

Madge felt now, what she had suspected all along, that the man was crazy.

"I keep away from them. Only at night I go near their trails. If I let them near me they would steal my gold—the treasure I've spent years in accumulating."

His words ended in a passionate gasp. His eyes gleamed strangely. Madge decided that it was best to humor him. Bye-and-bye she would manage to slip away and find the sled.

"Oh, I've heard of that Windigo," she said, with a quick laugh that only half concealed the tremor in her voice. "But you see, I don't believe in ghosts. Nobody does, except, perhaps, the Indians."

With a great effort she rose. Her hurt shoulder throbbed and ached till she felt like crying out. Her cap had fallen off and she began to look about for it.

At that instant the man leaped to the opposite wall and snatched his gun down. He had barely time to take up a position of defence against one of the posts when the rude door of the shack swung slowly open, revealing the muffled form of a sergeant of the Royal North West Mounted Police.

The girl gave a cry of mingled surprise and relief. The owner of the shack stood like an animal at bay, his eyes gleaming, his breath coming in short, quick gasps. His finger twitched on the gun trigger.

"Put down the gun, my friend," said the officer quietly.

As under a spell, still gazing at the newcomer, the other slowly lowered his rifle. The officer now perceived the girl for the first time, and he removed his fur cap. Madge saw the dark head and healthy-looking brown face of Sergeant Donald Macpherson, whom she had met two years before at a dance at Athabasca Landing.

"What are you doing here, Miss Williamson, may I ask?" he demanded, his quick eye travelling about the dark room.

In a few breathless words the girl told him.

"Are—are you going to arrest him?" she added, nodding inquiringly at her quondam host. "What has he done?"

"Nothing, so far as I know, except scare the natives. I believe he's harmless, but a little 'off.' He's the victim of paranoia—thinks he has a buried treasure. Yet he's cute enough to keep up a bluff about a ghost. Now, sir, I've been on your trail for over a year, but never saw you in the flesh until this minute, although I've beaten this whole territory up hill and down dale. Only for that sled and the parcels dumped out down the trail a bit, I'd never have found my way here. But I followed your tracks, and here I am. You must get ready to come back with me. Will you get ready at once?"

Something magnetic, either in the speaker's decided tone or the steady glance of his eyes, or both, acted like a charm on the grizzled hermit. He nodded affirmatively, and pulled down his cap and coat from a hook. Both were made of beaver skin. "You won't let them have my gold?" he whispered, hoarsely, laying a trembling hand on the sergeant's arm. "See, I'll show you—and her."

He turned, lifted a pick, and began to pry loose some boards in a corner. Macpherson drew his electric flashlight from his pocket and turned it upon the cavity revealed.

"A moment—only a moment," panted the hermit. He took up a spade and scraped away some loose earth and instantly there flashed into view the dull but unmistakable gleam of gold—gold quartz, gold in the nugget and gold in tiny grains.

"By jove! Then it's true, after all!" ejaculated Macpherson. "You really have buried treasure! I say, sir, what is your name?"

The hermit gazed sorrowfully at the young man. "I am the Spirit of this great wilderness," he replied, in his droning way. "This room we are in is well underground—out of the way of prying folk. I have no name. I live here in the daytime. At evening I go abroad. Sometimes," and here he chuckled, "sometimes they come close to me—those people of another world—but I have merely to walk into the good old earth. I have more than one entrance to my home—and they, well, they don't come as near again.

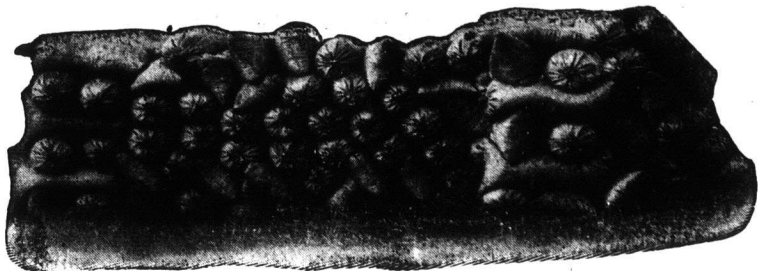
They call me 'The Windigo,' I believe." And he laughed aloud.

"You speak like a man of some education," said Macpherson, and added in an aside to the girl, "Take down a book from that shelf yonder, and see if his name is on it. There must be some clue, somewhere about."

Madge turned to a rude pine shelf nearby and took down a small volume, bound in dog-eared green leather. It was Service's "Songs of a Sourdough." She opened it at the fly-leaf. Macpherson switched the ray of his flashlight full on the page. There was both a name and a date:

"Jasper F. Williamson, April 9th, 1911."

"You see, I came up with the mail man," the sergeant explained, as the three travelled south under a sky so full of stars it seemed like a gown of purple velvet sown with diamonds. "He's a new



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