

in the flooding light, he chopped holes through the ice and fell to fishing for the big lake trout that inhabited those deep waters. He had luck. And soon, absorbed in the new excitement, he had forgotten all about the great grey wolf.

It was late, for Kane had slept the early part of the night, waiting for moonrise before starting on his expedition. The air was tingling with windless cold, and ghostly white with the light of a crooked, waning moon. Suddenly, without a sound, the dog crept close against Kane's legs. Kane felt him tremble. Looking up sharply, his eyes fell on a tall, grey form, sitting erect on the top of a naked point, not a hundred yards away, and staring, not at him, but at the moon.

In spite of himself, Kane felt a pricking in his cheeks, a creeping of the skin under his hair. The apparition was so sudden, and, above all, the cool ignoring of his presence was so disconcerting. Moreover, through that half-sinister light, his long muzzle upstretched towards the moon, and raised as he was a little above the level on which Kane was standing, the wolf looked unnaturally and impossibly tall. Kane had never heard of a wolf acting in this cool, self-possessed, arrogantly confident fashion, and his mind reverted obstinately to the outworn superstitions of his *habitant* friends. But, after all, it was this wolf, not an ordinary, brush-fence wolf, that he was so anxious to study; and the unexpected was just what he had most reason to expect! He was getting what he came for.

KANE knew that the way to study wild creatures was to keep still and make no noise. So he stiffened into instant immobility, and regretted that he had brought the dog with him. But he need not have worried about the dog, for that intelligent animal showed no desire to attract the Grey Master's notice. He was crouched behind Kane's legs, and motionless except for his shuddering.

For several minutes no one stirred—nothing stirred in all that frozen world. Then, feeling the cold begin to creep in upon him in the stillness, Kane had to lift his thick-gloved hands to chafe his ears. He did it cautiously, but the caution was superfluous. The great wolf apparently had no objection to his moving as much as he liked. Once, indeed, those green, lambent eyes flamed over him, but casually, in making a swift circuit of the shores of the lake and the black fringe of the firs; but for all the interest which their owner vouchsafed him, Kane might as well have been a juniper bush.

Knowing very well, however, that this elaborate indifference could not be other than feigned, Kane was patient, determined to find out what the game was. At the same time, he could not help the strain beginning to tell on him. Where was the rest of the pack? From time to time he glanced searchingly over his shoulder towards the all-concealing fir-woods.

At last, as if considering himself utterly alone, the great wolf opened his jaws, stretched back his neck, and began howling his shrill, terrible serenade to the moon. As soon as he paused, came far-off nervous barkings and yelpings from dogs who hated and trembled in the scattered clearings. But no wolf-howl made reply. The pack, for all the sign they gave, might have vanished off the earth. And Kane wondered what strong command from their leader could have kept them silent when all their ancient instincts bade them answer.

As if well satisfied with his music, the great wolf continued to beseech the moon so persistently that at last Kane lost patience. He wanted some variety in the programme. Muttering: "I'll see if I can't rattle your fine composure a bit, my friend!" he raised his rifle and sent a bullet whining over the wolf's head. The wolf cocked his ears slightly and looked about carelessly, as if to say: "What's that?" then coolly resumed his serenade.

Nettled by such ostentatious nonchalance, Kane drove another bullet into the snow within a few inches of the wolf's forefeet. This proved more

effective. The great beast looked down at the place where the ball had struck, sniffed at it curiously, got up on all fours, and turned and stared steadily at Kane for perhaps half a minute. Kane braced himself for a possible onslaught. But it never came. Whirling lightly, the Grey Master

all at once he felt a tingling at the roots of his hair, which seemed to tell him he was being watched from the darkness. Peer as he would, however, he could catch no hint of moving forms; strain his ears as he might, he could hear no whisper of following feet. Moreover, he trusted to the keener senses, keener instincts, of the dog, to give him warning of any furtive approach; and the dog was obviously at ease.

HE was just beginning to excrete himself for letting his nerves get too much on edge, when suddenly out from the black branches just ahead shot a long, spectral shape and fell upon the dog. There was one choked yelp—and the dog and the terrible shape vanished together, back into the blackness.

It was all so instantaneous that before Kane could get his rifle up they were gone. Startled and furious, he fired at random, three times, into cover. Then he steadied himself, remembering that the number of cartridges in his chamber was not unlimited. Seeing to it that his axe and knife were both loose for instant action, he stopped and replenished his Winchester. Then he hurried on as fast as he could without betraying haste.

As he went, he was soon vividly conscious that the wolves—not the Grey Master alone, but the whole pack also—were keeping pace with him through the soundless dark beyond the rim of the spruces. But not a hint of their grim companionship could he see or hear. He felt it merely in the creeping of his skin, the elemental stirring of the hair at the back of his neck. From moment to moment he expected the swift attack, the battle for his life. But he was keyed up to it. It was not fear that made his nerves tingle, but the tense, trembling excitement of the situation. Even against those strange, hidden forces of the forest, his spirit felt sure of victory. He felt as if his rifle would go up and speak, almost of itself, unerringly at the first instant of attack, even before the adversary broke into view. But through all the drawn-out length of those last three miles his hidden adversaries gave no sign, save that once a dead branch, concealed under the snow, snapped sharply. His rifle was at his shoulder, it seemed to him, almost before the sound reached his ear. But nothing came of it. Then a panic-mad rabbit, stretched straight out in flight, darted across the fast narrowing brightness of his path. But nothing followed. And at last, after what seemed to him hours, he came out upon the open

pastures overlooking Burnt Brook Settlement. Here he ran on a little way; and then, because the strain had been great, he sat down suddenly upon a convenient stump and burst into a peal of laughter which must have puzzled the wolves beyond measure.

After this, though well aware that the Grey Master's inexplicable forbearance had saved him a battle which, for all his confidence, might quite conceivably have gone against him, Kane's interest in the mysterious beast was uncompromisingly hostile. He was bitter on account of the dog. He felt that the great wolf had put a dishonour upon him; and for a few days he was no longer the impartial student of natural history, but the keen, primitive hunter with the blood-lust hot in his veins. Then this mood passed, or, rather, underwent a change. He decided that the Grey Master was, indeed, too individual a beast to be just snuffed out, but, at the same time, far too dangerous to be left at liberty.

And now all the thought and effort that could be spared from his daily duties at the Cross-Roads were bent to the problem of capturing the great wolf alive. He would be doing a service to the whole Quah-Davic Valley. And he would have the pleasure of presenting the splendid captive to his college town, at that time greatly interested in the modest beginnings of a zoological garden which its citizens were striving to inaugurate. It thrilled

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Drawn by Arthur Heming.