

THE FORESTER'S DAUGHTER

A Romance of the Bear Tooth Range

By HAMLIN GARLAND

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Under Berrie's direction they worked busily putting the camp equipment in proper places, taking no special thought of time till the tent was down and folded, the paniers filled and closed and the fire carefully covered. Then the girl said: "I hope the horses haven't been stampeded. There are bears in this valley, and horses are afraid of bears. Father ought to have been back before this. I hope they haven't quit us."



"Shall I go and see?" "No, he'll bring 'em if they're in the land of the living. He picked his saddle horse, so he's not afoot. Nobody can touch him anything about trailing horses, and besides, you might get lost. You'd better keep close to camp."

Thereupon Wayland put aside all responsibility. "Let's see if we can catch some more fish," he argued. To this she agreed, and together they went again to the outlet of the lake, where the trout could be seen darting to and fro on the clear, dark food, and their cast their flies till they had secured ten good sized fish.

"We'll stop now," declared the girl. "I don't believe in being wasteful." Once more at the camp they prepared the fish for the pan. As they were unpacking the paniers and getting out the dishes for their meal thunder broke from the high crags above the lake, and the girl called out:

"Quick! It's going to rain! We must reset the tent and get things under cover!" Once more he was put to shame by the decision, the skill and the strength with which she went about re-establishing the camp. She led, he followed in every action. In ten minutes the canvas was up, the beds rolled, the paniers protected, the food stored safely. But they were none too soon, for the thick gray veil of rain which had cloaked the loftiest crags for half an hour swung out over the water, laden gray under its folds, and with a roar which began in the tall pines, a roar which deepened, rushed only when the thunder crashed resoundingly from crag to crag, the tempest fell upon the camp and the world of sun and odoriferous pines vanished almost instantly, and a dark, threatening and wondrous world took its place.

The young people, huddled close together beneath the tent, would have enjoyed the change had it not been for the thought of the supervisor. "I hope he took his slicker," the girl said between the tearing, ripping dashes of the lightning. "It's raining hard up there."

"How quickly it came. Who would have thought it could rain like this after so beautiful a morning?" "It storms when it storms in the mountains," she responded with the assiduous air of her father. "You never can tell what the sky is going to do up here. It is probably snowing on the high divide. Looks now as though those cayuses pulled out some time in the night striking the trail for home. That's the trouble with stall fed stock. They'll nudge you any time they feel cold and hungry. Here comes the half," she shouted as a sharper, more epileptic roar sounded far away and approaching. "Now keep from under!"

"You'll have to take lessons in swinging an ax," she said. "That's part of the job."

cooking the midday meal, and at 2 o'clock they were able to eat in comparative comfort, though the unmetted snow still covered the trees, and the water dripped from the branches.

"Isn't it beautiful?" exclaimed Wayland, with glowing, boyish face. "The landscape is like a Christmas card. It wouldn't be so beautiful if you had to wallow through ten miles of it," she sagely responded. "Daddy will be wet to the skin, for I found he didn't take his slicker. However, the sun may be out before night. That's the way the thing goes in the hills."

To the youth, though the peaks were storm hid, the afternoon was joyous. Berrie was a sweet companion. Under her supervision he practiced at chopping wood and took a hand at cooking.

He had to admit that she was better able to care for herself in the wilderness than most men, even western men, and, though he had not yet witnessed a display of her skill with a rifle, he was ready to believe that she could shoot as well as her sire. Nevertheless he liked her better when engaged in purely feminine duties, and he led the talk back to subjects concerning which her speech was less blunt and manly.

He liked her when she was joking, for delicious little curves of laughter played about her lips. She became more amusing as she told of her "visits east," and of her embarrassments in the homes of city friends. "I just have to own up that about all the schooling I've got is from the magazines. Sometimes I wish I had pulled out for town when I was about fourteen; but you see, I didn't feel like leaving mother, and she didn't feel like letting me go, and so I just got what I could at Bear Tooth." She sprang up. "There's a patch of blue sky. Let's go see if we can't get a grouse." Together they strolled along the edge of the willows. "The grouse come down to feed about this time," she said. "We'll put up a covery soon."

Within a quarter of a mile they found their birds, and she killed four with five shots. "This is all we need," she said, "and I don't believe in killing for the sake of killing. Rangers should set good examples in way of game preservation. They are deputy game wardens in most states, and good ones too."

get each tonight—perhaps not for a couple of nights. We will need a lot of food." He did not voice the fear of the storm which filled his thought, but the girl understood it. "It won't be very cold," she said. "It's never so during these early blizzards, besides, all we need to do is to drop down the trail ten miles, and we'll be entirely out of it."

"I'll feel safer with plenty of wood," he argued, but soon found it necessary to rest from his labors. Coming in to camp, he seated himself beside her on a roll of blankets, and so together they tended the fire and watched the darkness roll over the lake till the shining crystals seemed to drop from a measureless black arch, soundless and oppressive.

"What time is it now?" she asked abruptly. He looked at his watch. "Half after 8."

"If father isn't on this side of the divide now he won't try to cross. If he's coming down the slope he'll be here in an hour, although that trail is a tolerably tough proposition this minute. A patch of dead timber on a dark night is sure a nuisance even to a good man. He won't make it."

"Don't I rig up a torch and go to meet him?" "She put her hand on his arm. "You stay right here," she commanded. "You couldn't follow that trail five minutes." "You have a very poor opinion of my skill."

"No, I haven't; but I know how hard it is to keep direction on a night like this, and I don't want you wandering around in the timber. Father can take care of himself. He's probably sitting under a big tree smoking his pipe before his fire—or else he's at home. He knows we're all right, and we are. We have wood and grub and plenty of blankets and a roof over us. You can make your bed under this fly," she said, looking up at the canvas. "It beats the old balsam as a roof. You mustn't sleep cold again."

"I think I'd better sit up and keep the fire going," he replied heroically. "There's a big log out there that I'm going to bring in to roll up on the windward side."

"It'll be cold and wet early in the morning, and I don't like to hunt kindling in the snow," she said. "I always get a very thick head the night before I wish you had a better bed. It seems selfish of me to have the tent while you are cold."

"I hope he's at home," she replied quite seriously. "I'd hate to think of him camped in the high country without bedding or tent."

"Oughtn't I to take a turn up the trail and see? I feel guilty, somehow. I must do something."

"You can't help matters any by hoofing about in the mud. No, we'll just hold the fort till he comes. That's what he'll expect us to do."

He submitted once more to the force of her argument, and they ate breakfast in such intimacy and good cheer that the night's discomforts and anxieties counted for little.

"We have to camp here again tonight," she explained demurely.

"I'm sure you'll be glad to see him," she said gallantly, answered. "I would mind a month or so, only I shouldn't want it to rain or snow all the time."

"Poor boy! You did suffer, didn't you? I was afraid you would. Did you sleep at all?" she asked tenderly. "Oh, yes, after I came inside; but, of course, I was more or less restless expecting your father to ride up."

"That's funny. I never feel that way. I sleep like a log after I know you were comfortable. You must have a better bed and more blankets. It's always cold up here, or is only I shouldn't want it to rain or snow all the time."

"The sunlit was short lived. The clouds settled over the peaks, and ragged wisps of gray vapor dropped down the timbered slopes of the prodigious amphitheater in which the lake lay. Again Berrie made everything snug while her young woodsman toiled at bringing logs for the fire."

At last fully provided for, they sat contentedly side by side under the awning and watched the falling rain as it splashed and sizzled on the sturdy fire. "It's a little like being shipwrecked on a desert island," said the girl. "As if our boats had drifted away."

At noon she again prepared an elaborate meal. She served potatoes and grouse, but biscuit with sugar syrup and canned peaches and coffee done to just the right color and aroma. He declared it wonderful, and they ate with repeated wishes that the supervisor might turn up in time to share their feast, but he did not. Then Berrie said firmly: "Now you must take a snooze. You look tired."

He was in truth not only drowsy, but lame and tired. Therefore he yielded to her suggestion.

"About twelve miles." "Don't you think we'd better close camp and go down there? It is now 3 o'clock. We can walk it in five hours."

"But, dear girl," he began desperately, "I don't want to do for us to camp here alone in this way another night. What will Cliff say?"

"I'm not worried a bit about him. It may be that there's been a big snow fall up above us, or else a windstorm. The trail may be blocked, but don't worry. He may have to go round by Lost Lake pass." She pondered a moment. "I reckon you're right. We'd better pack up and rack down the trail to the ranger's cabin—not on my account, but on yours. I'm afraid you've taken cold."

"I'm all right, except I'm very lame, but I am anxious to go on. By the way, is this ranger, Berrie married?" "No; his station is one of the lone-some cabins on the forest. No woman will stay there."

"This made Wayland ponder. "Nevertheless," he decided, "we'll go. After all, the man is a forest officer, and you are the supervisor's daughter."

"I'm glad you had a bad night," she insisted, in a tone which indicated her knowledge of his suffering. "Camp life has its disadvantages," he admitted, as he put the coffee pot on the fire. "But I'm feeling better now. I never tried a bird in my life, but I'm going to try it this morning. I have some water heating for your bath. He put the soap, towel and band of hot water just inside the tent flap. "Here it is. I'm going to bathe in the lake. I must show my hard-boiled."

"I hope he's at home," she replied quite seriously. "I'd hate to think of him camped in the high country without bedding or tent."

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She made no further protest, but busied herself closing the paniers and putting away the camp utensils. She seemed to recognize that his judgment was sound.

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"If you can't do a thing one way, do it another."

She perceived at once that the speaker was an alien like himself, for she wore an alien riding boots, a divided skirt of expansive cloth and a lank, wide rimmed sombrero. She looked indeed precisely like the heroine of the prevalent western drama, Her sleeves rolled to the elbow, disclosed shapely brown arms, and her neck, bare to her bosom, was equally sun smit, but she was so round cheeked, so childishly charming, that the most critical observer could find no fault with her makeup.

One of the men rode up. "Hello, Norcross. What are you doing over here?"

"The mischief you are," exclaimed the other. "Where's Tony?"

"(to be continued.)"

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