

held my wearied senses until the morning sun burned away its holding thread.

As I laved my face at the river side I saw a birch-bark creeping up the farther bank. Opposite, the solitary tracker got into his craft and came across. It was Lone Man. Fate had drawn the breed's far-reaching eye to our camp-fire smoke as he came to the river; a camp-fire meant food, and the hunter had been outwitted by Mooswa and was hungry. I had sore need of Gabriel, and Gabriel had sore need of food, so we met as blood brothers, great in our dissimulation.

Cayuse cut at the bacon until his arm was lame; and Gabriel ate until I feared he would trail not that day. But when I told him of Henly he shoved the hunting knife in its sheath, lighted his pipe with a coal, and said eagerly: "Marse! Marse! Marse! I mus' go quick me for look dat fell'. By Goss! I like dat mans. By Goss! Lone Man find dat mans or he don' sleep. Dat moneas he come for my little brudder when he die, and he spik wit' good heart. We mus' go quick, I can't wait. Dat nichie, T'ree Deer, he can't track not'in'; he's jus' good for pack grub ober de portage."

When I spoke of a money reward, Gabriel stopped me. "By Goss! don't spik dat when you don' want mak' row. I don' want not'in'; I find me dat boy, 'cause he's been good when my brudder he's die."

Lone Man's words were an inspiration; his unholy face lost its wolf-like fierceness as he spoke, and became good to look upon. Hope carried in his voice, and his eagerness reached into my tired frame until I raced up the steep hill to the leadership of his long stride. To the left we turned. Gabriel's huge rounded shoulders were low hung; and beyond the ridge of his greasy black hair, his sharp eyes were picking up our trail of the past evening as though he trod a boulevard. Suddenly he stopped, dropped to his knees, and picked from a foot-print leaves and twigs.

"Well, I'm damned!" growled Cayuse, "if the kid didn't come clean to here, an' then light out!"

Again we followed Lone Man; and again, in a hundred yards he stopped and examined the trail.

"A wolf!" I exclaimed in dread, for there, set in the soft earth, was an oval pug.

The eyes of Cayuse shifted from mine evasively as I looked at him for information.

"Must be a timber wolf," I asserted, addressing Cayuse pointedly; "it's too big for a coyote."

"Too big for a wolf," Cayuse added.

"You think—"

But Cayuse interrupted me: "He knows—just look at him," and Cayuse jerked his head toward Lone Man.

"Garou?" I asked.

Cayuse nodded.

"Trailing the boy?"

"The black devil ain't out here for no promenade."

Lone Man's long stride carried us fast. The wind in the dreary pines whispered to us "hurry, hurry, hurry"; and at our feet, sometimes in patches of mud, the marks of a huge spreading paw fair atop a boot track beckoned us forward in haste.

"What do the tracks say?" I asked Cayuse once. "Has the dog caught up?"

"He's leadin' the kid off into the bush; the kid's trailin' behind, thinkin' the beast's headin' for home."

On, on, ever deeper into the forest; sometimes in the sand of a jack-pine knoll reading the horrible tale of Garou's guidance; sometimes marking the footprints of dog and man in the black mud of a muskeg; sometimes listening to a reading of the signs from Three Deers—I went, my heart full of unuttered dread.

Three times as he fled through the forest Henly had lain down to rest; only to jump up again and speed onward, frightened by something. How the Indian read aright this fine print I know not, but I believed.

In front of me Three Deers threw some guttural Cree words down the wind to Cayuse.

"What is it? I panted.

"Garou's struck mates," Cayuse answered.

"Dogs?" I queried.

"Timber wolves—a pair."

"They're trailing the boy?"

"Behind Garou."

I was too weary to follow the thread of this new horror, and silently we struggled on. Trees, trees incessantly; white birches like marble pillars; evil-gnarled jack-pine; tamaracks, slim-growing in colonies, like the tapering spars of yachts riding at anchor in a bay. And

suddenly, Lone Man, standing motionless, his hawk face thrust forward, reading a story etched on the sand-hill we had breasted.

Toward evening I felt that we were going down grade.

"We're close to the Athabasca," Cayuse muttered, as we struggled side by side over the body of a giant spruce.

In half-an-hour I caught a glint of mist rising above the trees in a valley.

"Old Athabasca," Cayuse said, nodding.

It was sundown when Lone Man led us out through a tangle of gray willow to a low reach of graveled bank, and at our feet swept the majestic river in rapid flow. There was the double trail, dog and man, set in the little belt of sand like letters cut in a copper-plate. How the boy's heart must have leapt with joy at the changing relief of the river, I thought.

Lone Man pointed toward a curious double mark in the sand. Its meaning was plain—a pair of knees had left the silent memory of a prayer—a prayer of thankfulness to God.

Cayuse touched me on the arm, and said: "We'll stow this tucker pretty damn fast. If the boy bucks up—if he sleeps, I'm thinkin' good an' strong we'll be too late." Lone Man suggested that we send the two Indians to the Portage for our canoe, saying: "Dat boy he's been long tam for hit de trail, an' don' eat not'in'—he can't walk for de portage."

Then, in the long northern afterglow, we made our way over the terrible tracking trail that threaded the river bank, calling, and firing our Winchesters. Sometimes the willows were impenetrable, and we waded waist deep in the water; sometimes the spruce-lined bank was gloomy as a cavern. Eager though I was for the finish of our suspense, I hailed with joy Lone Man's dictum that we must rest through the hour of darkness that remained, lest we pass the boy. Even as Gabriel spoke I fell wearily in the low bushes at my feet, and, falling, passed into a sleep that was deeper than the reach of dreams. When the gray light spurred us on again, my clothes clung to me plastic in the wet they had sucked from the river mud as I slept.

For an hour we followed the footprints, full of their terrible reading; plain was the tale of the final struggle even to me. Short and wavering the steps; many times leading to the water's edge where the fevered lips had been moistened.

Once Gabriel spoke to Cayuse. "He's mak' for keel fish; he's plenty much hungry, dat poor boy."

"By God! I don't like the looks of that," Cayuse had added to me, pointing to the wet sand that was mapped with scratched lines as though Garou had made a rush at Henly and had been driven off.

Gabriel from this point hastened to a lope. The tracks looked fresh—we must be coming close. A point cut the river into a bend in front of us, and the trail we followed clung to the river edge. Leaving it, Gabriel pulled himself up the bank by the roots of a birch, and we followed. As we fought our way through the thick bushes on the point, suddenly a thin, tremulous voice carried to our ears: "Dearly Beloved, the spirit moveth us—"

The words of the prayer trembled through the spruce forest like an echo stealing from the doors of a cathedral.

As we stood for a second trying to locate the boy, his voice reached us again: "Sneer and gnash your teeth, Satan; the Lord casteth out devils!—Listen, Satan:

"There is a happy land—"

The weak voice was drowned by a snarling growl. With a curse on his lips Cayuse crashed through the bushes. As I followed, tearing at the thick undergrowth suddenly my feet slipped, and I hurtled down the bank to the river sands.

Twenty yards from where I had fallen sat Henly, his back against a boulder; and just beyond crouched Garou, in his face and snarling lips the story that we were just in time.

As I threw my rifle to my shoulder, a Winchester rang out sharp and clear, and Garou, with a howl, rose to his haunches, spun around once, and fell, dying on the sands.

As I turned I met the eye of Lone Man, sullen and fierce.

"I lak for shoot my own dog myself," he said.