

before him, "Squamish man, I come to court your daughter."

Kwatek's dull eyes darkened to suspicion, flamed with anger. "You big chief," said he, "of other people from the great plains; I poor red man with one little girl I love."

"I, too, love Sali," said Kwail, and wondered at his own gentleness.

Kwatek raised his arm as if to strike. "You never have Sali for your woman," he cried, and strode into his house.

But Kwail was a mighty hunter who had lured many kinds of prey. Up in his lodge among the hills he had rich blankets and many mats, baskets woven cunningly, quivers full of delicate arrows. Kwatek was a poor man, and besides, all Squamish men love gifts. When the summer was near an end came Kwail again, striding down the mountain trail. Before the little house he paused, calling to Kwatek and to Nootka, his squaw. "I come to court your daughter," said he, and waiting for no bidding, slipped inside the door.

They said nothing, Kwatek and his little squaw. The man was only obeying their customs. Four days and nights must he squat there, his blanket close about him, just inside their doorway. No food must pass his lips, no word must be given to him or taken. Only a fire was kept burning brightly, and on the fourth day they must give him his answer. So Kwail had taken up his vigil.

II

A little wind came scattering the night, sending grey shadows stealing among the black. Vision fled from Kwail, and once more he trembled, haunted by a thousand doubts. In her far corner Sali was sleeping—sleeping serenely undisturbed, with the black eyes of Kwail forever on her. In all the summer days she had given him neither reason to despair nor yet to hope. She seemed to move in a strange, placid world of her own imaging, girded about with a calm that was like some delicate shrouding veil. Kwail stirred restlessly, counting the dying hours of night. How bright they kept the fire! They need not have feared him. Had he not sworn by the Great Spirit—sworn deliberately, with a great agony of longing upon him—to await their time. After that, if they would not hear him—ah, but he would not think

of it! Was she not his by right of his long watching, his trust inviolate! He fell to brooding again, and when he awoke a long time after, morning had come. He rose quietly, letting his blanket fall from about his shoulders, and slipped out into the open. A neighbor would give him food, and at the same time acquaint him of Kwatek's answer; it was their custom.

Kwail had passed four days and nights for the most part patiently; now it took a fierce control to wait one hour. He strode out into the forest, swaying heavily like a drunken man. He never knew how he passed those minutes; but when he stood before the neighbor's house again his face and body were torn and bleeding, his clothes in rags about him.

The old squaw raised an inscrutable smile to him. "Eat first," she said, and set much food before him.

Kwail devoured the cakes and bear's meat, all of it, but he did not know what he was eating. Only he felt that he must have strength.

"Now," said he, and stood upright before her.

"Kwatek and Nootka, his squaw, send greetings." The old woman spoke very quietly. "They say, thank you, but Kwail shall never be their son."

Things grew dim before the man; he caught suddenly at the doorpost.

The old woman smiled—an inscrutable smile. "Kwatek much like wild cherry wood," she said. "He keep it for his death pyre." Once again she smiled, and very gently pushed the young man from the door.

Day was bright over all the Northland; only in the hills the grey mist of night still lingered. Kwail raised hands, clasped and trembling. "Hear me, Spirit," he cried. "Lead me to Thy presence; only there the wild cherry grows."

Then with noiseless feet Kwail fled into the forest.

III

In the little Squamish village there was a great stir. Kwail, mighty chief of the plains, was to come today to claim Sali, daughter of Kwatek, as his wife. Red men from beyond the borders of the hills were come to do him honor; every native of the place was there. It was a great occasion which something more than cus-