you medjers yo' sugar, an' 'cisely how you stir it.' Dat's what major say. Come 'long, Mrs. Razzie, come 'long.' Uncle Nat got half way to the door, but the irresponsible lady failed to follow.

"Not now, Uncle Nat, thank you," the creole answered languidly. "I'm too tired. You may bring a glass out here if you please."

"I kin fetch it all out here an' make dat sangaree right befo' yo' eyes," and Uncle Nat had already started to do this when Miss Barbara stopped him.

"And get my gallery all spattered up," she objected, "when Mandy has just scrubbed it? And draw a million flies? Not much. Make yo' litter in the pantry. Hurry. Hurry."

As old Nat grudgingly slambled through the front door, Barbara called after him, "And stir it a long time, a good long time."

"Especially, Miss Barbara, especially." Reaping the reward of duplicity, they had barely got their whispering under way again before the crafty Negro thrust out his face and said, "O, Miss Barbara! I nigh forgot! Dat carpenter laf word for you to come out an' 'bamine de way he hung yo' garidge do', so'ter to scratch yo' nice little new car. Better come 'long right now, befo' it gits too dark."

If the sangaree could not entice Mrs. Razzie away from Miss Barbara, maybe the garage door might tempt Miss Barbara away from Mrs. Razzie, which amounted to the same thing, and Nat would get rid of the note. But the girls only paused long enough in their bumble-bee talk for Barbara to say: "I have already looked at that door. It is quite tight."

"But I means de back do'."

"The garage has no back do'."

"Especially, Miss Barbara, especially."

Again he disappointed, temporarily, pending his punctual return bearing the majolles pitcher and two glasses, with much reddish slop spilled on the tray.

"Look at that, Uncle Nat!" Barbara scolded. "Aren't you ashamed to serve a sangaree in any such style? Get a cloth."

This gained a few more seconds, while old Nat shuffled in, and out again with a disheveled tray was wiped, and he continued to hang around.

"Now, Uncle Nat," Barbara suggested, "it's time for you to go out and feed those cute little new puppies."

"No'm," he answered, sitting down comfortably on the step. "Dey ma's feedin' 'em. Dem pups is all puff'd up wid feed."

Then he mopped his face with the claret stained cloth and tried to hear what they were saying. In a moment he had another idea, and proposed it.

"O, Mrs. Razzie, dat puts me in min'—hadn't you better come 'long wid me an' lem-me he'n pick out yo' pup what de major's aimin' to give you? I'm a fust class picker when it comes to pups. Now, of a pup's got big feet, an'—"

"No, thank you." She sawed him off. "Mr. Razzie wishes to select that puppy for himself."

Barbara could think of nothing more to invent, and in their awkward silence all three could hear the put-put-put of Neezer's motor boat, towing home the fishermen. Both girls lifted their heads with a jerk, and listened half-frightened, as a seary mule listens when he thinks the train is about to run over him. But the major's approach threw a ruse to

Nat. He thought of another scheme to separate the Siamese twins.

"Here dey come, Miss Barbara," he reminded her. "An' yo' pa sho will need his toddy when he 'rives in."

There Nat had her. Everybody on Bennington knew that Major Stark permitted no one else to mix his toddy, which constituted their afternoon function for the thirsty. In preparation for this routine old Nat sprang up and moved toward the pantry.

"I'll lay out ev'ring fer de on de table, Miss Barbara, so you kin have dem toddies waitin', wid de frost on de outside."

"Thank you, Uncle Nat. But never mind. They'll be ready when father comes."

"But yo' pa's mighty nigh here."

"Then where's his maw?" she sternly demanded. "Uncle Nat, if Major Stark comes in and does not find his paper lying right there on that table, well, I hate to be in your shoes."

Nat's feet were in his shoes, and he set them both in the driveway, one ahead of the other, just as swift as he could, with his funny duck legged waddle hustling for the mail box.

"Dat's helagin, as major say." Old Nat grumbled to himself. "Fust thing I know I'll git catch wid dis note."

His two big feet scattered gravel, and Nat's coatails burned the wind on his way to the mail box. He must rush back and empty that dynamite note from his pocket before Mr. Razzie came meddlin' and got Nat's business all cluttered up. Then Nat thought of Mr. Stuart, mashed down on his accelerator, and flew. Mr. Stuart must be already waiting for him in the old Pearce graveyard, ramping up and down amongst the cedars, and slashing his leggings with a whip. Nobody named Clayton could ever sit still and be quiet after he got his mind set on doing something.

"Dar now!" Nat halted with his hand in the mail box. "Ef I don't tote dat answer mighty brief to de graveyard, Mister Stuart sho will tote hissed up here. He'll jes' nicherly march to Bennington, major or no major, husband or no husband. An' den—an' den!"

Awed by the awfulness of what he foresaw, old Nat grabbed his mail and started back to the house. Almost before Barbara could miss him she saw him returning with the letters in his hand.

"Anything for me?" she asked without interest.

"No'm. Nothin' fer nobody, 'cept major's paper, an' two o' dese blue letters fer Mister Razzie."

Those particular blue letters came so regularly from New York and had such a peculiar

medallion in one corner that old Nat grew to recognize their envelopes, and always tucked them aside for Mr. Razzie. Now he stuck both letters within his coat, in perilous proximity with the penciled note from Mr. Stuart Clayton.

Bounding up the front steps, Nat could see through the broad hallway to the back gate, at which the fishermen were already entering.

"You dey come, Miss Barbara," he pointed. "Geet! Yo' pa's got a fine string. Better run an' look."

He figured that Mrs. Razzie, being indifferent to fish, and so tired, would probably remain where she was, and he could slip her the note. But she didn't remain. She got up and went with Miss Barbara, just as if she were afraid to be left by herself. Arm in arm both girls hastened through the hallway, with old Nat tagging behind and muttering: "Huh, ef dis was a million dollar bill, she wouldn't 'low me nary chance to give it to her."

Old Nat felt like the organ grinder's monkey, with a hot penny that he dared not drop. The note was scorching him, but he saw no sense in trying to deliver it right under the eyes of Mr. Razzie. So the disgraced Negro shuffled down steps into the back yard, while Barbara and Adelaide halted on the back gallery to meet their men.

First through the rear gate marched Mr. Florian Razzie, wearing his white cork helmet and carrying a rifle. Although he stalked toward them as if he were posing for an episode in Darkest Africa, the wife detected a certain jerky motion which betrayed his mental disturbance. As the ladies were observing him, he must continue to dissimulate. At the proper time his capture of the much wanted Clayton would burst upon them.

"Uncle Nat," he spoke with clever nonchalance, "tell Seymour to saddle the lay filly. I'll give her a tryout."

"Yes, sub; Seymour's gone to town, but Ed kin do it."

While Nat hurried to the stables, Razzie set down his rifle against the steps, and gave an imitation of having nothing on his mind.

"O, Florian, dear," Adelaide bent over the railing and spoke her prettiest. "Did you catch me a nice little fish?" But the anxious question in her eyes did not concern a fish; she only wanted to feel sure that he had not caught her at the lake.

"Yes, we had good luck," the husband nodded.

An appreciative man would have glanced a second time at those lovely young women in their riding habits; yet Razzie barely glanced the first time, then turned away to the kennels and began inspecting a new litter of pups.

Barbara pinched Adelaide's arm and whispered: "I'm afraid he suspects something."

"Yes; but not us. Mon dieu! If he suspected that?"

This was old Nat's day for hunches. Hus-tling back from the stables, he now felt a hunch that Mrs. Razzie was watching her husband.

"Huh!" he smirked, "dat shoe oughter be on t'other foot."

All that the ladies saw and all that Nat saw was a husband who knelt beside the kennel and gave his undivided attention to one of old Nat's pups. As Nat approached, Razzie glanced up from this engrossing occupation to inquire, "Is the filly ready?"

"Jes a minit, sub, soon as Ed gits her curried."

Meanwhile the major, with Dr. Humphreys, had paused in front of Miss Barbara's garage to look at her new car. From there the major called:

"Nat, where's my mail?"

"Here, sub. Comin', sub." And Nat moved over to the garage, keeping one eye skinned for whatever Mr. Razzie might be doing. "Better step light in dis business," he warned himself.

Hearing Major Stark call for his mail seemed to put Mr. Razzie in mind of his own, for he, too, called out, "Uncle Nat, have you some letters for me?"

"Yes, sub. Got two."

"Let me have them, please."

"Suttinly, sub; suttinly."

When Nat went back to deliver those letters things began to happen. Mr. Razzie continued to kneel before a pen in which the major's favorite pointer was sucking her pup. The ladies had already gone inside, and the two old crows fishermen were just disappearing through the door. Uncle Nat and Mr. Razzie had the entire back yard to themselves. It was peaceful out there, with no sign of trouble, and Nat never even got a hunch.

He shuffled across the yard, fumbling in his pockets for the blue letters. It was not Uncle Nat's fault if Clayton's note, being so small, got sandwiched between the two big envelopes. So Nat bent down and gave Mr. Razzie three documents instead of two.

"Here's yo' letters, Mr. Razzie. I hope bofe of 'em brings good news."

With this gentle wish, and to show that he never meant a bit of harm, that he wasn't afraid of anybody, Uncle Nat squatted down side and side with Mr. Razzie, and began talking to him for his own good about the puppies.

"Mr. Razzie," he advised, "ef I was you I'd pick dis he-dog, wid de spotted ears—"

"Dis little pot belled feller, he ain't liable to grow nigh as big as dis spot ear. De way to prosy nigh as big as dis spot ear, is to grow to his feet. Dis spot ear pup sho will turn out a whale—"

Serely he gabbled on without noticing that Mr. Razzie had risen and become ominously quiet.

"One time," Nat never looked up. "One time I had a liver an' white p'inter—"

But Mr. Razzie didn't hear him. Razzie couldn't hear anything, couldn't see anything, couldn't think of anything except some penciled words on a bit of paper at which he was staring, and wondering what they meant. He read the note twice before seeing that it was addressed to "Adelaide."

"Now, dat liver an' white p'inter o' mine—"

Nat continued the history until Razzie broke in.

"Where did you get that?"

"My ole dog had dat pup, her own self. She had ten of 'em at one time."

"Dat the pup. This note."

"Dat note?" with an innocent raising of the eyes.

"Yes. This note."

A clutching hand grabbed Nat's collar and jerked the Negro upright. Nat saw the two blue letters drop to the ground while Razzie showed a smaller scrap of paper at him and demanded:

"Where did you get this infernal note?"

"Dat note?" Nat felt his pockets, he searched all his pockets, he rummaged them one after another, two at a time, over and over again. Mr. Clayton's note was gone, and Nat could see it in Razzie's hand. Fur-

thermore, Nat saw something else in Mr. Razzie's face which set the trigger of his legs for traveling; but the hand in his collar held him hitched. Involuntarily he made a grab for the note, which Razzie jerked away and demanded, "Where did you get this?"

"Gitt—gitt—gitt which?"

"This piece of paper?"

"Dat, dat piece o' paper? Huh! I never had it."

"Don't lie to me, old man!" The infuriated Razzie gripped Uncle Nat by a strangerlike, while the Negro's popping eyes stared around for somebody to help him get loose. What he craved was a severance from this enraged white man with the blazing eyes. Or if he couldn't get a severance, he needed time, more time to prepare his pleas. But the yard was empty; no first aid showed up. Folks never seemed to care how much trouble Nat had. Even his best friend, the lazy fat pointer, kept wagging his fool tail as if he failed to realize what a particular fix Uncle Nat was in. It appeared like Mr. Razzie didn't know how to do anything except to choke niggers and keep saying:

"Don't lie to me, old man. You did have that note."

"No, sub. Not me."

"But you gave it to me, just this minute—with those letters."

"Oh! Wid dem letters. Suttinly, suttinly. You means dem blue letters?" Old Nat gazed blankly upon the ground as he studied the pair of blue envelopes which lay at Razzie's feet.

"Mr. Razzie," he spoke doubtfully. "Cose I ain't 'sputin' yo' word, sub, but is you certain sho dat I give you dat paper?"

"Sure? Of course I'm sure." Razzie's words shot from him with the spiteful crackle of a machine gun. "Look at it. See it?"

"Especially, sub, especially. I see it now." A light burst upon Uncle Nat, and a grim overcast spread his countenance. "I see it good. But lord, Mr. Razzie, dat little old piece o' paper, hit don't mount to shucks. Us was talkin' bout dis spot year pup—an'—"

"Damn the pup! I want to know the scoundrel who gave you this note."

"Which scoundrel?" His innocent face puckered into a network of brand new wrinkles as Nat strove to clear his thoughts. "Mr. Razzie, dat sho is p'uckular. At de same time you was axin' me dat question 'bout de note, it jes fell in my min' to wonder how come seech a little piece o' paper ever got in Major Stark's letter box."

"This never come through the mail," Razzie snapped. "Some infernal hood sent it by you. Who was it?" By shaking Nat until his teeth rattled, Razzie shook out a rattled answer:

"A white gent'man—give it to me."

"Who? Who? Tell me the truth."

How could any Negro tell the truth, or tell anything else, while he was having the very life throttled out of him by a wire fingered Frenchman. Then Razzie ceased up and let Nat suck a whiff of breath.

"Who is the man?"

"Tain't no man, Mister Razzie. No, seh! He never give it to me. You skeered me so bad dat I overspoke myself."

"I'll do worse than scare you." Razzie mended his grip while trying to decipher the hastily scribbled signature. His voice stilled with wrath as he looked up. "Old nigger, do you know a man named Stuart Clayton?"

"Clayton? Clayton? Tain't no Claytons livin' in dis neighborhood, sub. Ain't never heard o' such a man."

Not once did Florian Razzie let go of Nat's collar as he punched out the illegible name, then turned the paper and saw an address typewritten on the other side.

Senior Stuart Clayton, El Jucaro, Salamanca. That's the name! he exclaimed, and in the surprise of it forgot his hold on the prisoner, who promptly backed out of reach.

"Uncle Nat, do you know a low dog named Stuart Clayton?"

"No, sub; no, sub; I ain't 'quainted wid nary sizz dog by dat name." Nat was now free. He executed a couple of back steps, and glanced behind, to make sure that his running room was clear.

"Stop! Stop!" Razzie ordered. "He's the man you were talking about with Dr. Humphreys? Just came home from Central America?"

"Who? Me? I ain't spoke no word 'bout dat man."

"You do know him. Where is he? I'll choke it out of you."

Having already had an overdose of choking, Nat failed to remain and let that crazy Frenchman grab his throat again. He made one jump, and Razzie's arm missed him, as Nat whirled, snatched off his hat, and retired from that section of the United States. Razzie only got a flying start, but gave up chasing a rabbit that also had wings.

Only once did Nat glance back and saw Razzie rushing toward the steps where he'd left his rifle—which supplemented Nat's speed. It would have taken a swift bullet to catch him before he dodged behind the hedge of cherokee roses, and squeezed through a hole in the fence, which was known solely to Nat and the dogs. Never did a hole come in handier.

"Dere now," he gasped, as he tumbled on all fours into the pasture. "Done got my business in a jam. I ain't gwine to larry an' 'plain nothin'. Mister Razzie ack too hasty." Clayton's bungling go-between had undoubtedly got their business in a jam. Things might have continued to rock along lazily on Bennington, if Nat had only slipped the note to Adelaide instead of placing it in the hands of her husband. A lady always understands, but husbands are very dense.

Of course, if Mr. Razzie would listen to no explanation, Uncle Nat felt compelled to depart. Which he did. It was not a leisurely nor a dignified departure, but a duck legged haste across the back yard and a headlong dive through the hedge. Nevertheless he succeeded in departing.

For one tense moment Uncle Nat crouched behind the cherokee roses, and batted both eyes to observe what further action Mr. Razzie proposed to take. Mr. Razzie had already taken so much action that Uncle Nat was willing to let the whole thing drop right where it was. But the Frenchman showed no desire to let the matter drop; he was fixing to do something else, fixing to do a whole lot of things, but didn't know exactly what. Nat could see him charging around the back yard, frowning and swearing and undecided. First Mr. Razzie seemed to be studying the note and glaring into the house as if he had half a notion to rush in and settle with Mrs. Razzie. Then he dashed towards the hedge behind which Nat disappeared, and considered the bay filly under saddle.

"Lorree," Nat groaned, "ef he gits on dat hoss, I'm 'blesed to reach de big woods."

(Continued Next Sunday.)