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his fingers together over his knees, and his body rocked a little, from side to side.

"There were three Kwakuitl guides—all the rest of them had died. We struck through to the Mackenzie—yes, it must have been the Mackenzie, but we called it Hunger River. Hotailub said that if we got down to sea water before the frost set in, we could beat down the coast to the land of his people. We had a shell of a birch-bark, with a moosehide sail. There was a white mist that morning on the river, and we struck the heel of a bald little rock, as smooth as an old man's head. We all floundered out and scrambled for land. And then the fog lifted, and we looked for the boat; it was gone. We were alone in the middle of the great river, the four of us, with just room to squat on the rock, so.

"On the second day Hotailub said he would swim for it. But he was weak, and half a mile out we saw him go down. Then the third day came. And still we waited and waited, and nothing happened. And we sat there, chewing buckskin clothes and moccasins.

Then the fourth day came, and after that I lost track of time. I only know that long afterward it came to me, like a vision—it came to me, the way I was to get off!"

The deep-set, animal-like eyes searched the gloom of the half-lit room furtively, then he drew up his knees, gorilla-like, and went on.

"In the dark, when the two Kwakuitls were sleeping, I raised each head in my hand, quickly, and beat it down against the rock—each head, until it was soft and the hands stopped twitching. I tied the two of them together, firmly, at the throats, and at the knees, and at the ankles. Then I rolled them down the shelving rock into the water. While they lay there I tied them to a little spur of the rock, twice, with double strings torn from my coat. And then I waited."

"Waited?—waited for what?" I gasped, suddenly sickened at the thick smell of the burning tallow.

"I waited and waited, watching them. It was only days, but it seemed years. And then I saw that the time had come. For they no longer lay dark and heavy under the water, but they floated and pulled at the double string, and swung round with each change of the wind. Then I watched for the breeze, and loosened them, and waded out into deep water."

"My God, man you don't mean—" The horror of it was too much for me, and I stumbled out toward the open door, where the quiet country smells blew in, like incense.

"They were my ship of deliverance," intoned the hairy brute squatting on the floor. "They were the weak who died for the strong. And one arm I placed over them so, and with the other I paddled, slowly, slowly, for I was weak, and the rain set in, and I had no strength to waste. And when one arm ached I paddled with the other, paddled, and paddled, slowly, with the water to my chin. And I knew it was night, and then morning again. But still I had to paddle on and on, counting the strokes. Ten times I made ready to drop away and get rid of the hunger and the ache in the arms and bones. But after what had happened, I was afraid! It was years and years I paddled—years and years. And when the current swept us against a shelf of sand I lay there, too weak to crawl away from them. A chilkat squaw found me there, and dragged me to a fire."

The sputtering candle-end, as he spoke, burned out and left the room in utter darkness.

"She dragged me to the fire and gave me fish to eat. They fed me and took care of me, and I stayed with their tribe all that winter. But every night, the fools, they tied my hands with moose-hide. That was the little trouble—they tied my hands with moose-hide, so that I couldn't swim, when I lay there drowning."

Through the darkness I could hear the heavy wheeze of his great, panting chest and the soft pad, pad of his hands on the floor, as he paddled with first one hand and then the other.