

would be guaranteed for him by the management.

Hyman turned and walked out of the room, out of the dowdy hotel.

The book agent does much of his heaviest cannonading after dinner, at night, when the head of the family is usually at home to listen and to sign. And on each other evening the whole squad had labored after the "supper" hour. But this being Saturday, when villagers usually go visiting or shopping or loafing about town, and the end of a hard week's toil, it had been voted that a game of penny ante would be in order. So every one repaired to the room of Tripp, now the hero of the battalion. All assembled except Hyman—he had disappeared.

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AND nothing was heard from him until shortly before midnight, when he entered softly—softly for a butcher, anyway—and, not without a slight trembling of his right hand, laid before Granger a

piece of paper. The manager glanced down, then put on his spectacles and took a second, more searching, look, then leaped to his feet and cried:

"Wh—what's the meaning of this?"

"It's an order for forty-six sets," said Hyman, as calmly as he could.

"Who—why—wha—whose name is this, signed here?"

"Jacob H. Schisselhaus, the mayor of this town."

"But I don't understand. How can he—what does he want with—how can he take—"

"He bought forty-six copies of the books from me. I just left him," said Hyman. "If you don't believe he signed it, call him up."

"But for what?"

"Two for each school in town; four for each of the two high schools, six for the Carnegie Library, two for the Soldiers' Home, one for each hospital, one for himself—and I don't know what all he's gonna do with them, but he's got a

place for every set, and the city pays for the lot."

The book agents bounced to their feet, studied the signed order, looked dumbly at Hyman, who beamed a bit; a butcher is not always subtle enough to conceal strong emotions.

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WHAT kind of a selling talk did you give him?" gasped Granger, satisfied that Hyman had told the truth. "I never heard of such a sale. We've tried the library and hospital racket and the schools and such, and we couldn't dent anything; they were always too wise; they wouldn't buy installment books at our prices."

"This isn't installment; this is spot cash on delivery," said Hyman. "And that adds 50 per cent to the commission, as I remember it."

"Yes. But how? How did you do it? What did you say to him?"

"I went to see him in his store. He's a small town guy, though he's a big

man here, and what he didn't know about his own business would have made a child sick. So I whispered in his ear and told him I could show him where he could run the knife up the other way and make veal chops out of spare ribs. He handed me an apron; I put it on and learned him more about modern methods than he had ever dreamt. Oh, I forgot to tell you—he's a butcher.

"And, by the way, I'd like my commission Monday morning—in cash. And you can cancel the railroad ticket. I'm gonna stay here. I don't want to book agent any more. I don't guess I'd ever make another sale, anyhow, because I'm not gonna show any other butchers any grand circuit tricks. I'm gonna go to work for the mayor next week, and he says if I stay here and make good he'll get me elected an alderman. And you can bet that when I get in power I'll have a law passed barring book agents out of the town. Good night."

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THE RED VALHALLA

(Continued from Page 4)

the white men. For he recognized the voice of the great Frost Devil Koonagoyiak, threatening vengeance on the invaders of the domain of the yellow haired manitous in the territory of bad medicine.

The next night they made camp in the tiny valley between two jagged mountain ridges. The gale had subsided and the twinkling stillness of frozen snow and frosty stars was broken only by the hissing play of the crackling gold and green fingers of the aurora. An arctic fox flitted by like a phantom, and limned against the green sky, barked, sending eerie echoes across the still air of the night.

McFarlane stared across the smoky flame at Gaylord.

"Wonder what old hair-breadth Craig did in the Congo jungles today?" he said, and laughed. No one laughed with him, and his mirth trailed off into sheepish silence.

"It seems a long time, doesn't it?" muttered Gaylord. "Weeks and weeks!"

"And yet," amended the other, "it's only days and days—two days! What makes it seem so long?"

"The distance and the blank, white, frozen loneliness. A man could travel a thousand miles from here, in any direction, without meeting a single human being, I suppose."

"Except dead men."

Gaylord shot a startled glance at his companion.

"Why 'dead men'?" he queried sharply.

"Because the stillness and the cold make me think of dead men. No living men ought to be here. It's a dead man's country. Think of those who have starved and frozen and drowned up here!"

"Enough, I suppose." He stared at McFarlane, his black brows gathering into a frown. "But I am going to sleep. If this little slant eyed devil worshiper isn't an infamous liar, tomorrow we hack at raw gold!" And he turned over in the sleeping bag and stared at the dripping snow.

On the crest of a great snow-capped ridge Teeshwinah paused. It was late in the afternoon, and the sun, half of whose ruddy globe had appeared above the horizon, dipped again out of sight. Below, the ice floe ground and grumbled, wearing itself into huge fragments against the granite teeth of the promontory. The great green slabs of ice danced and dipped in the boiling flood, roaring like a flume past the rugged walls of the opposite island. They made camp. Teeshwinah indicated the island, and signified that there was the abode of the red Frost Devils.

Gaylord and McFarlane unslashed the light one-man kayaks and carried them the half mile down to the shore. Upon

their return they found the seal meat bubbling. They ate in silence, retiring early.

At dawn they were back at the kayaks.

Gaylord looked across the stretch of boiling water and down at the frail stretched hide of his little native boat.

"Ugly water," he said. "Too much ice. We're in a nice fix if the walrus hide rips."

McFarlane laughed. "Wish you luck, old man. Hope you get across. Here goes!" And plying the two-ended paddle desperately, he thrust the nose of the covered craft into the swirling procession of broken ice.

Gaylord, with his lips set grimly, followed suit. McFarlane didn't glance back. One worry had vanished. The light bow of the kayak rode up and over the ice cakes, eliminating lateral pressure. One had only to guide against capsizing by bracing against the ice fragments with the paddle. The passageway of the open water was scarcely a quarter of a mile in width.

McFarlane plied a steadier paddle, and Gaylord noted that the journalist was steering the more direct course. He had landed, and was actually running up the white slope of the island when Gaylord's crazy little craft touched the shore. He couldn't see where his companion had landed. He drew the kayak well ashore and started up the face of the cliff.

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THEN as an afterthought he retraced his steps and crept cautiously toward the other's landing place. From there he followed McFarlane's footprints. The journalist had been running. Up at the top of the ridge they trended off to the west. Gaylord didn't follow them. The object of their quest lay before them. The island had the appearance of being the crater of an extinct volcano. In the hollow was reared a great square stone blockhouse, surrounded by a number of squat stone huts, roughly plastered with clay.

The path of descent was fairly easy to negotiate. Gaylord was hardly able to control his eagerness as he approached the cluster of huts. He peered into the first one, and there was borne to his nostrils the peculiar scent of stale cold air. Nothing could be seen, the snow having drifted almost over the roof. He didn't waste time on the other small ones. Through the snow-choked arch of the huge door he entered. There was little within to reward his quick scrutiny. A stairway of logs in one corner suggested the second floor. He clambered up and into the great single room. Footsteps echoed after him. McFarlane, breathing heavily, ascended and stood staring at him.

"The gold?" he queried.

"Here," said Gaylord.

The grime from centuries of melting mortar had disguised the walls with a film of gray, faced at this time with frost. With a knife Gaylord scratched through the gritty film. The rich red tint of gold was his reward. They toppled one of the ponderous plates down. It clanged against the log floor, and the echo of its fall resounded throughout the ancient fortress. It was about eight feet in length and five in height. In places it was almost two inches thick; elsewhere, an inch or more. Crooked seams ran across its face in all directions.

"Hammer rolled and welded," said Gaylord. "It was some arrangement for transportation, I suppose. They didn't have dogs. I imagine they intended to drag it on huge sleds. But something interrupted the work."

They ignited blubber oil in soapstone bowls. Its red flare brought the shadow corners into the play of light. Massive, rudely wrought figures leered back at them, the blubber flame lighting into lurid gleams the gems that made their eyes and corselets. The gold had been hammer welded, and in the long hours of the arctic night some northland artist had amused himself shaping the metal into the crude outlines of his gods. Some one else had stuck them full of rubies and emeralds, pressing the sharpest point of the rough stones into the soft gold. The images stood in rows, their backs against the gold plated walls, like the effigies of the eminent dead in a statuary hall.

"Tons of it," said McFarlane in an awed voice, hardly above a whisper.

"Millions," murmured Gaylord. "And dead men in rusted armor on guard!"

He stepped over and kicked a bronze casque with a rent in the rear. Something tinkled within. "Flint," he muttered. "And driven in by a strong arm or bow!"

McFarlane stared down into the debris. "Hair," he said, holding up a golden strand. "Yellow hair. Hardly changed in a thousand years!" He disappeared into the shadows.

"They died hard," he resumed irrelevantly. "Some flint chipping native tribe did for them. I saw where they got the gold. There's a hot water spring down below us. I saw its steam and went over. The rock is red with iron and yellow with great gold nuggets, just as the metal bubbled out of the cooling lava fissures millions of years ago. It's a volcano of frozen gold. Think of it! A million fortunes—guarded by dead men—dead men with yellow hair!"

He ceased to speak, and the rumble of the echo died away.

There was a long period of silence. With his knife Gaylord pried some of the gems out of the gold and dropped them into the pockets of his fur jacket. Then it occurred to him that it was getting late. "McFarlane!" he called. The echo

shrieked its summons into the darkness. There was no response. Then Gaylord, in the gloomy silence of the vast room, understood. McFarlane had gone out through one of the little windows, to slide down the banked snowdrifts. He was alone in the Red Valhalla. Fear clutched at his heart and sent the blood hammering through his temples. Down the log stairway he sped. In the door he bumped into McFarlane.

"The kayaks!" said the journalist; "they're gone—they're gone!"

"Both?"

"I couldn't find mine!"

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GAYLORD looked at McFarlane. The color had drained out of his face. "Good God, man!" he screamed. "I cast yours adrift. I didn't want you to go back to her. But mine—mine—it must be there. South of yours! I stood a paddle up. I—" He paused, mouthing without sound.

McFarlane laughed bitterly. "I found the paddle," he explained. "And I broke it. Then I pushed your kayak out onto a cake of ice and watched it sail up the flume and out into the bay! She said that she had promised you!"

"She lied, then!" screamed Gaylord. "She told me that—that she had said 'Yes' to the man she loved!"

"We're a pair, then," said McFarlane with despairing calm. "It must have been Craig!"

"Craig! Why, his wife—"

"Is dead! Auto accident or something. I was with the old man when he got the wire at Sitka, five months ago. I thought you knew it!"

Across the smoky flare from the blubber lamp they stared into each other's eyes. Then Gaylord laughed mirthlessly.

"We've served ourselves out, all right," he declared. "We're enrolled with the notables—the resident guests, as it were—of the Red Valhalla!"

McFarlane didn't seem to hear. He was staring out into the roaring arctic gale. It shrieked in melancholy triumph and seeped through the loosened mortar, making the blubber flame gutter and dance.

"Two more!" he muttered. "Two more on guard now! And they won't have yellow hair!"

Ashore, Teeshwinah groveled on his face in the little snow igloo, supplicating Koonagoyiak, the Frost Devil. For the dogs were burrowing deeper, in portent of the five-day blizzard. And it was bad medicine!

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Friendship

Mabel—Do you know anything about Tom Brown?

Arthur—Why, Tom is my best friend. Mabel—I know that, but is he all right otherwise?