

# Elizabeth

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## A TALE OF THE DUTCH

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H. RIDER HAGGARD

REVISED AND EDITED

BY

MICHAEL J. MCHUGH

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# INTRODUCTION

There are basically two ways of writing an historical romance—the first is to choose some notable and leading characters of the time to be treated and, by the help of history, attempt to picture them as they were; the other, to make a study of that time and history with the country in which it was enacted, and from it to deduce the necessary characters.

In the case of *Lysbeth*, the author has attempted this second method. By an example of the trials, adventures, and victories of a burgher family of the generation of Philip II (1527–1598) and William the Silent (1533–1584), he strives to set before modern readers something of the life of those who lived through one of the most fearful tyrannies that the Western world has known—the Spanish Inquisition. How did they live, one wonders; how is it that they did not all die from the fierce persecution, those of them who escaped the scaffold, the famine, and the pestilence?

This question and another arises, why were such things permitted to be? I have selected this story, in part, because these issues are worth consideration, especially by young people, who are so apt to take everything for granted, including their own religious freedom and personal security. How often, indeed, do any living folk give a grateful thought to the forefathers who won for us these advantages, and many others with them?

The writer has sometimes heard people who have traveled to the Netherlands express surprise that even in an age of almost universal prosperity its noble churches are permitted to remain smeared with melancholy whitewash. Could they look backward through the centuries and behold with the mind's eye certain scenes that have taken place within these very temples and about their walls, they would marvel no longer. Perhaps that is why in Holland they still love whitewash, which to them is a symbol, a perpetual protest; and remembering stories that have been handed down as heirlooms to this day, frown at the sight of even the most modest sacerdotal vestment. Those who are acquainted with the facts of Dutch history and their great struggle for religious liberty will scarcely wonder why they still

fear religious hierarchy that is tied to a bureaucratic power and why many Hollanders still value their right to own a Bible even though many seldom read it.

# CHAPTER I

## THE WOLF AND THE BADGER

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The time of our story begins around the year 1544 when Emperor Charles V ruled the Netherlands, and our scene is the city of Leyden.

Anyone who has visited this pleasant town knows that it lies in the midst of wide, flat meadows, and is intersected by many canals filled with water from the Rhine River. But now, as it was winter, near to Christmas indeed, the meadows and the quaint gabled roofs of the city lay buried beneath a dazzling sheet of snow. At this season, instead of boats and barges, skaters glided up and down the frozen surface of the canals, which were swept for their convenience. Outside the walls of the town, not far from the *Morsch poort*, or gate, the surface of the broad moat that surrounded them presented a sight as simple as it was charming. Just here, one of the branches of the Rhine ran into this moat, and down it came the pleasure-seekers in sleigh, on skates, or afoot. They were dressed, most of them, in their best attire, for the day was a holiday set apart for a kind of skating carnival, with sleighing matches, such games as curling, and other amusements.

Among these merry folk might have been seen a young lady about twenty-two years of age, dressed in a coat of dark green cloth trimmed with fur, and close-fitting at the waist. This coat opened in front, showing a brodered woollen skirt, but over the chest it was tightly buttoned and surmounted by a stiff ruff of Brussels lace. Upon her head she wore a high-crowned beaver hat, to which the nodding ostrich feather was fastened by a jeweled ornament of sufficient value to show that she was a person of some means. In fact, this lady was the only child of a sea captain and shipowner named Carolus van Hout, who, whilst still

a middle-aged man, had died about a year before, leaving her heiress to a very considerable fortune. This circumstance, with the added advantages of a very pretty face, in which were set two deep and thoughtful gray eyes, and a figure more graceful than was common among the Netherlander women, caused Lysbeth van Hout to be much sought after and admired, especially by the marriageable bachelors of Leyden.

On this occasion, however, she was unescorted except by a serving woman somewhat older than herself, a native of Brussels, Greta by name, who in appearance was as attractive as in manner she was suspiciously discreet.

As Lysbeth skated down the canal towards the moat many of the good burghers of Leyden took off their caps to her, especially the young burghers, one or two of whom had hopes that she would choose them to be her escort for this festival day. Some of the elders, also, asked her if she would care to join their parties, thinking that, as she was an orphan without near male relations, she might be glad to receive their protection in times when it was wise for beautiful young women to be protected. With this excuse and that, however, she escaped from them all, for Lysbeth had already made her own arrangements.

At that date there was living in Leyden a young man around the age of twenty-four, named Dirk van Goorl, a distant cousin of her own. Dirk was a native of the little town of Alkmaar, and the second son of one of its leading citizens, a brass founder by trade. As in the natural course of events the Alkmaar business would descend to his elder brother, therefore, their father apprenticed Dirk to a Leyden firm, in which, after eight or nine years of hard work, he had become a junior partner. While he was still living, Lysbeth's father had taken a liking to the lad, with the result that he grew intimate at the house which, from the first, was open to him as a kinsman. After the death of Carolus van Hout, Dirk had continued to visit there, especially on Sundays, when he was duly and ceremoniously received by Lysbeth's aunt, a childless widow named Clara van Ziel, who acted as her guardian. Thus, by degrees, favored with such ample opportunity, a strong affection had sprung up between these two young people, although



as yet they were not engaged, nor indeed had either of them said a word of open love to the other.

This profound timidness may seem strange, but some explanation for their self-restraint was to be found in Dirk's character. In mind he was patient, very deliberate in forming his purposes, and very sure in carrying them out. He felt impulses like other men, but he did not give way to them. For two years or more he had loved Lysbeth; but being somewhat slow at reading the ways of women he was not quite certain that she loved him, and above everything on earth he dreaded a rebuff. Moreover he knew her to be an heiress, and as his own means were still humble, and his expectations from his father small, he did not feel justified in asking her in marriage until his position was more established. Had the Captain Carolus still been living, the case would have been different, for then he could have gone to him. But he was dead, and Dirk's fine and sensitive nature recoiled from the thought that it might be said of him that he had taken advantage of the inexperience of a kinswoman in order to win her fortune. Also, deep down in his mind he had another substantial and quite secret reason for proceeding slowly, whereof more will be said in its proper place.

Thus matters stood between these two. Today, however, though only with diffidence and after some encouragement from the lady, he had asked leave to be his cousin's escort at the ice festival; and when she consented, readily enough, appointed the moat as their place of meeting. This was somewhat less than Lysbeth expected, for she wished him to escort her through the town. But, when she hinted as much, Dirk explained that he would not be able to leave the works before three o'clock, as the metal for a large bell had been poured into the casting, and he must watch it while it cooled.

So, followed only by her maid, Greta, Lysbeth glided lightly as a bird down the ice path on to the moat, and across it, through the narrow cut, to the frozen meer beyond, where the sports were to be held and the races run. The scene at this spot was very beautiful.

Behind her lay the roofs of Leyden, pointed, picturesque, and

covered with sheets of snow, while above them towered the bulk of the two great churches of St. Peter and St. Pancras, and standing on a mound known as the Burg, the round tower which is supposed to have been built by the Romans. In front stretched the flat expanse of white meadows broken here and there by windmills with narrow waists and thin, tall sails, and in the distance, by the church towers of other towns and villages.

Immediately before her, in strange contrast to this lifeless landscape, lay the well populated expanse known as the Meer, a frozen body of water fringed around with dead reeds standing so still in the frosty air that they might have been painted things. On this meer half the population of Leyden seemed to be gathered; at least there were thousands of them, shouting, laughing, and skimming to and fro in their bright garments like so many peacocks. Among them, drawn by horses with bells tied to their harness, glided many sleighs of wickerwork and wood mounted upon iron runners, their front ends fashioned into quaint shapes, such as the heads of dogs or bulls, or Tritons. Then there were vendors of cakes and sweetmeats, vendors of spirits also, who did a good trade on this cold day. Beggars too were numerous, and among them a host of crippled souls who slid about in wooden boxes, which they pushed along with crutches. Lastly, many loafers had gathered there with stools for fine ladies to sit on while the skates were bound to their pretty feet, and chapmen with these articles for sale and straps wherewith to fasten them. To complete the picture, the huge red ball of the sun was sinking to the west, and opposite to it the pale full moon began already to gather light and life.

The scene seemed so charming and so happy that Lysbeth, who was young, and now that she had recovered from the shock of her beloved father's death, light-hearted, ceased her forward movement and poised herself upon her skates to watch the interesting scenery. While she stood thus a little apart, a woman came towards her from the throng, not as though she were seeking her, but aimlessly, much as a child's toy boat is driven by light, contrary winds upon the surface of a pond in summer.

She was a remarkable looking woman of about thirty-five

years of age, tall and bony in make, with deep-set eyes, light gray in color, that seemed to flash fiercely and then to waver, as though in memory of some great dread. From beneath a coarse woollen cap a wisp of grizzled hair fell across the forehead, where it lay like the forelock of a horse. Indeed, the high cheekbones, scarred as though by burns, wide-spread nostrils and prominent white teeth, from which the lips had strangely sunk away, gave the whole countenance a more or less equine look which the sunlight seemed to heighten. For her covering, the woman wore a poorly and not too plentifully clad gown of black woollen, torn and stained as though with long use and journeys, while on her feet she wore wooden clogs, to which were strapped skates that were not well matched, one being much longer than the other.

Opposite to Lysbeth this strange, gaunt person stopped, contemplating her with a dreamy eye. Presently she seemed to recognize her, for she said in a quick, low voice, the voice of one who lives in terror of being overheard:

“That’s a pretty dress of yours, Van Hout’s daughter. Oh, yes, I know you; your father used to play with me when I was a child, and once he kissed me on the ice at just such a festival as this. Think of it! Kissed me, Martha the Mare,” and she laughed hoarsely, then went on: “Yes, well-warmed and well-fed, and, without doubt, waiting for a gallant to kiss you”; here she turned and waved her hand towards the people— “all well-warmed and well-fed, and all with lovers and husbands and children to kiss. But I tell you, Van Hout’s daughter, as I have dared to creep from my hiding hole in the great lake to tell all of them who will listen, that unless they cast out the cursed Spaniard, a day shall come when the folk of Leyden must perish by thousands of hunger behind those walls. Yes, yes, unless they cast out the cursed Spaniard and his Inquisition. Oh, I know them, I know them, for did they not make me carry my own husband to the stake upon my back? And have you heard why, Van Hout’s daughter? Because what I had suffered in their torture dens had made my face—yes, mine that once was so beautiful—like the face of a horse, and they said that ‘a horse ought to be ridden.’”

Now, while this poor excited creature, one of a whole group

of such people who in those sad days might be found wandering about the Netherlands crazy with their griefs and sufferings, and living only for revenge, poured out these broken sentences, Lysbeth, terrified, shrank back from her. As she shrank the other followed, until presently Lysbeth saw the woman's expression of rage and hate change to one of terror. In another instant, muttering something about a request for alms which she did not wait to receive, the woman had wheeled round and fled away as fast as her skates would carry her, which was very fast indeed.

Turning about to find what had frightened her, Lysbeth saw standing on the bank of the meer, so close that she must have overheard every word, but behind the screen of a leafless bush, a tall, forbidding-looking woman, who held in her hand some brodered caps which apparently she was offering for sale. These caps she began slowly to fold up and place one by one in a leather satchel that was hung about her shoulders. All this while, she was watching Lysbeth with her keen black eyes, except when from time to time she took them off her to follow the flight of that person who had called herself the Mare.

"You keep ill company, lady," said the cap-seller in a harsh voice.

"It was none of my seeking," answered Lysbeth, astonished into making a reply.

"So much the better for you, lady, although she seemed to know you and to know also that you would listen to her song. Unless my eyes deceived me, which is not often, that woman is an evil-doer and a worker of magic like her dead husband Van Muyden; a heretic, a blasphemer of the Holy Church, a traitor to our Lord the Emperor, and one," she added with a snarl, "with a price upon her head that before nightfall will, I hope, be in Black Meg's pocket." Then, walking with long firm steps towards a fat man who seemed to be waiting for her, the tall, black-eyed peddler passed with him into the throng, where Lysbeth lost sight of them.

Lysbeth watched them go, and shivered. To her knowledge she had never seen this woman before, but she knew enough of the times they lived in to be sure that she was a spy of the

priests. Already there were such creatures moving about in every gathering, yes, and in many a private place, who were paid to obtain evidence against suspected heretics. Whether they won it by fair means or by foul mattered not, provided they could find something, and it need be little indeed, to justify the Inquisition in getting to its work.

As for the other woman, the Mare, doubtless she was one of those wicked outcasts, accursed by God and man, who were called *heretics*; people who said dreadful things about the Pope and the Church and God's priests, having been misled and stirred up thereto by a certain fiend in human form named Luther. Lysbeth shuddered at the thought and crossed herself, for in those days she was a devout Roman Catholic. Yet the wanderer said that she had known her father, so that she must be as well born as herself—and then that dreadful story—no, she could not bear to think of it. But, of course, heretics deserved all these things; of that there could be no doubt whatever, for had not her father confessor told her that thus alone might their souls be saved from the grasp of the Evil One?

The thought was comforting, still Lysbeth felt upset, and not a little relieved when she saw Dirk van Goorl skating towards her accompanied by another young man, also a cousin of her own on her mother's side who was destined in days to come to earn himself an immortal renown, young Pieter van de Werff. The two took off their caps to her, Dirk van Goorl revealing in the act a head of fair hair beneath which his steady blue eyes shone in a rather thick-set, self-contained face. Lysbeth's temper, always somewhat quick, was ruffled, and she showed it in her manner.

"I thought, cousins, that we were to meet at three, and the kirk clock yonder has just chimed half-past," she said, addressing them both, but looking not too sweetly at Dirk van Goorl.

"That's right, cousin," answered Pieter, a pleasant and alert young man, "look at him, scold him, for he is to blame. Ever since a quarter past two have I—I who must drive a sleigh in the great race and am backed to win, been waiting outside that factory in the snow, but, upon my honor, he did not appear until

seven minutes ago. Yes, we have done the whole distance in seven minutes, and I call that very good skating."

"I thought as much," said Lysbeth. "Dirk can only keep an appointment with a church bell or a business partner."

"It was not my fault," broke in Dirk in his slow voice; "I have my business to attend. I promised to wait until the metal had cooled sufficiently, and hot bronze takes no account of ice parties and sleigh races."

"So I suppose that you stopped to blow on it, cousin. Well, the result is that, being quite unescorted, I have been obliged to listen to things which I did not wish to hear."

"What do you mean?" asked Dirk, taking fire at once.

Then she told them something of what the woman who called herself the Mare had said to her, adding, "Doubtless the poor creature is a heretic and deserves all that has happened to her. But it is dreadfully sad, and I came here to enjoy myself, not to be sad."

Between the two young men there passed a glance which was full of meaning. But it was Dirk who spoke. The other, more cautious, remained silent.

"Why do you say that, Cousin Lysbeth?" he asked in a new voice, a voice thick and eager. "Why do you say that she deserves all that can happen to her? I have heard of this poor creature who is called Mother Martha, or the Mare, although I have never seen her myself. She was noble-born, much better born than any of us three, and very fair—once they called her the Lily of Bussels—when she was the Vrouw van Muyden, and she has suffered dreadfully for one reason only, because she and hers did not worship God as you worship Him."

"As we worship Him," broke in Van de Werff with a cough.

"No," answered Dirk sullenly, "as our Cousin Lysbeth van Hout worships Him. For that reason only they killed her husband, and her little son, and drove her mad with torture so that she lives among the reeds of the Haarlemer Meer like a beast in its den; yes, they, the Spaniards and their Spanish priests, as I daresay that they will kill us also."

"Don't you think that it is getting rather cold standing here?"

interrupted Pieter van de Werff before she could answer, "Look the sled races are just beginning. Come, cousin give me your hand," and, taking Lysbeth by the arm, he skated off into the throng, followed at a distance by Dirk and the serving-maid Greta.

"Cousin," he whispered as he went, "this is not my place, it is Dirk's place, but I pray you as you love him—I beg your pardon, as you esteem a worthy relative, do not enter into a religious argument with him here in public, where even the ice and sky are two great ears. It is not safe, little cousin, I swear to you that it is not safe."

In the center of the meer, the great event of the day—the sleigh race—was now in progress. As the competitors were many these must be run in heats, the winners of each heat standing on one side to compete in the final contest. Now each victor had the special honor and duty to select a person to carry as a passenger in the little seat in front of him, his own place being on the seat behind where he directed his horse by means of reins. This passenger he could select from among the number of ladies who were present at the games; unless, indeed, the gentleman in charge of her chose to deny him in set form; namely, by stepping forward and saying in the appointed phrase, "No, for this happy hour she is mine."

Among the winners of these heats was a certain Spanish officer, the Count Don Juan de Montalvo who, as it happened, in the absence of his captain who was on leave, was the commander of the garrison at Leyden. He was a man still young, only about thirty indeed, reported to be of noble birth and handsome in the usual Castilian fashion. That is to say, he was tall, of a graceful figure, dark-eyed, strong-featured, with a somewhat humorous expression, and, of very good if exaggerated address. As he had but recently come to Leyden, very little was known there of this attractive cavalier beyond that he was well spoken of by the priests, and, according to report, a favorite with the Emperor. Many of the high born ladies admired him much as well.

For the rest everything about him was handsome like his per-

son, as might be expected, in the case of a man reputed to be as rich as he was noble. Thus his sleigh was shaped and colored to resemble a great black wolf rearing itself up to charge. The wooden head was covered in wolf skin and adorned by eyes of yellow glass and great fangs of ivory. Round the neck also ran a gilded collar hung with a silver shield, whereon were painted the arms of its owner, a knight striking the chains from off a captive Christian saint, and the motto of the Montalvos, "Trust to God and me." His black horse was of the best breed, imported from Spain, complete with a harness decorated with gilding, and a splendid plume of dyed feathers rising from the headband.

Lysbeth happened to be standing near to the spot where this conspicuous driver had halted after his first victory. She was in the company of Dirk van Goorl alone—for as her other cousin, Pieter van de Werff was the driver of one of the competing sleds, he had now been summoned away. Having nothing else to do at the moment, she approached and not unnaturally admired this brilliant equipage, although in truth it was the sleigh and the horse rather than their driver which attracted her attention. As for the Count himself she knew him slightly, having been introduced to and danced a measure with him at a festival given by a grandee of the town. On that occasion, he was courteous to her in the Spanish fashion, rather too courteous, she thought, but as this was the manner of Castilian dons when dealing with burgher maidens she paid no more attention to the matter.

The Captain Montalvo saw Lysbeth among the throng and recognized her, for he lifted his plumed hat and bowed to her with just that touch of condescension which in those days a Spaniard showed when greeting one whom he considered his inferior. In the sixteenth century, it was understood that all the world were the inferiors to those whom God had granted to be born in Spain, the English who rated themselves at a valuation of their own, and were careful to announce the fact, alone excepted.

An hour or so later, after the last heat had been run, the steward of the ceremonies called aloud to the remaining competitors to select their passengers and prepare for the final contest.



Accordingly, each driver, leaving his horse in charge of an attendant, stepped up to some young lady who evidently was waiting for him, and led her by the hand to his sled. While Lysbeth was watching this ceremony with amusement—for these selections were always understood to show a strong preference on behalf of the chooser for the chosen—she was astonished to hear a well-trained voice addressing her, and on looking up to see Don Juan de Montalvo bowing almost to the ice.

“Señora,” he said in Castilian, a tongue which Lysbeth understood well enough, although she only spoke it when obliged, “unless my ears deceived me, I heard you admiring my horse and sleigh. Now, with the permission of your cavalier,” and he bowed courteously to Dirk, “I name you as my passenger for the great race, knowing that you will bring me fortune. Have I your leave, Señor?”

Now if there was a people on earth whom Dirk van Goorl hated, the Spaniards were that people, and if there lived a cavalier whom he preferred should not take his cousin Lysbeth for a lonely drive, that cavalier was the Count Juan de Montalvo. But as a young man, Dirk was singularly diffident and so easily confused that on the spur of the moment it was quite possible for a clever person to make him say what he did not mean. Thus, on the present occasion, when he saw this courtly Spaniard bowing low to him, a humble Dutch tradesman, he was overwhelmed, and mumbled in reply, “Certainly, certainly.”

If a glance could have withered him, without doubt Dirk would immediately have shriveled to nothing. To say that Lysbeth was angry is too little, for in truth she was absolutely furious. She did not like this Spaniard, and hated the idea of a long interview with him alone. Moreover, she knew that among her fellow townspeople there was a great desire that the Count should not win this race, which in its own fashion was the event of the year, whereas, if she appeared as his companion it would be supposed that she was anxious for his success. Lastly—and this was the chiefest sore—although in theory the competitors had a right to ask anyone to whom they took a fancy to travel in their sleds, in practice they only sought the company of young

women with whom they were on the best of terms, and who were already warned of their intention.

In an instant these thoughts rushed through her mind, but all she did was to murmur something about the Heer van Goorl—

“He has already given his consent, like an unselfish gentleman,” broke in Captain Juan tendering her his hand.

Now, without absolutely making a scene, which then, as today, ladies considered an ill-bred thing to do, there was no escape, since half of Leyden gathered at these “sleigh choosings,” and many eyes were on her and the Count. Therefore, because she must, Lysbeth took the proffered hand, and was led to the sleigh, catching as she passed to it through the throng, more than one sour look from the men and more than one exclamation of surprise, real or affected, on the lips of the ladies of her acquaintance. These manifestations, however, caused her spirit to quicken. So determining that at least she would not look ridiculous, she began to enter into the spirit of the adventure, and smiled graciously while the Captain Montalvo wrapped a magnificent apron of wolf skins around her knees.

When all was ready, her charioteer took the reins and settled himself upon the little seat behind the sleigh, which was then led into position by a soldier servant.

“Where is the course, Señor?” Lysbeth asked, hoping that it would be a short one.

But in this she was to be disappointed, for he answered:

“Up to the little Quarkel Meer, round the island in the middle of it, and back to this spot, something over a league in all. Now, Señora, speak to me no more at present, but hold fast and have no fear, for at least I drive well, and my horse is sure-footed and roughed for ice. This is a race that I would give a hundred gold pieces to win, since your countrymen, who contend against me, have sworn that I shall lose it, and I tell you at once, Señora, that gray horse will press me hard.”

Following the direction of his glance, Lysbeth’s eye landed upon the next sleigh. It was small, fashioned and painted to resemble a gray badger, that silent, stubborn, and, if molested, savage brute, which will not loose its grip until the head is hacked

from off its body. The horse, which matched it well in color, was a Flemish breed; rather a raw-boned animal, with strong quarters and an ugly head, but renowned in Leyden for its courage and staying power. What interested Lysbeth most, however, was to discover that the charioteer was none other than Pieter van de Werff, though now when she thought of it, she remembered he had told her that his sled was named the Badger. In his choice of passenger she noted, too, not without a smile, that he showed his cautious character, disdainful of any immediate glory, so long as the end in view could be attained. For there in the sleigh sat no fine young lady, decked out in fancy attire, who might be supposed to look at him with tender eyes, but a little fair-haired girl aged nine, who was in fact his sister. As he explained afterwards, the rules provided that a lady passenger must be carried, but said nothing of her age and weight.

Now the competitors, eight of them, were in a line, and coming forward, the master of the course, in a voice that every one might hear, called out the conditions of the race and the prize for which it was to be run, a splendid glass goblet engraved with the cross-keys, the Arms of Leyden. This done, after asking if all were ready, he dropped a little flag, whereon the horses were loosed and away they went.

Before a minute had passed, forgetting all her doubts and annoyances, Lysbeth was lost in the glorious excitement of the moment. Like birds in the heavens, cleaving the keen, crisp air, they sped forward over the smooth ice. The happy throng vanished, the dead reeds and stark bushes seemed to fly away from them, the only sounds in their ears were the rushing of the wind, the swish of the iron runners, and the hollow tapping of the hooves of their galloping horses. Certain sleighs drew ahead in the first burst, but the Wolf and the Badger were not among these. The Count de Montalvo was holding in his black stallion, and as yet the gray Flemish gelding loped along with a constrained and awkward stride. When, passing from the little meer, they entered the strait of the canal, these two were respectively fourth and fifth. Up the course they sped, through a deserted snow-clad country, past the church of the village of

Alkemaade. Now, half a mile or more away appeared the Quarkel Meer, and in the center of it the island around which they must turn. They reached it, they were round it, and when their faces were once more set homewards, Lysbeth noted that the Wolf and the Badger were third and fourth in the race, someone having dropped behind. Half a mile more and they were second and third; another half mile and they were first and second, with perhaps a mile to go. Then the real fight began.

Yard by yard the speed increased, and yard by yard the black stallion drew ahead. Now in front of them lay a furlong or more of bad ice encumbered with lumps of frozen snow that had not been cleared away, which caused the sleigh to shake and jump as it struck. Lysbeth looked round.

“The Badger is coming up,” she said.

Montalvo heard, and for the first time laid his whip upon the haunches of his horse, which answered gallantly. But still the Badger came up. The gray was the stronger beast, and had begun to put out his strength. Very soon his ugly head was beside them, for Lysbeth felt the breath from his nostrils blowing on her, and saw their steam. Then it was past, for the steam blew back into her face; yes, and she could see the eager eyes of the child in the gray sled. Now they were neck and neck, as the rough ice turned smooth. Six hundred yards away, not more, lay the goal, and all about them, outside the line of the course, were swift skaters traveling so fast that their heads were bent forward and down to within three feet of the ice.

Van de Werff called to his horse, and the gray began to gain. Montalvo lashed the stallion, and once more they passed him. But the black was failing, and he saw it, for Lysbeth heard him curse in Spanish. A moment later, after a cunning glance at his adversary, the Count pulled upon the right rein, and a shrill voice rose upon the air, the voice of the little girl in the other sleigh.

“Take care, brother,” she cried, “he will overthrow us.”

True enough, in another moment the black would have struck the gray sideways. Lysbeth saw Van de Werff rise from his seat and throw his weight backward, dragging the gray on to



his haunches. By an inch, not more, the Wolf sleigh missed the gelding. Indeed, one runner of it struck his hoof, and the high woodwork on the side brushed and cut his nostril.

“A foul, a foul!” yelled the skaters, and it was over. Once more they were speeding forward, but now the black had a lead of at least ten yards, for the gray must find his stride again. They were in the strait; the course was lined with hundreds of witnesses, and from the throats of every one of them arose a great cry, or rather two cries.

“The Spaniard, the Spaniard wins!” said the first cry that was answered by another and a deeper roar.

“No, Hollander, the Hollander! The Hollander comes up!”

Then in the midst of that fierce excitement, bred by the excitement perhaps—some curious thoughts fell upon the mind of Lysbeth. The race, its details, its objects, its surroundings faded away; these physical things were gone, and in place of them was present a dream—a spiritual interpretation such as the influences of the times in which she lived might well inspire. What did she seem to see? She saw the Spaniard and the Hollander striving for victory, but not a victory of horses. She saw the black Spanish Wolf, at first triumphant, outmatch the Netherland Badger. Still, the Badger, the dogged Dutch badger, held on.

“Who would win?” The fierce beast or the patient beast? Who would be master in this fight? There was death in it. Look, the whole snow was red, the roofs of Leyden were red, and red the heavens; in the deep hues of the sunset they seemed bathed in blood, while about her the shouts of the hackers and factions transformed themselves into a fierce cry as of battling peoples. All voices mingled in that cry—voices of hope, of agony, and of despair; but she could not interpret them. Something told her that the interpretation and the issue were in the mind of God alone.

Perhaps she swooned, perhaps she slept and dreamed this dream; perhaps the sharp rushing air overcame her. At the least, Lysbeth’s eyes closed and her mind gave way. When they opened and it returned again, their sleigh was rushing past the winning post. But in front of it traveled another sled, drawn by a gaunt gray horse, which galloped so hard that its belly seemed to lie upon the ice, a horse driven by a young man whose face was set like steel and whose lips were as the lips of a trap.

As Lysbeth began to come to herself, she wondered, could that be the face of her cousin Pieter van de Werff, and, if so, what passion had stamped that strange seal thereon? She turned herself in her seat and looked at him who drove her.

Was this a man, or was it a spirit released from Hades? Blessed Mary! What a countenance! The eyeballs starting and upturned, nothing but the white of them to be seen; the lips curled, and between, two lines of shining fangs; the lifted points of the mustachio touching the high cheekbones. No—no, it was neither a spirit nor a man, she knew now what it was; it was the very type and incarnation of the Spanish Wolf.

Once more she seemed to faint, while in her ears there rang the cry—“The Hollander! Outstayed! Outstayed! Conquered is the accursed Spaniard!”

Then Lysbeth knew that it was over, and again the faintness overpowered her.

## CHAPTER II

# SHE WHO BUYS—PAYS

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When Lysbeth's mind recovered from its confusion, she found herself still in the sleigh and beyond the borders of the crowd that was engaged in rapturously congratulating the winner. Drawn up alongside of the Wolf was another sleigh of plain make, and harnessed to it a heavy Flemish horse. This vehicle was driven by a Spanish soldier, with whom sat a second soldier apparently of the rank of sergeant. There was no one else near; already people in the Netherlands had learnt to keep their distance from Spanish soldiers.

"If your Excellency would come now," the sergeant was saying, "this little matter can be settled without any further trouble."

"Where is she?" asked Montalvo.

"Not more than a mile or so away, near the place called Steene Veld."

"Tie her up in the snow to wait until tomorrow morning. My horse is tired and it may save us trouble," he began. Then he added, after glancing first back at the crowd behind him and then at Lysbeth, "No, I will come."

Perhaps the Count did not wish to listen to condolences on his defeat, or perhaps he desired to prolong the time away with his fair passenger. At any rate, without further hesitation, he struck his weary horse with the whip, causing it to amble forward somewhat stiffly, but at a good pace.

"Where are we going, Señor?" asked Lysbeth anxiously. "The race is over and I must seek my friends."

"Your friends are engaged in congratulating the victor, lady," he answered in his suave and courteous voice, "and I cannot leave you alone upon the ice. Do not be troubled, for this is only a little matter of business which will scarcely take a quarter of

an hour," and once more he struck the horse urging it to a better speed.

Lysbeth thought of remonstrating, she thought even of springing from the sleigh, but in the end she did neither. To seem to continue the drive with her cavalier would, she determined, look more natural and less absurd than to attempt a violent escape from him. She was certain that he would not put her down merely at her request. Something in his manner told her so, and though she had no longing for his company, it was better than being made ridiculous before half the inhabitants of Leyden. Moreover, the position was no fault of hers. It was the fault of Dirk van Goorl, who should have been present to take her from the sleigh.

As they drove along the frozen moat, Montalvo leant forward and began to chat about the race, expressing regret at having lost it, but using no angry or bitter words. Could this be the man, wondered Lysbeth as she listened, whom she had seen deliberately attempt to overthrow and injure his adversary in a foul? Could this be the man whose face just minutes before had looked like the face of a devil? Had these things happened, indeed, or was it not possible that her fancy, confused with the excitement and the speed at which they were traveling, had deceived her? Certainly it seemed to have been overcome at last, for she could not remember the actual finish of the race, or how they got clear of the shouting crowd.

While she was still pondering these things, replying from time to time to Montalvo in monosyllables, the sleigh in front of them turned the corner of one of the eastern bastions and came to a halt. The place where it stopped was desolate and lonely, for the town being in a state of peace, no guard was mounted on the wall, nor could any living soul be found upon the snowy waste that lay beyond the moat. At first, indeed, Lysbeth was able to see nobody at all, for by now the sun had gone down, and her eyes were not accustomed to the increasing light of the moon. Presently, however, she caught sight of a group of people standing on the ice in a recess or little bay of the moat and half hidden by a fringe of dead reeds.



Montalvo saw also, and halted his horse within three paces of them. The people were five in number, three Spanish soldiers and two women. Lysbeth looked, and with difficulty stifled a cry of surprise and fear, for she knew the women. The tall, dark person, with lowering eyes, was none other than the cap-seller and Spanish spy, Black Meg. And she who crouched there upon the ice, her arms bound behind her, her grizzled locks torn loose by some rough hand, surely it was the woman who called herself the Mare, who that very afternoon spoke to her and cursed the Spaniards and their Inquisition. What were they doing here? Instantly an answer leapt into her mind, for she remembered Black Meg's words, that there was a price upon this heretic's head, which before nightfall would be in her pocket. And why was there a square hole cut in the ice immediately in front of the captive? Could it be—no, that was too horrible.

"Well, officer," broke in Montalvo, addressing the sergeant in a quiet, wearied voice, "what is all this about? Set out your case."

"Excellency," replied the man, "it is a very simple matter. This creature here, so that woman is ready to take oath," and he pointed to Black Meg, "is a notorious heretic who has already been condemned to death by the Holy Office, and whose husband, a learned man who painted pictures and studied the stars, was burnt on a charge of witchcraft and heresy two years ago at Brussels. But she managed to escape the stake and since then has lived as a vagrant, hiding in the islands of the Haarlemer Meer, and, it is suspected, working murder and robbery on any of Spanish blood whom she can catch. Now she has been caught herself and identified, and, of course, the sentence being in full force against her, can be dealt with at once on your Excellency's command. Indeed, it would not have been necessary that you should be troubled about the thing at all had it not been that this worthy woman," and again he pointed to Black Meg, "who was the one who waylaid her, pulled her down, and held her until we came. She requires your certificate in order that she may claim the reward from the Treasurer of the Holy Inquisition. Therefore, you will be asked to certify that this is, indeed, the notorious

heretic commonly known as Martha the Mare, but whose other name I forget, after which, if you will please to withdraw, we will see to the rest."

"You mean that she will be taken to the prison to be dealt with by the Holy Office?" queried Montalvo.

"Not exactly, Excellency," answered the sergeant with a discreet smile and a cough. "The prison, I am told, is quite full, but she may start for the prison and as there seems to be a hole in the ice into which, since Satan leads the footsteps of such people astray, this heretic might chance to fall—or throw herself."

"What is the evidence?" asked Montalvo.

Then Black Meg stood forward, and, with the rapidity and unction of a spy, poured out her tale. She identified the woman with one whom she had known was sentenced to death by the Inquisition and escaped, and, after giving other evidence, ended by repeating the conversation which she had overheard between the accused and Lysbeth that afternoon.

"You accompanied me in a fortunate hour, Señora van Hout" said the captain boldly, "for now, to satisfy myself, as I wish to be just, and do not trust these paid hags," and he nodded towards Black Meg, "I must ask you upon your oath before God whether or not you confirm that woman's tale, and whether or not this very ugly person named the Mare called down curses upon my people and the Holy Office? Answer quickly, if you please, Señora, for it grows cold here and my horse is beginning to shiver."

Then, for the first time, the Mare raised her head, dragging at her hair, which had become frozen to the ice, until she tore it free.

"Lysbeth van Hout," she cried in shrill, piercing tones, "would you to please your Spanish lover bring your father's playmate to her death? The Spanish horse is cold and cannot stay, but the poor Netherland Mare—ah, she may be thrust beneath the blue ice and bide there until her bones rot at the bottom of the moat. You have sought the Spaniards, you, whose blood should have warned you against them, and I tell you that it shall cost you dear. But if you say this word they seek, then it shall cost you

everything, not only the body, but the spirit also. Woe to you, Lysbeth van Hout, if you cut me off before my work is done. I fear not death, nay I welcome it, but I tell you I have work to do before I die.”

Now, in an agony of mind, Lysbeth turned and looked at Montalvo.

The Count was a man of keen perceptions and understood how best to capitalize on this lady's agony. Leaning forward, his arm resting on the back of the sleigh as though to contemplate the prisoner, he whispered into Lysbeth's ear, so low that no one else could hear his words.

“Señora,” he said, “I have no wishes in this matter. I do not desire to drown that poor mad woman, but if you confirm the spy's story, drown she must. At present I am not satisfied, so everything turns upon your evidence. I do not know what passed between you this afternoon, and personally I do not care, only, if you should chance to have no clear recollection of the matter alleged, I must make one or two little stipulations—very little ones.

“Let me see, they are that you will spend the rest of this evening's festival in my company. Further, that whenever I choose to call upon you, your door will be open to me, though I must remind you that on three occasions already, when I have wished to pay my respects, it has been shut.”

Lysbeth heard and understood. If she would save this woman's life, she must expose herself to the attentions of the Spaniard, which she desired least of anything in the world. Moreover, speaking upon her oath in the presence of God, she must utter a dreadful lie, which she was reluctant to do. For thirty seconds or more she thought, staring round her with anguished eyes, while the scene on which they fell sank into her soul in such fashion that never until her death's day did she forget its aspect.

The Mare spoke no more, she only knelt searching her face with a stern and wondering glance. A little to the right stood Black Meg, glaring at her sullenly, for the blood-money was in danger. Behind the prisoner were two of the soldiers, one putting his hand to his face to hide a yawn, while the other beat his

breast to warm himself. The third soldier, who was somewhat in front, stirred the surface of the hole with the shaft of his halbert to break up the thin film of ice that was forming over it, while Montalvo himself, still leaning sideways and forwards, watched her eyes with an amused and cynical expression. And over all, over the desolate snows and gabled roofs of the town behind, over the smooth blue ice, the martyr and the murderers; over the dark sleigh and the fur-wrapped girl who sat within it, fell the calm light of the moon through a silence broken only by the beating of her heart, and now and again by the sigh of the wind breathing among the rushes.

"Well, Señora," asked Montalvo, "if you have sufficiently reflected, shall I administer the oath in the form provided?"

"Administer it," she said hoarsely.

So, descending from the sleigh, he stood in front of Lysbeth, and, lifting his cap, repeated the oath to her, an oath strong enough to blast her soul if she swore to it with false intent.

"In the name of God the Son and of His Blessed Mother, you swear?" he asked.

"I swear," she answered.

"Good, Señora. Now listen to me. Did you meet that woman this afternoon?"

"Yes, I met her on the ice," was her response.

"And did she in your hearing utter curses upon the government and the Holy Church and call upon you to assist in driving the Spaniards from the land, as the spy, whom I believe is called Black Meg, has borne witness?"

"No," said Lysbeth.

"I am afraid that is not quite enough, Señora. I may have misquoted the exact words. Did the woman say anything of the sort?"

For one second Lysbeth hesitated. Then she caught sight of the victim's watching, speculative eyes, and remembered that this crazed and broken creature once had been a child whom her father kissed and played with, and that the crime of which she was accused was that she had escaped from death at the stake.

"The water is cold to die in!" the Mare said, in a meditative

voice, as though she were thinking aloud.

"Then why did you run away from the warm fire, heretic witch?" jeered Black Meg.

Now Lysbeth hesitated no longer, but again answered in a monosyllable, "No."

"Then what did she do or say, Señora?"

"She said she had known my father, who used to play with her when she was a child, and begged for alms, that is all. Then that woman came up, and she ran away, whereon the woman said there was a price upon her head, and that she meant to have the money."

"It is a lie!" screamed Black Meg in fierce, strident notes.

"If that person will not be silent, silence her," said Montalvo, addressing the sergeant. "I am satisfied," he went on, "that there is no evidence at all against the prisoner except the story of a spy, who says she believes her to be a vagrant heretic of bad character who escaped from the stake several years ago in the neighborhood of Brussels, whither it is scarcely worthwhile to inquire about the matter. So that charge may drop. There remains the question as to whether or not the prisoner uttered certain words this afternoon, which, if she did utter them, are undoubtedly worthy of the death that, under my authority as acting commandant of this town, I have power to inflict. This question I foresaw, and that is why I asked the Señora, to whom the woman is alleged to have spoken the words, to accompany me here to give evidence. She has done so, and her evidence on oath as against the statement of a spy woman not under oath, is that no such words were spoken. This being so, as the Señora is a good Catholic whom I have no reason to disbelieve, I order the release of the prisoner, whom for my part I take for nothing more than a crazy and harmless wanderer."

"At least you will detain her until I can prove that she is the heretic who escaped from the stake near Brussels," shouted Black Meg.

"I will do nothing of the sort. The prison here is overfull already. Untie her arms, and let her go."

The soldiers obeyed, wondering somewhat, and the Mare

soon scrambled to her feet. For a moment she stood looking at her deliverer. Then crying, "We shall meet again, Lysbeth van Hout" suddenly she turned and sped up a dyke at extraordinary speed. In a few seconds there was nothing to be seen of her but a black spot upon the white landscape, and then she vanished altogether.

"Gallop as you will, Mare, I shall catch you yet," screamed Black Meg after her. "And you too, my pretty little liar, who have cheated me out of a dozen florins. Wait until you end up before the Inquisition as a heretic—for that's where you'll end. No fine Spanish lover will save you then. So you have gone to the Spanish, have you, and thrown over your fat-faced burgher. Well, you will have enough of Spaniards before you have done with them, I can tell you."

Twice had Montalvo tried to stop this flood of furious eloquence, which had become personal and might prove prejudicial to his interests, but without avail. He then adopted other measures.

"Seize her!" he shouted to two of the soldiers. "That's it. Now hold her under water in that hole until I tell you to let her up again."

They obeyed, but it took all three of them to carry out the order, for Black Meg fought and bit like a wild cat, until at last she was thrust into the icy moat head downwards. When at length she was released, soaked and shivering, she crept off silently enough, but the look of fury that she cast at Montalvo and Lysbeth drew from the captain a remark that perhaps it would have been as well to have kept her under water two minutes longer.

"Now, sergeant," he added, in a genial voice, "it is a cold night, and this has been a troublesome business for a feastday, so here's something for you and your watch to warm yourselves with when you go off duty," and he handed him a very handsome present. "By the way," he said, as the men saluted him gratefully, "perhaps you will do me a favor. It is only to take this black horse of mine to his stable and harness that gray trooper nag to the sleigh instead, as I wish to go on my round of the

moat, and my beast is tired.”

Again the men saluted and set to work to change the horses, whereon Lysbeth, guessing her cavalier’s purpose, turned as though to fly away, for her skates were still upon her feet. But he was watching.

“Señora,” he said in a quiet voice, “I think that you gave me the promise of your company for the rest of this evening, and I am certain,” he added with a slight bow, “that you are a lady whom nothing would induce to tell an untruth. Had I not been sure of that, I should scarcely have accepted your evidence so readily just now.”

Lysbeth winced visibly. “I thought, Señor, that you were going to return to the festival.”

“I do not remember saying so, Señora, and as a matter of fact I have pickets to visit. Do not be afraid, the drive is charming in this moonlight, and afterwards perhaps you will extend your hospitality so far as to ask me to supper at your house.”

Still she hesitated, dismay written on her face.

“Jufvrouw Lysbeth,” he said in an altered voice, “in my country we have a homely proverb which says, ‘she who buys, pays.’ You have bought, and the goods have been delivered. Do you understand? Ah, allow me to have the pleasure of arranging those furs. I knew that you were the soul of honor, and were but—shall we say, teasing me? Otherwise, had you really wished to go, of course you would have skated away just now while you had the opportunity. That is why I gave you time, as naturally I should not desire to detain you against your will.”

Lysbeth heard and was aghast, for this man’s cleverness overwhelmed her. At every step he contrived to put her in the wrong; moreover, she was crushed by the sense that he had justice on his side. She had bought and she must pay. Why had she bought? Not for any advantage of her own, but from an impulse of human pity—to save a fellow creature’s life. And why should she have perjured herself so deeply in order to save that life? She was a Catholic and had no sympathy with such people. Probably this person was an Anabaptist, one of that dreadful sect that practiced nameless immoralities. Was it then because

the creature had declared that she had known her father in her childhood? To some extent, yes, but was not there more? Had she not been influenced by the woman's invocation about the Spaniards, of which the true meaning came home to her during that dreadful sleigh race—at the moment, indeed, when she saw the Satanic look upon the face of Montalvo? It seemed to her that this was so, though at the time she had not understood it. In Lysbeth's mind, it seemed that she was not a free agent and that some force pushed her forward that she could neither control nor understand.

Moreover—and this was the worst of it—she felt that little good could come of her sacrifice, or that if good came, at least it would not be to her or hers. Now she was as a fish in a net, though why it was worth this brilliant Spaniard's while to snare her she could not understand, for she forgot that she was beautiful and a woman of property. Well, to save the blood of another she had bought, and in her own blood and happiness, or in that of those dear to her, assuredly she must pay, however cruel and unjust might be the price.

These were the thoughts that passed through Lysbeth's mind as the strong Flemish gelding lumbered forward, dragging the sleigh at the same steady pace over rough ice and smooth. And all the while Montalvo behind her was chatting pleasantly about various subjects, telling her of the orange groves in Spain, of the Court of the Emperor Charles, of adventures in the French wars, and many other things. To this conversation, she made such responses as courtesy alone demanded. What would Dirk think, she was wondering, and her cousin, Pieter van de Werff, whose good opinion she valued, and all the gossips of Leyden? She only prayed that they might not have missed her or, at least, that they took it for granted that she had gone home.

On this point, however, she was soon destined to be undeceived, for presently, trudging over the snow-covered ice and carrying his useless skates in his hand, they met a young man whom she knew as Dirk's fellow apprentice. On seeing them, he stopped in front of the sleigh in such a position that the horse, a steady and a patient animal, pulled up of its own accord.



"Is the Jufvrouw Lysbeth van Hout there?" he asked anxiously.

"Yes," she replied, but before she could say more Montalvo broke in, inquiring what might be the matter.

"Nothing," he answered, "except that she was lost and Dirk van Goorl, my friend, sent me to look for her this way, while he took the other."

"Indeed. Then, noble sir, perhaps you will find the Heer Dirk van Goorl and tell him that the Señora, his cousin, is merely enjoying an evening drive and that, if he comes to her house in an hour's time, he will find her safe and sound, and with her myself, the Count Juan de Montalvo, whom she has honored with an invitation to supper."

Then, before the astonished messenger could respond, indeed, before Lysbeth could offer any explanation of his words, Montalvo lashed up the horse and left him standing on the moat bewildered, his cap off and scratching his head.

After this, they proceeded on a journey that seemed to Lysbeth almost interminable. When the circuit of the walls was finished, Montalvo halted at one of the shut gates, and calling to the guard within, summoned them to open. This caused delay and investigation, for at first the sergeant of the guard would not believe that it was his acting commandant who spoke without.

"Pardon, Excellency," he said when he had inspected him with a lantern, "but I did not think that you would be going the rounds with a lady in your sleigh," and holding up the light the man took a long look at Lysbeth, grinning visibly as he recognized her.

"Ah, he is a wise man, the captain, a very wise man, and it's a pretty Dutch bird he is teaching to pipe now," she heard him call to a comrade as he closed the heavy gates behind their sleigh.

Then followed more visits to other military posts in the town and, with each visit, a further explanation. All this while, the Count Montalvo uttered no word beyond those of ordinary compliment and ventured on no act of familiarity, his conversation and demeanor indeed remaining perfectly courteous and respectful. So far as it went this was satisfactory, but at length

there came a moment when Lysbeth felt that she could bear the position no longer.

“Señor,” she said briefly, “take me home. I grow faint.”

“With hunger doubtless,” he interrupted. “Well, by heaven, so do I! But, my dear lady, as you are aware, duty must be attended to, and, after all, you may have found some interest in accompanying me on a tour of the pickets at night. I know your people speak roughly of us Spanish soldiers, but I hope that after this you will be able to bear testimony to their discipline. Although it is a festival day you will be my witness that we have not found a man off duty or the worse for drink. Here, you,” he called to a soldier who stood up to salute him, “follow me to the house of the Jufvrouw Lysbeth van Hout, where I sup, and lead this sleigh back to my quarters.”