

"SALADA"

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"BELA"

"To cap all, the ice went out two weeks ahead, and we had to change to wheels, and sink to the hubs in the land trails. Now, by gad, before the ice on the shore is melted, it'll be time for the lake to freeze over again!"

"No use grousing about it," muttered Shand.

Big Jack clamped his teeth on his pipe and fell silent. For a while there was no sound in the shack but Husky muttering over his game, the licking of the wood fire, and faint, mournful intonations down the chimney from the pines. The man on the bed shuddered involuntarily, and glanced at his mates to see if they had noticed it.

"This one, Joe Hagland, was considerably younger than the other three. He was a heavy, muscular youth, with curling black hair and comely features, albeit somewhat marked by wilfulness and self-indulgence.

Back in the world outside he had made a brief essay in the prize-ring, not without some success. He had been driven out, however, by an epithet spontaneously applied by the fraternity: "Crying Joe Hagland."

The trouble was, he could not control his emotions.

"For God's sake, say something!" he cried at the end of a long silence. "This is as cheerful as a funeral!"

"Speak a piece yourself, if you feel the want of entertainment," retorted Jack, without looking around.

"I wish to God I'd never come up to this forsaken country!" muttered Joe. "I wish I was back this minute in a man's town, with lights shining and glasses banging on the bar!"

This came too close to their own thoughts. They angrily silenced him. Joe buried his face in his arms, and another silence succeeded.

It was broken by a new sound, a soft sound between a whisper and a hum. It might have come from the pine-trees, which had many strange voices, but it seemed to be right there in the room with them. It held a dreadful suggestion of a human voice.

It had an electrical effect on the four men. Each made believe he had heard nothing. Big Jack and Shand stared self-consciously into the fire. Husky's hands holding the cards shook and his face changed color. Joe lifted a livid white face, and his eyes rolled wildly. He clutched the blankets and bit his lip to keep from crying out.

They moved their seats and shuffled their feet to break the hideous silence. Joe began to chatter irrelevantly.

"A funeral, that's what it is! You're like a lot of damn mates. Who's dead, anyhow? The Irish do it better. Whoop things up! For God's sake, Jack, dig up a bottle, and let's have one good hour!"

The other three turned to him, oddly grateful for the interruption. Big Jack made no move to get the sug-

gested bottle, nor had Joe expected him to. The liquor was stored with the rest of the outfit in the stable. None desired to have the door opened, at that moment.

Young Joe's shaking voice rattled on: "I could drink a quart myself without taking breath. Lord, this is enough to give a man a thirst! What would you give for an old-fashioned skate, boys? I'd welcome a few pink elephants myself, after seeing nothing for days. What's the matter with you all? Are you hypnotized? For the love of Mike, start something!"

The pressure of dread was too great. The hurrying voice ptered out, and the shack was silent again. Husky made a bluff of continuing his game. Jack and Shand stared into the fire. Joe lay listening, every muscle tense.

It came again, a sibilant sound, as if out of a throat through clenched teeth. It had a mocking ring. It was impossible to say whence it came. It filled the room.

Young Joe's nerves snapped. He leaped up with a shriek, and springing across the room, fell beside Shand and clung to him.

"Did you hear it?" he cried. "It's out there! It's been following me! It's not human! Don't let it in!"

They were too much shaken themselves to laugh at his panic terror. Both men by the fire jumped up and turned around. Husky knocked over

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his box, and the cards scattered broadcast. He sidled toward the others, keeping eyes on the door.

"Stop your yelling!" Shand hoarsely commanded.

"Did you hear it? Did you hear it?" Joe continued to cry.

"Yes, I heard it," growled Shand.

"Me, too," added the others.

Joe's rigid figure relaxed. "Thank God!" he moaned. "I thought it was inside my head!"

"Listen!" commanded Jack.

They stood close together, all their late agnosticism forgotten in a common fear. There was nothing to be heard but the wind in the tree-tops.

"Maybe it was a beast or a bird—some kind of an owl," suggested Husky, shakily.

"No; like a voice laughing," stammered Joe.

"Right at the door like—trying to get in," added Shand.

"Open the door!" said Big Jack.

No one made a move, nor did he offer to himself.

As they listened they heard another sound, like a stick rattling against the logs outside.

"Oh, my God!" muttered Joe.

The others made no sound, but the color slowly left their faces. They were strong men and stout-hearted in the presence of any visible danger. It was the supernatural element that turned their breasts to water.

Big Jack finally crept toward the door.

"Don't open it!" shrieked Joe.

"Shut up!" growled Jack. They perceived that it was not his intention to open it. He dropped the bar in place. They breathed easier.

"Put out the light!" said Husky.

"Don't you do it!" cried Shand. "It's nothing that can shoot in!"

Their flesh crawled at the unholy suggestion his words conveyed.

They stood elbow to elbow, backs to the fire, waiting for more. For a long time it was quiet except the trees outside. They began to feel easier. Suddenly something dropped down the chimney behind them and smashed on the hearth, scattering the embers.

The four men leaped forward as one, with a common grunt of terror. Facing around, they saw that it was only a round stone such as the chimney was built of. But that it might have fallen naturally did not lessen the fresh shock to their demoralized nerves. Their teeth chattered. They stuck close together with terrified and sheepish glances at each other.

"By God!" muttered Big Jack.

"Ice or no ice, to-morrow we move on from here!"

"I never believed in—in nothing of the kind," growled Shand. "But this beats all!"

"We never should have stopped here," said Husky. "It looked bad—a deserted shack, with the roof in and all. Maybe the last man who lived here was murdered with a whip!"

Young Joe was beyond speech. White-faced and trembling violently, the big fellow clung to Shand like a child.

"Oh, hell, said Big Jack. "Nothing can happen to us if we stick together and keep the fire up!" His tone was less confident than the words.

"At the wood's outside," stammered Husky.

"Burn the furniture," suggested Big Jack.

Setting the action to the word, he put his barrel-stave rocker on the embers. It blazed up generously, filling every corner of the shack with light, and giving them more confidence. There were no further untoward sounds.

Meanwhile the fifth man had been sleeping quietly in the corner. The one who goes to bed early in camp must needs learn to sleep through anything. The other men disregarded him.

The table and the boxes followed the chair on the fire. The four discussed what had happened in low tones.

"I noticed it first yesterday," said Big Jack.

"Me, too," added Husky. "What did you see?"

"Didn't see nothing," Jack glanced about him uneasily. "Don't know as it does any good to talk about it," he muttered.

"We got to know what to do," said Shand.

"Well, it was in the day time, at that," Jack resumed. "I set a trap for skunks beside the trail over across

the creek, and I went to see if I got anything. I was walkin' along not two hundred yards beyond the stable when something soft hit me on the back of the head. I was mad. I spun around to see who had done it. There wasn't nobody. I searched that piece of woods good. I'm sure there wasn't anybody there. At last I thought it was a trick of the senses like. Thought I was a bilious maybe. Until I got to the trap."

"What was it hit you?" asked Husky.

"I don't know. A lump of sod it felt like. I was too busy looking for who threw it to see."

"What about the trap?" asked Shand.

"It comin' to that. It was sprung, and there was a goose's quill stickin' in it. Now, I leave it to you if a wild goose ain't too smart to go in a trap. And if he did, he couldn't get a feather caught by the butt end, could he?"

They murmured in astonishment.

"Me," began Husky; "yesterday I was cuttin' wood for the fire a little way back in the bush, and I got hit up and took off my sweater, the red one, and laid it on a log. I loaded up with an armful of wood and carried it to the pile outside the door here. I wasn't away two minutes, but when I went back to my ax the sweater was gone."

"I thought one of you fellows took it. Remember, I asked you? I looked for it near an hour. Then I came in to my dinner. We was all here together, and I was the first to get up from the table. Well, sir, when I went back to my ax, there was the sweater where I first left it. Can you beat it? It was so damn queer I didn't like to say nothing."

"What about you?" Jack asked of Shand.

Shand nodded. "To-day when I walked up the shore there was something funny. I had a notion I was followed all the way. Couldn't shake it. Half-a-dozen times I turned short and ran into the bush to look. Couldn't see nothing. Just the same I was sure. No noise, you understand, just pad, pad on the ground that stopped when I stopped."

"What do you know?" Jack asked in turn of Joe.

"W—wait till I tell you," stammered Joe. "It's been with me two days I couldn't bring myself to speak of it—thought you'd only laugh. I saw it a couple of times, flitting through the bush like. Once it laughed—"

"What did it look like?" demanded Jack.

"Couldn't tell you; just a shadow. This morning I was shaving outside. Had my mirror hanging from a branch around by the shore. I was nervous account of this, and I cut myself. See, there's the mark. I come to the house to get a rag."

"You was all in plain sight—cookee inside, Jack and Husky sittin' at the door waitin' for breakfast, Shand in the stable. I could see him through the open door. He couldn't have got to the tree and back while I was in the house. When I got back my little mirror was hangin' there, but—"

"Well?" demanded Big Jack.

"It was cracked clear across."

"Oh, my God, a broken mirror!" murmured Husky.

"I left it hangin'," added Joe.

Meanwhile the chair, the table, and the boxes were quickly consumed, and the fire threatened to die down, leaving them in partial obscurity, an alarming prospect. The only other movable was the bed.

"What'll we do?" said Joe, nervously. "We can't break it up without the axe, and that's outside."

Husky's eye, vainly searching the cabin, was caught by the sleeping figure in the corner.

"Send cookee out for wood," he said. "He hasn't heard nothing."

"Sure," cried Joe, brightening, "and if there's anything out there we'll find out on him."

"He'll see we've burned the stuff up," objected Shand, frowning.

"What of it?" asked Big Jack.

"He's got to see when he wakes. Tain't none of his business, anyhow."

"Ho, Sam!" cried Husky.

The recumbent figure finally stirred and sat up, blinking. "What do you want?" Sam demanded, crossly.

As soon as this young man opened his eyes it became evident that a new element had entered the situation. There was a subtle difference between the cook and his masters, easier to see than to define. There was no love lost on either side.

Clearly he was not one of them, nor had he any wish to be. Sam's eyes, full of sleep though they were, were yet guarded and wary. There was a suggestion of scorn behind the guard. He looked very much alone in the cabin—and unafraid.

He was as young as Joe, but lacked perhaps thirty pounds of the other youth's brawn. Yet Sam was no weakling either, but his slenderness was accentuated in that burly company.

His eyes were his outstanding feature. They were of a deep, bright blue. They were both resolute and prone to twinkle. His mouth, that unerring index, matched the eyes in sug-

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To-day, more than ever before, is woman's opportunity. Many new occupations are now opened to her, which, before the war, she was deemed unfitted to fill. And truth to tell, she has risen to the opportunity, and now shares many business responsibilities in former times confined to men. But, as women are subject to more frequent fluctuations of health than men, many will be handicapped early, if they regard their health requirements too lightly.

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gesting a combination of cheerfulness and firmness. It was the kind of mouth able to remain closed at need. He had thick, light-brown hair, just escaping the stigma of red.

There was something about him—fair-haired, slender, and resolute—that excited kindness. There lay the difference between him and the other men.

"We want wood," said Husky arrogantly. "Go out and get it."

An honest indignation made the sleepy eyes strike fire. "Wood!" he cried. "What's the matter with you? It's just outside the door. What do you want to wake me for?"

"Ah!" snarled Husky. "You're the cook, ain't you? What do we hire you for?"

"You'd think you paid me wages to hear you," retorted Sam. "I get my grub, and I earn it."

"You do what you're told with less lip," said Husky threateningly.

At this point Big Jack, more diplomatic, considering that a quarrel might result in awkward disclosures, intervened. "Shut up," he growled to Husky. To Sam he said conciliatingly: "You're right. Husky hadn't ought to have waked you. It was a bit of thoughtlessness. But now you're awake, you might as well get the wood."

"Oh, all right," said Sam indifferently.

He threw off his blanket, as they all did, he slept in most of his clothes. He pulled on his moccasins. The other four watched him with ill-concealed excitement. The contrast between his sleepy indifference and their parted lips and anxious eyes was striking.

Sam was too sleepy and too irritated to observe as once that the table and chair were missing. He went to the door rubbing his eyes. He rattled the latch impatiently and swore under his breath. Perceiving the bar at last he flung it back.

"Were you afraid of robbers up here?" he muttered scornfully.

"Close the door after you," commanded Jack.

Sam did so, and simultaneously the mask dropped from the faces of the men inside. They listened in strained attitudes with bated breath. They heard Sam go to the wood-pile, and counted each piece of wood as he dropped it with a click in his arm. When he returned they hastily resumed their careless expressions. Sam dropped the wood on the hearth.

"Better get another while you're at it," suggested Jack.

Sam, without comment, went back outdoors.

"Well," said Jack with a foolish look, "nothing doing, I guess."

"I thought there was nothing," boasted Husky.

"You—" began Jack indignantly. He was arrested by a gasp from Joe. "My God! Listen!"

They heard a sharp, low cry of astonishment from Sam, and the armful of wood came clattering to the ground. They heard Sam run, but away from the cabin, not toward the door. Each caught his breath in suspense. They heard a thud on the ground, and a confused, scrambling sound. Then Sam's voice rose quick and clear.

"Boys, bring a light! Quick! Look! Shand! Quick!"

The four wavered in horrible indecision. Each looked at the other, waiting for him to make a move. There was no terror in the cries, only a wild excitement. Finally Big Jack, with an oath, snatched up the lantern and threw open the door. The others followed in the order of their courage. Joe bringing up the rear.

A hundred yards from the door the light revealed Sam struggling with something on the ground. What it was they could not see—something that panted and made sounds of rage.

"Boys! Here! Quick!" cried Sam. To their amazement his voice was full of laughter. They hung back.

"What have you got?" cried Jack.

"The answer was as startling as an explosion: 'A girl!'"

A swift reaction passed over the four. They sprang to his aid.

"Hold the light up!" Sam cried breathlessly. "Shand, grab her foot. I've got her arms locked. God! Bites like a cat! Carry her in." This ended in a peal of laughter.

Between them Shand and Sam carried her toward the door, staggering and laughing wildly. Their burden wriggled and plunged like a fish. They had all they could do, for she was both slippery and strong. They got her inside at last. The others crowded after, and they closed the door and barred it.

Sam, usually so quiet and wary in this company, was transformed by excitement. "Now, let's see what we've got!" he cried. "Put her feet down. Look out or she'll claw you!"

They set her on her feet and stood back on guard. But as soon as she was set free her resistance came to an end. She did not fly at either, but coolly turned her back and shook herself and smoothed her plumage like a ruffled bird. This unexpected docility surprised them afresh. They watched her warily.

"A woman!" they cried in amazed tones. "Where did she drop from?"

They instantly ascribed all the supernatural manifestations to this human cause. Everything was made clear, and a load of terror lifted from their breasts.

The suddenness of the reaction dizzied them a little. Each man blushed and frowned, remembering his late unmanly terrors. They were amazed, chagrined, and tickled all at once.

Big Jack strode to her and held the lantern up to her face. "She's a beauty!" he cried.

A silence succeeded that word. Four of the five men present measured his mates with sidelong looks. Same shrugged and, resuming his ordinary circumspect air, turned away.

(To be continued.)

Rain Races Light and Sound.

Why does a heavy downpour of rain often follow a clap of thunder? asks the Popular Science Monthly, and gives this answer: "For, as is popularly believed, because the thunder jostles the cloud particles together into rain drops. In the violent turmoil between the positive and negative electricity in a thundercloud there will be places where the production of drops by condensation and their subsequent breaking up proceeds more rapidly than elsewhere. Hence in these places there will be more drops to fall as rain, and also more electrification, the rainfall occurring about the same time as the flash."

We have, then, starting toward the earth at the same time, light, sound and raindrops. The light, traveling at a speed of about 186,000 miles per second, reaches us almost instantly. The sound travels far more slowly still. Thus we observe, first, the lightning, then the thunder, and then the rain.

Ancients Used Few Adjectives.

The plethora of adjectives in modern literature contrasts with the abstinence of the ancients in this respect. A contributor to the Italian review, *Minerva*, with time to spare, has made a count of substantives and adjectives in the works of Virgil, Dante and Leonardo. In the second book of the "Aeneid," which contains the fall of Troy, there are 1,637 nouns and 539 adjectives. In Dante's "Divina Commedia," out of the 6,215 adjectives which it contains only seventeen are in the superlative. These are facts from which the tyro in literature may well draw a moral.—Christian Science Monitor.

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