

a way, and Anno opened the door expecting to see her husband. The dog dashed furiously out, but no sign of Mart appeared. The young wife went out into the piercing air—saw and heard nothing, and was slowly turning in, when a sound caught her ear—it was the sound of hoofs striking full and sharp upon the frozen ground. So had Mart never approached before. But there was no time for wonder, for the next moment the horse galloped up to the door and stopped. Anno saw instantly that something unusual had happened—the animal was dripping with foam and trembling all over—the sledge was reversed, and above all, Mart was not there.

Anno was the girl still; she called quick to her grandmother—the old woman did not answer—she flew into the inner room. Liso was standing motionless with her face turned from the door. There was no light save from the little snowed up window; but Anno saw enough to know that she stood in prayer. "Oh! *Jummal!*" (God) said the poor girl to herself, "hear her!" and leaving her undisturbed, she ran again out of the house, gave one look at the trembling horse, and then all trembling herself, began to retrace the jagged track in which it had come.

We must now return to Mart, whom we left in a frightful position. He knew what it was to put forth his strength in games and wrestling matches, and it was such as, shoulder to shoulder, and muscle to muscle, few could withstand. But it was as nothing now against the heavy weight, the vicelike teeth—the rending grasp, that held him down on every side. For a few seconds the desperate violence of a man to whom life is sweet, and such a death most horrible, shook off the pitiless assailants; but his own blood had dyed the snow, and the sight of it seemed to turn ferocity into fury. The blood-hounds closed upon him—they pulled him down!

People say there is no time to think in sudden dangers—they have never known one. There are more thoughts struck from the mind in one moment's collision with sudden and desperate peril than in days of fearless scenery. The sweets of this earth—the home that lay so near—the mystery of heaven, swept over poor Mart's mind; nay, even particulars found time to intrude. He thought how Anno and Liso would watch through the night—how his mangled remains would tell all in the morning—Anno's despair, the village lament: he thought of all this, and more, and knew himself in the jaws of hungry wolves! Then those foul lurid eyes glared over him; the tightening of the throat followed, and thinking was over. Still he struggled to release his arms—the grasp on the throat was suffocating him—his senses reeled—when on a sudden—dash came another animal hard-breathing along; threw itself into the midst with one sharp howl, and fastened upon the chief assailant. The wolves relaxed their fury for an instant; Mart reeled giddily to his feet, and recognised his brave dog. For a second he stood stunned and bewildered; when he saw one wolf retreating, and all three attacking the dauntless *Karrja Pois*. He turned to help him, and a bright object caught his eye; it was his hatchet lying on the snow, within arm's length of his last struggle. Mart snatched it up and was now himself again. Blood was dripping from him, but his limbs were uninjured, and furious were the blows he dealt.

One wolf soon lay dead at his feet; the other cowed, and retreated, spilling his blood as he went, and held off, skulking round; and now Mart poured his whole fury on the great monster, which held *Karrja Pois* in as stifling a grasp as he had done his master. It was no easy task to release the dog. The hatchet rung on the wolf's skull, rattled on his ribs, and laid bare the gaunt backbone; but the dog's own body interrupted any mortal wound, and the wolf seemed to feel no other. Poor *Karrja Pois'* case was desperate; his legs were all drawn together, protecting the very parts he sought to wound, when suddenly he stretched himself out with some fresh agony, and the hatchet was buried deep in the wolf's throat. Many more fierce strokes were needed before life was extinct; and as Mart rose, a hand on his shoulder started him, and his wife fell on his bosom.

"Mart!"

"Anno!"

Long did the young couple stand in speechless embrace; but the weaker supported the stronger, for Mart's manly nerve was gone, and he leant on Anno like a strengthless child.

"Mart, Mart! Oh! you are safe—dear Mart!" For all answer, Mart pressed her closer.

"But what is here?" for her hand, which laid on his shoulder was wet with a warm clammy substance, and there was light enough to see that dark stain which nothing else is like.

"Mart! you are hurt, you are bleeding!" and going back a step, she saw for the first time her husband's condition. The two dead wolves, the gasping dog—the bloody and farrowed snow! and the full and dreadful truth came upon her, and she burst into passionate sobs.

In truth Mart presented a frightful aspect; his sheepskin hung in strips, for each claw had cut it like a knife, his shoulder was bare, not only to the flesh, but to the bone; his long hair was dishevelled; every article of clothing was torn and awry. It was too evident that some dreadful struggle had taken place, and Anno now saw with what.

It was now Mart's turn to support; his strength was returned, and with it his unlagging sweetness.

"Anno! *Eimohenne!* Anno! *pai!* don't cry so; I am safe and well, only a few scratches on my skin; you'll have to patch me up, as well as my clothes. Let's attend to poor *Karrja Pois*—nobody but you could have made me forget him—I fear he's more hurt than his master."

And the young couple leant over him and tenderly examined his wounds. Then with many tears Anno related how in the deepest sleep the faithful old dog had seemed to receive tidings of his master's danger; and Mart described how he had reached his side when his need was at the greatest—though he did not say how great that need had been—but Anno knew; and then both caressed him more and more.

There was life in the old dog yet, and more than they had ventured at first to expect; his throat was lacerated, his ear torn through, and many a bite and a rent had he on his body, but he licked the hands that felt his wounds, and, rising on his feet, shook a shower of blood from him. Then he deliberately smelt first at one wolf's carcase, and then at the other, to see that all was right,