

of apathy. A subtle odor of rotting leaves rose beneath his feet, and once a faint tinkling breeze brushed across that barbaric, painted floor, intoxicant with a wild, exhilarating taint of frost and fire—and he neither breathed deep, as a human would, nor sniffed like an animal.

And then suddenly he paused, his corded neck twisted and his fingers spread tensely. Again came the sound that had pierced his consciousness. It was high and silvery, like bubbling water or smitten fairy bells, clear as the vault of turquoise overhead, sweet as the sunset robin piping its vespers.

A strange mixture of pleasure and cunning spread over the man's countenance. He turned at right angles to the trail and loped towards the river, the naked underbrush whipping across his chest and arms. Though his speed was great he made as little noise as an Indian, for the wilderness had trained him thoroughly since he had committed himself to her care.

In a hundred yards he emerged from the strips of tawny shadow on to the low bank of the river. Before him the water twinkled sharply like an army of spear points as it slipped over the white pebbles and splashed playfully against black protruding boulders. The yellow beach below reflected a wave of heat into his face. Opposite, scarlet, gold and silver ranked the scalloped shore and spread unbroken to the mountains, rosy in the sunset glow.

Round the bend above spun a canoe. It was painted crimson and seemed like a huge autumn leaf curled by the frost and drifting upon the current. The steersman was leaning forward, his hands resting on either gunwale, intent on his companion's words. His over-refined features, Norfolk jacket and checked cap proclaimed him a Sybarite, an intimate of luxury and civilization. The girl in the bow slapped aimlessly at the water with her blade and laughed again—a clear, musical peal.

"You talk like one of Harding Davis' faultless heroes, Went," she mocked. "You know I like you 'fair to middling,' but the test hasn't come yet. This west country seems to be even tamer than Broadway, and I refuse to accept a man on his smile and his clothes. Let's hurry or we'll never overtake the others."

The man grunted impatiently. "I see there is nothing for it, but I must be-

come a river driver or a lumber cook to prove I have the power to undo five generations of cultivating and degenerate into a savage. By Jove, Faith, there's a good example for you now. See that fellow coming down the bank?"

The girl stared in frank astonishment at the big, semi-naked man who grinned back at her and began to wade through the shallows as if to intercept the canoe.

Morrison instinctively dipped his paddle and the other lengthened his stride. "What the devil does he want?" he muttered uneasily as the distance between them closed.

"How do?" he greeted, with an attempt at friendliness.

But the stranger seemed as heedless of his words as of his presence. He splashed forward with the water boiling about his knees and his narrowed eyes riveted on the beautiful face of the girl.

A sudden premonition of danger awoke in her brain. Though the man's lips still grinned good-naturedly, something in his gaze contradicted them. His huge, shaggy form approaching without swerve or hesitation filled her with vague alarm.

"What do you want?" she commanded sharply.

In answer he shot out a long, knotted arm and gripped the bow of the canoe. For an instant she gazed wide-eyed as he towered over her; then his left arm circled about her waist and threw her across his shoulder.

As in some terrible nightmare, she heard her companion curse and spring to his feet, saw a bare foot strike the gunwale and twirl the canoe bottom up, and felt herself borne swiftly towards the beach. Numb, as though under the influence of an opiate, she had no impulse to cry out or struggle. Her dry lips strove to mumble her lover's name, but could make no sound.

After what seemed torturing ages her contracted vision became aware of a white-faced man running towards her, his clothing streaming water. The arm across her back tautened like a cable as her captor swung on his heel, turning her towards the forest. She heard a bestial snarl in her ear and the dull sob of a blow on flesh. Then, as the glittering water spun back into view, she saw her companion rise to his feet and rush wildly down the beach. She swooned into merciful oblivion.