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"Seven? What have you heard? What makes you think so?"

"That is what the Drum says."

The Drum! There was a Drum then! At least there was some sound which people heard and which they called the Drum. For the woman had heard it.

The woman shifted, checked something upon her fingers, while her lips moved; she was not counting, Constance thought; she was more likely aiding herself in translating something from Indian numeration into English. "Two, it began with," she announced. "Right away it went to nine. Sixteen then—that was this morning very early. Now, all day and to-night, it has been giving twenty. That leaves seven. It is not known who they may be."

SHE opened the door and looked out. The roar of the water and the wind, which had come loudly, increased, and with it the wood noises. The woman was not looking about now, Constance realized; she was listening. Constance arose and went to the door too. The Drum! Blood prickled in her face and forehead; it prickled in her finger tips. The Drum was heard only, it was said, in time of severest storm; for that reason it was heard most often in winter. It was very seldom heard by any one in summer; and she was of the summer people. Sounds were coming from the woods now. Were these reverberations the roll of the Drum which beat for the dead? Her voice was uncontrolled as she asked the woman:

"Is that the Drum?"

The woman shook her head. "That's the trees."

Constance's shoulders shook convulsively together. When she had thought about the Drum—and when she had spoken of it with others who, themselves, never had heard it—they always had said that, if there were such a sound, it was trees. She herself had heard those strange wood noises, terrifying sometimes until their source was known—wailings like the cry of some one in anguish, which were caused by two crossed saplings rubbing together; thunderings, which were only some smaller trees beating against a great hollow trunk when a strong wind veered from a certain direction. But this Indian woman must know all such sounds well; and to her the Drum was something distinct from them. The woman specified that now.

"You'll know the Drum when you hear it."

Constance grew suddenly cold. For twenty lives, the woman said, the Drum had beat; that meant to her, and to Constance too now, that seven were left. Indefinite, desperate denial that all from the ferry must be dead—that denial which had been strengthened by the news that at least one boat had been adrift near Beaver—altered in Constance to conviction of a boat with seven men from the ferry, seven dying, perhaps, but not yet dead. Seven out of twenty-seven! The score were gone; the Drum had beat for them in little groups as they had died. When the Drum beat again, would it beat beyond the score?

The woman drew back and closed the door; the water was hot now, and she made the tea and poured a cup for Constance. As she drank it, Constance was listening for the Drum;

the woman too was listening. Having finished the tea, Constance returned to the door and reopened it; the sounds outside were the same. A solitary figure appeared moving along the edge of the ice—the figure of a tall man, walking on snowshoes; moonlight distorted the figure, and it was muffled too in a great coat which made it unrecognizable. He halted and stood looking out at the lake and then, with a sudden movement, strode on; he halted again, and now Constance got the knowledge that he was not looking; he was listening as she was. He was not merely listening; his body swayed and bent to a rhythm—he was counting something that he heard. Constance strained her ears; but she could hear no sound except those of the waters and the wind.

"Is the Drum sounding now?" she asked the woman.

"No."

Constance gazed again at the man and found his motion quite unmistakable; he was counting—if not counting something that he heard, or thought he heard, he was recounting and reviewing within himself something that he had heard before—some irregular rhythm which had become so much a part of him that it sounded now continually within his own brain; so that, instinctively, he moved in cadence to it. He stepped forward again now, and turned toward the house.

Her breath caught as she spoke to the woman. "Mr. Spearman is coming here now!"

Her impulse was to remain where she was, lest he should think she was afraid of him; but realization came to her that there might be advantage in seeing him before he knew that she was there, so she reclosed the door and drew back into the cabin.

CHAPTER XX.

The Sounding of The Drum.

NOISES of the wind and the roaring of the lake made inaudible any sound of his approach to the cabin; she heard his snowshoes scrape the cabin wall as, after taking them off, he leaned them beside the door. He thrust the door open then and came in; he did not see her at first and, as he turned to force the door shut again against the wind, she watched him quietly. She understood at once why the Indian woman had been afraid of him. His face was bloodless, yellow, and swollen-looking, his eyes bloodshot, his lips strained to a thin, straight line.

He saw her now and started and, as though sight of her confused him, he looked away from the woman and then back to Constance before he seemed certain of her.

"Hello!" he said tentatively. "Hello!"

"I'm here, Henry."

"Oh; you are! You are!" He stood drawn up, swaying a little as he stared at her; whiskey was upon his breath, and it became evident in the heat of the room; but whiskey could not account for this condition she witnessed in him. Neither could it conceal that condition; some turmoil and strain within him made him immune to its effects.

She had realized on her way up here, what, vaguely, that strain within him must be. Guilt—guilt of some

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