

BELL
NO. 393

10¢

THE *Love Ranger's* FAMOUS HORSE

HI-YO

SILVER

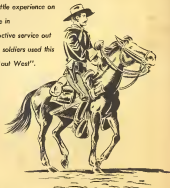




the McClellan Saddle

The McClellan saddle was invented during the American Civil War. It was designed so that a heavily-armed cavalry trooper could keep a good "seat" very easily and still swing a sabre and use a large bore rifle.

Since the Union cavalry used vast numbers of raw recruits, who had very little experience on horseback, the new saddle was invaluable in getting the most active service out of them. After the war, many soldiers used this saddle in their long trip "out West".



FROST SPARKLES ON THE CANVAS TOPS OF THE WAGON TRAIN, AS THE RISING SUN PEERS THROUGH THE MORNING MIST. . .



WELL--- IT HAPPENED WHEN SILVER WAS AROUND SIX MONTHS OLD... A COLD SNAP JUST LIKE THIS HAD HIT WILD HORSE VALLEY.



IT WAS THE FIRST SHARP COLD THE SPRING COLTS HAD KNOWN--- IT FILLED THEM SO FULL OF LIFE AND ZIP THAT THEY DIDN'T KNOW WHAT TO DO WITH THEMSELVES.



"SILVER'S BIG DISAPPOINTMENT CAME WHEN HE TRIED TO DRINK AT THE FROZEN CREEK! HE BRUISED HIS LIP!"



"AS USUAL, WHEN ANYTHING WENT WRONG, HE CALLED FOR MOUSSA, HIS MOTHER."



"THE WATER SPLASHED UP FROM MOUSSA'S POUNDING HOOF AND SCARED HIM."



"BUT WHEN HE SAW HIS MOTHER DRINKING, HE FOUND COURAGE TO FOLLOW SUIT: NATURE, YOU SEE, HAS MADE WILD COLTS SCARY OF EVERYTHING THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND--- AND THAT SAVES THEIR LIVES SOMETIMES."



THE FREEZING OF THEIR WATER HOLES DROVE A BAND OF ELK DOWN TO WILD HORSE CREEK. LITTLE SILVER WHISTLED A WARNING --- BUT MOUSSA PAID NO ATTENTION TO THE BIG BRUTES."



"SCENTING THE ELK, A PAIR OF WOLVES HOWLED FROM THE RIMROCK."



"A BIG SILVERTIP BEAR MADE HIS KILL AHEAD OF THEM..."



"--- AND LATER SHUFFLED DOWN TO THE CREEK FOR A DRINK --- SCARING SILVER'S MOTHER AND EVERY HORSE WITHIN SIGHT OR SCENT OF HIM."



"THAT NIGHT, SYLWAN, THE WILD HORSE KING, KEPT HIS BAND CLOSE-HERDED, READY FOR FIGHT OR FLIGHT... THE FALLING SNOW WAS A NEW TERROR TO THE YOUNGSTERS."



"A BRIGHT MORNING SUN PUT AN END TO THEIR NIGHTMARE FEARS."



"ALL DANGER FORGOTTEN, THE WILD HORSE HERD SPREAD OUT TO GRAZE."



NONE SAW THE LEAN, BLACK STALLION MOVING CAUTIOUSLY BEHIND THE SCREEN OF YOUNG TREES.



FROM TIME TO TIME HE HALTED TO SMIFF THE BREEZE— MAKING SURE THAT ITS DIRECTION WOULD NOT BETRAY HIS PRESENCE! HIS EYE WAS WILD— HIS COAT ROUGH— HIS MOTIONS JERKY.



MAKING SURE THAT THE HERD LEADER WAS NOT IN SIGHT, THE BLACK STEPPED OUT OF COVER— CLOSE ENOUGH TO STARTLE THE GRAZING MARES. THEY WERE MORE CURIOUS THAN SCARED, HOWEVER—



— UNTIL THE SHIFTING WIND BROUGHT THE STRANGER'S SCENT! THEN A HORRID FEAR SEEMED TO LOOSEN THEIR JOINTS!



IT WAS THE SCENT OF A BRAIN-SICK KILLER! EVEN LITTLE SILVER KNEW IT INSTINCTIVELY— AND TREMBLED SO HARD HE COULD SCARCELY STAND.



THE BLACK MOVED TOWARD HIS PETRIFIED AUDIENCE! HE KNEW THEIR FEAR— AND TOOK A FIERDISH PLEASURE IN IT.



"A MAD STALLION HAS BUT ONE DESIRE--- TO KILL, TO DESTROY! HE HAS NO FEAR, AND HIS STRENGTH IS THE STRENGTH OF MADNESS!



"SUDDENLY THE MARES BROKE AND FLED, WITH THEIR COLTS BESIDE THEM.



"A CLUMP OF STIFF BUSHES LOOMED UP IN FRONT OF SILVER! HE OGGED TO ONE SIDE--- MOUSSA WENT TO THE OTHER.



"ROUNDING THE CLUMP, HE FOUND THE BLACK FURY NEARER THAN HIS MOTHER--- IN FACT, RIGHT ON HIS HEELS!



"WITH A SHRILL SCREAM OF PANIC, HE RAN SLINDLY, DESPERATELY, CARELESS OF DIRECTION. THE BLACK WAS AFTER HIM!"



"THE FROZEN CREEK WAS IN FRONT OF HIM--- BUT THERE WAS NO TIME TO TURN ASIDE!"



STRAIGHT OUT HE LERPT--- WITH ALL HIS STRENGTH.



THE THIN ICE BENT AND CRACKED, BUT DID NOT PUNCH THROUGH AS THE COLT'S LIGHT WEIGHT STRUCK IT.



"HIS LEGS SHOT FROM UNDER HIM! LIKE A TOBACCAN, HE WHIRZED ACROSS THE CREEK."



"BEHIND THE KILLER BRACED, BUT COULD NOT CHECK HIMSELF IN TIME."



"WITH A CRASH AND A SPLASH, THE THIN ICE GAVE WAY."



"BAWLING, SQUEALING, THRASHING, THE MAD HORSE ROSE ON HIS HIND LEGS."



WITH THE MUDDY BOTTOM GRIPPING AT HIS FEET, HE HURLED HIMSELF ASHORE! THE MAD ANGER IN HIM WAS LIKE A LIVING FLAME, LONGING TO KILL THE FIRST THING HE SAW."



"AND THE NEXT WAS--- SYLVAN, THE WILD HORSE KING! WARNED BY HIS MARES, HE CAME THUNDERING DOWN THE CREEK---TRUMPETING HIS CHALLENGE TO THE DESTROYER."



"THE MAD STALLION HAD REACHED SOLID FOOTING ..."

"... AND SYLVAN SCORED THE FIRST BLOW."



"THE BLACK STRANGER HAD LOST NONE OF HIS FIGHTING SKILL, DESPITE HIS CRAZED BRAIN--- HIS TEETH BARELY MISSED THE KING'S THROAT, AND DROVE HARD AGAINST THE WHITE SHOULDER."

"HE WHEELED--- AND SYLVAN'S RIBS BOOMED LIKE A DRUM, AS THE BLACK'S HEELS STRUCK."



"HEAD LOW, SEEKING SYLVAN'S SLIM FORE-LEGS WITH JAWS THAT COULD CRUSH BONE AT ONE SNAP, THE STRANGER BORED IN."



"BUT SYLVAN HAD NOT WON HIS KINSHIP WITHOUT LEARNING BATTLE SKILL! A LIGHTNING STROKE OF HIS FOREHOOF STRUCK THE BLACK FULL ON THE FOREHEAD."



"NO SECOND BLOW WAS NEEDED! SLOWLY, THE GAUNT FORM OF THE BLACK CRUMPLED... THE MAD LIGHT DIED OUT OF HIS EYES..."



"SYLVAN SHIFTED AT HIS ENEMY."



"---AND TURNED AWAY, TRUMPETING HIS VICTORY TO HIS FRIGHTENED HERD---STRENGTH AND PRIDE IN EVERY ROYAL LINE OF HIM!"





"WHILE THE OLD MAN FELL AGAIN IT
 BOUNDED HIM, BECAUSE HE COULDN'T
 UNDERSTAND IT!"

"HE FINALLY CLIMBED
 ONTO THE SOLID BANK!"



"AND CALLED OUT LOUD,
 WHINING FOR HIS MOTHER!"

"MAGGIE WAS WAITING FOR HIM—ON THE
 OTHER SIDE OF THE STREAM—SHE
 COULDN'T GET TOY ON THE BANK
 YET—" YOU WENT FOR HIM?" SHE
 CALLED TO HIM IN HORSE TALK.



BUT SILVER WAS TOO ANXIOUS TO REACH HIS MOTHER'S COMFORTING FLANK BESIDES. THE ICE HAD LOST SOME OF ITS TERROR FOR HIM! HE JUMPED---



--- AND CROSSED THE CREEK ON HIS CHIN--- MOUSSA WONDERING AT THIS NEW AND PUZZLING PRANK!



SHE RAN HER SOFT NOSE OVER HIS QUIVERING LITTLE BODY, MAKING CERTAIN THAT HER YOUNGESTER HAD NO HURT. BY AND BY THE SILVER COLT STOPPED HIS TUMBLING--- BUT NEVER AS LONG AS HE LIVED, WOULD HE FORGET THE HORROR OF HIS FLIGHT FROM THE "BLACK HORSE"!



THE WINTER MONTHS SAW MOST OF THE GOOD GRASS EATEN, WHERE THE WILD HORSES RANGED--- BUT NOT UNTIL SPRING SPREAD ITS NEW CARPET OF FLOWERS FROM CLIFF TO CREEK DID THEY RETURN TO THE SCENE OF LITTLE SILVER'S FRIGHT--- AND SILVAN'S VICTORY!



NOW, I'LL CARRY YOUR WATER BUCKETS--- SO YOU'LL BE BACK TO THE WAGON BEFORE YOUR FOLKS WORRY ABOUT YOU



BUT--- TELL ME--- DID SILVER EVER HAVE TO FIGHT TO PROTECT THE OTHER HORSES WHEN HE GREW UP?

HE CERTAINLY DID, LONNY--- BUT THAT IS A STORY ALL BY ITSELF!





STEADY, SILVER!
WHAT IS IT?

OOH! MAYBE HE
SMELLS A BEAR!

SILVER GOES A-ROAMING



SILVER ISN'T
SCARED! HE ACTS
ANGRY, LONNY!

THAT'S RIGHT, JEANNE!
I GUESS SILVER WOULDN'T
BE AFRAID OF ANYTHING—
ANY MORE THAN THE
LONE RANGER WOULD.



WHAT ARE
THOSE TRACKS?
A BEAR'S?

NO, LONNY—THEY BELONG
TO A WHOPPING MOUNTAIN
LION! HE JUMPED ACROSS
THE CREEK LESS THAN AN
HOUR AGO! SILVER HATES
LIONS.



WHY DOES SILVER
HATE LIONS SO?
THERE MUST BE A
STORY BEHIND IT.

THERE IS, JEANNEY!
IT HAPPENED SOME
YEARS AGO, WHEN
SILVER WAS IN HIS
THIRD YEAR.



LATE THAT FALL, A GREAT RESTLESSNESS
CAME OVER THE SILVER COLT! ALL AT ONCE,
THE LENGTH AND BREADTH OF WILD HORSE
VALLEY SEEMED TOO SMALL... HE LONGED
TO CLIMB THE HEIGHTS AND SEE THE FAR
PLACES.

"AT A TROT, THEN AT A GALLOP HE HEADED FOR THE FAR END OF THE VALLEY! OUTSIDE LAY DANSEN...AND ADVENTURE TO MATCH HIS FIERY SPIRIT."



"BUT NOT FAR OUTSIDE THE ENTRANCE THE SOUND OF PURSUING HOOFEATS HALTED HIM. A FAMILIAR WHINNY DRIFTED DOWN-WIND."

WHEE-HEE-HEE!



"IT WAS SCAMPER...FAITHFUL LITTLE SCAMPER, WHO WAS NEVER HAPPY AWAY FROM HIS FRIEND AND HERO, SILVER!"



"SILVER LOVED THE LITTLE RASCAL! IN FACT, SCAMPER WAS THE ONLY COMPANION HE WOULD HAVE ALLOWED TO FOLLOW HIM, AS HE CLIMBED THE WILD FOOTHILLS."



"SNOW ALREADY MANTLED THE HIGH PEAKS, AND THE COLD WIND THAT BLEW DOWN FROM THEM WAS LIKE A TONIC TO SILVER'S HOT YOUNG BLOOD! IT WAS THE BREATH OF ADVENTURE."



"TWO DAYS LATER, SNOW CAME TO THE FOOTHILLS. THE TWO COLTS FRISHED ABOUT IN IT LIKE YEARLINGS...HEEDLESS OF THE WOLVES THAT DREW EVER NEARER, AND NEARER..."



"THEY HALTED IN WILD SURPRISE, AS A BLACKTAIL BUCK AND THREE DOES DRIFTED PAST IN FEATHER-LIGHT BOUNDS. THE HOWLING OF THE GRAY PACK WAS VERY NEAR NOW."

OW-OW-OO-OOOOOO!



"AS THEY BURST INTO VIEW OF THE COLTS, THE WOLVES BUNCHED UP. HERE WAS A DIFFERENT GAME... QUARRY JUST WAITING TO BE PULLED DOWN!"



"AT THE GRAY LEADER'S BROWL, THE HUNTERS SLUNK INTO A CIRCLE, A RING OF DEATH! NO GAME THIS CAUGHT HAD EVER ESCAPED THEIR PACK."



"WHEN THE RING WAS COMPLETE, TWO GRAY SHADOWS GARTED IN. THE ONE TO SNAP AT SILVER'S THROAT, THE OTHER TO CUT THE CORD ABOVE SCAMPER'S HOCK."



"BUT THE SILVER COLT MOVED WITH A LIGHTNING, OBSCURE SPEED THAT THE WOLVES DID NOT EXPECT! EVEN AS HIS FOREHOOF SENT THE LEADER SPINNING, HIS STRONG JAWS DROVE DOWN LIKE A JAVELIN TO SEIZE THE SECOND KILLER BY THE SPINE."



"WITH A QUICK JERK, HE TOSSED THE LOOT AWAY WITH A BROKEN BACK."



— THEN WHIRLED TO HELP SCAMPER BEAT OFF HIS ATTACKERS.



"THAT WAS ENOUGH FOR THE GRAY HUNTERS! LEAVING TWO OF THEIR NUMBER ON THE TRAMPLED SHOW, THEY SLUNK AWAY TO PICK UP THE TRAIL OF THE DEER...WHO WOULD RUN, BUT COULD NOT FIGHT.



"IN THEIR HUNT FOR GRASS NOT COVERED WITH SNOW, THE COLTS DRIFTED THROUGH THE HILLS TO THE LOWER VALLEYS.



"AT NIGHT THEY PICKED OUT A PATCH OF DRY BRUSH, AND SLEPT HEAD-TO-TAIL, SHARP EARS ON GUARD FOR THE APPROACH OF STEALTHY ENEMIES.



"ONCE OR TWICE THEY CAUGHT THE SCENT OF AN INDIAN CAMPFIRE, AND CIRCLED IT, DOWN-WIND! SILVER NEVER COULD FORGET THE TIME WHEN RED HORSE HUNTERS HAD INVADDED HIS HOME VALLEY.



"BEFORE LEAVING THE FOOTHILL COUNTRY, THEY HAD ONE MORE BRUSH WITH A SAVAGE ENEMY AS THEY APPROACHED A LITTLE STREAM TO DRINK —



"... A BULL ELK'S CHALLENGE RANG OUT LIKE A BUGLE. IT WAS THE SEASON WHEN WAPTI'S TEMPER IS LIKE GUNPOWDER, AND HIS SPEAR-POINT HORNS ARE POLISHED FOR BATTLE."



"SCAMPER PLUNGED AWAY IN FRIGHT, SNORTING FOR SILVER TO FOLLOW. BUT THE TALL GOLT STOOD HIS GROUND."



"GRITTING HIS TEETH ELK FASHION, THE BULL LEAPED FORWARD! SILVER TENSED..."



"...AND AT THE LAST INSTANT WHIRLED ASIDE, TO LET THOSE POLISHED BAYONET POINTS PASS THROUGH EMPTY AIR!"



"THE BULL GRUNTED IN SURPRISE
---FLEW TO A STOP---"



"---ONLY TO TAKE BOTH HEELS OF THE SILVER GOLT FULL IN HIS FLANK! THE SLEDGE-HAMMER BLOWS KNOCKED HIM OFF HIS FEET ---"



"...IN A BAWLING HEAP, ALL THE WIND AND THE FIGHT GONE OUT OF HIM."



"SILVER BLEW HIS NOSE LOUDLY AS HE WATCHED HIS ANTLERED ANTAGONIST TURN TAIL IN PANICKY FLIGHT! TO HIM IT WAS ALL A HUGE JOKE."



"AS HE LOWERED HIS HEAD AND DRANK, LITTLE SCAMPER CAME SOFTLY BACK, HEARTY AGLOW WITH FRESH ADMIRATION FOR HIS FEARLESS FRIENDS."



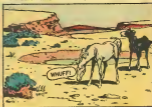
"DAY BY DAY, THE TWO MOVED DOWN FROM THE HILLS UNTIL THEY FOUND THEMSELVES AT THE EDGE OF THE DESERT. HERE THE GRASS WAS SCANTY, AND THE SPIGE OF SAGEBRUSH TWIGLED IN THEIR NOSTRILS."



"BUT THERE WERE NARROW, TREE-GROWN CANYONS THAT SHELTERED AN OCCASIONAL WATER HOLE..."



"THERE THEY OFTEN FOUND THE TRACKS OF OTHER WILD HORSES... AT ONE WATER HOLE, INDIAN HORSE HUNTERS HAD JUMPED A STALLION AND HIS BANG."



"A FEW MILES FARTHER ON, THEY CAME UPON A FEW STARTLED MARES...STRAYS FROM THE MAIN BAND THAT THE INDIANS HAD BEEN CHASING."



"SILVER LOST NO TIME IN MAKING FRIENDS WITH THE LEADERLESS 'YOUNG LADIES'---A STRANGE NEW POSSESSIVENESS FILLED HIM..."



"...WITH JEALOUSY! HE SQUEALED AND SNAPPED AT SCAMPER, WARNING HIM TO LEAVE THESE NEW-FOUND FRIENDS ALONE! HE, SILVER, WOULD BE THEIR ONLY PROTECTOR!"

"SCAMPER FELT HURT! HE DIDN'T UNDERSTAND THAT HIS HERO, SILVER, WAS STARTING TO GROW UP AND 'ACT SMART' THE WAY HALF-GROWN BOYS DO IN THE PRESENCE OF GIRL FRIENDS."



"MEANWHILE, BEYOND THE NEXT MESA, APACHE HORSE HUNTERS HAD TRAPPED A WILD STALLION AND HIS BAND IN A NARROW BOX CANYON. THE WALLS WERE STEEP, BARE ROCK."

"THEY CLOSED THE ENTRANCE WITH A STOUT FENCE, TOO HIGH FOR A HORSE TO JUMP."



"THEN THEIR BEST ROPERS CLOSED IN... TO CATCH THE BLACK AND WHITE HERD LEADER! AFTER THAT, TAKING THE MARES WOULD BE EASY... THEY THOUGHT."



"EEE-OUSH!"

"BUT THE STALLION KEPT HIS HEAD! HIS MARES WERE CAUGHT... HOPELESSLY UNLESS THEY CHOSE TO FOLLOW HIM UP THE CANYON SIDE."



"WHAUGH!
WHE-HEE-UOH!"

"HERE DEATH WAITED FOR A SINGLE SLIP! THE MARES SAW IT AND FAILED TO FOLLOW."



WITH A LAST DESPERATE SCRAMBLE, HE REACHED THE TOP!



"... AND RACED AWAY ACROSS THE MESA, TO SEEK THE FEW OF HIS BAND THAT HAD NOT ENTERED THE CANYON TRAP."



"A BREEZE SWEEPING UP THE MESA'S SIDE BROUGHT HIM THE FAR-OFF SCENT OF THOSE HE SOUGHT."



"WHEE-HEE-HEE
HEEEEEE-UH?"

FIVE MINUTES LATER SILVER HEARD THE BLACK AND WHITE'S TRUMPETED CHALLENGE TO BATTLE... AND ANSWERED IT... ?

LIKE TWO SWORDSMEN, THEY CIRCLED EACH OTHER BEFORE CLOSING... THE BLACK AND WHITE READY TO KILL OR BE KILLED FOR HIS MARES... SILVER SCORNING TO RUN FROM AN ENEMY, NO MATTER HOW BIG AND FIERCE!

EEEE-HA-HA-HA! (WHA-HA-HA-HAW!)



AT THAT MOMENT CAME A GRIM INTERRUPTION! AN OLD COUGAR HAD SPOTTED SCAMPER, CLOSE BENEATH THE CLIFF.

THE COLT'S SCREAM OF PAIN AND PANIC RANG SHRILL!



EEEEEEEEEEEE-AH!

AT THE SOUND, SILVER WHEELED... ALL THOUGHT OF QUELING SOME... AWARE ONLY THAT HIS LITTLE FRIEND WAS IN MORTAL DANGER.

STRAIGHT AT THE SNARLING CAT HE CHARGED.

EEEEEEEEEE --- ?



EE-UHH!

RRR-
RAOW!

HIS SLASHING FOREHOOPS BATTERED THE KILLER FROM SCAMPER'S BACK..."



... TO FALL ALMOST UNDER THE HOOPS OF THE PURSUING STALLION.



"THE COUGAR'S DOOM WAS SEALED! CAUGHT BY BOTH THE STALLION'S HOOPS, HE SQUALLED HIS DEATH SONG.



"SHOULDER TO SHOULDER, THE TWO COLTS, SILVER AND BLACK, HEADED BACK TO THE WATER HOLE.



"AND THERE SILVER NURSED HIS LITTLE FRIEND'S WOUNDS.



"ONCE MORE SCAMPER WAS HAPPY IN THE CLOSE COMPANIONSHIP OF HIS TALL PARTNER! TOGETHER THEY COULD FACE THE BEST AND THE WORST THAT THE WIDE WORLD HAD TO SHOW."



THAT'S A CREEK --
WHERE THE LINE OF
TREES IS --- ISN'T
IT, LONE RANGER?

YES, JEANNE! IT'S NOT
VERY WIDE, BUT I'LL HAVE
TO FIND A WAY ACROSS
IT FOR THE WAGONS.

SILVER

GETS A WARNING



WHY--- I THOUGHT YOU
SAID THAT IT WASN'T
VERY WIDE! IT'S A
HUNDRED FEET ACROSS,
AND DEEP!

THIS IS JUST A POND THE
BEAVERS HAVE MADE IN
THE CREEK, JEANNE! THE
STREAM ITSELF IS NARROW,

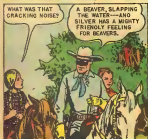


"AT THE FARTHER EDGE OF THE
POND A BEAVER'S TAIL HITS THE
WATER LIKE A GUNSHOT..."



WHAT WAS THAT
CRACKING NOISE?

A BEAVER, SLAPPING
THE WATER--- AND
SILVER HAS A MIGHTY
FRIENDLY FEELING
FOR BEAVERS.



SILVER LIKES
BEAVERS, YOU
SAID HOW IS
THAT, LONE
RANGER?

WELL, IT'S QUITE A
STORY! IT STARTED
WHEN SILVER WAS A
LITTLE MORE THAN A
YEAR OLD---



SILVER WAS OLD ENOUGH TO TAKE SHORT TRIPS AWAY FROM HIS MOTHER'S PROTECTION... AND HE DID SO, MORE AND MORE OFTEN! HIS LITTLE BROTHER, BORN THAT SPRING, TOOK MOUSSA'S ATTENTION.



HIS FAVORITE LOOKOUT WAS A LITTLE POND OF ASPENS THAT JUTTED OUT INTO A BEAVER POND... THERE HE COULD WATCH THE BEAVERS SWIMMING TO AND FRO...



...OR REPAIRING THE DAMAGE THAT SPRING FLOODS HAD DONE TO THEIR DAM.



HE NEVER TIRED OF SEEING THOSE BUSY LITTLE LIMBERMEN FELL YOUNG TREES FOR FOOD AND BUILDING MATERIALS...THE BEAVERS NEVER MINDED HOW CLOSE HE STOOD.



AT THE CRASH OF A FALLING TREE, THE SILVER GOLT LEAPED AWAY IN PRETENDED FRIGHT.



RETURNING, HE WOULD SHOUT AND STAMP, CHALLENGING THE BEAVER TO FURTHER PLAY.



"THEN A BROAD TAIL WOULD SLAP THE GROUND, AND THE COLT WOULD JUMP! IT WAS ALL A FRIENDLY GAME."



"ONE DAY, AFTER WATCHING THE FALL OF A LARGER TREE THAN USUAL..."



"...HE HEARD AN AGONIZED SQUEAKING AND CHATTERING FROM BENEATH THE PRUNE TRUNK."



"THE TREE WAS CLEARLY TO BLAME! EXPERIMENTALLY, SILVER TOOK A BRANCH IN HIS TEETH AND PULLED! THE TREE MOVED A LITTLE, AND HE PULLED HARDER."



"THE MALE BEAVER'S MATE LAY PINNED UNDER THE TREE...CAUGHT WHEN IT FELL! SILVER WANTED TO HELP, BUT HE COULDN'T THINK HOW."



"SUDDENLY THE TREE ROLLED OVER, WITH A SWISH."



"THE MALE BEAVER LICKED HIS MATE'S FACE. SLOWLY, SHE MOVED ASIDE! SHE WAS NOT MUCH HURT, AFTER ALL.



"SOON THEY WERE BACK AT WORK, WITH LOW, CONTENTED CHIRPPINGS."



"LATE THAT SUMMER, A LEAN OLD WOLF CAME DOWN INTO WILD HORSE VALLEY, IN HOPES OF KILLING A STRAY COLT.



"HE FOUND ALL THE SMALL COLTS HUGGING CLOSE TO THEIR MOTHERS' PROTECTING SIDES... AND LICKED HIS LEAN CHOPS IN DISAPPOINTMENT.



"DESPERATELY HUNGRY, HE MADE FOR THE CREEK! THERE HE MIGHT SURPRISE AN UNMAY FROG—OR EVEN A MUSKRATT OR PERHAPS A BEAVER!



"INSTEAD, HE SAW SOMETHING THAT MADE HIS EYES BLAZE WITH FIERCE DESIRE... A FAT YEARNING WITH A SILVER COAT, ALONE AND HELPLESS!



"THE LEAN, OLD LOBO SANK ONTO HIS BELLY AMONG THE UNDERGROWTH AND BEGAN TO CRAWL FORWARD.



"BUT BRIGHT, BEADY EYES CLOSE TO SHORE SAW WHAT SILVER DID NOT.



"TO THE WISE OLD BEAVERS, THE TREMBLING OF THE TALL WEEDS BEHIND SILVER MEANT DANGER!



"LIKE TWO PISTOL SHOTS THEIR TAILS CRACKED THE POND...THE BEAVERS WELL-KNOWN WARNING SILVER JUMPED..."



"...AND WHIRLED TO FACE AN EQUALLY STARTLED WOLF!



"A SECOND LATER, THE LOBO WAS SLIDING FORWARD, TEETH BARED FOR THE ATTACK! SILVER'S CALL FOR HELP RANG OUT LOUD AND SHRILL."



"AND HIS MOTHER, MOUSSA, REPLIED, AS SHE GATHERED HERSELF TO RACE TO HIS AID."



"NO LONGER MOUSSA THE GENTLE, SHE DROVE INTO THE ASPENS LIKE A WHITE THUNDERBOLTING PACK OF WOLVES COULD HAVE STOPPED HER!"



"KNOWING WELL THE FURY OF A FIGHTING MARE, THE OLD WOLF MADE ONE HALF-HEARTED SLASH AT YOUNG SILVER. HIS GAME WAS UP, BUT HE WAS TOO ANGRY TO QUIT ..."



"...UNTIL HE SAW MOUSSA CHARGING DOWN ON HIM!"



"AS HE TURNED TO FLEE, SILVER'S SMALL, HARD HOOPS DROVE AT HIS RUMP."



"THEN HE WAS RUNNING FOR HIS LIFE, ONE SHORT JUMP AHEAD OF RAGING MOUSSA."



"FAR OUT INTO THE POND HE LEAPED!



"THE TWO BEAVERS, SWIMMING DEEP, LOOKED UP AT THE LONG-LEGGED INTRUDER WITH BRIGHT, DISDAINFUL EYES! THEIR LONG, WOODCUTTING TEETH COULD HAVE CUT HIM INTO BITS... BUT THEY ONLY ASKED TO BE LET ALONE."



"WET AND DISGUSTED, THE OLD LOBO CLIMBED OUT ON THE OTHER SIDE. IT WOULD BE SOME TIME BEFORE HE GOT HIS APPETITE BACK... FOR COLTS OR BEAVERS!"

"MOUSSA MADE SURE THAT HER YEARLING SON WAS UNHARMED, BEFORE SHE TURNED BACK TO HER NEW BABY... AND THE OLD BEAVERS SWAM BACK TO TAKE UP THEIR WOODCUTTING."

"AHHHHH-
BRRRRR!"



"WITH HIS TWO FLAT-TAILED AND KIDNEY-EYED FRIENDS ON GUARD, SILVER NOW FELT SAFER THAN EVER! ALL HIS LIFE HE WOULD REMEMBER HOW THEIR WARNING SAVED HIM FROM A DEADLY ENEMY."

"DID THE OLD LOBO EVER
COME BACK TO WILD
HORSE VALLEY
AFTER THAT?"

"YES, JEANNE... BUT
THAT IS ANOTHER
STORY! WE MUST HURRY
NOW AND FIND A GOOD
CROSSING FOR THE WAGON
TRAIN! THEY'RE DEPENDING
ON US, YOU KNOW!"



RANSER! WHY ARE YOU
LOOKING "WEE" OFF AT THE
SKYLINE TODAY? IS
THERE DANGER FROM
THE INDIANS?

NO, LONNY!
SOMETHING WORSE!

SILVER

LEADS TO FREEDOM



THE PRAIRIE GRASS IS SO DRY, RIGHT NOW,
THAT ANYTHING COULD START IT BLAZING...
AND ONCE STARTED, IT COULD BURN THIS
WAGON TRAIN! THERE'D BE
NO STOPPING IT! I'VE SUGGESTED
"NO SMOKING" BY ANY
MAN IN THE
THE OUTFIT!



BUT THE DRIVER OF THE LAST WAGON
TAKES A CHANCE.

"JIM HOSKINS' THAT'S
AGAINST THE RULES--"

"HUSH YOUR
FACE, WOMAN!
(PUFF! PUFF!
PUFF!)"



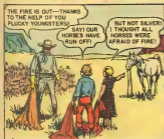
THE LONE RANGER'S "WEE"
AHEAD--- HE'LL NEVER KNOW!



LOOK! BACK THERE!
IT'S SMOKE!

A GRASS FIRE!





*--- SOME COMANCHE HORSE HUNTERS SET FIRE
TO THE GRASS AT ONE END OF WILD HORSE
VALLEY, YOUNG SILVER'S HOME.

*A STRONG WIND CARRIED THE
RED DESTRUCTION SWIFTLY FROM
THE VALLEY'S NARROW ENTRANCE.



"SYLVAN, THE WILD HORSE KING, ROUNDED UP HIS BAND. SILVER AND THE OTHER TWO-YEAR-OLDS SAW THEM STREAMING PAST ---



"--- AND JOINED THE ROUT! BLACK SCAMPER STUCK TO HIS FRIEND SILVER LIKE A BURR.



"AT THE OTHER END OF THE VALLEY, MORE COMANCHES LEAPED SUDDENLY FROM HIDING, WHIPPING AND WAVING BLANKETS TO TURN THE WILD HORSE BAND



"STRAIGHT INTO THE MOUTH OF A NARROW, ROCKY CANYON THEY DROVE --- WHERE THE WALLS WERE TOO STEEP TO CLIMB



"BEFORE THEY KNEW IT, THE LEADING MARES AND COLTS WERE HEADING INTO THE WINGS OF A WILD HORSE TRAP.



"BUT BEFORE THE BULK OF THE HERD HAD ENTERED THE HIDDEN GATE, SYLVAN SPOTTED IT! HIS HARD MOOFS GRADED HIS SPEED."



"HE WHIRLED, BITING AND SCREAMING,
TO TURN HIS MARES BACK IN TIME."



EE-ARWHY!

"THEN, DASHING INTO THE LEAD, HE CHARGED THE
SAVAGE HUNTERS--- WITH SILVER AND SCAMPER
AT HIS FLANK."



"THE STARTLED INDIANS JUMPED FOR THEIR
LIVES--- LET THE WILD HORSE BAND FOUR
PAST THEM---"



"THROUGH A WALL OF CHOKING SMOKE, THE
GREAT WILD LEADER TOOK HIS FOLLOWERS!
BUT THE RED FLAMES HAD PASSED..."



"--- LEAVING NOTHING BUT BLACK,
SCORCHED EARTH! SYLVAN DID NOT
HESITATE--- DID NOT LET HIS BAND
PAUSE OR REST! ONLY OUTSIDE
THEIR RUINED VALLEY WOULD
LIFE BE POSSIBLE."

"BACK IN THE CANYON TRAP, MOUSSA, THE WHITE
MARE, AND A FEW OTHERS HURLED THEMSELVES
IN VAIN AGAINST STOUT LOG WALLS."



SILVER AND SCAMPER ALSO WERE MISSING FROM THE WILD KING'S BAND. IT WAS SILVER'S NOTION--- TO COOL HIS HOT, SMARTING FEET IN THE CREEK.



HERE THE CREEK BROADENED OUT, AND A TINY ISLET, UNTOUCHED BY THE FIRE, INVITED THE SWIMMING COLTS.



HERE THEY SPENT THE REST OF THAT TRAGIC DAY, PEERING OUT THROUGH THEIR GREEN AND WATERY SHELTER. NEAR SUNDOWN THEY SAW---



--- MOUSSA AND THE OTHER MARES COME OUT OF THE CANYON, FOOT-ROPED AND RIDDEN BY THEIR RED-SKINNED ENEMIES.



THAT NIGHT, SILVER AND SCAMPER TOOK THE TRAIL OF THE CAPTIVES. IN THE WHITE COLT BURNED AN ANGER AGAINST THE CREATURES WHO HAD STOLEN HIS MOTHER AND HIS FRIENDS.



SEVERAL MILES FROM THE VALLEY, HE FOUND THEM, CAMPED CLOSE TO THE CAPTURED MARES! SILVER WAS TOO WISE TO CALL OUT.



ON SILENT FEET, AVOIDING THE HORSE GUARD, SILVER REACHED THE CORRAL --- HE REACHED OUT TO TOUCH THE SOFT NOSE --- ASSURE HER THAT SHE WOULD BE FREED IN A MOMENT.



MOUSSA HAD TRIED TO CHW THROUGH THE ROPE, BUT HER TEETH WERE DULLED WITH AGE. SHE THEREFORE TALKED WHERE SILVER, WITH YOUNG, SHARP TEETH SUCCEEDED.



WHILE STRENGTH CAME BACK INTO MOUSSA'S CRAMPED LEG, SHE WATCHED HIM TACKLE THE TOP ROPE OF THE CORRAL.



AT MOUSSA'S LUNGE, IT SNAPPED! BEHIND HER, THE SMALL COLTS BUNCHED UP, WHINNYING.



WITH A STARTLED YELL, THE HORSE GUARD HEARD THE RUSH AND JUMPED TO HALT IT.



--- BUT OUT OF THE NIGHT, A SHADY TERROR LOOMED! BRAVE SCAMPER STRUCK A BLOW FOR HIS FRIENDS!



"ABOVE THE STORM OF HOOFBEATS, FADING INTO NIGHT, CAME YOUNG SILVER'S TAUNTING BUGLE CALL! THE COMANCHES DANCED IN HELPLESS FURY."



"THE NEXT-- SILVER LED HIS MARES IN A CIRCLE, SEEKING TO PICK UP THE SCENT OF SILVER'S HERD."



"ON THE THIRD DAY, HE SIGHTED THE LITTLE BUNCH OF BACHELORS GRAZING BY THEMSELVES. THEY CAUGHT SILVER'S SCENT AND CALLED."



"SILVER THE MIGHTY SPOTTED THE NEWCOMERS-- AND LEFT HIS MARES TO INVESTIGATE! NO RIVAL LEADER COULD TRESPASS ON HIS TERRITORY."



"WITH JEALOUS SQUEALING AND SMORTING, HE ROUNDED UP THE MISSING MEMBERS OF HIS BAND--- MOUSSA THE GENTLE, AND THE LITTLE COLTS--- PAYING NO ATTENTION AT ALL TO THE PAIR OF BACHELORS WHO HAD BROUGHT THEM BACK."



BUT THAT DID NOT BOTHER SILVER AT ALL, FOR HE WAS STILL A HAPPY GO LUCKY YOUNG BACHELOR! TO RUN AND PLAY AND FEED WITH SCAMPER, AND TO KNOW THAT ALL WAS WELL WITH HIS FRIENDS-- THAT WAS PURE HAPPINESS FOR THE YOUTHFUL PRINCE OF WILD HORSE VALLEY."

