

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

IN THE TEMPLE OF THE WILD

"GRANDE PORTAGE at last, father!" exclaimed Joan, using words she had used a full year before as the Factor's craft grazed the Port Charlotte landing on the Pigeon River's bank. "It is good to get the canoe cramps out."

"Yes, Joan," nodded Wayne, a smile cracking the grim mahogany of his face as recollection stirred within him. "It's been a long day, but here's a nine-mile walk to stretch your legs."

"And not a packer to clutter up the trail!" laughed Carlisle, giving Joan his hand to help her out. "Look at Port Charlotte—empty as a last year's bird's nest! Look at the Portage—deserted to the skyline! We'll have a quick passage over."

Twelve months before he had gone into Cumberland House with a lone canoe. Now he had come out down the Saskatchewan, Lake Winnipeg, through the Winnipeg River, the Lake of the Woods, Rainy Lake, and the Pigeon River with a fleet of fifteen hundred paddles. As he turned off up the trail with Joan, followed by Wayne and Andrews, he waved a sign to his brigade leader, Drummond, to unload the massed brigades and pack over after him.