

My comrades slept on, all but the Assiniboin. He got up slowly, and stood beside me. His presence calmed me somewhat; and I arose and walked to where my comrades were sleeping. I stooped down and shook each one separately; but no one of them moved. I shook them again. The Assiniboin came and assisted me. We touched their white faces with our chill hands. They were cold as ice. Red Plume and myself both looked into each other's faces. It was an awful moment. The three stark, stiff forms—stark and stiff in the rigidity of death—lay so calm and motionless before us. They were dead and out of their misery. Why were we spared? The question ran through my mind in an instant. It was easily answered. Both Red Plume and myself had lain close to the rock behind the others. Their bodies had sheltered us. They were gone, and we were left to suffer on.

We had no strength left to bury them; so we left them where they were, and staggered away from the spot. We could not stay there where those three dead men lay. Our strength was almost gone; but we made our way slowly. I think we had walked as much as an hour, when, as we rounded the corner of a rock, a joyful shout broke from the lips of the Assiniboin. I looked up into his face. He pointed his finger down the glen; and there, not one hundred yards from us, was a hut. Undoubtedly it was one we had searched for so long in vain. I could hardly control my feelings. A new hope sprang up in my breast, and, side by side with Red Plume, I walked until we reached the hut, and stood within its walls.

We took in at a glance the contents of the apartment. A keg of gunpowder stood in one corner, and a bunch of dried sticks in another. No food of any kind was visible. I had expected to find something with which to satisfy my gnawing hunger, but was doomed to disappointment. My heart sank like lead in my bosom, and I laid down on the cold, hard floor, and cried like a child.

The Assiniboin stood beside me for a moment, and then left the lodge. I said nothing to him; I knew what his inten-

tions were; his face spoke plainer than words would have done. He had gone to try and find his way from the hut to the prairie. The distance could not be great, but in his present exhausted condition I knew it would be exceedingly difficult. I had no hope. Even if he should succeed, there would remain ten weary miles between him and camp. No, he would fail. I would have hoped at almost any time, but this was too improbable—too impossible.

Hour after hour wore slowly on, and still the Assiniboin did not return. Every time the wind sounded outside I watched and listened for his footstep. Surely he would return—he would not leave me to die alone? Company even in death is sometimes desirable. It was so with me. I felt that Red Plume would not come back; and yet I watched and waited, in the vain hope that he might.

It was growing late; the shadows of evening were beginning to gather, and it was growing colder. I essayed to make a fire of the dried sticks that lay within the hut; but I was too weak—I could no longer raise my body from the floor. I gave up all hope. Here I must lay and wait for death.

A sound on the outside aroused me from my lethargy. Red Plume had come back to me. I looked towards the door in an agony of joy. I could hardly wait for him to reach it. The footsteps paused for an instant, but only for an instant. The next moment a dark form blocked up the doorway, and a dark, proud face, looked down upon me. It was not the Assiniboin. It was a strange Indian—one I had never seen before. I recognised the symbol of his tribe, however. He was a Piegan Blackfoot.

He noted everything at a glance, and immediately set to work. He produced some venison, and, after kindling a fire, proceeded to make a broth. I could hardly wait for him to finish—he worked so deliberately, it seemed to me. At length he took the broth, and with a wooden spoon he fed me. He gave me but a few spoonfuls, and this mite only increased my raging hunger.

After an interval he gave me a little more of the weak broth, and continued