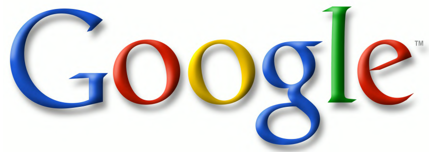

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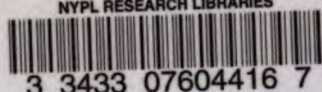


# BULL'S MISTAKE

JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

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## By J. W. Schultz

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# LONE BULL'S MISTAKE

## A LODGE POLE CHIEF STORY

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I LEANED OUT OVER THE OUTER ONE AND TRIED TO SEE THE TALKERS (*page* 61)

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# Lone Bull's Mistake

A

LODGE POLE CHIEF STORY

BY JAMES WILLARD SCHULTZ

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY
GEORGE VARIAN

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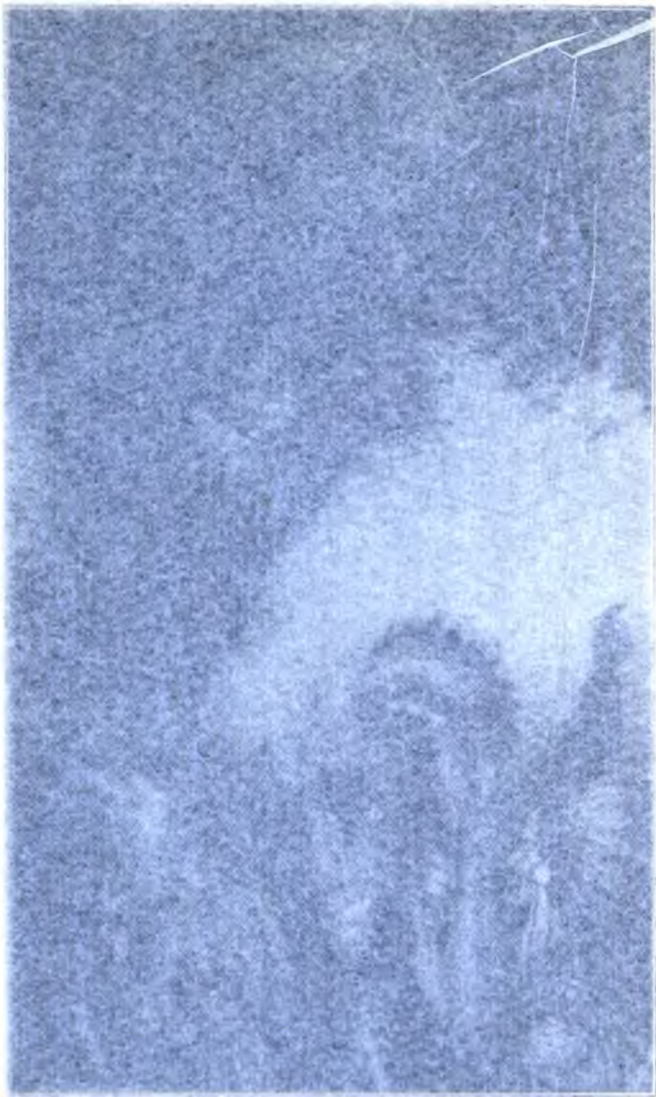

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# Illustrations

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# LONE BULL'S MISTAKE

## A LODGE POLE CHIEF STORY

### CHAPTER I

I HAD seen my fourteenth, and my sister Nitaki her twelfth, summer, when it happened. That was a bad medicine day for all of us; we little knew what trouble, what suffering was coming to us because of my father's pride and anger and unforgiving heart. And it was all his fault, as you shall learn.

In the New Grass Moon of that summer, we, the Pikuni, or, as you white people call us, the South Blackfeet, were encamped on the Teton River, close to the buttes we call the Four Persons. We were a numerous people in those days: the camp numbered about eight hundred lodges, or, all told, about forty hundred men, women, and children.

Now, because we were so many our wise forefathers had counseled together and made certain rules regarding hunting, which had ever since been in force. One of the rules was that whenever the



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tribe wanted to make a big killing of buffaloes quickly, for the purpose of obtaining many hides for tanning into leather for new lodges, or for other purposes, then no hunter should go out by himself, lest he frighten the game out of the vicinity of the camp and deprive other hunters of the chance to kill what they also required. At such times it was the custom of the chiefs to have certain young men watch the great herds of buffaloes, and notify them when one came near. They would then have the camp-crier go all among the lodges to tell the hunters to mount their fast runners and assemble at the head chief's lodge. And when all had gathered there, he himself would lead them out, and decide the point of attack, and there would ensue a swift, long chase; and when it was over, the plain would be strewn with hundreds of the big animals.

There was a severe penalty for any who broke this rule. The head chief would order the Seizer Band of the All Friends Society to punish the man, and they would fall upon him, and rend his clothes, and whip him, and sometimes destroy his lodge and kill his fast buffalo-running horses. All this was perfectly just and fair: the very life of the people depended upon the successful hunting of the



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buffaloes. These animals have ever been our food, our shelter, and our clothing.

On a day of this New Grass Moon of my fourteenth summer, some unfortunate hunters made complaint to the chiefs that continuous, each-man-for-himself hunting had so scattered and driven off the buffaloes that they were unable to get the number of hides they needed for the making of new lodges. The chiefs heeded their words, and at once ordered the camp-crier to notify the people that no hunting was to be done until further notice. At the same time they ordered members of the Raven Carrier Band of the All Friends Society to watch the surrounding plains and report daily the movements and size of the herds upon them. My father was sitting in our lodge as the camp-crier rode by, shouting the warning of the chiefs to the people, and reminding them that they well knew what would happen to any who should break the rule.

"Ha! Those chiefs order us to do this and that as though we were so many children!" my father exclaimed. "I shall go hunting if I want to for all of their orders and threats!"

We thought that he spoke idly; but two days



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later he suddenly asked: "Sisaki, how much meat have we?"

"We used the last of the fresh meat this morning. There is enough dry meat to last another day," my mother answered.

"Very well! Very well! We will remain idle until it is all used, and then go kill some. My woman and my children shall have fresh meat and plenty of it, though I break every one of the hunting rules."

"Oh, but father! Oh, my man! Think what the Seizers will do to you if you disobey the order of the chiefs. You must not break it. There is plenty of fresh meat in camp. I will go at once and ask one or another of our relatives or friends for some."

"Ha! Those Seizers would not dare touch me!" my father exclaimed. "I shall go hunting day after to-morrow morning. Meantime, I forbid you to ask any one for meat. We have never asked for food, and we never shall."

"But think how many people have come to us for meat, for marrow grease, back fat, and even pemmican. It is but fair that they should supply us in this, our very first time of need."



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

"I would rather that we all starve than break my record as an ever provident hunter," my father declared. "Since the day we first set up a lodge together we have always had plenty of meat of my own killing. I have been proud of that; I have, perhaps, boasted of my skill and success in hunting, but every one knows that there is not my equal in all the camp. No, my woman, we will not, after all these winters together, begin now to ask favors — no, not even from your own brothers, nor mine. I tell you again that, unless the chiefs give the call for a general buffalo run, I shall anyhow go hunting day after to-morrow morning. There! I have said it."

Of course, this decision of my father's made my mother and my sister and me very uneasy. When he went out to round up our horses and water them, my mother cried a long time, telling us again and again that trouble was in store for us. We prayed the sun to bring in a great herd of buffalo, so that a chase would be ordered. The next morning the watchers reported a very large herd far out on the plains south of the river, but in such a wide, level flat that they could not be approached. Oh, how we hoped that during the coming night the



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herd would move northward to the breaks of the river! But that was not to be: soon after the light of the new day came, the camp-crier shouted the news. The big herd was still in the center of the wide flat. And again he shouted the chiefs' order, and told the people that they must be patient.

After he had passed our lodge, my father laughed a long, deep, bad-sounding laugh. And then: "Ha! And they continue to forbid us to hunt,—we who have not a mouthful of meat in the lodge!" he exclaimed. "Yes, and they tell us to starve and be patient! Well, the rest may do as the chiefs order, but here is one man who is going out for fresh meat. Now, as soon as he can get ready, Lone Bull is going out. And you, Black Otter, shall go with me."

This last was to me. Black Otter was the name given me when I was born. I did not earn my present name, Lodge Pole Chief, until long after this bad medicine day.

"Oh, my man, pity me!" my mother pleaded. "As you love your children, as you love me, I beg you not to go hunting. Remain here with us until the call is given for the big chase."

"Yes. And either starve or beg food. I shall do



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neither," my father answered. "It is because I love you all so much that I am going out. Black Otter, my son, go bring in the horses."

I looked at my mother, hoping that she would take my part and keep me from going on the hunt; but she had covered her head with her robe and was crying. Well she knew that neither pleading nor argument would turn my father once he had made up his mind to do something. So, picking up my rope, I went out of the lodge and up on the plain back of camp, and found and drove in our herd, which numbered something more than a hundred head. My father was waiting for me at the river-edge, where I watered them, and he caught out two, his swiftest buffalo-runner, and a fast, gentle animal for me. We were soon saddled up and mounted, and riding westward out of camp. As we passed the lodge of White Antelope, chief of the Seizers, he came outside and asked us where we were going. My father never answered him, and kept looking straight ahead as though he had not seen or heard the man. Turning in my saddle several times as we went on, I noticed that the chief kept staring after us as long as we were in sight; and I said to myself that he would surely



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make it his business to find out where we rode, and why.

After leaving camp we rode southwest out on the plain, and toward the foothills of the Backbone-of-the-World;[1] and passing close under the westernmost of the Four Persons buttes we saw on its summit one of the members of the Raven Carriers Band watching the country. He signaled to us many times to turn and go back to camp, but my father paid no more attention to him than he had to the chief of the Seizers. On and on we rode, now at a swift lope, and again at a trot, and a little before midday we came to the border of the hills. Here and there in the distance we had seen a few old buffalo bulls, and once a lone three-year-old, that looked sleek and fat, started out from under a ridge that we topped: "Oh!" I cried out, "kill him, father. You can easily overtake him."

"He is fair meat, but there is better afoot; we will have a fat dry cow before the day ends," was the answer I got, and I made no more suggestions about the hunt.

Riding to the top of the first of the foothills, we dismounted and had a look at the great plains

[1] The Rocky Mountains.



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stretching away to the eastern sky-line. Not very far out was the great herd of buffaloes, thirty or forty hundred head, that the Raven Carriers had been watching for several days. The animals were still in the center of a big level flat, and the glimmer of shallow lakes of rain- and snow-water here and there in the rich grazing-ground showed the reason why they had not moved in to the river for water. The watchers were right: in their present position they could not be approached near enough for a successful chase.

We watched the big herd while my father smoked a pipeful of tobacco, and then rode to the next foothill to the south; and as we slowly and cautiously made its summit and looked down the other side, we discovered a band of forty or fifty cows and some calves in the coulée between it and the next hill. They were close under us; no more than the distance of two bow-shots, and one of the number was a very big, wide and rounding-hipped cow; undoubtedly a dry cow, and very fat.

Said my father: "You see, my son, that it is right that we did not kill the young bull back there. The sun is good: he has guided us straight to the very animal we want."



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I made no answer; my thoughts were all upon what would happen to us when we returned to camp in the evening. I did not believe, with my father, that the Seizers would not dare attempt to punish him for breaking the hunting rule.

After looking over the ground my father told me to remain where I was until he should have time to circle around down to the mouth of the coulée. I was then to circle up to its head, and ride down and frighten the buffaloes, when they would naturally rush past him and out on the plain. Everything worked just as he had planned. As soon as the buffaloes saw me they threw up their tails and went down the wide coulée with tremendous leaps. At the mouth of it my father cut in right among them, rode up beside the dry cow, and shot an arrow in between her short ribs clear to the feathering. The one was enough. Blood gushed in a big red stream from her mouth and nostrils, she stopped and swayed on her fast weakening legs, and suddenly toppled over, dead. And at that we sprang from our horses and began butchering. She was a fat cow; all of three fingers of snow-white back fat covered her boss ribs, and even on the hind quarters it was more than a finger thick.



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My father was more than pleased with the kill. He sang the coyote or hunter song as we worked, and when we had taken the tongue, and all the choice meat our horses could carry, he rubbed his hands together and smiled, and said: "There, son, we have some very rich meat. I think that you and your mother and sister will enjoy it. Ha! And the chiefs ordered us to remain in camp and starve. Well, Lone Bull's family shall not starve so long as he has strength to bend a bow."

When the cow dropped, we neither of us paid any more attention to her mates as they rushed straight out on the plain. But now, just as we were about to load the horses with the meat, we noticed a great cloud of dust away off to the east, and suspected what had happened. But neither of us spoke. My father sprung on to his horse and started up the slope of the nearest foothill; I got into my saddle and followed him, and at a fair elevation we drew rein and looked out upon the plain. Sure enough, the band from which my father had taken the cow had rushed straight to the great herd and frightened it, and it was running southward straight away from our camp. All the watching and waiting for it to move to broken country



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had been for nothing, and upon my father alone rested the blame for the failure of the plan of the chiefs for a great killing of the animals. Because of his pride, his disregard of what was for the welfare of the whole people, the much-needed animals were rushing like a great black river south across the plain, probably never to stop this side of the breaks of the Missouri.

I looked at my father. The contented smile was gone from his face and into his eyes had come a worried expression. But it did not last long; he soon resumed his natural cold, proud bearing, and said, more to himself than to me: "Well, what of it? I have certainly stampeded the herd, but whose is the blame? Not mine. My children must eat, though I break all the hunting laws that were ever made."

I made no answer to that, of course, and presently we went back to the meat, loaded it on the horses, and rode homeward. The sun went down before we came in sight of the camp, and as we wended our way in among the lodges in the gathering darkness the people stood and stared at us, and gave us no greeting nor even spoke to one another. A great silence — a strange, a menacing silence —



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seemed to be ever spreading out before us, and following in our rear. We came to the doorway of our lodge and dismounted. My mother stood outside awaiting us, and even she spoke no word as in duty bound she lifted the meat from one horse and then the other, and carried it inside. If my father was uneasy, — if he sensed, as I did, the hostile feeling of the people toward him, — he did not show it.

Leaving me to unsaddle and turn loose the horses, he entered the lodge and said: "Well, mother, well, little daughter, you see that I have brought you some very fine fat meat. Hurry and cook some of it; I know that you are very hungry."

I went inside and sat down on my couch as he finished speaking. My mother did not answer him. I noticed that her hands trembled as she carved the buffalo tongue into a wide, thin sheet, and placed it and some boss ribs upon the red coals of the little cottonwood fire.

My father laid aside his bow, picked up from the head of his couch the Hudson's Bay Company flintlock gun he had purchased the summer before, examined it carefully and lovingly, and set it against the back rest at his end of the couch he and my mother shared. He had fired the gun only a few



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times. Powder and balls were scarce. A bow and arrows were effective enough for running buffalo; the white man's weapon was reserved for a time of war. Already, with the few guns obtained from the white traders of the North, our Blackfeet warriors had driven the Crow tribes from the tributaries of the Missouri to the Yellowstone; they had lost forever the rich hunting-ground north of that river.

The tongue and the rib meat were soon broiled and my mother passed us generous portions of it. She did not herself take any and my father asked the reason — if she was ill?

"I am sick at heart," she answered. "Be sure that we must pay for what you have done this day."

"Ha! Take now the weight from that afraid heart of yours," he exclaimed. "What! Do you think that the Seizers would dare do anything to me? Am I not the greatest warrior of this tribe? Have I not counted more coups than any of them? Have I not more than once taken the lead and saved them from defeat in battle with our enemies? Why, I could be, if I wished, the head chief of our people. Come, now, eat some of this fine meat and cease worrying: all is and shall be well with us."

My father really believed what he said: that he



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could, if he wished, be the head chief of the tribe. But, young as I was, I knew differently. Running here and there among the lodges with my playmates, I had often heard talk about my father, and in particular I remembered what old Low Bear, a wise medicine man, had said of him, not knowing that I was near.

"To become a chief," he told his visitors, "one must be brave and generous, and above all, of kind and even temper. Lone Bull is brave; he is our greatest warrior, and he is very generous: many a widow and orphan just about live upon the meat he kills. But he has a far too proud and fiery heart; he gets terribly angry about nothing. Yes, and he plainly shows by the way he speaks to people, or listens impatiently to their talk, that he thinks himself far better in every way than any one else. Therefore I say that he can never become a chief."

I went home and told my mother what I had heard. When I had finished she was silent for a long time, and then said: "Whatever his faults, your father is good to us. Always remember that."

And now I noticed that my sister also was not eating, and that she and my mother kept looking with afraid eyes at the doorway of the lodge, and



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flinching in their seats at every little noise outside. Their fear became mine; my food tasted bad in my mouth; I pretended to eat the rib I held, and with them kept my eyes on the doorway.

Thus it was that we did not see the rumpling of the lodge skin at the back of the lodge as many hands noiselessly raised it in order to attain firm grip of the ends of the lodge poles; nor could my father see it as he sat with his back to it, slowly eating a portion of the tongue, and between bites humming the coyote song. And suddenly, as some of the Seizers tilted the lodge up over our heads and completely overthrew it, others sprang upon my father and grasped his arms before he could use the knife with which he had been cutting his food.

He gave a terrible roar of anger and struggled furiously with his captors. My mother sprang to his aid, crying out: "Let go of him! Let him go, I say!" My sister ran shrieking away in the darkness, and I stood still, undecided what to do. A great crowd of people, muffled to the eyes with their robes, gathered quickly around us and spoke no word. There was something terrible, something heart-stifling in their silence; it showed that all approved the punishment about to be given my father.



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Eight of the Seizers firmly held him while others hurried to get possession of his weapons, and still others took up every piece of the fat meat we had brought in. As soon as this was done the chief of the Seizers advanced and struck my father upon the back with a riding-quirt. It was not a hard blow, but the broad rawhide lashes made a loud spat when they hit the soft and tightly stretched leather shirt he wore. Some of the people groaned at the sound of it. My mother gave a loud shriek and struggled to get free. I made a dash at the chief, and was quickly seized and held. Again and again, six strokes in all, the quirt lashes spatted against my father's back, but he did not flinch and made no outcry.

Then said the chief: "You people, all of you here around standing, you have seen with your own eyes what is done to one who breaks the hunting laws. Be wise: obey the orders of the chiefs—orders for the good of us all, or what has been done to this man to-night will also be done to you."

And with that the Seizers released the three of us and quietly went away, most of the crowd following them, or scattering to their homes.

My father sat down on his couch and covered his



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face with his hands. My sister returned, still crying, and put her hand in mine. The few people who remained, our relatives mostly, came forward and helped my mother reset the lodge and rebuild the little fire; then, with a few words of sympathy and offers of dry meat and pemmican, they too went away and left us to ourselves.

Once, twice, three times my mother replenished the fire, but my father did not remove his hands from his face or speak. His had been a terrible punishment. Not that the lashes of the quirt had hurt — a child could have borne the sting of them. It was the act itself that hurt; according to our way of thinking, you know, the humiliation in being struck, or whipped, can be wiped out only by the death of the striker. Therefore, we scold our children, but never whip them. To strike a youth is to break his spirit.

Well, the third fire burned low, and again and again my mother spoke softly to my father, telling him to lie down and sleep. He never once replied nor moved, and so, in the dim light of the fading coals, the three of us crept quietly to rest and left him sitting there. And oh, how our hearts did yearn to comfort him! Over and over I said to myself



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before I slept: "It was his fault; he brought it upon himself." But for all that I felt more devoted to him than I had before in all my life. And wondering and worrying about what he would do with the coming of a new day, I at last fell into restless sleep.

More than once during the night I heard my father groan, and my mother say to him: "Oh, my man, my man! What can I do to ease your aching heart?"

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## CHAPTER II

WHEN I awoke at daylight I saw my father sitting on his couch and staring at the fire my mother had just built. He looked very grave and sad and tired. I think that he had sat up all night.

My mother presently spoke to him: "My man, we have not a mouthful of food in the lodge. May I at least get from my brothers enough meat for the children's early meal?" she asked.

"Yes, go get some. They must eat and so must you. Myself, I shall not eat another meal in this camp," he answered.

"Oh, what—what do you mean by saying that?" she asked.

"Just this: from this day on I am no longer a Pikunikwan. Go get food and cook and eat it, and then pack up as soon as you can. The midday sun shall see us far on our way from this camp."

Sister and I heard this with sinking hearts. To be taken away forever from relatives and playmates would be a terrible thing. We could not at first believe that my father really meant what he said. But my mother knew better. Still, she hoped



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to change his mind. Without a word she went out, and soon returned with her brother, Fox Eyes, and my father's younger brother, White Wolf. Also she brought meat and set it up before the fire to roast.

"Lone Bull, brother, what is this we hear — that you intend leaving us?" White Wolf asked.

"You heard truth," my father bitterly exclaimed. "You saw me whipped, forever disgraced, last night. After that do you think that I could remain a member of this ungrateful tribe? Think of what I have done for it: the battles that I have led and won! Think how generous has ever been my hand: never a hungry or needy man, woman, or child but found food and help in this lodge! And then to be whipped because I hunted for meat for my own hungry ones! Well, I am done with this ungrateful people!"

"But, brother, the rule you broke: the rule made for us all, common men and chiefs alike —"

"Oh, I know all that you would say," my father interrupted. "I did not go out to chase the big herd of buffaloes, nor did I intentionally stampede it. That was an accident. But I was given no chance to explain. Brother, it is useless for you



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to argue with me; my mind is made up; I leave this ungrateful people forever just as soon as we can pack up. I would like to have the weapons that were taken from me last night by the Seizers. If you can get them for me, I shall be pleased; if you can't get them, well, I can make new bow and arrows, and in time, no doubt, purchase another gun."

"Lone Bull, my elder brother," said White Wolf, "you are thinking only of yourself. Consider your woman and your children, and for their sake remain with us. Or, if in the heat of your anger you must go, then go away alone for a time. Go visit our relatives of the North: the Kaina, or the Blackfeet. Yes, go and camp with them until your anger dies out, as it soon will, and then return to us."

"White Wolf's words are my words, brother-in-law," said Fox Eyes. "It is not right for you to separate my sister from her relatives. It is risking her life and the lives of your children to take them wandering off with you. Sooner or later you will be discovered by a war party from one of the tribes hostile to us, and that will be the end of you all. I beg you to remain with us."



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"Well, since you put it that way, I shall not compel Sisaki and the children to go with me. They shall remain with you or go with me, just as they choose. What say you, woman and children mine?"

"Well you know that your trail is my trail," my mother sobbed.

"There, you see how it is!" my father exclaimed. "Of course she will go with me. And as to the children, naturally they will want to go with us. Is it not so, my son? Is it not so, daughter?"

"Yes," we both whispered, but loud enough to be heard.

"Well, then, go for all of me, but when trouble comes to you, as it surely will, just remember that I did my best to keep you from going into it!" Fox Eyes angrily exclaimed; and snatching up his robe he left the lodge.

"Brother, I shall argue with you no more; I see that it is useless," said White Wolf as he arose. "I go now to try to get your weapons for you."

News traveled fast in camp that morning. Fox Eyes had no more than started on his errand when the head chief came in, followed by several medicine men and leading warriors of the tribe.



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"Now, then, Lone Bull, what is this we hear?" the chief began as he made his way around the fire and sat down beside my father. "Surely the tongues are forked that bring word that you are leaving us — leaving your tribe, your relatives, forever?"

"Whosesoever the tongues, they spoke straight. I am leaving you — I and my woman and children — forever," my father answered; and would say not another word, although the chief, and those with him, in turn tried to show him that he was making a great mistake. And so they soon got up and left, angry, of course, because of my father's silence and the failure of their good intentions.

Then, as my mother set some of the roasted meat before my sister and me came White Wolf with the weapons. At sight of them my father brightened up.

"Ha! I have not, then, to make new weapons!" he exclaimed. "This night we shall feast of good fat meat of my own killing. Hurry, my son, eat quickly that borrowed meat, and go run in the horses."

I had no hunger; I was too unhappy to eat; and



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so I took but a mouthful or two of the food, to please my mother, and went out for the herd. By the time I got them to the water's edge, our lodge was down and the packs all made up.

White Wolf came over and helped me catch the number we needed — five pack and two travoys and four riding-horses.

"Nephew," he said to me as we led the animals in, — "nephew, from this day you put away your boyhood and become a man. Your father is taking you all into great danger. Promise me that you will do a man's part, so far as you can, in keeping always a steady lookout for the enemy, and fighting hard for your mother and sister."

"I will do my best," I answered.

"Of course you will," said he; "therefore, take this." And he unslung and handed me his bow and arrows in their beautiful long-tailed otterskin case and quiver. "Oh, that I could go with you!" he added. "But that cannot be; not at this time: your aunt is no better. Later on, perhaps —"

He broke off there, but I knew what he was thinking: that my aunt could never get well, that when her end came he would be free to come to our aid. But where? My father had said no word —



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had given us not the slightest hint of his plans, other than the main one, to get away from the camp as soon as possible.

We were not long saddling and loading the horses, my father standing and looking on with great impatience. A large crowd had surrounded us, and while some of the women helped my mother with the packing, they made her cry by telling her how much they would miss her at their little gatherings; and several of the old women cried with her, and wondered how they could get along without the one who had ever been good to them.

My sister, too, was crying over parting with her playmates, and it was all that I could do to keep the tears from my eyes as my boy friends crowded around me with words of sympathy, and little offerings of one kind and another. Oh, how I hated to leave them!

A number of men were gathered around my father, doing their best to persuade him to change his mind and remain with the tribe; but, of course, their efforts were useless. While they talked to him, he kept watching the packing, and when the last horse was loaded he told my mother to mount her animal and to lead out on the down-the-river



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trail. He and I then rounded up the loose stock and fell in behind her and my sister with pack and travoy outfit, and passed out of the bounds of the great camp. I wondered if I should ever see it again. And looking eastward at the great lonely plains and buttes, and the timbered valley, where many a foe, no doubt, was lurking, I felt that I had surely parted from my friends and relatives forever.

All the long morning and until far into the afternoon we kept the trail at a slow trot, the usual gait of the pack-horses. Sometimes we rode in the timbered valley, and again up over a point of the plain to cut a big bend of the river. And during all that time my father never spoke a word. I wondered if he did not, after all, regret his in-anger-made vow of separation from the tribe. Judging by the expression of his face he was not happy.

From midday on signs of game became more and more plentiful in the valley, well-worn trails of elk and deer and buffaloes running everywhere through the timber and brush. We saw a number of deer and several elk, and a few buffalo bulls now and then, but it was not until a band of buffalo



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cows appeared ahead, wending their way down the valley slope to the river, that my father called out for a halt. He then went on through the timber and we three silently waited for a signal from him. We had n't the heart to talk.

The band of buffaloes straggled across the bottom in single file and disappeared in the timber bordering the river. They did not see us, though close, for we had stopped in a thick growth of service berry and cherry brush higher than our heads as we sat our horses. We kept looking at the grassy bottom that they had crossed, expecting them to rush out on their back trail when my father should attack them, but, as we afterward learned, he misjudged the point at which they would enter the timber and rode some distance below it. Then, discovering his mistake, he turned back and charged them as they were lined along the shore of the river, drinking. A high cutbank on the opposite shore prevented their crossing, so they plunged back into the timber, quartering away from the river and right toward us.

Big and little, there must have been a couple of hundred of the animals. The thunder and rattle of their hoofs, the cracking of dry wood, and the



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swishing of brush warned us that they were coming our way.

"Ride out of this brush! Go! Quick!" I shouted to my mother and sister, but I might just as well have whispered: the deafening rush of the buffaloes killed my words.

Two things there are that more than others make the heart afraid: the sudden rise of a flooding river breaking its winter ice coat and the rush of a herd of stampeding buffaloes. Before either of them man is helpless; they come upon him almost as swift as lightning, and only by the protection of the gods may he survive their resistless torrent. I had no more than shouted the words of warning when the herd was upon us, those in the lead forced on, whether they would or no, by those behind and then loose horses and pack-horses and we ourselves, on our rearing, terror-stricken animals, were hemmed in and forced along with them. On either side a big, plunging, sharp-horned cow pressed close to me; behind was a solid mass of them, and in front no small number, the swiftest of the herd, that had swung off to one side and the other of us, and then closed up and hemmed us in. There are always some buffaloes in a herd swifter than any



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horse for even a short distance. And, as you know, the best of horses cannot keep up with a herd for a longer time than is required by a good and quick shot to kill twenty or so of the animals. They have big lungs, the buffaloes, and with their good wind and strong muscles they can run a whole day without once stopping.

My mother was separated from me by six or eight animals on my right. On my left, and a little ahead, only a couple of shaggy, brown, plunging backs between us, rode my sister, tightly gripping the mane of her horse. On all sides of us were some of our loose stock mixed in with the buffaloes; the greater number had broken out of the brush ahead of the stampede, and were safe enough off to one side on the open, grassy bottom. My mother was on a big, strong, gentle horse of good staying power, and I did not worry much about her safety. My sister was the one in greatest danger, for her three-year-old colt was only half-broken, and sometimes went crazy when he became excited. I saw now that she had lost control of the animal, the rawhide rope which she used for a bridle having become unhitched from his lower jaw. Our one way to get free from the herd was to guide our



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horses toward the outer edge of it as now and then an open space permitted, but without a bridle Nitaki could not do that. She was lost if I could not save her. My uncle's words came to my mind: "From this day you must put away your boyhood and become a man . . . fight hard for your mother and sister."

Well, I would save my sister. But how? How could I get up beside her? I could not clear the way of the buffaloes between us — Why not? Right at my back was the weapon which my uncle had given me for just such a purpose. In the excitement of the stampede I had forgotten all about it.

Reaching back I pulled the case and quiver around, drew out the bow and strung it, but not without great effort: my slender boy arms were no match for the tough and hard-to-spring wood, and I never could have done it except that my excitement and eagerness for the time being gave me the strength of a man. That done I fitted an arrow to the bow, and bending forward and over to the left I drew back the cord with sudden pull and let the arrow go — and *zip!* it went low down into the cow's side just back of the ribs. It was



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a heart shot. The big animal made but two more jumps and dropped, and I swung my horse into the space that had been hers, fitted another arrow to the bow, and fired it at the remaining cow. It struck in somewhat too far back, but a second shaft did good work: the cow stopped short, and did not at once drop, and thus caused a split in the crush of animals behind her. Thus I had plenty of room to swing in beside my sister. Meantime her horse had begun to plunge and kick out at the buffaloes close pressing him, and just as I shot the second cow his furious plunges caused the saddle cinch to break. My sister shrieked as she felt the saddle rise with her, and for the first time looked back at me for help. The second jump of the horse jolted her and the saddle far back on his hips, for she had lost her grip on the mane. My heart nearly stopped with fear for her when I saw that, for another jump of the horse would cause her to slide from him, right under the feet of the buffaloes, to be instantly trampled to death.

I was then but two jumps of my horse from her, and I hit his flank a heavy whack with my bow, which caused him to make a big, long leap, and then another, and just as my sister was going back-



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ward off her animal, I caught her by the waist and somehow pulled her crosswise on to my horse in front of my saddle. And there she lay, head down one side and heels down the other, for I had not the strength to set her up before me.

Again the buffaloes closed in around me, and kept my none-too-strong horse going at a pace that must soon wind him, now that he carried a double burden. Should he stumble and fall, or give out and stop, right there we should meet our end. On and on we went, I whacking the horse harder and harder to make him hold his own in the rush, and praying the sun for help: "Pity us, O Sun and all you Above People," I cried. "We are only children. We want to live. Have pity and guide us clear of this living river of death."

As I look back on it now I feel that my prayer was answered at once; for just as I finished it the lead buffalo suddenly swung, quartering to the left,—for no reason at all that I could see,—and straight toward a few big old cottonwoods standing in the center of the bottom between the river and the foot of the valley slope. We soon came into the scattering grove, and I swung my blown and sweating and trembling horse in behind the first



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big tree-trunk, and brought him willingly to a halt. On either side the big herd of buffaloes thundered by me. The last stragglers passed.

I had been looking for my mother, and saw that she was not riding among the herd. I forced my horse out around the tree and looked back, and with the relief I felt when I saw her a little way off with my father, I found that I was trembling and faint. My sister slid to the ground and sat there limp and weak.

My mother presently had her in her arms: "Oh, what a narrow escape we had!" she cried. "Brave boy, you saved your sister. I saw it all. I don't know how I got out of the stampede. I guess it was more my good old horse than myself that found the way."

"All is well. For your escape from the great danger I shall make sacrifice to the sun this day," said my father, happily. "And back there by the river I killed a fat cow. Come, let us round up the pack-horses and make camp, and after we have feasted and rested awhile, you and I, my son, will go after the loose horses that are missing. They will soon drop out from the buffalo herd."

All that we did before night. And that evening,



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around the cheerful little fire in our lodge, we forgot for the time our trouble and were quite happy. I felt very proud of myself, for I had saved my sister from a terrible death, and had killed my first buffalo, two of them with three arrows. I was a good marksman, for I had long been using a bow and blunt-headed arrows in hunting small game, rabbits and grouse. But to bend a strong man's bow and kill with it two big buffaloes was a great feat for a boy who had seen only fourteen winters, if I do say it.

My father tested the bow and wondered how I could possibly have used it. "The sun must have given you the power just for that time. Try to bend it now," he said.

I tried, and failed, whereupon my father spent the evening scraping the bow until it was fit for my use, but still powerful enough for killing even buffaloes.

One thing we had been wanting to know, and hesitated to ask, and that was whither we were headed.

My father now of his own accord told us his plan: "Well, we are now free from the Pikuni chiefs and their Seizers, and can do as we please," he said.



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"I thought at first of going across the Backbone-of-the-World and joining the Flatheads, but I have little love for their timbered, buffaloless country," he said. "So we shall go down in the country of the Gros Ventres and live with them. They are almost the same as our brothers, and their head chief, Short Bow, as you know, is my special friend. If we have luck we should find their camp within the next five or six days. No doubt they are camping somewhere along the foot of the Bear Paw Mountains."

Since we could no longer live among our own people, his plan suited us very well. The Gros Ventres, who are really Arapahoes, you know, had come to the Blackfeet when, more than fifty winters back, the six or seven clans of them had parted from the main tribe because of a quarrel about the ownership of a white cow that had been killed in a buffalo trap. Ever since that time they had been our allies, and under our protection, as you may say. Not that they needed much protection, for they are brave and good fighters. They had free range of our great hunting-ground. They sometimes camped beside us for many moons, and at other times wandered by themselves over the plains. A great many



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of them spoke our language perfectly, but never was there a Blackfoot able to master their words. Twist my tongue as I would, I could never get out one of them with the right sound.

We did not break camp the next day until nearly noon, for my mother insisted upon cutting into thin sheets for drying much of the meat of the cows we had killed. While she was doing that, Nitaki helping, my father and I sat upon the rim of the valley where we could see the country in all directions. We did not mean to be surprised by any prowling war party if we could help it.

Nowhere on the plains nor in the valley was there any indication that enemies were moving about. Here and there bands of buffaloes and antelopes were stringing into the river for water, or out from it to graze on the wide plains. Were men moving anywhere about, some of the herds would be on the run instead of slowly walking or peacefully grazing on the new, green grass. We sat there on the rim all the morning, keeping ever a watchful eye upon the country, and waiting for my mother's signal for us to run in the horses and break camp.

Just before she waved her robe we noticed two horsemen coming swiftly down the valley on our



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trail of the day before. "Ha! A couple of the Pikuni," my father exclaimed, and said no more. And he was right: we met them when we got down to camp, White Wolf and Fox Eyes, come again to ask him to remain with the tribe. They talked long and earnestly, setting forth many reasons why they thought we should turn straight back with them.

My father listened patiently until they had quite finished, and then answered: "Brothers, your hearts are good. It truly hurts me to leave you, but after what has happened I cannot go back. But we do not part with you forever; we go to live with the Gros Ventres. In the coming winters and summers the two tribes will often meet; at such times you shall visit me — but myself, I shall never again enter the camp of the Pikuni. There! I have finished. And now we must pack up and go our way. Go you yours, and may the sun and all the above people keep you and yours safe from all the dangers that lurk beside the trail."

So for a second time we parted from those good men and rode eastward down the valley: on and on all the afternoon in the warm sunshine, which was very pleasant after the cold of the long winter. And nothing happened to alarm us.



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

We made camp early, and my father said that another day of steady travel would take us to the mouth of the river — its junction with the Marias, only a short distance from the point where that stream runs into the Missouri.

The lodge was no sooner up than my mother broiled meat for us, and after eating and picketing some of the horses and hobbling others, my father and I went up on the south rim of the valley to view the country in the light of the setting sun. We saw nothing to alarm us — the game everywhere feeding or resting or going to and from the river. "Ha! The country is peaceful enough. A good ending of a good day," said my father, as he seated himself more comfortably by my side and fumbled in the pouch at his belt for pipe and material for a smoke.

We were sitting on a point overlooking a sharp bend in the river. Below was a long, grassy, and, beside the river, timber-fringed bottom extending a long way downstream. Near the lower end of it a band of buffaloes suddenly burst from the cottonwoods and dashed out across it for the plains. I nudged my father and silently pointed to them. "Ha! That may mean something not so pleasant,"



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he said, and replaced his half-loaded pipe and tobacco in the pouch.

The buffaloes went up the slope and out on the plain. We paid no more attention to them and kept our eyes on the long strip of timber from which they had emerged; and presently, a little farther up than they had appeared, three deer broke into sight, ran straight down the bottom, and back into the timber.

"Black Otter, trouble comes," my father said to me. "Men — a war party, no doubt — are in that timber and coming upstream."

And, as if to prove his words, just as he said that we saw thirty or more men come into an opening in the woods and string across it: a war party surely, and traveling straight toward our camp. The instant they crossed the glade and reëntered the timber we sprang to our feet and rushed down the slope for the lodge. "If they have scouts ahead of them, we are lost," my father groaned, and well I knew it. Traveling through the narrow belt of timber they could not help seeing the lodge, pitched at its outer edge, and would be upon my mother and sister before we could reach them.

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## CHAPTER III

THE point on which we had been sitting separated the bottom in which our lodge was pitched from that in which the war party was traveling, so they could not have seen us even had they been out of the timber. On our way up across the bottom we rounded up the horse herd and drove it before us, and as we approached the lodge my father called out: "Hurry! Help catch the saddle- and pack-animals. A war party is near."

But sensing danger from our rushing in with the herd, my mother and sister were already coming to meet us with the ropes, and we soon caught out and conveniently tied for saddling the number wanted. While we were doing that my father explained the approach of the war party in the bottom below.

"Don't get excited," he said; "unless there are scouts ahead of the party, we have time to pack up everything and make our escape. I leave you to do the packing, while I go down to the lower end of the bottom and stand watch." And with that he re-slung his bow case and quiver, took his gun, and rode off.



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

Never did lodge come down quicker than ours. My mother pulled the front fastenings while I raised the pegs around it, and while I pulled off the lodge skin and folded it, she bunched the poles and attached them to the two horses that dragged the sixteen slender sticks. Sister, meantime, was busy with the parfleches, refilling them with the food and other things — not many — that had been taken out for use. And in a very short time we had the last pack fastened and got into our saddles.

Evidently there were no scouts ahead of the party, or, if there were, they had passed on the opposite side of the river and had not noticed us. My father, down at the end of the bottom, had been keeping an eye on us as well as watching for the approach of the enemy, and when we mounted our animals he came to us on a swift lope.

"All is well. We are mounted and the enemy, afoot, cannot harm us," he said. "Woman mine, and you, Nitaki, strike out across the bottom and up the valley slope, and from the rim go straight out on the plain. Keep your animals at a good trot. We shall follow with the herd. As soon as it is dark we will turn and go east, and then into the river and make camp."



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

The sun had already set. As we climbed the slope the night came fast. We kept looking back into the bottom for sight of the enemy, but they did not appear, and as we neared the top of the slope, the rim of the valley, this worried my father.

"It may be," he said, "that instead of following the river they cut up on to the point and are even now waiting for us there on top. You drive the herd, my son, and I will go on ahead until we are well out on the plain."

The slope was quite steep on its upper reach and the horses had slowed down to a walk. My mother, in the lead, was quite near the rim when my father started ahead, making his big and powerful horse take the hill on the jump despite its steepness. He was almost abreast the lead when there suddenly sprang up in sight on the rim the whole line of the enemy, and with dreadful yells they fired down at us with their bows and four guns.

At that one of the horses in the lead gave a strange, almost human cry of pain, and dropped, and even in the excitement of the time I noticed that it was the one that carried my father's sacred pipe, his war finery, and medicine sacks. I should have told you before that he was a medicine man,



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and owner of the Thunder Pipe and all the power and mysteries that go with it.

When the stricken pack-horse was hit, so, an instant later, was my sister, an arrow whizzing into the fleshy part of her left arm above the elbow. She also gave a terrible shriek, and my mother cried out: "Oh, my daughter! She is shot! She dies! Take me, too, oh, enemies!"

"Hush! She lives. Turn, both of you, back down the hill," my father shouted, and fired his gun at the enemy, now rushing down at us.

Most of the herd was already stampeding. As we turned the also frightened and willing pack-animals after them and lashed our horses to a lope, more arrows showered among us and some of the enemy closed in, and, swinging lariats, attempted to catch here and there a horse. Strangely enough, not a single noose fell over the head of an animal, and before the throwers could recover their ropes for another cast we were well away from them and fast leaving them behind.

Back down into the valley we rushed the herd, and then, at my father's shouted commands, up the length of it, then across the river and out on the plains of the north side.



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There, at my mother's call, we halted while she quickly did what she could for my sister, snapping the arrow shaft in two and withdrawing it from the wound, which she bound with a soft piece of buckskin. And through it all, painful as it was, Nitaki never once cried out or flinched.

My mother, however, was in tears as she worked, and kept crying out to my father: "Oh, my man! See! Just see what your willfulness, your hard-mindedness has done. And this is but the beginning of bad luck. Know you that the Thunder Pipe—all your medicines—are in the hands of the enemy?"

"Yes, I know it," my father answered, and was silent.

We knew how he felt. This was a terrible loss, a loss affecting us all: without this medium of prayer, favored by the sun and all the gods, of what avail would be our sacrifices, our prayers for help, for safety from the enemy, for long life and happiness?

"I have to recover that pipe! Oh, I just have to recover it!" my father exclaimed, as we mounted and rode on.

"You can never do it," my mother told him.

"Oh, yes, I can," he confidently answered. "That



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is an Assiniboine war party, on a raid against the Pikuni, no doubt. If your people don't discover them, they will be back in their camp by the end of this moon. It is there that I shall go for the pipe, once you and the children are safe with the Gros Ventres."

My mother made no answer to that. My own thought was that my father was talking very big: one could go into an enemy's camp in the night and sneak out horses, but to find, among several hundred, the one lodge in which was the pipe and then take it, that was surely the impossible.

Said my mother now: "My man, here is your chance to get back the pipe and at the same time do much good: let us turn straight home and warn our people of the approach of this war party. And you will have but to make the call, and enough warriors will gather to enable you to wipe out the war party, every last man, and get the pipe."

"Call the Pikuni your people if you will. They are not my people: I don't care if they lose all their horses," he answered.

And, oh, how that answer hurt us!

For more than half the night we traveled far out on the plain, eastward, then turned southeastward,



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and after a time struck the river. There we unpacked the horses in a big cottonwood grove, tied up some of them, hobbled others, and then made down our beds and slept.

With the first faint light of the new day, without eating, we packed up and went on and on down the valley, and not until the sun was straight over our heads did we stop to eat and rest for a time.

It was late in the day when we came to the junction of the Teton and Marias Rivers, crossed both streams, and went on down the big berry-brush bottom of the Missouri. Nearing the lower end of it we heard the sound of an axe in the big cottonwood grove there, and as we pulled up our horses and listened, a tall tree trembled at the top, and then went crashing to the ground.

"Ha! That was white man's work," said my father. "An Indian would never cut down a big, green, and useless tree."

We rode on, then, turning in toward the river, and not at all afraid, for white men never fought the plains people unless first attacked. We soon came close to the big grove, and just this side of it, in a clear, grassy space near the river, saw many white men at work putting up the walls of a large



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log house. Right near it was a great quantity of trade goods in boxes, barrels, and sacks, and tied to the bank of the river were three large boats in which all the stuff had been brought up.

As we sat motionless on our horses looking intently at the strange scene, one of the white men made signs for us to ride in. As we neared the place he advanced and met us, shook my father's hand, and in signs invited us to dismount and camp with him. He was a rather slender, not tall, very fine-looking man, smooth-faced, long-haired, and dressed all in blue, with many large bright shining buttons on his long-tailed coat. On his feet were beautifully embroidered moccasins, and when my father noticed them, the pattern of the porcupine-quill work, he smiled happily, and jumped from his horse and shook hands again, and said to us: "This can be no other than the trader with the Earth House People, of whom we have so often heard." And in signs he asked him if it were not so?

"Yes, I am that man," he signed; and added: "Come; come with me to my lodge."

We followed him into the timber and to a big, fine lodge from which stepped a smiling, beautifully dressed, handsome young woman and made signs



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to us to dismount; her lodge was our lodge, she said.

Need I say more, my son? Yes, these were no other than Ki-pah and Sah'-kwi-ah-ki, father and mother of your own close friend, Raven Quiver. Ki-pah — he is gone. And Sah'-kwi-ah-ki — there she sits beside you, my son, and gray is her head and wrinkled her face, like mine. Oh, the dead and gone years — the happy, happy years of our youth! Sah'-kwi-ah-ki, true friend mine, oh, that the gods would give us back those years![1]

Well, my son, we went into the lodge and feasted upon buffalo meat and white men's food. Boiled beans were placed before us, the first I ever saw. I

[1] *Author's note:* Ki-pah and Sah'-kwi-ah-ki (Earth Woman) were no other than Captain James Kipp and his Mandan wife, parents of my own close friend, Mr. Joseph Kipp. Captain Kipp was a trusted factor of the American Fur Company. It was in the summer of 1833 that he built the Company's Fort Mackenzie, at the mouth of the Marias, where Lodge Pole Chief first met him. The latter, therefore, was born in 1819. See Catlin's *Eight Years* for that great artist's estimate of Captain Kipp. Of his wife I will simply state here that she was one of the best, the most high-minded, kindly women I ever knew, and a second mother to me. The son, Joseph Kipp, or Raven Quiver (Mas-twun'-o-pa-chis), as the Blackfeet fondly called him, inherited all the good and brave qualities of his father and mother. He died December 12, 1913, only a few days before this was written. All Montana mourns his loss. Few, few, indeed, are left of my friends of the old buffalo days.



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liked them. After we had feasted we went out and set up our own lodge and then went out to watch the strange work of these white men. Twice in my life I had been to the fort of the Red Coats, in the North, but never before had any of us seen the Long Knife white men. Some of our people, however, had traded with them at their fort at the mouth of the Yellowstone, the one in the village of the Earth House People, — as you say, the Mandans, — and it was at this last place that they had met Ki-pah and Sah′-kwi-ah-ki. Him they liked best of all the Long Knives. They told much of his kindness to them, and of the presents he and another, a painter, had given them. The painter, they said, had made pictures of Bull's-Back-Fat, and of Eagle Ribs, Northern brothers of ours, so lifelike that the pictures could not be told from the men. These first Long Knives to come into the country were clean men, my son. They took pride in their appearance. They were always smooth-faced; they wore their hair long and well combed; they dressed in neat blanket capotex, and blanket trousers, except their chiefs, who always wore blue cloth clothing with many bright buttons. And they were ever polite to us. These who now swarm into our country, —



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hairy-faced, rough-headed, greasy, and bad-mannered,—the very sight of their hair-covered faces makes us sick.

It was on the day after our arrival there that the Long Knives finished one room of their fort and placed in it the trade goods they had brought up river from the big fort at the mouth of the Yellowstone. Long, long we gazed at the beautiful and useful things displayed on the shelves and walls of that room: fine blankets, bolts of red and blue cloth, beads, bracelets and ear-rings, paints, needles, awls, fire steels, and knives, guns and pistols, pots and dishes and cups of hard metal, beaver traps and saddles.

My father could not keep his eyes off those saddles. Of black, shiny leather were they made, horn and cantle and stirrups studded with large-headed brass nails. They were beautiful saddles; and so made that they would not chafe a horse's back.

"How much for one of them?" my father asked Ki-pah.

"Twenty skins," meaning beaver-skins, of course.

Said my father: "I have no skins, but I have four



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traps that I got from the Red Coat traders of the North. I will trap twenty skins with which to buy one."

Ki-pah gave him two traps. "I make you a present of them. With six traps you will soon get your number of skins," he said.

There were beaver dens and slides all up and down the banks of the Big River and the Marias. My father and I went first over on the smaller stream and set the traps, and the next morning found four beavers in them. We quickly reset the traps, and skinned the animals and went home. There my mother and Nitaki fleshed the hides and stretched them on willow hoops to dry.

On the seventh morning we came home with five skins: "There, I now have twenty-three skins. As soon as they are dry I will trade them for a saddle for myself, and a white blanket for you, woman mine," said my father.

"Man mine, you shall do neither," said my mother. "With these skins, and more, if necessary, we must buy a gun for Black Otter."

My father turned to her in surprise. "Why, he is only a boy. Boys don't have guns," he told her.

"Well, this boy shall have one," she answered,



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"even if I have to trade some of my horses for it. He has handled a man's bow and with it saved his sister's life. If he can use a bow he can use a gun. Don't forget what you have done, my man: you have taken us away from our people, from the safety of the big camp. We need all the protection we can get."

"But he has not yet obtained his medicine. He is too young—"

"He shall get his medicine at once," my mother broke in. "If he is too young to face the enemy—well, who forces him to do it, I'd like to know?"

"Oh, well, as you say, so shall it be," my father answered.

He was n't a stingy man; he was just thoughtless; and in most things he took my mother's advice. As soon as the last skins of the catch were dry, we gave them to Ki-pah for a gun and a white blanket for my mother. And with the gun Ki-pah gave four cups of powder, one hundred balls, and two extra flints. The gun was a flintlock, of course; smooth-bored, and brass-trimmed. And was n't I a proud boy when it was put into my hands!

Ki-pah himself taught me how to load it, and gave me a little metal powder measure: "Never



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put in more powder than it will hold, or you will likely burst the barrel," he told me.

Toward evening of that day my mother went to visit with Sah'-kwi-ah-ki. My father was with the white men. Nitaki and I sat in our lodge, she making a head of horse-tail hair for a new leather doll, and I happy with my gun in my lap. I could n't set it away at the head of my couch; I just had to keep my hands on it all the time. I wanted to shoot it; to see something fall when it bellowed. "Come on, sister, we will go get some meat," I said at last; and with her arms full of dolls she followed me out into the timber.

We went clear to the lower end of the long bottom, and there hid in the thick willows bordering the shore of the Big River. Not ten steps below us was a big, well-used, dusty game trail that ran from the high plains down the valley slope and through the timber to the water's edge; I was sure that meat of some kind would soon be coming along it to drink.

In a little while Nitaki nudged me: "Did you hear that?" she whispered.

"No."

"A stick cracked back in the timber," she said.

I felt ashamed that I had not heard it. I was the



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hunter, I should have heard it. I listened more intently and heard nothing — neither of us heard the footsteps of the big bull elk that soon appeared walking along the trail. His new fuzz-covered horns were no longer than the length of my hand; his winter coat of hair hung to the new growth in faded, rough patches; he was thin-fleshed, of course. But so was all the game in the New-Grass Moon: we had to eat poor meat.

Oh, yes, I was excited, and so was Nitaki. We stared open-mouthed at that oncoming elk. I could feel Nitaki, pressing against my back, trembling with excitement. My heart beat so fast that it made my already raised gun wabble. I seemed to be able to sight it at anything but the big body of the animal.

I gripped it more tightly, held my breath, and aimed as well as I could, and pulled the trigger. The flint clicked against the pan; the powder in it hissed and flamed; and then the barrel spit out black smoke and boomed. The elk flinched back, sprang high from the ground, and when he came down rushed straight for the river, Nitaki and I fast after him, she dropping her dolls along the way, I in my excitement forgetting the greatest rule



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for the hunter, which is, reload the gun, fit a fresh arrow to the bow, before breaking cover.

But this time there was no need to reload the gun. I dropped it. The elk leaped out across the sands and fell into the river with a big splash. Nitaki and I ran after him, waded and half-swam out until we could get hold of his heels, and we had a fight with the swift current in towing him back to the shore. We could not drag the big, heavy body out on the sand, but we did manage to get it out from the pull of the current, and then Nitaki threw her arms around me and kissed me. "Meat-getter!" she called me, and kissed me again, and I was very proud of what I had done.

We had no knife. Dripping wet from head to foot we started home and met my father and Ki-pah, hurrying for the lower end of the bottom whence had come the sound of my shot. We led them back to the shore and showed them the elk, and while they butchered it my father praised my good shot, and scolded me for leaving camp without him: war parties were too many, he said, for children to be wandering away from camp.

So it was that I first fired a gun, and with the first shot made a killing.



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## Lone Bull's Mistake

We were now trapping more beavers, in order to get enough skins for one of the black leather saddles. Ki-pah offered to give my father one if he would go tell the Pikuni to trade no more with the Red Coats of the North and bring their beaver and other furs to him. My father refused to do that, of course, explaining that he had forever parted from our people, and giving his reason for leaving them.

Ki-pah closely watched him as he told it, then shook his head and signed: "You are making a great mistake. Cast off the anger in your heart and go back to your people. Yes, they whipped you, but you deserved the whipping. You broke the hunting law."

"They should not have whipped me," my father signed, so angrily and quickly that his hands worked almost too fast for the eyes to follow; "I fed widows and their children. I went first in battle against the enemy."

"Yes, and you should have been for that very reason first to obey the laws that your ancient, wise fathers made," the trader told him.

My father made no answer to that. He drew his robe closely around him and walked away, and for several days spoke very little to any of us. After he



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had got over his anger my mother again proposed to him that I should get my medicine. He agreed to it, and we all went out from camp to look for a good place for me to do my fasting.

We rode all around on the valley slopes of both rivers and found no sheltered spot. Then, coming down the Marias on our way back to camp, my father decided that the only thing to do was to build a resting-place for me in a tree. My mother objected that that would be too much like burying me. Our people, you know, place their dead on scaffolds built in trees. "But so much the better," my father told her. "To get his medicine, one must have to do with the mysteries of the other world; with death itself. It is when the body is, for the time, dead, and the shadow wanders, that one gets his medicine. Yes, his fasting-place shall be in a tree."

We soon found the very tree for our purpose: a cottonwood with low, wide-spreading big limbs, and handy to camp, yet so far from it that I should not be disturbed by the noise made by the white men fort builders. My mother and sister were a whole day fixing a place in it for me. Between two big limbs they laid and firmly lashed a long, wide



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scaffold of poles; laid a soft bed of buffalo robes on it; and over it stretched a part of an old lodge skin to shelter me from rain and sun heat. It was near sunset when I climbed to the scaffold, lay down with my gun at my side, and drew a robe over me.

"Pray! Pray continually to the gods for help," my father told me. "Pray to the creatures of earth, and air, and water. And I will pray to them for you. Oh, that I now had my medicine pipe!"

"Sister and I will come daily with water," my mother said.

And with that they all left me to my dreams, and went home.

Night came on. I was hungry, but not sleepy. I thought that I should not be able to sleep, all was so strange to me; so different from any other night. Never before had I slept alone outside a lodge. Never before had there been so many mysterious noises of the night.

Owls hooted all around me. "O Big Ears!" I prayed, "be my secret helper, my medicine, one of you."

All up and down the valley and along the rim of the plains wolves called one another for the evening hunt. "O wise ones, best of hunters, sure meat-



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getters, help me! Be good to my shadow as it goes forth on discovery this night," I prayed them.

Also I prayed to all the unseen ones who flitted around me on almost noiseless wings; who rustled and pattered about on the dead leaves of dead and vanished summers. As my father had directed, I prayed to all the living things of the air, the earth, and the deep waters. And then I tried to sleep, but sleep would not come.

Some deer or elk passed close under my tree, stopping here and there to nip off new shoots of brush. Not long after they had gone, another animal came along with almost silent tread, and much snuffling and champing of the jaws. That I knew was a bear; probably a big long-claw, a real bear. But I was not afraid. That kind, killer of people, could not harm me. Only the black bears could climb trees, and they were great cowards: even when wounded they would run from man.

As I could not sleep, I began praying again, calling upon every kind of creature for help.

And then I suddenly stopped and listened: other prowlers of the night — a great herd of them, judging by their footfalls — were coming. Right under my tree they stopped and began talking. Not Pi-



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kuni, nor Gros Ventre, nor Crow; I had heard those languages. "They are — they must be — Assiniboines," I thought.

On either side of me was a big pole lashed there for the purpose of keeping me from rolling out of my bed when asleep. I leaned out over the outer one, scared though I was, and tried to see the talkers.

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## CHAPTER IV

THE night was so dark that I could see no more than the dim outline of the talkers. They seemed to be a large party; forty or fifty men. I liked the sound of their language, so different from the ear-distressing talk of the Gros Ventres and the tribes on the far side of the Backbone-of-the-World. It had a peaceful, kindly sound; but I knew that the party was anything but peaceful. These men were raiders; their scouts had discovered the trader's fort and our lodge, and the horses belonging to us both, and were about to attack us. I knew that I had to get to camp ahead of them and give the alarm.

After what seemed a long time to me, they went on, and as soon as the soft thud and rustle of their footsteps died out, I thrust my gun crossways under my belt, swung down from the pole, and dropped to the ground and ran for home. Not straight for it: I circled to keep out of their way. And what mattered it if they did hear me stumbling through the brush? They would think I was some animal — a deer or elk running from them.



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I fell twice before I reached the open grass-land of the bottom. From there on I made better time and soon passed the fort and the big corral in which were Ki-pah's and our horses. The trader had about twenty head that had been brought up overland from the fort at the mouth of the Yellowstone.

His men were sleeping in the finished trade-room. I did not stop to awaken them, for I knew that I could not make them understand. Straight to our lodge I went and aroused the sleepers.

"A war party is coming; a big war party; Assiniboines, I think," I told my father.

"Yes, I hear you," he answered. "Make no noise, any of you. Remain right here until I call you. I go to awaken the trader."

Ki-pah was a light sleeper. At the doorway of his lodge my father softly called and he came out at once, but he could not, of course, understand our language, and it was too dark for sign talking. But that did n't much matter. My father laid down his gun and took Ki-pah's hands; he drew the right one across his throat; then spread out both hands and arms and brought them together in a wide sweep; then held the left hand before his breast and



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brought the right hand quickly to — and on top of it.

And then Ki-pah understood. Cut-throats — Assiniboines — many — here were the three signs. And for answer he took my father's hands and with them made signs for "should all go to the fort." There Ki-pah awakened his men and they soon came out with their guns. He then had Sah'-kwi-ah-ki take my mother and sister into the trade-room and bar the door, and half of the men he sent into the unfinished room adjoining it on the west. The rest of us went into the one on its east side. The logs were not yet chinked; there was plenty of room between them for us to thrust out our guns. The fort itself was one of the four sides of the corral; within it, right in front of us, were our horses.

Said my father: "Now let the cut-throats come. I hope that they will come soon: this is going to be a happy, happy time."

He loved a fight, did my father.

We stood a long time listening for the enemy and heard no sound of them. We wondered if they would attempt to get at the horses in the black darkness of the night or wait for the moon to rise. And as time passed we knew that they waited for



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its light. The Seven Persons marked the middle of the night when we saw the first, faint light from the moon in the eastern sky, and in a little while it was shining down upon us as it rose above the rim of the valley.

Then came the enemy but not from the direction we expected them to come. We were looking for them out on the open bottom, and on hands and knees they came crawling toward the fort from the near shore of the river. One of Ki-pah's men discovered them, and we all moved over to the south side of the room when he hissed and pointed out through a space between the logs. There were only eight crawlers. I whispered to my father that there had been forty or fifty in the party under my fasting-tree, and he told Ki-pah by signs what I had said. Ki-pah had told his men not to fire until he did, and he now signed the same to us.

On came the eight crawlers, nearer and nearer, until we could see them quite plainly. Each one had his blanket or leather wrap belted high at the waist and free from the tread of his knees, and each one carried his bow in his mouth and a bunch of arrows half-drawn from the quiver at his back. Not one of them had a gun.



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Nearer and still nearer they crawled, and separated into two parties, four to circle around the west end and four around the east end of the fort. Pausing frequently to listen, going very slowly and silently when they did move, they passed — the four that we were watching — within fifty steps of our room and on around to the far side of the corral where they were joined by the other four.

We saw them all climb the poles of the corral and look into it at the horses there and for the entrance to it. That was right next to the room from which we were watching them; a set of seven poles that could be removed. They looked all along their side and the west side for it, and then all came around the corner and along the east side toward us, sure that they were to find it there.

They were halfway from the corner to us when a couple of guns boomed out by our lodges and were followed by loud shouts of victory. We knew what that meant: the main party of the raiders had surrounded the two lodges and fired low down into them, and had, they thought, killed us in our beds.

The eight we were watching stopped short when they heard the two guns, and then started to come on. At that instant one of the men with us let his



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gun off, — he said afterwards that it was an accident, — and then, of course, we all fired, Ki-pah first, and the flash of his gun blinded us and spoiled our aim.

Would you think it? When the smoke cleared away we saw but one man on the ground in front of us. The seven were running toward the river-bank — the nearest shelter. Ha, my son, some of them were never to reach it!

The rest of Ki-pah's white men, they in the west room, had had no chance to shoot, and they now rushed out from the place and took aim at the running enemy, and fired. Six guns were they, and they tumbled over three of the runners. We were reloading our guns, meantime, and running outside, but were not quick enough for another shot. Down jumped the surviving four from the bank to the shore sands and were gone.

The shouting out by our lodges had stopped short when our first gun went off; the night was as quiet as though nothing at all had happened. My father gave four loud whoops, and then sang the victory song with mighty voice. "Just to let them know who they were trying to raid," he told me.



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

We remained on guard at the fort for the rest of the night, but saw nothing more of the enemy. When daylight came Ki-pah had his men carry the four dead to the river and toss them into it, but not until my father and I had examined them. There was nothing on them that we wanted.

All our foodstuff was down in the lodges. We had to go there for it, and there we went, all but two, who remained to guard the horses, still in the corral. We went very slowly, guns cocked and ready, and made a complete circle of the little grove before moving into the camp.

The raiders, as we expected, had gone. The two lodges, as we also expected, were in distress. The leather coverings, low down, were full of little slits, and the arrows that had made them were sticking in our beds and elsewhere, almost as plentiful as quills on a porcupine. But none of our property was missing. The raiders, apparently, had not entered the lodges, had no doubt hurriedly left them when the firing began at the fort. Finding that the women could safely come down to the lodges, I was sent after them, and we all soon had something to eat.

Right after the meal the lodges came down,



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DOWN JUMPED THE SURVIVING FOUR

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Ki-pah and Sah'-kwi-ah-ki moving into the fort, we setting our lodge up right beside it; and from that morning until we left, the horses were close herded in the open bottom, my father and I taking our share of the work.

Now that the excitement was over, my father became very low-hearted. He would not allow me to go back to my fasting—my dream tree. "It is useless for him to try to get his medicine now," he told my mother. "The gods are against me because I have lost the Thunder Pipe. He would never have been disturbed out there in his tree if I had had it to use with my prayers for him."

We did not go to our beaver traps for some days; not until we were quite sure that the war party had left the country. And when we did get to them we found, of course, in every one a spoiled beaver. We reset the traps, farther up the river, then killed a young buffalo bull, my father running it with his swift horse, and as usual stopping it with a single arrow. He was a fine shot afoot and astride a horse. We went straight home with the meat, as much of it as the horse could carry along with our weight.

Since we could not return to our people, my



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mother and sister and I were satisfied to remain where we were. Not so my father; he longed for the company of men, and the white men were no company for him. Also, he was very unhappy over the loss of his pipe. Indeed, we all believed that it was a sign that bad luck of some kind was coming to us.

Came the day when, with the morning catch, we had the twenty beaver-skins for the saddle and three skins more. As soon as the green ones were stretched on the hoops, my father turned the whole number over to Ki-pah for the saddle and some things for my mother and sister, and then we prepared to leave in the morning for the Gros Ventres camp.

Upon learning our intention Ki-pah gave us some presents, and some to carry to the Gros Ventres chiefs. "Tell them that I have come here to stay," he said, "and that I want them to catch many beavers for trade with me."

My father was very happy that day, for Ki-pah had given him a medicine fire-maker: a thin, round, smooth piece of looks-like-ice rock of great and sacred and mysterious power. One had but to hold it a little above some fine dry grass, or



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wood splinters, and facing the sun, and it would draw fire from the great sky god and set the stuff ablaze. We all believed that it was even greater medicine than the lost Thunder Pipe.

And because of that we set out across the plains the next morning with the feeling that nothing bad would happen to us. And nothing did. On the second day, toward sunset, we found the Gros Ventres camp. It was pitched on the Little, or as you white men call it, Milk River, north from the west end of the Bear Paw Mountains. We rode into it, and making inquiries, found our way to Short Bow's lodge. He was the head chief, and my father's greatest friend among the men of the tribe.

Straight as we went, word had gone ahead of us of our coming. We drew up in front of the lodge, dismounted, and my father raised the door curtain to go in, when the chief came stealing around from behind and caught and embraced him, crying out: "I saw you before you did me. I give you three horses."

That was the way of it in those days. Long-parted friends tried to surprise one another, and be the first to give a present. My father was much



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disappointed that he had not been able to surprise his friend, and much pleased at the welcome given us.

"My lodge is your lodge. Enter, enter and rest, and feast with us," said Short Bow.

By that time his womenkind had come out and greeted my mother and sister. They began unpacking our things and helping my mother put up our lodge. I drove the horses out to good grass in the bottom, hobbled the leaders, and returned to camp.

When I got back our lodge was up, the couches made, and everything in order, and my people all in Short Bow's lodge. I joined them there, and as soon as I took my seat the women placed a big dish of meat and back fat before me.

Short Bow was a big, fine-looking man, and as kind and brave as he was big, else he never would have been head chief of the tribe. He was also a great medicine man, and his medicine was lightning fire. I knew the story of it well: In the long ago his father's father went hunting one day, carrying only three arrows in his quiver. Deer were very plentiful, but it was not until he had traveled away from camp more than half of the



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day that he got a shot at one, a big buck, standing a long bow-shot away. He missed it, and the flint head of the arrow, striking a rock, was shattered.

He went on and soon got another shot at the same animal, and again missed it, and look as he would, everywhere around, he never could find this, his second arrow.

He went on. Every little way a deer, or two or three, or a bunch of them, would lunge off into the thick brush before he could take good aim at them; he had but the one arrow now, and could take no chances with it.

At last, near sundown, he saw a young buck feeding on the edge of a cutbank of the river, and approached it very cautiously, for here, he thought, was his last chance of the day to get meat. He sneaked up quite close to it, the deer still grazing and unaware of his approach, and took good aim and let the arrow go, and over its back whizzed the shaft, and far out into the swift river, and was lost.

Said the man to himself: "I am a good arrow-shooter, yet have I missed three easy shots, and lost every one of my three arrows. This is a sure sign that something — perhaps something very



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bad — is to happen to me. It is best that I get home as soon as I can."

He started home, did the man, walking fast, and running in the more open places of the woods. He was a long way from camp, and night brought with it black storm-clouds that soon covered the whole sky. He could not see a step ahead, and after falling three or four times over logs and stones, and at last very nearly tumbling from a cutbank into the river, he stopped to wait for starlight or the break of day. With outstretched hands and careful steps he felt his way to a big cottonwood tree and sat down under it.

Soon came the storm: much thunder and lightning and fierce wind, but of rain only a few drops, and as the man prayed the gods for protection from the storm and from the prowlers of the night, lightning suddenly struck an old dead tree close in front of him. Following the awful crash big limbs and pieces of limbs, and splinters of the tree itself, came thumping to the ground, and crashing down through the branches of surrounding trees, and on the trunk of the struck tree dry and tattered bark that clung to it caught fire. Just a little spark of fire at first, but it grew and



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grew until it lighted up the whole surrounding wood, and by this light the man saw a dead deer, a big buck, lying on the ground at the foot of the struck tree. He wondered what had killed it — why the bears or wolves had not feasted upon the carcass.

And now came the rain: heavy rain, cold rain that wet and chilled him. And there was the fire, still eating up the bark on the splintered tree-trunk. Lightning, that terrible, dreadful, life-destroying weapon of the thunder-bird, had set it; therefore it was a medicine fire that man had best avoid.

But this man was very brave; also he was now shivering, trembling in his thin, wet leather clothing. Said he to himself, "I will take a little of the fire and with it build a big blaze to warm me."

And praying the gods for protection, and the thunder bird for pardon for using it, he went to the tree to tear from it a piece of the burning bark. Thus going, he came to the deer. Its wide-open eyes were as full and as natural in appearance as though it was alive. He bent over and felt of the body: it was warm and soft and yielding to his hand.

And suddenly it was all plain to him: the gods,



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the thunder bird, had taken pity on him. They had seen him lose his three arrows and had set this fire and killed this deer for his use and comfort. No longer afraid, he took some of the burning bark and with it built a good fire under another tree. Then with his flint knife he cut meat from the body of the deer, and cooked and ate it, and felt warm and comfortable as he sat leaning against the tree-trunk and close before the fire.

The storm soon passed away, and the stars and then the moon appeared, but the man did not know it: he slept. And in his sleep his shadow, wandering, met the thunder bird, and it told him that he must always keep alive the fire that it had set for him in his need; that by so doing he would have long life and happiness.

Just before daybreak the man awoke, and as his dream had told him to do, so he did. He made a cup of moistened and well-worked clay, placed in it a piece of very rotten wood and touched a live coal to it, and then with more clay made a cover for the cup. This had a small hole in it so that the smouldering fire could breathe. Like man, my son, if fire cannot breathe, it dies. So it was that the man took home the lightning fire.



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Arrived at his lodge, he ordered his women to put out the fire they had, and then with that he carried he built a fresh one. And since that day the sacred flame has lived. Its coals covered over and kept alive at night with ashes, and carried in a clay cup from camping-place to camping-place, and handed down from father to son and father to son, it has been great medicine. Every owner of it lived to great age, and each one of them was ever rich and happy. I doubt not that it lives yet in the lodge of Short Bow's son.

There! That is the story of the fire around which we sat that evening in the Gros Ventres camp. I have been particular to tell you all about it because — well, you will see the reason later.

"There! Now, tell us the news," said Short Bow, as he handed my father a fresh-lighted pipe, and leaned back on his couch.

"The news is that I have quit the Pikuni forever, that I am no longer a member of that ungrateful tribe," my father answered.

"No! Oh, no! That cannot be! It must not be so!" Short Bow cried, quickly sitting up and staring hard at all of us.

"Yes, so it is, and so it ever shall be!" said



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my father loudly; and he went on to tell him all about it.

When he had finished, no one spoke for a long time.

My father became impatient. "Ha! Why don't you say something?" he asked. "I thought that you would be glad that I have come to join your tribe — to be one of you."

"I told you, brother, that my lodge is your lodge," Short Bow answered. "I now say that my people are your people. We are glad to have you with us. But my advice to you is this: remain with us for a time, and then return to your people. Neither we, nor any other tribe, can be to you what the Pikuni are."

"The Pikuni are without heart. I shall never return to them. I shall remain with you," said my father.

Later in the evening, when the lodge was filled with visitors, my father told of the arrival of Ki-pah in the country, and gave the trader's message. They all said that that was the best news they had heard in a long while. They did not like to go to the mouth of the Yellowstone to trade, for that was in Sioux country, and the fort of the Red



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Coats was too far away in the North. Ki-pah should have their trade, they said, and they would at once begin trapping beavers for him. They all seemed to be glad that we had come to live with them.

As only a few of the Gros Ventres spoke and understood our language well, my father used signs as well as words when talking with them, so that all would know what he said. He now told of our narrow escape from the Assiniboine war party, and of the loss of his medicine pipe, and when he had finished, he got much sympathy.

Said Short Bow: "Brother, that is truly a terrible loss. What will you do without it?"

"Well, I have another medicine, one that the white trader gave me," my father answered. "It is truly a powerful medicine. I can draw fire from the sun with it. I am sure that it will help me in my prayers to the gods. And then I shall soon get back my pipe. The Assiniboines are cowards — dogs — nothing people. I shall go right into their camp and get that pipe."

A man sitting across the fire from my father laughed a low, mean, I-doubt-your-words kind of a laugh; and every one turned quickly to look at



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him. Leaning forward and speaking in a strange language, he quickly told my father in signs: "The Assiniboines are brave men; chiefs all of them. It is the Pikuni who are cowards — dogs."

And with that he got up, wrapped his robe closely about him, and walked slowly out of the lodge.

My father was so surprised that at first he could only sit still and stare at the man. Then, turning to Short Bow, he asked: "Did I hear right? Who is that man?"

"He is an Assiniboine," the chief answered. "He and his woman, afoot, came to us at the beginning of last winter. He said that he had quarreled with his people, had left them forever, and begged us to take pity on him. We did. He lives in Black Rabbit's lodge, and looks after his horses and hunts for him."

"Well, I am going to hunt him! No man can call me a dog, a coward, and then strut off that way!" my father cried, and started to follow him.

"No, no, brother, no!" Short Bow exclaimed, taking him by the arm. "You must not fight him — not here, not in this camp. We gave him our protection and may not break our word."



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"But he called me — the Pikuni — bad names!"

"You were the first to call names," Short Bow reminded him. "And listen. He did not give you — he gave the Pikuni — those bad names. And you say that you are no longer a member of the tribe. Well, then, what is it to you what he calls that people?"

My father had been straining away from Short Bow, impatient to arise, to follow the Assiniboine; but when the chief said that, all the strength seemed to go out of him: he sank back weakly on the couch, and was silent. For the first time, I think, he was beginning to see that he must pay for what he had done. It was true: no longer one of the Pikuni, he had no right to stand up for them. His pride was terribly hurt, and he could do nothing to wipe out the sting of the Assiniboine's words.

We soon went out and to our own lodge, and, early as it was, to bed. So ended our first evening with the Gros Ventres.

I did not sleep well. Somehow I kept thinking of our horses. In the early part of the night my dream had been about them — some trouble about them; but when I awoke I could not recall just



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what it was. It made me very uneasy. As soon as day began to break I quietly got up and dressed, took my gun, and went out to look for them. I went afoot; we had not picketed even one of them at the lodge, for my father said it would not be necessary: the Gros Ventres had a guard of young men out every night to protect the herds, to give warning of the approach of a war party.

Up and down the river bottoms I went and out on the plains, hurrying ever faster from herd to herd of the Gros Ventres animals in the hope that they might be ours, yet ever with the feeling — from the very start I had it — that I would not find our horses.

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## CHAPTER V

THE sun was well up when I examined the very last one of the several hundred herds and then hurried back to camp.

"Our horses are gone! Our horses have been stolen!" I cried, as I tore into our lodge and almost fell on my couch.

"Oh, no, they have not been stolen, my son; you have just overlooked them," said my father quietly. "If they were stolen, some of the Gros Ventres herds would also be missing. But there is no excitement in camp, no outcry. No, my son, you are mistaken. Calm yourself. Rest, eat. We will go out together after a time and run in the herd."

Just then Short Bow stepped outside his lodge and began shouting invitations to a feast. My father's was the first name called. He hurried to the river for his morning bath, then to recomb and braid his hair, rubbed his face and hands with the sacred red-brown paint, and went out.

Said my mother as soon as he was gone: "You are sure that the horses have been stolen?"



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"Very sure," I answered. "I have hunted through every piece of timber along the river, been out on the plains north and south of the valley, and just as sure as I sit here I know that the enemy has taken our herd."

My mother sighed. "Well, it is just what I have been expecting," she said, more to herself than to us. "Never, never shall we have any peace and happiness and good luck until Lone Bull sees his mistake and we return to our people."

My sister began to cry. She loved some of her horses, the little colts especially, more than she did her dolls.

In the other lodge, meantime, Black Rabbit was telling that his Assiniboine herder and hunter and his woman had disappeared; that some time in the night they had stolen out of the lodge without awakening any one, and were gone with all their little belongings, presents that had been given them, and their ropes and riding-saddles.

At that my father suddenly cried out: "My son is right! He cannot find our horses this morning. He was sure that they had been stolen, and I could not believe it. They are stolen: that Assiniboine has them!"



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"We will soon know if they are gone or not," said Short Bow. And he sent one of his women to tell the camp-crier to order the young men out to look for them.

The feast went on. I think that my father did not eat much. Short Bow's old mother came over and told us that the Assiniboine and his wife were gone in the night with all their things, and that my father believed the cut-throat had taken our horses.

Somehow my mother and I knew at once that he had them. I told her about my dream. "Ah! There it was, a warning!" she said. "If you could only have thought to awaken us, your father might have saved the herd."

We were both sure that the Assiniboine and his wife were right then driving the herd eastward as fast as they could go.

And we were right. The young men soon came back from the valley and plains, and told that they could not find our horses, but had found the trail of them in the new grass. They had been traveling rapidly straight down the valley. And then one of the night herd-watchers told of having seen the Assiniboine among the herds in the early part of the



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night, but, thinking that he was one of the guard, had said nothing to him nor noticed what he was doing.

My father and Short Bow counseled together and that it was useless to pursue the Assiniboine, as he had a long, long start, and many fresh horses to ride. The one thing to do was to locate the camp of that tribe and watch for a chance to get the horses.

"Yes, that is what I shall do," said my father. "I wanted to go there anyhow, to recover my pipe. Well, how many of your warriors will go with me?"

"Brother, I am sorry. You must go alone," Short Bow told him. "We made peace with the Assiniboines last summer and have no cause to go against them."

My father did not like that. The Gros Ventres, under the protection of the three tribes of us, the Pikuni, Blackfeet, and Bloods, had no right to be making peace with our enemies without first getting our permission. He complained to my mother about it.

"That is true," she told him, "but you, why, you have nothing to say about it: you are no longer one of the Pikuni."



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There was another hard hit my father got. He made no reply to it, and was silent a long time, finally telling my mother to get ready extra moccasins for him, as he would leave that night for the Assiniboine camp.

The tribe was at that time at the mouth of Milk River. During the day he had another talk with Short Bow. The chief promised to take care of us during his absence. In the afternoon he took a sacred sweat-bath and an old medicine man offered prayers for his success.

At sundown he put on his little pack of moccasins, ropes, dried meat, and war clothes, picked up his gun, and left us. He looked very sad, very lonely, as he went down the valley. My mother and sister cried as they watched him go, and I felt pretty badly myself.

Well, we had three horses, those that Short Bow had given us, so we were not actually afoot. My mother and sister used them for bringing in wood and I for hunting. I was only a boy, but I had no longer the ways of a boy. I had many boy friends in the Gros Ventres camp, three especially, whose mothers were of the Pikuni. Naturally they spoke my language and the Gros Ventres too. In other



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camps we had had great fun hunting rabbits and grouse, and playing together. But I could n't do that any more. I had killed buffaloes, so what were rabbits to me?

And I worried all the time about our condition. Separated from our people, my father gone, perhaps never to return, without enough horses with which to move camp, we were truly the poorest of the poor. I had no heart for play. Nor was I old enough to be friends with the young men of the camp. They had nothing to say to me when I went among them. I was not asked to their dances and other gatherings. I was very lonely.

Three days after my father left, camp was moved some distance up the river to new beaver trapping-grounds. Short Bow loaned us two horses, all he could spare, which made five head, for the moving. But five were not enough to carry all our belongings and us too. No one offered to lend us more horses, although there were hundreds of them running loose, and so we packed everything on the five, and ourselves went on foot all through the long hot day.

And how ashamed we were to be afoot, we who had always had plenty of horses to ride, to lend,



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and to give to those who needed them. It is terrible to be poor. And how different were the Gros Ventres from our own people. The Pikuni had good hearts. They would never permit strangers even to travel on foot.

After we made camp that evening I told my mother that things should soon be different, even if my father failed to get back our herd. "From now on I am going to be a man," I told her. "I am going to trap beavers with which to buy horses. And later I shall go to war against the enemy and take more of their horses than we can use."

"You are a good boy, a brave boy," my mother told me. "You shall trap beavers and hunt for us. But it is best that you first have your dream. We cannot have you going away from camp without a protector, a sacred medicine helper all your own."

I agreed to that, and my mother got Short Bow to pray for me, after she and my sister had built a platform in a tree and put a bed on it.

It was nearly sunset when I went into the chief's lodge. He had me sit beside him while he painted my face red, the sun's own color, and then painted in black a butterfly, sign of good dreams, on my forehead. He then prayed to the gods to have



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pity on me, and to his fire he cried: "Ancient fire! Lightning fire of my fathers! Have pity on this boy! Help him to have good dreams; to find a strong medicine, a most powerful helper for his times of need!"

My mother and sister went with me to my dreaming-place as soon as I left the chief's lodge. It was in a big cottonwood tree, one of four, away out in a coulée south of the river and close under the rim of the plains. It was not a place where enemies would hide. The Gros Ventres, warned that I was to dream there, would never come near enough to disturb me.

As soon as I climbed up into my bed and lay down and said that I was comfortable, my mother and sister left me and returned to camp. I thought much of the chief's prayers for me, and of his sacred, ever-living fire, a truly powerful medicine. I began praying to it and to all the gods, and soon fell asleep.

Day after day I lay there in my bed in the tree, fasting and praying, and morning after morning my mother and sister brought me water, coming very quietly and staying only long enough to ask how I felt.



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For the first two days I was very hungry, but after that I thought no more of food. Then in my sleep I — my shadow — began to have strange adventures as it left my body and went forth in quest of help. Traveling far over plains and mountains, and up and down river valleys, I met many of the ancient ones — the shadows, you know, of those first ones of the earth, those first animals, who, with our first fathers, spoke but the one language, that of the Pikuni.

Yes, I talked with many of them; asked them for help; but somehow my dreams did not last. I — my shadow — would come back to my body too soon; the dream would be broken; and mostly I could only partly remember what it was. Perhaps this was because I worried so much about my father. I was continually thinking about him. I could just see him, all alone and very sad, hiding by day and traveling by night in search of the enemy's camp and his horses. And something seemed to tell me that he was going straight into great danger.

My son, came the fourth night: four, the medicine number. I was in one of four trees, that itself a good sign. I prayed hard to all the gods, to Short Bow's sacred fire, and to the four directions of the



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earth, and took four swallows of water, and fell asleep, and lo! I got that which I had prayed for. Not only that, but I got four medicines. Four! The lucky number! Just think of it!

Listen. This is the way it happened — this was my dream: I walked across a big plain, and very tired and hot and thirsty, I went down into a valley, knelt on the shore of its stream and drank, and then sat back on the sand to rest. A raven — bird of good luck — flew over me, and on into the timber at my back. I called upon him for help, turning to watch him, but he never answered me nor stopped. When he went out of sight I again faced the stream. Sitting on the sand at the edge of the water, all in a row and watching me, were four of a certain kind of land-and-water animals. I cannot tell you just what kind they were; one never tells the names of his secret helpers, you know.

Said one of them to me: "We heard your call for help as we were passing. Well, what is it? Maybe we can help you."

"Do help me!" I cried. "I need help. Far have I traveled, and many have I asked to be my medicine, my helper, and all have failed me."

"Just as we said when we heard you calling



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Raven," the one who had first spoken told me. "Well, we will help you, we four brothers, we four ancient ones. In the very, very long ago we and your first fathers were friends. They were good to us, and we will be good to you. Yes. We will be your medicine. Come now to our lodge with us."

Their lodge was a near-by cave in the river-bank. I followed them into it. All along the sides were clean couches of grass. On the walls hung beautiful garments, strange medicines. I looked at them closely, longingly. Then one of the brothers spoke to me, and lo! they had changed themselves into men. All the ancient ones had the power to do that, you know.

My son, I may not tell you much more about my visit in that strange place with those ancient ones. They told me how I must call upon them, how pray to them for help, and then told me that I could go.

My shadow returned to my body. I awoke; and oh, how glad I was that I had found my medicine! I lay there in my tree bed thinking it all over until daylight came, and then I hurried home to tell my mother and Short Bow about it. So it was that I got my medicine. The four brothers have been



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my powerful helpers. I am an old, old man. Through many battles, through countless dangers, they have brought me safely to my peaceful old age.

Well, now that I had my medicine, the young men of the camp took some notice of me; asked me to their dances, and came to my lodge to eat with me and talk. I was no longer lonely. I went hunting with them, and brought home all the meat and hides we could use. I set our few beaver traps and every morning found from one to three beavers in them. One or two of the Gros Ventres had visited Ki-pah during my fast, and had brought home fine blankets and cloths, beads, tobacco, knives, and traps, and the whole tribe had become eager to trade for the white man's goods. Every one who had traps was using them. Horses were plentiful and cheap. For a good, swift buffalo-runner I paid three beaver-skins. One skin would buy a good pack-horse. So anxious were those who had no traps to get my skins that they took them from the animal and themselves fleshed and dried them. My mother and sister and I were busy and happy but for one thing: we worried continually about my father; worried so much as the days passed and he



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did not return that my mother went out all through the camp one morning, and vowed before the people that she would burn a sacred, a medicine lodge for the sun, if the great sky god would send the lone wanderer safely home to us.

I was now making with my traps better than a horse a day. We soon owned enough to carry our lodge and all our things, and good fast ones to ride, and some to spare. My mother and sister went with me to the traps every morning, and helped skin the catch.

If I did n't have to hunt, I would spend the rest of the day herding my horses together. I had great trouble with them. They would keep going back to the herds from which they had been sold, and I wanted them to become so used to one another that they would remain together. Some I tied neck and neck with short ropes, others I hoppled, and that helped some; but every day I had to hunt up several of them. It was generally night before I could go home and eat and rest.

It was not very far from where we were camped to the mouth of the river, where was thought to be the Assiniboine camp. A man on foot could easily go there in five days' travel. We kept count of the



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days of my father's absence, each night cutting a notch in a stick. When fifteen days had passed, we began to have fears for his safety, and got Short Bow to make sacrifices to the gods, and beg them to help him to avoid the dangers by the way and return to us.

After that we felt more hopeful for a time; but when the twentieth day had passed we felt worse than ever. Twenty days. That was time enough for him to go twice to the mouth of the river and back.

Said my mother: "Oh, my children, I am very anxious. I fear that we shall never see your father again."

I thought so too, but would not say it, and cheered her up the best I could, giving many reasons for his long absence. More days passed.

One evening I cut the thirtieth notch in the stick, and was laying it away back of my couch, when the door curtain was slowly drawn aside and my father stumbled inside, and would have fallen right into the fire had I not jumped up and caught him. We got him over on his couch, and propped him up against the back rest.

I noticed that he had on him none of the things



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with which he had started away, not even his bow-and-arrow case. Where was it, I wondered, and where his beautiful war clothes in fringed and painted rawhide case? And why were his right hand and arm so swollen and black and green-colored? And how terrible was his appearance! All the firm, full flesh of him was gone. He was just a skeleton covered with loose skin. His big eyes were deep-sunken and had a strange expression: they seemed to take little notice of us, and to be staring at some far-away thing not given us to see.

His wandering gaze fastened upon his medicine sack, which my mother had always kept in its place, fastened to a lodge pole over the couch. He weakly pointed to it. "Take it down. Open it," he whispered.

I did so. The first thing that came to my hand was the takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument that Ki-pah had given him.

I held it up and he reached out for it. "Ah! There it is. Because I forgot to take it with me, because I had no medicine — that was why all the bad luck came to me," he whispered.

My mother was heating a pot of left-over meat and soup. She filled his own wooden dish with the



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soup and held it to his lips. He drank it all without stopping, asked for more, and drank another dishful.

Then he wanted meat, but my mother would not give it to him. "Hand me some at once. I am starving," he commanded.

But my mother shook her head and said: "No. After a while you can have some." And almost at once he went to sleep with the medicine instrument in his hand.

We kept the fire going and watched him.

Short Bow came in, bent over and looked at him, and at the swollen hand and arm. Then he sat on my couch with me. "He has suffered much, but I think he will soon get well," he said.

It was long after the middle of the night when my father awoke. He asked at once for soup and meat. The pot of it was warm by the fire, and all that my mother would give him he drank and ate hungrily, and then, for the first time noticing Short Bow, he sat up with something like his old, quick way of movement, and gave him greeting. "Ha! It is you, my friend, I am glad," said he.

"We prayed, we made sacrifices for you, and you are here. We are glad, too," Short Bow told him.



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"Myself, I never expected to see my woman and children again," said my father. "Listen! This is what happened:—

"Four nights after leaving you all, I came close to the mouth of this river, and with the light of the new morning I saw smoke rising away off down the valley. I knew that it was the smoke from the lodges of the enemy. Later on, I saw men riding out on the plains to hunt. I lay hidden all day, waiting until night should come before starting for the camp.

"I thought it best to pray to the gods for help; to make sacrifice to them. The enemy had my Thunder Pipe, of course, but I had the medicine fire-maker that the white man had given me. That would be of some use; I would draw fire from the sun with it, and then the great sky god would surely notice me, and listen to my call for help. I opened my war-clothes cylinder to take out the the ice-rock, and lo! it was not there. I was sure that I had laid it between the shirt and the leggings. I must have dreamed that I did so, for all the time it was here, right there in that medicine sack you see, just where I had put it some days before leaving camp.



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"Well I had nothing with which to pray and sacrifice, but I prayed and sacrificed as best I could without the medicine thing, and with the coming of night started for the enemy's camp. My plan was, first, to find my horses, then to sneak into the camp and try to recover my Thunder Pipe. I went around a bend in the valley and saw the red-yellow glow of the lodges of the enemy. The moon came up and I went from herd to herd of the grazing horses, but not one of the animals they had taken from me could I find.

"I then made up my mind to go into the camp and try to get the pipe. If I succeeded, I would round up what I could of the enemy's horses, and start home with them.

"I approached the camp. It was pitched right in the open bottom; there was not even sage-brush to hide my approach to it. I got down on hands and knees and began crawling through the fairly tall grass. When I was quite near the outermost of the lodges, a real [1] snake suddenly rattled just ahead and to my left. I flinched away from it, extending my right hand, and the snake's mate struck me right there on the forearm. Without giving me

[1] Real snake: ni-top-i-pik-sek-sin. The rattlesnake.



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warning, without once rattling, it struck its fangs deep into my arm. In my terror I almost cried out for help. I sprang to my feet, and the snake dropped from my arm. I held the bitten place to my mouth, and, sucking it, ran: ran, not up nor down the Little River, but straight way from it toward the Big River, just over the hill to the south. Almost at once my arm and hand began to swell, and to feel as though it were all on fire inside. Never, never felt I such terrible pain as that was.

"Over the hill I went, and down into the brakes of the Big River, and there, in the bottom of a timbered coulée, I came upon a mud-banked spring. I dropped down flat beside it, and thrust my burning arm into the mud. The coldness of it eased the pain, at first, and then it seemed as though the heat in my bitten flesh would set the mud itself on fire. I kept thrusting my arm down into fresh places. It did no good; the pain increased; and as daylight came I felt myself going. 'Right here I take the trail to the Sand Hills,' I said, and knew no more.

"When I came to myself again, where do you think I was? On an island in the Big River. How did I — why did I go there? I don't know. How



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long had I been there? I cannot tell. Gone were my bow and arrows, my war clothes, ropes, and my sack of moccasins and dried meat. Where, in my crazy wandering, had I left them or cast them away? I did not know. It was useless to try to find them. My arm and hand were still big swollen, but not now very painful. I wandered around on the island and found a few roots and ate them.

"When night came I pushed a piece of driftwood into the water and half-swam and half-floated to the north shore. I did not know where I was. I went up out of the valley and waited for daylight, and when it came, why, there, straight north of me, were the Wolf Mountains. In my crazy wandering I had come far up the Big River. I thought that I might as well be dead as the way I was. Regardless of war parties, I right then struck out across the plains from the mountains.

"Day after day I traveled, finding fewer and fewer roots, getting weaker and weaker. I passed the east end of the mountains. I struck this Little River and followed it up. And here I am. Had you been camped but a little way farther on, I could never have reached this lodge."



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"Ha! You did well," Short Bow told him. "Although you had no medicine, still the gods were with you. Few, oh, very, very few are those who survive the bite of a real snake."

My father did not answer. He was asleep again. Short Bow went home, and we lay down and also slept.

When we awoke the next morning my father still slept soundly. I told my mother not to say anything to him about the horses I had earned by my beaver trapping. As soon as I had finished eating I hurried out and caught two horses, and with my sister started up the river on my daily round of the traps. I told her that we would get through the work as fast as possible, and then round up our horses and call our father out of the lodge to see how well we had done during his absence. We thought that his heart would be glad when he learned that we had forty head of horses, that we had earned all but three of them, and would no longer have to get the loan of animals with which to move camp.

On the previous day I had moved and set my traps much farther up the river, beyond those of any of the other trappers. Here, where hundreds



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of young, smooth-bark cottonwoods stood thick along the sloping bank of the river, the always-working little woodcutters had trail after trail running out into the timber, along which they carried and dragged and pushed their cuttings to the shore, and then towed them to the deep water under the cutbank, on the opposite side of the river, and sank them.

Their dens were in the cutbank, the entrances to them far below the surface of the stream. In winter-time, when the ice covered the river, they fed upon these big piles of cuttings, when hungry dragging one of them up into the entrance of the den and gnawing and eating the bark, and then pushing the stripped white stick out into the water to float away.

They were not storing cuttings now; they did not begin that work until the falling leaves told of the approach of winter. But they used the trails just the same, going out along them every night to feed, and I felt sure that we should find one in each of the three traps.

We tied our horses at the outer edge of the timber, and slowly, silently, approached the river. I held my gun ready to shoot, for there was a



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chance that I might get a shot at one of the animals feeding on the shore or swimming about the place.

When quite near the first of the traps we heard a sudden heavy splash in the water where it had been set. It was a very loud splash; much louder than a beaver could make; we could not see what had caused it, as the thick brush hid the river from us. The splashing noise continued; not so loud now, but always in the one place.

"You stand here, and I will go ahead and see what is there," I told my sister.

After making a few steps I looked back: she was keeping close to me. I signed to her to stop.

She shook her head and signed: "No, I go with you."

And at that I paid no more attention to her and went on more carefully than ever.

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## CHAPTER VI

I WENT the last bit of the way on my hands and knees; and when, at last, I half-raised up and looked out through the brush, that which I saw made my heart beat fast: right there in front of me was a big, a very big, old grizzly bear standing on her hind legs in the water, forepaws half-raised, and with quick turns of the head watching the surface of the stream close around her. On the shore sat two very little bears watching her.

Suddenly, right at her back, a beaver stuck its head out of the water for a breath of air and as quickly sank. She whirled, jumping high in the air, and came down on all four feet, and pawed around in the muddied water. The claws of her right paw caught in my trap chain; she pulled, and brought to the surface the trap and the fine, big beaver in it. She made a lunge and gripped the round, fat body in her mouth and started ashore.

That made me mad. Also, I was terribly afraid of the big animal: she was of the kind that often



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killed people just for the fun of crushing their flesh and bones and leaving the body for relatives to find and cry over. But I was as angry as I was afraid. I did n't want to lose that trap, with several horses; nor the fine beaver, worth at least a good pack-animal.

For the very first time I called upon my medicine dream: "Hai-yu! You four ancient brothers, help me," I prayed, and made ready to shoot. The old she sticky-mouth was coming ashore; her two young ones were now standing on their hind legs, watching her, trying with their black, little noses to know what it was that she carried in her mouth. I had staked the trap chain its full length from the shore, so that the beaver could not go out on the land and free itself by gnawing off its leg. I intended that it should drown; no doubt it had just got into the trap and was struggling to keep its head above the water as the bear came along.

And now the chain suddenly straightened; the stake held, and the beaver and the dangling trap dropped from the bear's mouth. She gave a low growl of surprise and anger and turned to seize the animal again.

She was broadside to me; this was my chance.



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I aimed close back of her shoulder, and well below the back, and fired. The gun boomed; the bear gave a terrible roar of pain and anger; I sprang to my feet, whirled to run, and knocked my sister down. I had not known that she was right behind me. Of course, she yelled, and the bear heard her.

I grasped her arm and helped her up. "Run, Run fast!" I told her, as I looked back toward the river. Roaring loudly, and smashing down the big brush at every jump, the bear was coming for us. Red blood was streaming from her big, wide-open mouth; and when I saw that I felt that there was a chance for us to escape her: that light red, frothy blood comes only from pierced lungs. That was where my ball had struck in: there would soon be neither breath nor blood in her body.

Nitaki was running straight for the horses; running so fast that the two braids of her hair swung straight out from her head. I kept right behind her; but run as we would the bear was gaining upon us.

Again White Wolf's words came to me: "Fight hard for your mother and sister." And at that I turned off considerably to the left for a few steps, slowing up and shouting at the bear. She almost



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at once changed her course to follow me, never noticing Nitaki, and then I went on as fast as I could. But the bear was now very close to me, and getting closer. I dropped my gun, tore off my belt, and then, snatching my blanket from around my shoulders, I made a ball of it and tossed it backward over my head. The bear caught it, stopped to bite and claw it, and I went on for three or four jumps, to a young cottonwood, and up it to the first branches almost as fast as a squirrel could have climbed.

I looked back, the bear had left the blanket and was coming on, wheezing loudly, and all covered with foamy blood; and she was coming about as fast as ever, but suddenly, as she jumped, she died: died in the air. When her big body struck the ground it lay still, and I gave a shout of victory.

Down I dropped from the tree and called my sister: "Come, Nitaki," I yelled, "sticky-mouth is dead."

"Are you sure of it?" she shouted back.

"Yes, sure. Come on!" I answered.

Together we stood and looked at the big animal, almost as big as a cow buffalo. What a huge, wide



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head it had! What very small, mean eyes, and what very long claws on its fore feet! They were as long as my hand.

They were mine. I might not take the hide, none but medicine men dared take a bear's hide, and they only a strip of it from the back with which to wrap a sacred pipe. Why? Because bears are people, different from us but a very little in form.

But I had a right to the claws, just as one has a right to the scalp of the enemy he kills. I could wear them as a necklace, as proof that I had counted a coup. One after the other I lifted the big, fore paws and cut off the claws, Nitaki meantime getting my torn and bloody blanket in which to pack them. We then recovered my gun and I loaded it.

We went out to the river shore. The little bears were gone, and we never did see them again. I waded out in the stream and pulled up the stake, my trap, and then the chain, and the trap with the beaver in it. The bear's jaws had crushed the body but the skin was not torn and we soon had it off and the trap reset.

That was the only beaver we got that morning:



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the next trap was sprung, the third one untouched. I reset them, and we went home, on the way rounding up our horses. Our mother was watching for us, and when we had driven the herd close in front of the lodge she got my father outside.

"See what your son has done while you were away," she told him. "Those are his horses — all but the three Short Bow gave you."

"No! Oh, no! That can't be so!" my father exclaimed.

"But it is so," Nitaki told him. "Brother trapped beavers and traded the skins for them. And we helped him. We went almost every day with him and did most of the skinning."

My father said never a word. He sat down, leaned back against the lodge skin, and stared and stared at the horses.

Sister and I dismounted. "And there," she said, throwing down the beaver-skin, "is another skin — another horse."

I was untying my blanket bundle. I opened it and laid it on the ground in front of my father. "See! I have killed a big sticky-mouth. I have counted a coup. There are the claws. Just see how very big and long they are."



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Now, would n't you think that he would have been glad with us — that he would have laughed, and said something nice? He did nothing of the kind: he just glanced at the claws, and turned away his head, and muttered: "Everybody has good luck but me. Everything goes wrong with me. I am very poor."

"Oh, no, you are not poor, father, those horses are your horses —" I began. But my mother stopped me.

She was angry. I could see by the look of her eyes that she was very angry. "And if you are poor, unlucky, whose fault is it?" she cried. "Yours! Oh, let us go back to our people before worse luck comes to us!"

"Never! We will never go back!" my father told her; and for one so sick and weak he arose very quickly. And then he spoke more kindly: "Woman mine, and you, my children, listen!" he said. "Good luck must come to us. I shall soon be well and strong, and then I will go again after my horses and the Thunder Pipe, and next time I shall get them. Meantime, we have a good medicine, a powerful medicine: we have the ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun. Had I not forgotten to



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take it with me, I doubt not that I should have returned to you well and strong, and with all that I went after."

And with that he went back into the lodge, my mother helping him, and lay down on his couch.

The days passed. I continued trapping, and now we saved the skins I got for trade with Ki-pah; we had by this time many more horses than we could use. Sleeping much and eating plenty, my father soon began to look like himself again. Only on rainy days did his snake-bitten arm pain him much.

On the day that the camp-crier made the rounds of the lodge, shouting that all the people should be ready to start the next morning for the white man's fort at the mouth of the Marias, he said that he was well enough to stand the two days' ride.

We arrived at the place without adventure, and set up our lodges close to the Big River and above and below Ki-pah's fort. He was very glad to see us. He feasted the Gros Ventres chiefs and my father, and made them fine presents. My mother and Sah'-kwi-ah-ki, here, had become great friends; they were together about all the time.

When the Gros Ventres crowded into the trade-



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room of the fort, — all that could get in, — the great variety of rich trade goods they saw there astonished them. They almost fought with one another in their haste to get to the counters and exchange their beaver-skins for the various things that they fancied. There must have been all of twenty hundred beaver-skins in the camp, and in the course of four or five days Ki-pah had them all and his trade-room was bare of goods. But more soon came: three deep-loaded keel-boats from the fort at the mouth of the Yellowstone brought more things than Ki-pah had had in the first place before the trade began. Also, some of these things were so beautiful that just the sight of them, as they lay piled on the shelves, hurt one's eyes. Blankets there were, of many bright colors; very different from the white, and the blankets of the Red-Coat traders of the North. Every man and woman in the camp wanted one, and in the whole camp there was not a beaver-skin left. The chiefs counseled together, trying to decide upon the best place to go for more beavers.

With the three keel-boats there came a great white chief, with his men, to visit Ki-pah. He was, Ki-pah told us, a different kind of white man, from



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a country on the other side of a great lake of salt water, and was very rich and very wise. He was always asking questions about us and our country. Not a living thing was too big or too small for him to kill and prepare for carrying with him to his far home. He took the skins, and all the bones, of buffaloes and bears and elk and antelopes, and all other animals, big and little.

One day, when my father and Short Bow and I were sitting with him in his room, he caught a spider and fastened it to a piece of paper with a pin through its body. He then set it under a queer kind of a sees-far instrument with which to see things close, and told us to look through it at the spider's head. We did so, one by one, and what we saw made us shiver. Why, that spider's head was a horrible-looking thing. It had wicked eyes, and a mouth that could seize and rend prey apparently the size of a buffalo.

After we had looked at the spider, he set a drop of water under the instrument and had us look at that. It was full of wiggling worms — another horrible sight. He told us that all water was full of them. Of course we could n't believe that: he was great medicine, that white man; he had put



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those wigglers into the water just to show us what power he had.[1]

Well, the chiefs decided that we should go back to the Little River and begin trapping just above our old camp-site there. The camp-crier gave us the order early in the morning, to get ready to move the next day. But he had no sooner finished his round than he came riding again among the lodges, shouting: "We shall not break camp to-morrow. The Pikuni are coming. Our friends are even now close here."

It was Short Bow's woman who came hurrying into our lodge to tell us what he said.

My father's face turned all mad-looking when he heard the news, and we dared not show our joy before him. "If they come and set up their lodges right beside us, we shall move away at once," he told my mother.

She did not answer him. Nitaki and I hurried outside to watch for the coming of our people.

[1] *Author's note:* This "medicine white man" was undoubtedly Maximilian, Prince of Wied, who visited Captain Kipp at the mouth of the Marias in the summer of 1833. He was a great naturalist and traveler, and wrote a most interesting illustrated account of his journey up the Missouri in that early day. (See Maximilian's *Travels in North America*, obtainable in most of the large public libraries.)



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Our mother soon joined us. We saw Short Bow and all the under-chiefs, the great warriors and medicine men of the Gros Ventres, ride out to meet them. And in the lodge at my back my father sat thinking hateful thoughts of our own blood people. His actions made me very sad. I saw tears in my mother's eyes. I wanted to go inside and tell him that I did not think it fair for him so to spoil our lives. I dared not do it.

Short Bow and his men soon came riding slowly back, and with them was Lone Walker, and many other great men of the Pikuni. None of them noticed us as they dismounted and went into Short Bow's lodge to feast and smoke.

We kept our eyes upon the upper end of the bottom and presently saw the head of the long column of the Pikuni come out of the timber, halt in the open grass-land beside the river, and prepare to make camp. We hurried up there. On all sides people gave us hearty greetings. We went on and found our relatives: Fox Eyes and White Wolf, and all their women and children. Then what greetings there were; happy words and tears as well. Women and girls always cry when they are most happy.



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While the women hurried to put up the lodges and get water and wood and start cooking, Fox Eyes and White Wolf and a number of other men had me sit with them on the river-bank and tell them all that had happened to us since we had left the tribe. Silently they passed the pipe, listening carefully to all I said, and not one thing did they say until I told about killing the bear, and raised the necklace on my breast to show them its big claws.

An old man clapped his hands together then, and cried out: "Ha! A true Pikunikwan is this boy! A boy, say I? Why, he is a man, a warrior."

"Ai! You speak truth"; "True are your words, ancient one," the others exclaimed, and oh, how good was their praise in my ears!

When I came to the end of my talk, no one spoke for some time.

Finally White Wolf spoke up: "I am very much ashamed for my elder brother," he said. "I know that I should be very angry at him for all that he has done, most of all for taking his woman and children into all kinds of danger. But if I do say it, he is a good man, a brave man. Also, he is too proud. I say this: let us have pity for him. It is



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plain enough that the gods have forsaken him. He has lost his medicine, he has lost his horses, he has been snake-bitten. He is very, very poor. Let us all be very friendly to him and do what we can to get him to come back to us."

Every man there quickly cried out that he would do all he could toward that end, and the little gathering broke up. My mother and sister and I soon went home.

My father was cross with us. "Of course, you have all been up in the camp of the Pikuni — you would rather be there than with me," he said.

"Don't talk that way," my mother told him; "you know that we always want to be with you."

He did not say anything to that.

Visitors soon began coming to our lodge: White Wolf and Fox Eyes, first, to stay with us all day; and many others, friends of my father, men who had been with him on countless dangerous raids, who had fought beside him in many a battle. One and all they gave him most friendly greeting, gave what news they had, smoked a pipe or two, and went their way, each one telling him to return soon the visit.

Never had I seen my father act as he did that



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day. For the first time in his life he let others do the talking; had nothing to say for himself; showed by his every action that he was ashamed before them because his riches and his medicine had gone as surely from him as had the winter ice from the river flowing past our lodge.

White Wolf and Fox Eyes remained with us long after all the other visitors had gone, talking about everything except that which was always in their mind to ask. On that day they said not one word about wanting us all to go back to our place with the tribe.

In the evening, after they had gone, came a young man messenger from Lone Walker. The great chief wanted his old friend, Lone Bull, to come to his lodge and feast and smoke with him. My father quickly sat up when he heard that, and looked around for his robe and drew it to him. We thought that he accepted the call; our hearts beat fast with gladness; I could see my mother's eyes shining with joy. And then, suddenly, he tossed the robe from him, sank back against his back rest, and said to the messenger: "Tell your chief that I am a sick man and can go nowhere."

Oh, how disappointed we were!



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The next morning the chief came to our lodge and remained a long time. He acted in every way as though we were still with him, as though we had never parted from the tribe. His talk was mostly of old days; days of his and my father's youth, of their many good times together. And my father, listening, remembering, forgot for the time his anger and his losses, and before the chief left, himself did no little talking about old times. We thought it a good sign; a sign that his heart was changing; a sign that we should soon be setting up our lodge with those of our people.

Day after day and all day long the Pikuni crowded into Ki-pah's fort to trade their beaver-skins for his goods. They took all the different things that had been brought up in the three boats, and called for more. What a great thing it was for us, we all said, that a white trader had settled right in the middle of our hunting-ground for the purpose of supplying all our needs.

My son, what a mistake we made. I do not blame Ki-pah. Ours was the fault. We had no real need for anything that the traders brought into our country. Making their own weapons, killing their own food, making their own clothing,



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our ancestors had ever lived happily, contentedly. So should we have done; so we should have done had we been wise. With the coming of the traders began our end. For them we slaughtered our game; for their bright-colored blankets, their beads and tobacco, guns and firewater gave them a foothold in our country; gave them more and more until we gave our very lands. And so, by doing that, draws near our end, and the end for all the prairie peoples.

I do not remember how many days the Pikuni and the Gros Ventres camped side by side there at the mouth of the Marias. They were happy days; days of much visiting, much feasting and dancing, horse-racing, and at-marks-shooting with the guns obtained from the trader.

"You should save your balls for the enemy," an old man cautioned.

The shooters laughed at him. What were a few balls, a hundred balls? they wanted to know. A beaver-skin would buy twenty balls, and the streams were full of beavers.

At last Lone Walker and Short Bow counseled together and decided that it was time for the two tribes to part. All the dry wood in the bottoms had



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been gathered and used. Continuous hunting had driven the game herd far out on the plains. Everybody wanted to trap more beavers, and good trapping could not be done if the tribes camped together up and down the streams. Each chief had his camp-crier give out word that a move would be made the next morning, the Gros Ventres returning to the Little River, the Pikuni going south to the streams of the Belt Mountains.

Also Lone Walker and Short Bow talked together about my father. Both of them were his true friends. In the evening they came into our lodge, they, and White Wolf and Fox Eyes, and many others. Lone Walker, speaking for all of them, asked him to take back his words and return to his own people.

When he had finished speaking, Short Bow also urged him to do this.

"What? Do my ears hear right?" my father cried out. "Did n't you tell me that your lodge is my lodge, your people my people?"

"I did say so; I still say so," Short Bow answered. "I am your friend; and as a friend I advise you to return to your people. You can see for yourself that that is the thing to do, because, ever since



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you left them, you have had bad luck. The gods seem to be against you."

"It just happened so. True, I lost my Thunder Pipe, but I doubt not that my raid against the Assiniboines would have been successful had I not forgotten to take with me my takes-fire-from-the-sun medicine. I shall go soon again to the Assiniboine camp, and next time I shall surely recover my pipe."

"Now, brother, how could you possibly do that?" White Wolf asked.

"Why, I should go into the camp in the evening and sneak around among the lodges, peeking into them one by one until I could see the pipe, and then I should either rush right in and take it or wait until the people slept."

"And that would be the end for you," White Wolf told him; "they would have your scalp before you could get ten steps away from the lodge."

"Best you come back to us," said Lone Walker. "For the sake of your woman and children, come back."

"Yes, to be whipped again!" my father exclaimed. "Let us cease talking about it; I remain with Short Bow."



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Without another word our relatives and friends filed out of the lodge, Short Bow saying: "Well, be ready. We move camp in the morning."

I cannot begin to tell you how badly my mother and sister and I felt. We had set great hope on this talk. It had done no good: we were again to wander far from our people. And into what new dangers and troubles? we wondered.

Three days later we were back on the Little River with the Gros Ventres. My father was now about well and in good heart for doing things. He borrowed my gun when he chose, and did most of the hunting and beaver trapping. He intended to trade the first twenty beaver-skins he got for a new gun for himself.

For my mother and Nitaki and me the days now passed not unpleasantly. We had many friends among the Gros Ventres; several of them, as I have said, women of our own tribe, and their Pikuni-speaking children. When there was nothing else to do, and my father was away, we would talk about the good times we had had with our people at Ki-pah's fort.

On the morning that we left there my mother had whispered a long time with Sah'-kwi-ah-ki,



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the trader's wife. Nitaki and I now often asked her what that talk had been about, but she would never tell us, except to say: "You will know what we planned when it happens. It is something very good. Something that will make us all happy."

Arose the sun to make another fine summer day for us: a day for ripening the berries hanging in great green bunches on the trees. My father went early to the traps, and returned singing happily, for he had three beaver-skins tied to his saddle. We three, sitting outside the lodge and watching him, were happy because of his happiness. When all was well with my father, it was good to be with him. Little did we think what was to happen to us before the setting of that pleasant sun.

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## CHAPTER VII

This, my son, is what happened to us: In the afternoon of that pleasant day, my father and Short Bow sat in the shade of our lodge talking and smoking, and my father spoke of his ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument. He had lighted the pipe with it and claimed great things for it. It was, he said, undoubtedly the most powerful of all the different medicines in the camps of the Pikuni and the Gros Ventres.

"In the hands of those who made it, perhaps it is," said Short Bow.

"What do you mean by that?" asked my father.

"Just this," said the chief. "The white men's gods, their medicines also, are for them alone, and not for us prairie peoples. You can draw fire from the sun with that thing, but I believe that when you do so you are stealing the great god's fire and making him angry. I would not think of using it with my prayers to him."

"Ha! You do not understand!" my father exclaimed. "I know that it is powerful medicine;



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Ki-pah told me so. Why, it is much more powerful than your old lightning fire. What can you do with that except to keep it burning?"

"It was surely powerful enough to save you from death by the snake-bite," said the chief. "I prayed to it constantly during your absence. But, since you think so little of it, I shall not use it again in your behalf."

"Then don't use it. I can get along without your fire, and without your help of any kind," my father angrily told him. And oh, how it hurt us, listening, to hear him talking so to his best friend.

And the chief, he answered back never a word. Silently he handed over the pipe, and arose and went slowly to his lodge.

My father continued smoking. When the tobacco was burned to the last whiff, he knocked the ashes from the bowl, and called out: "Black Otter, go get the horses. Women, pack up and take down the lodge. We shall move away from here at once."

"Oh, don't get angry. Short Bow is not angry; he is only sorry for you," my mother told him.

She could not have said a worse thing.

"I don't want any one to be sorry for me!" he cried. "I can get along without any one's help!



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I have a stronger medicine than lightning fire! Go get the horses. Pack up, I say! I want to get out of this camp."

What was there to do but obey him? My mother and sister started taking down the lodge. I went for the horses. When I returned they had everything ready, and we saddled and packed up.

News of my father's anger, of his words to the chief, had gone all through the camp. The Pikuni women and two or three Gros Ventres women and some of our playmates stood around and sorrowfully watched us, but, afraid of my father, offered us no words of sympathy. But not one man was there, and not one of those we passed as we rode out of camp appeared to see us.

Such was our parting from the Gros Ventres. My father, on my best horse, rode proudly in the lead. My mother and sister and I, behind with the pack-horses and loose horses, rode with heavy hearts.

We made camp where the beaver traps were set. We passed a very unpleasant evening, no one saying a word, and went early to bed; I outside with the horses, every one of them hoppled or staked. Nothing happened during the night except that



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several times I had to drive away coyotes that were chewing the rawhide picket ropes.

In the morning we found three beavers in the traps, and skinned them after eating our meal of meat. Then my father told us to pack up, for we were going to live with the Crows.

"Oh, not with them!" my mother cried. "Why not go to the Blackfeet or the Bloods?"

"What are they but the Pikuni? They are all the one people, only under different names," my father told her. "And they also have those hunting rules. No, we will go live with the Crows, and be free to hunt whenever we need meat and hides."

"But they are our enemies," my mother objected.

"Enemies of the Pikuni, yes. But you forget that we are no longer of that tribe," my father answered. "They will welcome us — they will be only too glad to have Lone Bull with them."

Let me explain about the Crows, my son. What is our country had once been their country. Yes, the plains and valleys and mountains as far north as Belly River had once been theirs. Then, as our fathers got horses, and, later, guns from the Red-Coat traders, they came down into this richest of



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all hunting-grounds and drove the Crows southward, ever southward, until they held all the country north of the Yellowstone River. Then the Pikuni made peace with the Crows, both agreeing that this river should be the line separating the lands of the two tribes. Since that summer they had sometimes been at peace with one another and sometimes at war! mostly at war. Try as they would and did, the chiefs of the two tribes could not keep their young warriors at home. The young Crows would raid the Pikuni, or the young Pikuni would raid the Crows; there would be men killed, and a long war would be the result. At this time the two tribes were at war.

Well, we packed up and started for the Crow country, traveling now by night, and hiding ourselves and our horses as best we could in the daytime, so as to avoid war parties as much as was possible.

On the morning of the third day from the Little River, we came, soon after sunrise, to Ki-pah's fort. He was surprised to see us back so soon, and alone, and both he and Sah'-kwi-ah-ki, when they learned my father's intention, said all they could to get him to return to the Pikuni. He would not



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listen to them. With the beaver-skins we had he bought for himself a new gun and plenty of powder and ball, and for my mother and sister each a fine blanket, and red cloth for new dresses.

During the one day that we remained there at the fort, my mother again had several secret talks with Sah'-kwi-ah-ki. And again I wondered what it was all about. Sah'-kwi-ah-ki had not then learned our language; they talked by signs, and one cannot hear that. I watched them: they stood so close together that I could not see the movement of their hands.

But, finding that my father would not change his mind, Sah'-kwi-ah-ki handed my mother a new white blanket, blue cloth for a dress, some beads and red paint, and said: "My closest friend is an Arickaree woman, who grew up with my own Mandan people, and in my father's lodge. She is now in the Crow camp, married to a chief named Spotted Antelope. We now call her Crow Woman. Give her these things from me, tell her that you are my friend, and that I want her to be your friend."

My mother was glad to have that message to carry, and so were sister and I: it meant that we



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should anyhow find one friend, should we live to enter the Crow camp.

Leaving Ki-pah's fort we went up to where Fort Benton now stands, in order to cross the Big River, swollen bank-full with the melting snows of the mountains. So it was that we followed the trail of the Pikuni, but a short time since gone south to camp along the beaver streams.

On the first day out from the river, we rested and slept at the foot of the Highwoods, and, packing up at sundown, the following morning we struck brakes of Arrow Creek. Before going down into its deep, narrow valley, my father and I rode to a cut cliff above the trail and looked down into it, to see if any enemy was camping there. Of course we did n't ride to the very edge: we got down from our horses and crawled to the edge, and cautiously looked over it. The sun was just rising, so in the deep valley — it was almost a cañon — night still lingered. Little by little the light of day stole down there and we waited for it to eat up the last of the shadows. Soon all was plain: the stream, the narrow bottoms, the little groves of cottonwood and willow standing close to the water, and the far side of the cañon, a rock wall of many shelves. Not a living



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thing was moving down about there, nor in sight, except an old buffalo bull lying on a sandbar of the river, and, looking at him more closely, we saw that he was dead. I wondered, out loud, why the game had all left the country.

"There is nothing strange about that," said my father; "the Pikuni are ahead of us, you know. No doubt they camped down there for some days, and killed much game, and scared the herds off to other water."

I felt ashamed that I had not thought of that. I started to get up and follow my father back to the horses when I discovered a bighorn, a wide-backed, fat-looking he one, standing on a shelf of the cliff below us, and to our right. We had no meat, but had planned to kill some that morning. Here was our chance: I called my father back and showed him the animal.

"Good meat. We will sneak around to a point right over him and get him," he said.

We had not far to go, not more than two hundred steps. We came to the place and very carefully looked down over the edge of the cliff: the bighorn was there under us, right where we had seen him, and now lying down and chewing again the green



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things he had been nipping from the ground and brush.

My father was to have the shot, of course. He was slowly pushing his gun out over the cliff edge when I saw something move on a narrow ledge between us and the animal, and touched his arm and pointed downward. At that he drew back the gun and looked down with me, and lo! there was a big, a very big mountain lion crawling toward the animal, toward a point right over it, from there to make its spring.

We watched it, and at once became so interested in its meat-hunting that we had no thought of our guns. It kept its belly right down against the rock; its ears set forward; its long tail straight out, the tip end of it ever trembling. Almost it had the snake power, to move without legs; it crawled slowly, its eyes ever on the bighorn.

And the bighorn, he chewed and chewed his grasses, and kept raising his head, looking in all directions for signs of danger. That is the way with them when alone: they are always on the watch; they never sleep. Most always you find the old he bighorns together in little bands. Then they sleep by turns. When the watcher thinks



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that he has done his turn, he just butts one of his companions awake and himself lies down. Many a time I have seen them do that.

This lone old bighorn was a good watcher, but, of course, he could not see the enemy crawling along on the ledge above him. Every little way the lion would stop crawling and move its head out, little by little, so very slowly, that we could barely see it move. In the same way it would draw back its head, and then go on.

Once, as it was looking down, a piece of loosened rock fell from the cliff, struck the ledge near the bighorn, and bounded off into the cañon. The animal quickly turned its head and looked up, looked up to see what might have started it, and so quickly that the lion had not time to draw its head back out of sight. It held its head as motionless as the cliff itself. The bighorn's sharp, black eyes took in the whole cliff, every part of it above him; but he was looking for something that moved, and the lion's head escaped his notice.

Oh, how interested my father and I were in watching all this! Tracks in the winter snows had told us how the mountain lion got his food, but neither he nor I had ever seen one approach



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its prey; that is something that few men ever see.

And now came the most exciting part of this approach. The lion was at last straight above the bighorn and preparing to make its spring. Time and time again it shuffled its hind feet, seeking places upon which they would not slip.

It was then that I for the first time noticed how close the bighorn lay to the edge of its shelf. I said to myself that when the lion made its spring, it would also spring up, and both of them would go whirling to their death on the rocks below.

And just then the lion darted down upon the bighorn with the swiftness of an arrow. Its heavy body thudded against the animal, its claws sank into the flesh, its jaws closed upon the neck, and the bones cracked, and with that cracking went out instantly the life of the bighorn. It all happened in no more time than it takes me to snap my fingers. As quick as that, the bighorn was struck, its neck was broken, and it was dead: dead without one last kick. And to be sure of its food the lion was dragging the heavy body back from the edge of the cliff, dragging, half-carrying it, as easily as though it were a newborn kid.



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It was then that my father poked out his gun, and fired, and missed the lion. It growled, and sprang free from its prey, and looked all around, not knowing where and what was the danger. And then I fired at it, and my aim was true: the ball broke its backbone, went on down through the heart, and it sank down on the rock and was dead.

"Oh, I killed it. I have killed a mountain lion," I cried.

"Yes, you killed it, my son, and I am glad for you," my father said. "That lion's skin in the Crow camp is the same to you as ten horses. Well, go down there and push the two bodies over the edge. We will get them as soon as we make camp there by the creek."

Some distance farther on I found a place to get down, and was soon at the two bodies. I looked over the edge of the shelf: it was a long way down to the foot of it; I would not risk throwing over the lion, for his skin would be torn on the rocky slope. But I did push off the bighorn, and it struck the bottom with a crash that echoed all up and down the valley.

"Go on, and take my horse with you," I called to my father; "I will skin the lion here."



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I was a long time getting off the hide, and when I at last got down into the valley with it I found that my father had already taken what meat we needed of the fat bighorn.

"My bad luck continues," he said, "else why did I fail to shoot the mountain lion, so near to me?"

"Your new gun — you had not fired it before; perhaps it is not sighted good," I told him.

"No, no, there is nothing wrong with the gun," he answered, in a low, sad voice; "it is that the gods are against me. I am too tired now, but to-morrow morning, when we make camp, I shall get out my ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument and make medicine with it. Perhaps that will bring me the favor of the gods. I do not believe what Short Bow says: that the sun will be angry if I take fire from him."

We did not put up the lodge. After eating we made down our beds in the brush beside the stream, and my mother and sister and I slept while my father kept the horses grazing close in, and watched for enemies. At midday I got up and took his place, so that he could sleep for a time, and a little later my mother arose and nicely fleshed my mountain lion's skin. After seeing that the



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horses were not trying to stray off, I went up the valley a little way and found the camp-ground of the Pikuni. In several of the fireplaces, deep down in the ashes, there were still live coals; and by that I knew that the people had left there on the previous day. Their big trail from the camp-ground led straight up the river toward the mountains. How I wished that we were to follow it!

I went back to our horses and sat down, and got to thinking about my good fortune of the morning. It was as my father had said: with that one shot I had killed the value of ten horses. The Crows prized the mountain lion's skin above that of any other animal; they thought it great medicine, and used it for making a bow-and-arrow case, and for a saddle blanket when, all dressed up in their war clothes, they rode to battle against the enemy.

And then I thought about the bighorn. Keen as were his eyes, and swift and sure as were his feet, his enemy had easily taken his life. We were just like the bighorn, I thought. We were traveling in a country without doubt full of war parties, and we were about as helpless against them as the bighorn had been against the attack of the mountain lion. It did not seem possible to me that we could



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escape them and reach the Crow camp. And if we did, what kind of greeting would the Crows give us? I prayed long to the gods to have pity on us. I called upon my four ancient ones for help. We needed all the help we could get.

Before starting out from the valley that evening, my father and I climbed up to the edge of the plains for a good look at the country. We sat there a long time, but saw nothing to alarm us. There was not anywhere much life in sight; a few bands of antelopes, a few wolves and coyotes here and there, an eagle flying along with a rabbit in its claws, and a lone buffalo bull coming in for water; that was all.

We were about to go back to camp when the strange actions of the bull attracted our attention. It stopped suddenly a short distance from us and began jerking its big, chin-whiskered head up and down, up and down, and to the right and to the left — oh, wonderfully quick for such a big and slow-moving animal. And then it sprang three or four times high from the ground; then stood straight up on its hind feet, and with its shaggy fore legs pawed the air — oh, such a strange and funny sight it was! I laughed.



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"Do not laugh," said my father; "this may be medicine. Perhaps he is dancing that bull dance that our fathers got from the buffaloes in the long ago. Never, never have I seen anything like this. Watch it carefully. Listen! Is n't it making a low singing?"

The bull was again standing upon widespread legs, shaking its big head up and down, up and down, and sideways. I thought that I could hear something: a low, deep sound like the buzzing of many bees: like the faint moaning of wind in cliffs. And as we listened, holding forward our ears to catch the full sound of it, the bull sprang forward and with crooked-up tail went leaping by us and down the slope straight toward our camp. Our horses scattered in all directions before him. My mother and sister, busy packing up, dropped their bundles and fled to the shelter of a big cottonwood tree. The bull passed close by them, splashed into the stream and out of it, went on across the bottom and up the opposite slope, and out on the plain, running, running, ever running, until we lost sight of him in the gathering night.

Said my father then, as we started down the hill: "Black Otter, my son, we have seen something



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wonderful; we have seen something that is great medicine; that was the ancient dance of the bulls."

That was also my thought. I thought so for a long time. Then I told Ki-pah about it. He laughed: "Why, that was no medicine," he said; "that bull just had the stomach-ache, and danced around and ran, trying to get rid of it."

Well, maybe Ki-pah was right. And again, maybe he was n't. There are strange happenings on these plains of ours. Many, many things that we cannot understand.

My mother and sister had recovered from their scare by the time we got down to them. While saddling and packing the horses we told them what we had seen and they also thought it great medicine.

We were soon riding out of the valley, and now making a trail of our own. From that crossing of Arrow Creek the old, deep-worn travoy trail of the Pikuni — and the Crows before them — runs straight to Yellow River where the Creek-of-the-Hot-Spring joins it, and we wanted to cross away below that, and go well out around the Black Butte and the foot of the Snowy Mountains. By so doing my father thought we should be less likely to meet war parties.



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By the course we took it is a long way from Arrow Creek to Yellow River. We traveled steadily all night, and the sun found us still some distance out on the bare plains. We could not stop; there was neither shelter nor water for us.

When, at last, we struck the valley of Yellow River and had unpacked beside the stream, the sun marked almost the middle of the day.

My mother chose a little opening in the timber, placed some firewood there, and asked my father to start the blaze with his takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument because we were all so hungry and in a hurry to eat. He would not do it. "That instrument is not for common use; I am going to make medicine with it pretty soon," he told her. So I fixed my bow to the fire drill and started the fire. My mother set thin-cut sheets of the bighorn meat before it to roast, and we soon ended our hunger.

My father then prepared to make medicine, and asked us to sing some sacred songs with him. He freshly painted his face and hands with the red-brown earth that the gods love; tore some shreds from the inner side of a piece of dry cottonwood bark, rolled them into a ball, and laid it on the ground before him; took a pinch from my mother's



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A STRANGE VOICE STARTLED US

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sack of sweet-grass, and sprinkled that on top of the ball of bark shreds.

"Although I have not my Thunder Pipe, we will begin by singing the four songs that go with the unwrapping of it," he said, as he took his fire instrument in its four painted buckskin wrappings on the ground between him and the sweet-grass-covered bark.

"Now, then, the antelope song," he said to us, and we sang it with him while he removed the first of the four wrappings.

Next was the wolf song, and with it came off the second wrapping. We sang the thunder song, and off came the third wrapping. And now we came to the fourth, the most sacred of all, the buffalo song. My father raised his closed hands to the sides of his head, forefingers out and crooked, the sign for the animal; then he crossed his arms on his breast, the sign for a robe, a wrap. "Hai-yu! Buffalo. Hai-yu! My robe! My shelter!" we began, all watching my father's hands as he began to take off the fourth, the last wrapping.

A strange voice startled us. We looked up. We were entirely surrounded by a war party.

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## CHAPTER VIII

Oh, how frightened we were! The three of us stopped singing. "Keep on! If you would live, sing!" my father hissed at us, and somehow we obeyed him. With one eye on what he was doing and the other on the enemy, we went on with the song, although awful fear was in our hearts. And as we sang my father four times extended his hands to the medicine instrument, the fourth time removing its last wrapping and holding it up at arm's length above his head.

The song came to an end and he cried out: "Oh, you ancient one, my dream, help me! Oh, you sun, and all you gods of earth and sky, have pity on us! I purify myself before you, I offer you sweet-smelling smoke!" And with that he got the ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun to the right position, and first smoke arose from the ball of fuel, and then it burst into flame.

I was watching such of the war party as I could see, and one man in particular who stood nearest of all to my father. He was a big, fine-looking man,



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well dressed and carrying a beautiful shield, and an otter-skin case for bow and arrows. He stood with arms folded, a war club in his right hand, and looked down upon my father with a queer smile on his face, a smile that I thought meant: "We are just waiting to see the end of this foolishness, and then the end for you."

But when the ball of shredded bark burst into flame he gave a loud cry of surprise, and pointed to it and said something to his companions, and following him, they all sat down on each side — and in front of us.

My father continued to act as though he had not seen them. He reached out and took handfuls of the sweet smoke and rubbed himself with it, and then prayed long to the sun to keep us from all danger; to give us long life and plenty and much happiness.

I cannot tell you all my thoughts at that time. I was so frightened that they were all mixed up. I remember praying my own four ancient ones for help, and wondering in what way this war party would take our lives? It did not come to me then how brave, how very brave, my father was to keep on making medicine in the face of the enemy. Few men could have done it.



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Well, the little fire burned out, the last of the sweet-grass smoke drifted away with the wind, the prayer came to an end. My father picked up the four pieces of buckskin with which to wrap up the medicine instrument.

"Hai!" called out the man with the war club.

My father looked up.

The man pointed to the instrument, and said in signs: "Let me take it. I want to examine it."

"I cannot do that," my father signed back. "This is a powerful thing. It is one with the sun. You shall know that. Hold out your hand."

The man did as he was told, and my father took it, held it palm up, with his right hand lowering the ice-rock instrument over it until it made just a fine, bright spot of light on the skin.

"Ha!" cried the man, and drew his hand away with a jerk and examined the burned place, and said something to his companions, whereat they all clapped hands to mouths in surprise, and then talked much among themselves. My father wrapped up the instrument and placed it in the sack in which he kept it.

He of the war club and the burned hand watched



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him, and when it was put away he said, in signs, of course: "We were down there in the timber and saw you coming. We talked together and made up our minds to kill you and take your horses. We now have different hearts: let us be friends."

"Oh, good," half-whispered my mother, sitting beside me. "Oh, I hope that he speaks with one tongue."

"He does. He is afraid of us: he thinks that we have sun power," I told her. And as it turned out, I was right.

My father meantime answered: "Yes. That is good. We are friends."

"We are Cheyennes. What are you?" the man asked.

"In back time I was one of the Pikuni," my father answered, "but I quit them. We are now just ourselves, the four of us. We go south to find the Crows, and set up our lodge with them."

"The Crows are bad hearts. Best you go to my people. Tell them that you met me, Wolf Spotted, and I sent you to them. They have good hearts, they will be your friends."

"I will think about it. Where are your people?"

"They camp and hunt in the Black Hills, on the



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streams that run into the Big River. You can easily find them," the man answered.

"All is well with us. Cook meat," said my father; and my mother and sister began opening the parfleches. The war party — there were fifteen of them — went down into the far end of the timber and, returning with meat, built a fire of their own and started cooking.

The chief remained with my father and the two talked of many things. The Cheyenne said that he was taking his party on a raid against the across-the-mountains tribes, more to see what their country was like than anything else. "But of course they will pay us for looking at it," he said, and laughed loud and long.

We did not any of us sleep on that day. All seemed to be well with us, but we could not be sure of it: we were afraid of the war party. They slept all the afternoon. I remained out with the horses and kept my gun ready for anything that might happen. I watched the sun's slow travel and wished that he would hurry home to his lodge: I wanted packing-up time to come; to be on my horse and riding out from the river. Not until then should I be sure that the Cheyennes intended us no harm.



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Just before sunset I drove in the horses and tied those that we were to ride and pack. My mother roasted more meat and the Cheyenne chief again ate with us, and again urged us to go down into the Black Hills and live with the Cheyennes. My father replied that he would think about it; that if he should go, he would rather wait until the chief should return home, so that we should be sure to be well received.

Came now packing-up time. I saddled the horses, my sister and mother put on their loads, attached to them the lodge poles and the two travoys, and we were ready to start. So were the Cheyennes. The chief embraced my father, and then we all got into the saddle.

My father led off, telling us to follow and not look back. We obeyed him, but our backs shivered. We wanted to see what was going on behind us; if the war party was about to stick us full of arrows. Nothing happened. We soon passed out of the timber and crossed the river, and began climbing the long slope to the plains. Then we did look back: the Cheyennes were going up the long, open bottom above the place where we had spent the day. They had not meant to kill us. We were



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so glad to have escaped the great danger that we all wanted to sing.

My father was cheerful for the first time since we had parted from the Pikuni: "I knew all the time that Short Bow was mistaken," he said. "My ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument is medicine: great medicine. I used it at just the right time: the Cheyennes would have killed us all but for their fear of its wonderful power."

"Lone Bull, my man, you were brave to keep right on making medicine when the party surprised us," said my mother. "I don't see how you could have done it."

"Why, it was easy," my father answered her. "Something — my secret helper — warned me to do so. True, I was at first afraid that they would kill us, but when they waited until I lighted the sweet-grass I knew that there would be no killing."

We did not travel far that night, for we were very tired and sleepy. We soon came to It-Crushed-Them-Creek, and in the pines at the head of it we lay down and slept until morning, and then, by turns, through most of the day. Toward evening, while we were eating the meat that my mother had cooked for us, she told how the creek had got



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its name. Not far above the mouth of it was a streak of red-brown, sacred paint earth at the bottom of a high cutbank, and, having found it, the Pikuni went there every summer to dig out enough to last them until another summer. Each time they went there they had to dig farther and farther into the bank; that weakened it, but they kept gouging farther and farther into it, and one day, what the old men had predicted happened: down came a great piece of the cutbank, burying under it forever three of the women. After that no one ever dug paint there, and what had been Paint Creek, became It-Crushed-Them-Creek.

Leaving that camp, we arrived next morning at the foot of the Black Butte, and remained there for the day, seeing nothing whatever to alarm us. It was as though we four were the only people on the earth and the first that the animals had ever seen. It was a part of their great hunting-ground that the Pikuni seldom used, my father told us, mainly because all war parties passing through the country came to the Black Butte to look out upon the wide plains from its summit. They came, they went, killing only now and then an animal for food, and so it was that the game that lived there — the



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deer and antelopes, elk and bighorn and buffaloes had little fear of man.

I had the afternoon watch. When it was nearly time for me to awake the others, I strung my bow — taking it in preference to my gun because it was noiseless, and started out to kill some meat. I had not far to go: during the afternoon I had seen band after band of various kinds of game come from all directions into a coulée just above our resting-place, and then scatter out again, and I knew that there was one of their watering-places.

I went up there and saw the spring, a big, long, deep pool with smooth rock shores. Trails led to it from up and down the coulée, and from each side, these last worn deep into the earth of the slopes.

I hid in the sage-brush at the edge of one of these side trails, where I could look right down into it, and had no more than taken my place when I saw a band of antelopes coming, a big buck in the lead. I remained motionless, crouching in the brush, until he was right under me, and then sprang up and shot an arrow down at him with all the strength of my arms. He leaped high up and far forward and fell. Those pressing close behind



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turned and fled. My arrow, all red-stained, lay on the ground beside the trail: it had missed the rib bones and gone clear through him. I was very proud of myself when I saw what I had done; I felt that I had the strength of arm and sureness of aim of a grown man.

I jumped down into the trail, sharpened my knife-blade against a smooth, flat stone, and began butchering the antelope. I had one side of it skinned down to the back when I heard a snuffling and blowing of nose and a smacking of sticky lips back in the sage-brush above the trail. I knew what it was: a bear. I had to make a couple of jumps to get my bow, and when I got it in hand and raised up, there was old sticky-mouth right over me at the edge of the cut trail, and oh, what a big one he was!

I turned and ran down the trail, past the spring and up the other side of the coulée, and then looked back: the bear had his fore paws on my antelope and was tearing off big mouthfuls of the ribs. I ran on to camp and aroused my father, and we hurried with our guns in a roundabout way to the place from which I had shot the antelope. The bear was still eating and never looked up. My father fired,



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and I did. Both balls tore through his heart; he fell right on the antelope and made a few kicks and died. Oh, how glad we were!

We rolled the bear off from the antelope, finished skinning it, and took what we wanted of the meat. Then my father considered taking a strip of the bear's skin while we were cutting off its claws. It was true, he said, that he had not now the Thunder Pipe, but he was soon going to get it back; in the meantime he had a powerful medicine, the ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument, and he could wrap it in the strip until he got the pipe. And so deciding, he cut a wide strip of hide from the whole length of the bear's back, and we took it and the meat to camp.

We were all very happy that evening at the Black Butte. We had had a day of good rest and good success. We packed up and went on, keeping to the big trail that runs along the foot of the Snowy Mountains.

The sun was just rising when we came to the brakes of the Musselshell. As we descended the slope we saw that here the cherries were already ripe, the branches of the little trees bending low with the weight of the fruit. My mother and



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Nitaki wanted to stop right then and gather some, but my father would not allow it.

"We must get down into the cover of the timber at once," he said. "This evening, if all is well, you shall come back here and fill a couple of parfleches with the fruit."

We grabbed here and there a handful of the cherries as we rode down the hill. They tasted good in our dry and thirsty mouths; it was hard for us to go on and leave such good food.

We stopped in a fine grove of cottonwoods at the edge of the river, and while my mother and sister made a fire and roasted some of the antelope meat, my father and I examined the trails in the timber and the shores of the river. Footprints there were in them, tracks as plentiful as the grass, but none of human feet. Nor were there anywhere old fireplaces: it was as though Crows nor Pikuni nor any other tribe had ever camped there.

After our morning meal I took the watch and the others slept. There was good feed in the timber and I easily kept the horses there. I often went all along the edge of the grove, looking out at the open bottom and the valley slopes; from the plains on both sides the buffaloes came down to the river to



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drink, and stood long in the cool water or wandered out in it to lie down or slowly graze their way back up on the plains. There were many bear tracks in the trails, some very large and quite fresh. I kept a watch-out for the makers of them, but saw none: the morning was so hot that they were not moving.

My father took my place in the middle of the day, and then I slept, but not so long as usual. My mother and Nitaki were thinking of those cherries, anxious to be gathering them. They woke me up and asked if I thought it was time to go up on the slope. I went out into the timber and found my father, and asked him. He said that it was pretty early for that, but that I could go with him to the rim of the plain, and if all was well we could signal the impatient ones to come up. Before we started I caught a horse for my mother and one for my sister, for they intended to gather more fruit than they could carry: they wanted a lot of it to pound up and dry for winter use.

Arrived at the rim of the plain, my father and I looked out at the country a long time before giving the signal, for we wanted to be sure that there was no war party approaching. When, at last, I did get up and wave my robe, I could not see my



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mother and sister, as it was some distance down into the timber where they were.

But they were out in the edge of it and watching us, and soon came riding up to the cherry thickets. We joined them. The fruit tasted even better than in the morning: much sweeter, we thought. We ate plenty of it, and then began filling the parfleches, my father helping us. That made my mother laugh: it is not often that one sees a warrior gathering fruit for drying.

A yell from my sister startled us all. We turned and looked down where she was pointing: a lone rider was driving our horses down the valley as fast as he could go. They were too far away for us to see them plainly, but there could be no doubt but they were our horses. The stealer had herded them along in the shelter of the timber and the willows and cutbanks bordering the river for a long way before taking to the open bottom.

We could hardly believe our eyes. It did not seem possible that such bad luck had come to us. We just stood and stared and stared. And then my father called out to me to mount a horse.

I jumped on to the one that my sister had ridden up, my father on to the other. But we went only a



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little way in the women's saddles: they were too short; the high, straight rise of them jabbed us in stomach and back most painfully. We stopped and dismounted, and tore them off, and went on. From the very start we knew that it was useless to go on: these two horses that I had caught up for my mother and sister were both slow old pack-animals, their legs stiff with age. We kept on down the valley, however, pounding their flanks with our heels, jabbing their ribs with our gun-stocks, and hoping and praying, oh, so hard, that something would happen to enable us to overtake that lone enemy.

On and on we went. On down the valley, and then out of it to the east, and at the rim of the plain gave up. Herd and rider were then so far ahead of us that they were just small specks against the blue as they topped a ridge. We watched them go over it and out of sight, and turned back whence we had come.

My father rode ahead, all bent over and silent. I felt worse than I ever had in all my life. Those were my horses. I had worked hard for them. I loved them; was proud of them; and they were gone from me forever. I may as well tell you that on the way back to camp I cried.



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

My mother and sister met us at the edge of the grove and silently followed us into our camping-place. There we made another discovery: the enemy had gone all through our things, and had taken my father's medicine sack, in which was the ice-rock takes-fire-from-the-sun instrument, and his saddle; and the bow and arrows and beautiful case that White Wolf had given me were also missing. My father said nothing, and went away on the bank of the river and sat down. My mother began to sort over our things, trying to make up her mind what to take and what to leave. Not counting the lodge and lodge poles, there were eight pack-loads of it all, and we could take but two loads, and must ourselves go on foot wherever we were going.

For the time it was more than my mother could stand: the laying aside of the different things that she had long owned and loved and must now lose. She came over and sat down beside me and cried. My sister cried. I was myself almost crying again.

Presently my father came to us: "Well," he said, "the sun sets. Let us pack up and be going on."

"Oh, no, no!" my mother cried out. "Let us not go on! Let us turn back! Let us go to our people,



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where we belong! Oh, my man! Can't you now see that the gods are against you — that they have been more and more against you since the day we left the Pikuni? First you lost the Thunder Pipe; now your other medicine is gone; gone the horses that your son worked so hard to buy. Think how helpless we are: afoot in a country full of war parties. Oh, take back your words! Let us start right now for the camp of our people."

I was watching my father while she spoke. He listened; he was considering her words; I thought that he was going to do what she asked.

And then he suddenly cried out: "No, no! We can't go back! We have to go on! Poor, and on foot, my medicine gone, I could not go back to the Pikuni. We have to go on, I tell you. I will take you to the Crows, and then again go to the Assiniboine camp after my horses and my pipe."

His words gave me some hope. It was not now anger against the Pikuni that kept him from returning to them, I thought. It was shame; shame that we, who had always been so rich, were now so poor. I said to myself that if I could only get together another band of horses, it would not be hard to persuade him to take us back to our people.



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It was hard to choose what to take, what to leave: everything that we had was valuable to us. We took the lodge, without the poles; our clothing, some robes, my mother's tanning implements, the ammunition for our guns, and two yellow metal kettles that we had bought of the Red-Coat traders of the North for forty beaver-skins. These we loaded on to the two horses. We did not try to cache the rest of the things; we just abandoned them and struck out for the south.

We all took off our moccasins when we came to the river and waded across it. On the far side I got mine on first, and while waiting for the rest I back-trailed a man's fresh footprints that were there in the sand. I could trace them only to the timber, but I went on into it and found a pair of worn-out moccasins where the man had lain and watched us at our camp across the river. I picked them up and examined them, and knew them. There was no mistaking that odd design of red and blue and yellow porcupine-quill work, three bands across each upper: one of the men in the Cheyenne war party had worn them.

I took them out to the shore and showed them to my father. He did not remember having noticed



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them, but my mother did, and described the man who had worn them: tall, slender, and very long-haired, the ends of the braids wound with otter fur.

"Oh, well, what does it matter just what he is like?" said my father. "He followed us and got what he was after. We must have been blind not to have discovered him on our trail."

"I do not think that he followed us with the consent of his chief," I said.

"No, I am sure he did n't," my mother answered. "That chief is a good man. He meant well by us."

My father gave an angry laugh. "A good man, they say!" he cried. "I say that he sent his best runner, his most careful trailer, after us to get my medicine. Well, some day I may meet that chief again."

We were now afoot for the first time in all our lives. For my father and me it was not hard to walk on and on through the night. But my mother and sister suffered; their feet soon became sore; their strength went fast from them. By the time the Seven Persons marked the middle of the night they were just staggering along behind my father and me with the horses. And then Nitaki began



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to cry; she sat down on the ground and said she could walk no farther.

"Then you shall ride!" my father exclaimed, and told me to help him.

We took half the load from the horse he was leading, and put it on the other one, and then set my sister on top of the small load. Both horses groaned under the weight of their packs as we started on. I said to myself that everything we had anything to do with suffered.

It is a long way from the bend of the Musselshell across to the Yellowstone: a very long way when one is afoot and the rain pools are all dried up. When morning came we were still a long way from the river of the Crows, and so thirsty — my father and I more than the others — that we could hardly speak. My throat felt as though it had been sprinkled with sand.

My mother spoke to me, and I could not answer loud enough for her to hear my words. She suddenly raised her hands toward the rising sun and cried out: "O Sun, have pity. O Great Sun, world-ruler, have pity. Change the heart of this man of mine so that my children be not made to suffer so much."



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My father, hearing, stood with bowed head and said not one word. He soon started on and we wearily followed him. Away to the south we could see the brakes of the Yellowstone, and beyond it the wide valley of the Bighorn River. It was nearly noon when we approached the rim of the plain. "Only a little way farther, and then we will go down the hill to the river and drink and bathe," I thought.

And just then a lone rider appeared on the rim, stopped his horse and looked at us, and then went back under the rim. We had all stopped to watch him, but the instant he went out of sight we started on. What did it matter whether we died from want of water or from the attack of the enemy?

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# CHAPTER IX

We approached the rim, expecting attack. We came to it, guns ready, and lo! no one was there under it. We looked out at the river: the lone rider was just going into it; we watched him cross on the shallow ford, and then turn down the bottom.

"Ha! Not an enemy nor a friend," said my father. "He does n't even care who we are."

Smoke was rising from the bottom below the junction of the two rivers, a sign that people were camped there. My mother wondered who they might be. We did n't care just then: what we wanted was water, and we made a rush down to it, the staggering horses pricking up their ears and for the first time willingly following us. And oh, how good that water tasted! It seemed as though we could not get enough of it. We drank and drank, and then unpacked the horses, and when they were turned out my father and I went downstream and bathed, and my mother and sister did the same above our camping-place.

We had still a little meat. We cooked and ate



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it, and then we all lay down in the shade of the trees, and my father kept watch while we three slept.

When night came he awakened us. No one had come in sight, he said, but just before sunset he had heard three shots away down the river. We took what little bedding we had, went some distance down into the timber, and again lay down, my father also. We were still very tired; we did not want anything to eat; it was good to lie there in the warm night and rest, and go to the river often for more water. We all soon went to sleep and did not once awake during the night.

I was first up in the morning. From the river-bank I again saw smoke in the bottom below the mouth of the Bighorn. The horses were feeding near the place where we had turned them loose. I went from them to the inner edge of the timber and looked out upon the bottom. Five antelopes were grazing away out in the center of it. I crawled through the sage-brush until quite near them, and then shot one. So it was that we had something for our morning meal.

We ate plenty. All our tired feeling was gone. We kept looking off across the river, expecting to



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see people coming to learn who we were, but none came. The sun was high when we packed up and crossed the river.

On the far side was a plain trail running down through the bottom. We followed it, crossing the Bighorn some distance above its mouth, and on into the next bottom; and there, just below a big grove of cottonwoods, we came upon a fort, just like the one Ki-pah had built at the mouth of the Marias, and a single lodge beside it.

Five white men came out of the fort with their women and children, and out from the lodge came another white man, with his woman, and watched us as we approached them after tying our horses to a near-by tree. The white man standing by the lodge had painted his face and hands black, and we wondered at that: we had not known that the whites did that, as do we, when mourning for our dead.

It is not pleasant to be stared at. The whites and their women stared steadily at us as we approached them, making it very hard for us to walk right up and greet them naturally. But we did it, and all the men shook hands with my father and me. We had already learned from the Red-Coat traders of



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the North that that was the way white men gave greeting. It is a foolish custom.

After the hand-shaking was over, the black white man, the one who had charge of the trading-post, asked us in signs who we were and whence we had come. And as my father had answered the Cheyennes, so he answered now, that we had come from the Pikuni, from whom we had quit—parted forever.

He then wanted to know where the Pikuni were; and next, if we had seen a house like his up on the Big River, and a man in charge of it who had a Mandan woman. My father answered that we had been there several times; that the white man was our friend; that we had bought our guns from him; that the Pikuni and the Gros Ventres had all traded with him, and filled his house with beaver skins.

That pleased the man. He laughed and clapped his hands, and signed: "That is good. The white man and I are one, together in trade. He is my close friend. Come in. We will eat."

We went inside: through the trade-room full of the beautiful and useful white men's goods, and on into another room where was a big fireplace with pots of food sitting before the hot coals. We were given seats.



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One by one the white men washed their hands and faces, and wiped them with white cloths. The black-painted one washed. We were surprised to see him do it, for mourners do not wash in the middle of the day. But we were more than astonished when we saw that the black paint did not wash off, nor leave even a mark on the white wiping-cloth. Did we see wrong, or was this some kind of medicine work, we wondered?

One of the women, watching our surprise, said something to her companions, and they all looked at us and laughed. And then she signed to us: "He is a different kind of white man. He is a black white man."

At that we looked more carefully at the man and saw that he differed from the others in more than the color of his skin: his short, black hair curled tight to the scalp; he had big, blue-red lips; a very wide nose; and big eyes with much white in them. The woman was right: he was not a white man painted; he was a black white man. We did n't know whether we should like him or not.[1]

[1] *Author's note:* This black white man — in Blackfoot, Siks-ap-i-kwan — was undoubtedly the notorious colored man James Beckwith, or Beckworth, who lived long with the Crows, beginning in the year 1829 or 1830. The American Fur Company's



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The women handed us food in thin metal dishes, — soup, meat, and boiled corn of the Mandans' growing, — and we ate plenty. After the meal my father talked and smoked with the white men, and we learned that the Crows were daily expected to come in to trade. They had been trapping beavers for several moons up on the headwaters of the Bighorn. We decided to remain at the fort and meet them there. In the afternoon we put up our lodge with cottonwood poles.

In the evening the black white man and his Crow wife visited us. He asked many questions about the Pikuni, and why we had parted from them, and said that they were bad people, always making war against the Crows, but were poor fighters. And he

opinion of him was that he was two-faced, and a trouble-maker, always secretly urging the Crows to make war upon the whites. The fort at which our hero found him was, of course, Fort Cass, built on the south bank of the Yellowstone, just below the mouth of the Bighorn, by the American Fur Company in 1832. I have often heard my old friend Charles Chouquette, now deceased, speak of the place, and of the vast herds of game ever around it. Chouquette was the chief of *cordeliers* who kept the post supplied with goods from Fort Union. He had nothing good to say of Beckwith, and always blamed the man for the attack which the Crows once made upon him and his men, in which they were stripped of every stitch of clothing they wore and turned back afoot to Fort Union. They all but perished from cold and hunger before reaching its shelter.



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went on to tell how he had led the Crows against them in many battles, and how many of them he had killed. It was not pleasant to listen to all that, but of one thing I was glad: I could see that his talk made my father angry. That was a good sign: it showed that, for all his talk against them, he was still one of the Pikuni. My mother noticed too; we spoke about it afterwards.

Days came and days went, and the Crows did not appear. There were some beavers living in the banks of the two rivers, and I kept getting one or two in my traps every night. Also, I hunted, and kept our lodge and the trading-post supplied with different kinds of meat. My father did nothing, and said but little. His heart was very low. When he did speak, it was always of his medicines, his horses, and his plans for getting them back. Once we were safe with the Crows, he would start for the Assiniboine country, he said.

A whole moon passed before the Crows appeared. They came riding down the valley one afternoon, a multitude of them, with hundreds of packed horses and thousands of loose ones. The chiefs and head warriors rode far in the lead, and fired their guns in salute as they neared the fort. They were all



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dressed in their war clothes for the meeting with the white trader and his help, and never saw I finer-appearing men nor more beautiful costumes. I think that, if anything, their war clothes, their shields, and plumed head-dresses were even more handsome than those of our own people, and that is saying much.

My father did not stand outside with us to watch the coming of the Crows. He remained in the lodge, hardly knowing what to do. He had no fine horses, nor anything else for presents to the chief, and was ashamed to go to him and say: "I am very poor. Have pity on me."

The chiefs dismounted close to our lodge and looked curiously at it, and at us as they greeted the traders and went inside the fort with them. The people, meantime, were making camp at the edge of the timber above the fort and close to the river.

As soon as the lodges were up, my mother got out the presents Sah'-kwi-ah-ki had given her for the Arickaree woman, and my sister and I went with her to deliver them. Oh, how the people stared at us as we went through the camp, inquiring by signs for the lodge of Spotted Antelope! Some of them gave us no answer; others pointed



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toward the far end of the camp. None of them smiled at us, nor so much as asked who we were. I remembered afterward that they did not need to do that: the pattern of the embroidery on our moccasins told them that we were Pikuni. We at last came to the end of the camp, and an old woman pointed to a certain lodge as that of Spotted Antelope. One after another we entered it and found there a young woman pounding cherries. She looked at us in surprise, and smiled, and offered us seats.

We sat down and my mother signed to her: "Are you an Arickaree?"

"Yes," the woman answered.

"Have you a Mandan friend married to a white man trader?"

"Yes, yes," she quickly answered. "Where is she — my friend? You have seen her?"

My mother handed her the sack of presents, told her that they were from her friend, and that we had met her away up on the Big River, where her man had just built a trading-post at the mouth of the Marias River.

She was a handsome young woman, this Arickaree, but little older than I was, and when she



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opened the sack and took out the blanket and cloth and things, her face was all smiles.

Said my mother then: "Your friend is my friend, so have pity on us. We are parted from our people because of my man's anger at them. War parties have taken our horses, my man's medicines, all our things, and my man says that we must live with the Crows. We have nothing, no presents for the chiefs. Have pity: ask your man to make their hearts good toward us."

"I am your friend; have no fear," Crow Woman answered. "My man is a chief; the other chiefs will listen to him — take his words."

And so saying she opened one of her parfleches and took from it a new red blanket which she gave my mother, and a quill-embroidered belt for my sister. That, my son, was the beginning of my long friendship with Crow Woman. Little did we then think that in our old age we should be with Sah'-kwi-ah-ki, here, in the camp of my people.[1]

[1] *Author's note:* Crow Woman was another of my good friends in the days of my youth on the buffalo plains. Like Mrs. Kipp — Sah'-kwi-ah-ki — she was a second mother to me. Both were women of noble character and kind hearts. In her youth Crow Woman was captured by the Crows, along with her mother, and later married one of them, Spotted Antelope. Still later, in a battle between the Crows and the Bloods, her man was killed and



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## Lone Bull's Mistake

When we returned home from Crow Woman's lodge, we found my father still sitting on his couch, and more low-hearted than ever. The chiefs had finished their visit with the trader and gone to their lodges, but none of them had called to see him nor sent him an invitation to smoke. That surely did look bad for us: if the tribe did not receive us, if the chiefs should order us to leave, we should be followed by some of the warriors, — those who had lost friends and relatives in battle with our people, — and that would be our end. My mother told him of our talk with Crow Woman and her promise to help us; he laughed, and said that he did not think that a woman could be of much help to us.

The long day passed, and when evening came, with still no notice being taken of us, we felt that it

she was captured by that enemy, and eventually married one of them. In her old age she lived for many years with Mrs. Kipp, and the friendship of the two women was something beautiful to see, as I saw it, day after day and year after year. She died in 1906 while on a visit to her people in Dakota. Both women were very industrious. In the fall of 1882 their common savings fund amounted to more than three thousand dollars. Came then the dreadful "starvation winter" of the Pikuni, or South Blackfeet, and they spent their all in alleviating the distress of the helpless people. As it was, more than five hundred died before Washington awoke to the fact that the tribe was perishing.



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was a bad sign; that trouble was coming. But just when we were feeling worst, Crow Woman came in with her man, a big, heavy, laughing-faced warrior whom it was good to look upon.

He took the seat my father offered him, and said, in signs: "My woman tells me that you wish to live with us Crow people?"

"Yes," my father answered, "we want to live with you. We have parted with the Pikuni. My heart is not good toward them."

"That is good, and I will help you," said Spotted Antelope; "so tell me all about it: why you left your people, and how long ago."

My father was ashamed to say that he had been whipped by the All Friends Society; he just told that he had quarreled with the chiefs about hunting buffaloes, that he had hunted anyhow, and was done with the tribe forever; also, he told of all our troubles; of the loss of his medicines, our two bands of horses, and of our property that we had been obliged to throw away. He had no more than finished when a messenger came with word from the head chief, Buffalo Hump, that he wished to see my father.

"I have already talked with him, I asked him to



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send for you," said Spotted Antelope. "Come, let us go to his lodge."

The two went out and were gone a long time, Crow Woman remaining with us and telling us much about her life, and her friendship with Sah'-kwi-ah-ki. Upon their return Spotted Antelope did not come into the lodge with my father; he called to Crow Woman and she went home with him.

Then my father told us what had taken place in the head chief's lodge.

"All the chiefs were gathered there, and they had me tell why I wanted to live with the Crows, why I had left the Pikuni. When I finished, they talked together for a long time. Of course, I could n't understand what they were saying, but I knew that three of the chiefs were talking against me, and that Spotted Antelope and the head chief spoke for me, and that others agreed with them. And at last the three angry ones were talked down, and the head chief said to me in signs, — he is a fine sign talker: 'I and my children here say this to you: We do not like the Pikuni; we are at war with them; we do not know you. Maybe your heart is good, your tongue straight. We are going to find out about that. You may camp and hunt



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with us for a time, and we shall watch you. If we find that you are a good man, you shall become a Crow.'"

"That is not much like the way the Gros Ventres received us," said my mother. "Now, my man, listen and be not angry at me for what I am going to say: As you love your children and me, be careful. Whenever you get angry at these people, as you are sure to do, just keep your mouth tight shut, else the end will come quickly for all of us."

My sister and I, listening, were surprised to hear her speak out so to our quick-tempered father. We were still more surprised when he quietly answered: "Ai! I will be careful. I shall keep strong hold of my good sense."

So it was that life with the Crows began for us. A few of them became very friendly to us; the many paid no more attention to us than if we had been so many dogs. They pretended not to see us when we met or passed them. My father was seldom asked to the feasts and smokes of the chiefs, never except at Spotted Antelope's lodge, and that hurt him. Always, among the Pikuni, and among the other tribes of us, the Blackfeet, Bloods, and Gros Ventres, his place had been with the chiefs,



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for he was himself one of the greatest warriors of them all.

After the Crows had been at the trading-post for about ten days, they decided to start out on another trapping round. Like the Pikuni, the Gros Ventres, and other tribes their one thought was of the goods in the forts of the white traders. They wanted them all, those useful and beautiful things, and so began the trapping and hunting for furs and buffalo robes that is now ending in the wiping-out of our power. We could not see it then, my son, else a white man would never have been allowed to enter our country.

I bought three horses with the skins of the beavers I had caught. Crow Woman and her man gave us three more, so we had in all eight head; enough to carry us and our lodge and things. It was Crow Woman who came to our lodge one evening and told us where the Crows were going to trap; to no other place than the Musselshell. Right in the hunting-ground of our people, and not far from where they were camping!

"Why, the Crows have no right to go there!" my father cried. "That is not their country, it belongs to the Pikuni."



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"But what if it does? You are not one of that tribe," my mother reminded him; and he just dropped back in his seat and made her no answer. But later he had a talk with Spotted Antelope; told him that the Pikuni were on the Yellow River, just over the mountains from the Musselshell, and advised that the Crows keep to the south of the Yellowstone, else they would get into trouble. Spotted Antelope went at once to the other chiefs with the news and they held a long council.

Crow Woman told us the result of it: they were going to the Musselshell, back into their own country. The Pikuni had been able to take it from them because they had plenty of guns, bought from the Red Coat traders of the North. Well, the Crows now had plenty of guns, and were no longer afraid of the Pikuni.

Said my father: "We shall see what we shall see. The Crows forget that, if trouble comes, the Pikuni have the three other tribes of the prairie people with them."

So we started out, on what was, for us four, the back trail. And lo! when we arrived at the Musselshell, there were our pack-saddles, our bedding, and other things, just as we had left them. But



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even then our four pack-horses could not carry everything, and what we could n't take we gave to Crow Woman.

The trapping began right there at the big bend of the river. I was now as good a trapper as was my father, but he always went with me on the rounds of the three sets every morning. He kept saying that the Crows were not to be trusted, and that he dared not leave us and go, as he so much wanted to, on another attempt to recover his pipe and horses from the Assiniboines.

I knew that my father was right — that the Crows, the most of them, did not like us; but I said nothing because my mother and sister were already afraid enough of them. Our lodge was pitched beside that of Spotted Antelope, for protection, and they never went for wood or water except in company of Crow Woman. I made no friends. Always, when I passed a gathering of boys and young men, they made remarks about me and laughed at me. I could not understand what they said, of course, and I was glad that I could n't; perhaps I should not have been able to stand some of the names they no doubt called me. For one thing, they, of course, made talk about my poor clothes. Well, I was



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poor. I had only cow-leather leggings, and a leather summer wrap, and they all wore blankets and blanket or cloth leggings, and fine ear-rings and bracelets and paint, and looking-glasses dangling from their wrists. And all they did was to herd their horses, and stand around and look nice. I worked. My father and I were doing our best to catch beavers with which to buy more horses; and we hunted for Spotted Antelope as well as for ourselves.

We were doing well with our three traps. We were first out of camp every morning, we went farther away from it than any one else to do our trapping, and we did all we could to set the traps properly, often wading a long way to the foot of the slides so as to leave no scent along the shore. So it was that we got more beavers than any other trapper, excepting the black white man. He had thirty traps, and loaned them out, two or three here and two or three there, for half the catch. He did nothing himself except to wear fine clothes and sit and smoke, and keep telling how many enemies he had killed.

My father's eyes used to shine every time he looked at the black skin, and he would say to us: "I would just like to meet the big talker away out



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from camp where there would be no one to help him. I think that I am just as good a fighter as he is."

We camped there at the big bend a long time; almost a moon, I think. Then beavers became very scarce and the chiefs counseled together. Some wanted to move camp up the river; others thought it would be best to move down and camp at the mouth of Willows Around Creek.

As they could not agree, some young men scouts were sent out both ways to find out where the beavers were most plentiful. They did not leave camp very early. Neither did my father and I that morning, as I was a long time finding our horses. When we were ready to start down to our traps, the party going that way had already left.

We were in need of meat that day, so when we saw a band of antelopes coming down to the river to drink, we waylaid them and each killed a buck. We skinned them and quartered the carcasses for packing, and went on to our traps. The first one was unsprung. The second held a beaver. We pulled the drowned and dripping animal from the water and skinned it, and went on, to find that our third trap had been stolen. There were fresh



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moccasin tracks in the mud at the foot of the slide where we had set it; a smooth and still wet furrow showed where beaver and trap had been dragged ashore; and just back of the slide the ground was trampled by the feet of three horses. Three was the number of the scouts ahead of us that morning: they had stolen our trap and our beaver. Oh, how angry we were, and how helpless.

Unlike the Pikuni, the Crows had no hunting laws; we could not ask for the punishment of the thieves, nor could we punish them ourselves. All the happiness of the day was gone. We took up our two traps, picked up the meat when we came to it, and went home with dead hearts.

In our lodge my father made loud complaint about our loss and about the Crows, a lawless tribe. But he got no sympathy from my mother. Said she: "I don't see why you complain. You left the Pikuni because of their hunting rules. I thought that was just what you wanted: to live with people who do not have them."

Was n't that hard talk, and the truth? And what could my father say in answer to it? Nothing. He did n't even try to answer, and for the rest of the day he was very quiet.



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# Lone Bull's Mistake

Soon after dark that evening great excitement broke out in camp. Everywhere men were calling to one another, or singing war songs, and hurrying from lodge to lodge and talking excitedly. We wondered what it was all about.

And while we were wondering, Crow Woman hurried in to us and signed: "The scouts have discovered a small camp of the Pikuni down-river, down at the mouth of Willows Around Creek. All the warriors are going in the morning, as soon as they can see to catch their horses, to attack it. I fear for you when they return. To-morrow you had best all move into our lodge."

"How many lodges did the scouts see?" my father asked.

"They say that there are about eighty lodges in the camp," she answered, and hurried out. She came to the doorway again to sign: "Be quiet. I will come again," and was gone.

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## CHAPTER X

"HA! Eighty lodges. That will be the Small Robes Band," said my father.

"The Small Robes!" we all whispered.

That was our own band. All our relatives on my father's side were members of it.

"Yes, the Small Robes, of course," my father went on. "No other band of the Pikuni ever camps off by itself. And how crazy they are to do so away down here so close to the Crow country. Well, my woman, well, my children, our place is with them. We must go to them this night, warn them of the coming of the Crows, and help them in the fight. Eighty lodges against the whole Crow tribe! It looks hopeless, but something may happen; maybe the gods are with our people."

"How shall we go to them?" my mother asked.

"Why, as soon as the camp quiets down, as soon as every one is asleep, we shall sneak out and take the first four horses we can find, and go —"

"And leave everything here, our all! This time we shall be afoot," my mother put in. "Well,



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before we start I shall give everything to Crow Woman."

"No, you must n't do that," said my father. "Don't you see that that would get her into trouble — that she would be accused of warning us to go?"

"True, I did not think of that," my mother agreed. "She has been our true friend, yes, and her man, too."

Just then Crow Woman looked in again. "I dare not be seen here," she signed. "Be quiet, do not fear. To-morrow I shall help you."

And with that she was gone. It was the last we saw of her for many a winter.

My mother and sister opened the parfleches and looked over their useful and pretty things. Their best dresses they were bound to have — to die in if die they must. Also they took their awls and needles and sinew thread, and other things, and made of them each a little bundle. The rest they put back into the parfleches with many a sigh, and laced the fastenings. I wondered why, as they were never to see them again, they did that.

"Cover the fire," my father told them when they had finished; and after that we sat in darkness,



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waiting and waiting for the camp to become quiet, and wondering what the night had in store for us. What would be the result of the next day's battle? Where should we be the following night? In the Sand Hills — perhaps!

"Oh, you four ancient ones, help us all! Take us safely through the dangers that surround us!" I kept silently praying my medicines, my dream.

It seemed as though the camp would never become quiet. It was a long time before the last song ended and the last lodge fire died out. At last my father and I took our guns, our ammunition, and four ropes, and crept outside and lay on the ground, listening for any suspicious sound, and staring hard into the night. There was no moon, but the stars were very near and bright, enabling us to see, if dimly, for some little distance around. Nothing stirred. We got up and walked quietly about, to learn if any one was watching our lodge. No one was there. In the next lodge we could hear Spotted Antelope talking in his sleep.

My father scratched the skin of our lodge, my mother and sister came out, and we stole away from it into the near-by timber, and through it to the open bottom where we knew horses were grazing.



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We soon found a band of them, and caught from it one animal. From another we got two head, and from another a fourth. They were all slow, lazy old pack-horses, of course. The good, fast, free animals would not allow us to get near them.

Without saddle or saddle blankets, we mounted them, using the ropes for bridles, and started for the mouth of Willows Around Creek, heading straight out across the plains in order to cut the bow of the Musselshell. On and on we went, with rope-end and gun-stock and heel lashing and thumping the horses along at the best speed in them. It was hard on my mother, harder still for my sister, that bareback riding of rough loping, lazy horses, but they made no complaint.

Daylight came while we were still out on the plain from the junction of the river and the creek.

"Faster! Faster! The Crows are now catching their war horses. Hit hard! Ride faster!" my father cried at us.

My mother and sister could no longer thump their lazy mounts, so we got behind them and did double whipping and lashing and thumping. In the distance we sighted the smoke of lodge fires.

The sun was well up when we sighted the lodges,



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in an open bottom just above the mouth of the creek. The Crows were right: there were eighty of them. We rode nearer and knew the medicine paintings on some of them: they were the lodges of the Small Robes Band. Only about a hundred and fifty men against the whole Crow tribe, I thought. We could not hope to win the fight.

Some one had seen us coming and given the alarm, and the whole camp was gathered to learn who we were — why our haste.

We dashed in among them, my father shouting: "Get your weapons! Run in your horses! The Crows are coming."

He was excited. His eyes were like fire. Forgotten was his anger at our people. And they, they greeted him as though he had never left them.

As he jumped from his horse, White Wolf embraced him, and smiled at us, as he asked: "The Crows! Where are they? When will they come? How many of them?"

"The whole tribe is coming!" my father answered. "There is nothing for us but to run. We are too few to fight them. Hurry! Get in your horses!"

"Brother! have you gone crazy?" White Wolf



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asked. "Since when did the Pikuni run from the Crows? We have always outfought them, and we can do it again."

"Yes. But just us Small Robes — we can do nothing —"

"Why, we are all here," White Wolf told him; "the other bands are camped just around that bend. We came up here because of better grazing for our horses."

Oh, how glad I was to hear that!

And my father, he waved his gun and shouted: "Then call them! Hurry, some one, and tell them to gather here! Oh, what a happy time we shall have this day!"

A young man who had a horse up rushed off to the main camp to give the alarm. The men surrounding us scattered to their lodges to put on their war clothes, while boys were running in the horse-herds. We all went into White Wolf's lodge, and everybody talked at once in the excitement.

My father had no war clothes. White Wolf gave him a horns and weasel-skins head-dress, which was something, and he borrowed paints and carefully put them on his face and hands.

I also painted up with the red-brown, sacred color,



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and my mother, taking notice, cried out: "Why painting? You are not going out with the men!"

"Why not? Have n't I got my medicine?" I asked her.

"He goes with us. Woman, take courage: be glad that you have a son who wants to fight for you," my father told her; and she made no more talk against my going.

By this time the horses had all been run in. My father and I each got a fine animal from White Wolf, and we had no more than roped them when the warriors began coming from the main camp. A few at first, then more and more until the pounding of their horses' feet was like thunder.

One by one, and many at a time, they greeted my father; on all sides were cries of "Ok-yi Ni-tai Stum-ik!" All were smiling. All were glad to see him there. And he saw that it was so, and his heart was glad, and I was glad with him. It was good to see his face so happy-looking as he kept turning this way and that way, and answering: "Ok-yi, my brothers!"

With the band chiefs came Lone Walker. He sprang from his horse and embraced my father, and said: "I am glad to see you with us this day!



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Now, then, the Crows. Where are they? How many? When will they be here?"

"We were camped with them at the head of the big bend of the Musselshell," my father answered. "Yesterday their scouts discovered this camp of the Small Robes, but know nothing of your camp down the river. They come to-day to wipe out these lodges here. They will soon be coming in sight, the whole tribe of them."

"Good news! Good news, my children!" Lone Walker cried. "Now, then, let us plan quickly just what we shall do when they come. Lone Bull what say you?"

Oh, how proud I was when he called upon my father first! It was like old times. He was again the head warrior of our tribe. Every one waited silently, anxiously, for his words.

He looked out upon the bottom, just one, sees-everything glance, and said: "We must not let them know that we are many, that we are expecting them. Out here in front of the lodges some old men will be playing the wheel game. Among the lodges women will be tanning robes, and children will be running around. Boys will be keeping the horses in the edge of camp. One half of us, with



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our horses, will be cached in the timber up there along the Musselshell, and the other half in the brush up the creek. The enemy, I am sure, will come down the open bottom, to approach the camp. They will come with a rush, feeling certain that they can wipe us out. And we, as soon as they are well below us toward the camp, we will rush out and fall upon them. There! I have spoken."

"But they may not come down the bottom to approach the camp," said Lone Walker.

"Watchers are out. They will let us know which way they are coming," White Wolf told him.

And at that all the chiefs agreed that my father's plan was good. Should the enemy come from another direction, a different plan would be quickly made.

The old men were then shown where to lay out the end logs for their game, and the women were told what to do. As all the women and children had come up with the men from the main camp, the most of them were told to hide in the lodges, so that no more would be seen than belonged to eighty lodges. The old men from there took the place of the warriors of our band. They sat in groups here and there among the lodges, appearing



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to be smoking and telling stories, but beside them lay their weapons, and most of them still had strength to bend a bow.

Now that we were all ready for them, we were impatient for the Crows to come. But we waited long for them; the sun was high when a watcher hurried in from the hills to tell us that they were in sight. They were coming straight toward the bottom between the river and the creek, he said, and away back behind them were women on horses drawing travoys, on which they were going to pack home the plunder from our camp. That last news made us laugh. What a surprise was coming to the Crows. We could hardly wait to give it to them.

"Come, let us hurry to our places," some one cried.

"No, wait. We must first be sure that they are coming into the upper end of the bottom," said my father.

So we waited, very uneasy, very anxious for that to happen which was to happen, and soon another watcher came in and told that the enemy was not far out on the plain, riding at a trot and heading straight for the bottom.



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Lone Walker turned to my father: "Let us go hide," he said.

"Yes, let us go," my father answered, and took the lead of half of the warriors, bound up the creek.

Lone Walker led the other half to their hiding-place, and we were all soon hidden in the brush and timber, ready to charge out upon the enemy. Not a man was to move until my father should give the war cry and lead his party out.

My son, never saw I a finer sight than were those Crows as they came charging down into the bottom from the plain. Their beautiful war clothes made them a living rainbow of color. Their long-tailed head-dresses of eagle feathers streamed in the wind. Each man of them carried a fine, plume-encircled shield on his left arm. Even their horses were painted, and decked out with red and blue and yellow and green-dyed eagle plumes. Yes, and they were many; more than ten hundred men, each one with ready bow or gun. Oh, I was afraid of them! They appeared so powerful; so sure of themselves; it did not seem possible that we could stop them.

They rode silently down into the bottom, but



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when the old men players dropped wheel and shafts and ran for the lodges, and women and children there ran screaming in all directions, they raised their war song; and the sound of it was as loud as thunder in our ears.

I sat on my horse at my father's side. He was leaning forward over his horse's neck, watching the enemy, watching his men, with one hand continually signing: "Not yet! Not yet." It was plainly understood that we were not to charge until the enemy was far below us toward the camp.

We waited, watching him, watching the enemy charging down the flat between the river and the creek. They were still some distance above us when something happened that spoiled my father's well-made plan.

Right at my left side was Red Plume, on a big black stallion of fiery heart. He had been trained to race, and had won many races because he was so quick to start. Hearing now the thunder of hoofs, the shouts of the Crows, he thought that there was a race. He danced and sidled and arched his neck and jerked his head, Red Plume holding him in with all his strength. But horse was stronger than



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rider: he suddenly reared up on his hind legs, and with a long, high leap went crashing through the brush straight toward the open ground and the enemy, his rider powerless to stop him. That meant death to Red Plume if he kept on alone.

"Help him! Ride out!" my father shouted, and raised the war cry, and out we went at the Crows, still more than the distance of two bow-shots above us.

They yelled louder than ever when they saw us come out from the brush, and whipped their horses to greater speed. And then out from the timber by the river came Lone Walker and his men. That was too much for the Crows. They saw that their scouts had been mistaken; that they had the whole tribe of the Pikuni to fight; that but for the runaway horse, they would have been completely trapped. Chiefs and warriors and youths, they wheeled their horses and fled on their back trail, we all after them.

Must I say it? Yes, I have to. My son, it shames me to tell you that in those days the Crows had better horses than we. By raid after raid down into the always-summer land, they had taken from the tribes of that far country herd after herd of



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fine big swift animals, while we had only begun to make raids there. Most of our horses, a smaller breed, we had taken from the other-side-of-the-mountains tribes.

So it was that, from the very start, it was plain that we could not overtake the main body of the fleeing Crows. We kept on, however, urging our horses to their utmost speed, and one by one the slower riders of the enemy were overtaken, and with arrow or bullet started on their journey to Crow shadow land. Of all the Pikuni four rode some distance in the lead: my father, on White Wolf's best horse; Lone Walker, on his blue race mare; Tail-Feathers-Coming-over-the-Hill, on a big pinto; and Red Plume, on his runaway stallion. They seemed to hold their own; the rest of us steadily lost distance as we went shouting up the bottom and out on the plain. From the rim I noticed, far out on it, the Crow women tearing the travoys from their horses, and remounting to flee for the Musselshell.

Some of us, seeing now the hopelessness of the chase, began to drop out of it; others kept on, thinking that the Crows might, at last, from very shame, turn and fight. But no. On and on they



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went, and now there were no stragglers to be overtaken.

We were all about to stop when we saw, just back of the enemy, a horse writhing on the ground, its rider standing near it with raised gun. And at that we hurried on. The horse, of course, had broken a leg in a badger or prairie-dog hole. The man's comrades had deserted him. We were bound to see the end of it.

My father was the lead rider of the four. I learned afterward that he said over and over to the others: "He is my enemy! Leave him to me! Leave him to me!"

And "Yes! Yes! He is yours!" they shouted as they rode.

Think how I felt, my son. How my heart almost stopped as I saw my father charging toward that man with raised and steady gun. "Here is the big ending of all our misfortunes, and the worst of them all," I thought, and I prayed to my four ancient ones to help him.

Nearer and nearer my father came to the Crow, leaning far forward on his horse and swaying his body quickly to one side and the other, so as to make no steady mark for that ever-pointing gun.



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HE ALLOWED THE CROW TO STRIKE FIRST

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And suddenly the gun boomed, and hit, not my father, but the horse. It gave an awful shriek as it reared up and fell; but my father was off its back before it went down, and running toward his enemy; and as he ran he fired his gun, not at the man, but straight up toward the sky.

The two were then equal: both had empty guns. They held them up by the muzzle with both hands; swung them high as one does a war club. The Crow stood still, ready; my father swiftly approached him, watching steadily that raised gun. He allowed the Crow to strike first: that was the way he had planned it, and lowered his own gun, slanting crossways above his head, to meet the blow. It struck, and glanced off and did no harm. Then, before the Crow could even raise his gun to strike again, my father dropped his own weapon and seized the Crow's, and wrenched it from him, and stood over him with it upraised.

The Crow was no coward: he did not flinch; he just stood and looked my father straight in the face. I recognized him: he was a band chief, Bog Elk, by name, and the one who, more than any one else, had treated us like dogs while we were in his camp. Crow Woman had warned us against him;



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told my father again and again to be careful and give him no chance for a quarrel.

"And now he is to get his hay for all that," I said to myself.

And "Strike! Strike! Kill him!" the great crowd of the Pikuni shouted at my father.

But instead of striking he drew steadily back, and suddenly picked up his own gun, and held both weapons in the hollow of his left arm. "No, I shall not kill him," he called out to us, "nor shall you. He is mine. I wish him to live."

And then in signs he said to the Crow: "Go home. Go, and by day and by night be ashamed of yourself. You can never forget, you can never cast this away: I, whom you treated so meanly, I took from you your gun and gave you your life. Go!"

The man turned and took his back trail, and we knew that shame went with him; that from a distance his people had seen all that had happened, and that he could never again be a chief among them. And my father, he had counted upon him the greatest coup of all. That is the greatest coup, my son, to take from an enemy his weapon, and him unharmed, in full possession of his strength.

The great crowd of us silently watched the Crow



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as he went his way with bowed head and slow steps. It is a terrible thing to see even an enemy suddenly changed from a chief to a man without power or place in his tribe.

Then, as suddenly the crowd broke out in praise of my father: "Lone Bull! Great is Lone Bull! A great man is Lone Bull!" they shouted again and again; and then, as my father mounted behind me and we turned toward camp, some one started the victory song, and we all joined in the singing of it, and sang it all the way home.

On the way we passed nineteen dead men scattered along the trail, none of them our people. Not one of us had been even wounded. As we neared the camp all the old men, the women, and girls and children rushed out to meet us, shouting our names, praising us, with tears streaming down their cheeks, giving thanks to the sun for our safe return. And of all the great crowd, it was my father who got most praise. Him they recognized, as they ever had, as the greatest warrior of the Pikuni. It was long before they would let him pass, to eat and rest in White Wolf's lodge.

Worn out by our all-night ride and the excitement of the morning, the four of us slept all of that



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afternoon. During that time the main camp moved up beside our band, and scouts were sent to watch what the Crows were doing. At dusk the horses were all run in, and a watch set over them for the night.

Early in the evening White Wolf shouted invitations for a feast, and there soon gathered around our fire Lone Walker, Fox Eyes, and many of the great men of our tribe. The feast was eaten, the pipe sent upon its rounds, and then Lone Walker asked my father to tell the story of our wanderings and our misfortunes. He did so, leaving out not one thing, and he was long in telling it.

Said Lone Walker, then: "Brother, we hope that you will now remain with us."

My father looked him straight in the face and answered: "I am ashamed of myself. I had not the sense of a little child. I wish to remain with you. I am all for the hunting laws, and all the other laws of our people."

"Your words make my heart glad," Lone Walker told him. "Brother, you have lost your all. I give you five horses."

Then up spoke the other guests, one after another, giving us horses, and when the last one had spoken we were owners of thirty-five head.



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Right there our luck changed. The next morning came women with cow leather to make us a new lodge. Other women brought us robes for bedding; parfleches filled with dried meat and pemmican, and even dried berries. Pack-saddles and ropes and travoys and a few dishes they also brought, and before night we had of everything all that we needed. Two traps, even, so that we could catch beavers for trade at Ki-pah's post. Oh, but we were happy, happy people, the four of us that night!

On the following morning the scouts returned and told us that the Crows had left the Musselshell, heading for the Yellowstone and their own country. We saw no more of them. We trapped out the Willows Around Creek, and other streams of the Snowy Mountains, and then moved north and once more pitched our lodges at Ki-pah's post.

The white chief feasted our chiefs, and when it and the talk and smoke were over, my mother said that Sah'-kwi-ah-ki asked us four to go to her room. We went; we entered; and my father gave a loud cry of surprise as he passed inside the doorway; for there, hanging on the wall before him, was his sacred roll, his own lost Thunder Pipe. He



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could hardly believe his eyes. He turned to Sah'-kwi-ah-ki and tried to speak, and could only swallow hard.

Sah'-kwi-ah-ki took the roll from the wall, and carrying it carefully, placed it in his hands. "Take it. It is yours," she told him.

"But how did you get it?" he asked.

"Ki-pah sent a talking paper to the trader at the mouth of the Yellowstone, telling him to get the pipe. He bought it from the Assiniboine who took it that night from your medicine pack-horse," she answered.

"I will pay! Oh, I will gladly pay! How many horses? How many skins?" my father cried.

"Hush! Between friends there is no talk of pay," she signed.

And so it had to be.

"Ha! That is what you two were so secret about before we left here," I said to my mother. And, all tears and smiles, she nodded: "Yes."

And so, my son, I end my story.

THE END

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