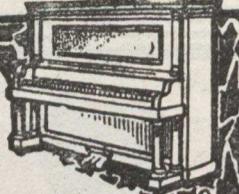


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asked your grandfather if he knew of an empty shack where a man could live and disturb no one. He told me of the shack at Lone Lake. There seemed a fitness in the name and the place. 'We belonged.' So I bought a canoe from a reservation Indian who luckily had one for sale, loaded up with supplies, and, following the old man, paddled up the river to Lone Lake. He kindly went with me to the hut and I took possession. There was enough of the 'eternal vagabond' in me to make me enjoy the adventure. The place held a stove, rusted but whole, a stump table and two odd spruce-root chairs. Also I found there a violin in its case, a faded red shawl, and what was left of a small pair of moccasins. Sherlock Holmes would have deduced that at a remote time a white man had lived there—and an Indian woman."

"Yes," said Nance, "the white man who was thrown over Black Rock by the Indian whose spirit they say haunts the lake, and the woman the Indian loved."

"I have seen no spirits," said Wynn, "though they may be there. The place is filled with an unutterable quiet. A healing silence. It is perfumed with balsam till the very shadows seem sweet-scented. I sought it as hurt things seek hidden places where they may be left alone, and perhaps win back strength. It has been lonely. So lonely, little lady, that at times I would even have welcomed the spirit of that love-mad Indian for company. 'But'—he looked down at the girl and held out his hand—"that has about passed."

She touched his hand lightly with her own, then drew back. In the dusk the dark gold of her hair was luminous, and her eyes brilliant as the stars in the frosty sky. "Oh, it is very late!" she said, "I must go in."

"Yes! Yes!" he said hurriedly. "And I have kept you too long. But tell me"—his voice suddenly eager—"tell me my story did not weary you, that it has not made you despise me. Tell me you like me quite as well as you did yesterday morning. You see, with a short uncertain laugh, "I take it for granted that I made a good first impression."

"Indeed, I like you as well," Nance replied, echoing the little passing laugh. Crossing to the door she stood suddenly absolutely still—listening. The long unhappy wail of a lynx came faintly on the wind, swelled louder, broke into moans, and died away.

"Have you a rifle in the canoe?" she questioned anxiously.

"He smiled in the dark. "Yes," he assured her.

"And—it is loaded?"

"With bird-shot," said Wynn.

"It should be buck-shot," she answered. "Keep the muzzle towards the bow, it is wiser when its dark. Good-night."

"Good-night," the man repeated.

The queer bark door swung on its moose-hide hinges, then closed. Wynn watched the girl's shadow fall on the window, stood a moment, lit his pipe, then strode across the brittle grasses towards the river.

Nance slipped off her green serge gown and put on a red woollen kimono that Sister Mary Philomena had made for her. She took the pins from her hair, brushed and braided it. Then she drew a bear-skin near the couch where the old man still slept, and sat down on the floor beside him. Joris, who had been nervously trotting about the room until she came in, went over to the hearth, stretched contentedly, tramped round in one small spot after a fashion probably followed by his wolf-kin in pre-historic days, curled up and slept. Wanota had disappeared. The wind blew up sharply. In the warm room, once more, the girl grew rigidly still and listened, for again came the desolate horrible cry of the lynx; nearer this time. Silence followed.

She crouched down, resting her head against the old man's hand where it lay on the fur. The red kimono that the little grey nun had fashioned, wrapped her round as in poppy leaves, but it held none of their charm, for sleep and she were two.

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