

in the gale; they creaked, they swished, they droned, they crackled with frost. It was coming on dusk. The deeper reaches of the forest were already dark. Horses and teamsters, sawyers, road-monkeys, axemen, swampers, punk-hunters and all, floundered from the bush, white with dry snow, iced and frosted like a Christmas cake, to the roaring bunk-house fires, to a voracious employment at the cooks' long tables, and to an expanding festival jollity. Town? Sure! Swamp's End for Christmas—the lights and companionship of the bedraggled shanty lumber-town in the clearing of Swamp's End! Swamp's End for Gingerbread Jenkins! Swamp's End for Billy the Beast! Swamp's End—and the roaring hilarity thereof—for man and boy, straw-boss and cookee, of the lumber-jacks! Presently the dim trails from the Cant-hook cutting, from the Bottle River camps, from Snook's landing and the Yellow Tail works, poured the boys into town—a lusty, hilarious crew, like loosed school-boys on a lark, giving over, now, to the only distractions, it seemed—and John Fairmeadow maintained it—which the great world provided in the forests.

Pattie Batch might have been aware of this—the log shack was on the edge of town—had not the window-panes been coated thick with Christmas frost. She might have heard rough laughter passing by—the Bottle River trail ran right past