

THE END OF THE GAME

which the previous moment had been empty and peaceful before him, stood Kip Ryerson.

At the sight David stiffened all over with a sudden tense quiver. But Mary gripped his arm tight —

“Dave!” she cried, “Dave, you promised me!”

And at her words, and the clutch of her hands, David checked himself, and with the relaxing again of his muscles a long tremble went over him like the sharp vibration of a tweaked wire.

But in that moment Kip Ryerson made a fatal mistake. He had been walking carelessly, secure in the belief that his enemy pursued him miles distant on the other side of the river, and then raising his eyes he looked suddenly out of this security to behold him instead directly in the way before him. David Cree was the man he most feared in all the world, and as he came upon him thus unexpectedly, with the startled panic of the coward his hand flew back instinctively to his hip pocket. But, quick as the gesture was, David saw it and was quicker, and with a bound like the freed snap of a bent sapling he closed upon him.

David Cree was a very strong man, much stronger usually than his opponent, but fear in that crisis lent Ryerson a sudden insanity of strength, and he fought with the impetuosity and violence of terror. There are some experiences never translated into words, but which rear themselves for always as grim monuments of certain emotions — and for Kip Ryerson, the tearing remembrance of David Cree’s fingers at his throat had come to stand for the very climax of fear — and