# Under Frozen Stars

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by GEORGE MARSH

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#### SYNOPSIS

From his fur post, Sunset House, in the Canadian north, Jim Stuart, trader in charge, sights an overturned canoe in the lake. With his headman, Omar, he rescues the drifter, who proves to be Aurore LeBlond, daughter of his rival in the fur business. Made comfortable at the post, Aurore proves to be a charming companion. Exchanging badinage, she and Jim arrange to exchange notes on a certain island. LeBlond, with Paradis, his unscrupulous half-breed lieutenant, arrives in search of the missing girl.

#### CHAPTER I-Continued -3-

With a voice hoarse with feeling, he said, with a slight trace of accent: "Mr. Stuart, my daughter says she owes her life to you and your man."

As they faced him, the striking resembiance in feature and expression between father and daughter impressed the man who entered the room followed by Renault and Paradis. The girl was the true daughter of Louis LeBlond.

"Luckily, we happen to see her," deprecated Stuart.

"Yes, but she tells me that her strength was gone-she had already given up, when she saw you." Le-Blond impulsively grasped the hand of the man who studied him. "We are rivals in business; it cannot be helped. But what you have done for my child I will not forget."

In a corner of the room the slim Paradis, dark as a half-breed, talked excitedly to the thick-set Renault, across whose swart face a knife slash had left a livid scar.

"It was nothing," replied Stuart. "I happened to see her canoe. That was You owe me nothing, sir." As he spoke, Paradis left Renault and whispered in LeBlond's ear.

"My house is at your disposal," continued Stuart. "Will you and your daughter stay here tonight?" The eyes of the speaker hardened as he went on. "The gentleman who is whispering to you, and Renault, here, are welcome to sleep in the tradehouse. You can't cross the lake against this

The somewhat small but regular features of Paradis darkened in a scowl at the thrust, but he continued his whispering. Slowly a look of doubtof perplexity-crept into LeBlond's eyes, but with a gesture of irritation he waved aside the insistent Paradis. Turning, he spoke rapidly in French to his daughter, who replied vehemently, her courageous black eyes flashing in anger as she faced her father.

"Mr. Stuart," said the patently embarrassed LeBlond, "you-a-found her in the afternoon?"

"Yes." In a flash Stuart sensed what was coming--what Paradis had been whispering.

"And you let lake through six hours of daylight-hunt for her, thinking she was drowned?" LeBlond spoke more in regret than in anger.

"Why didn't you send word?" added Paradis with a sneer.

"Father!" The blood rose to Aurore LeBlond's temples. "Are you crazy? Do you know what you're saying? Is this your gratitude?" The eyes of the girl flamed with indignation. "Mr. Stuart wanted to take me home, but I wouldn't go. There was only the small canoe here, and I was afraidafraid of that lake. And this is your thanks to him! Oh, I'm ashamed of you-ashamed of you all!"

The enraged factor of Sunset House was near the end of his self-control as he faced LeBlond. "You see fit to quibble over my actions today. I've nothing to explain. You found out what the lake was out there, when you crossed with the wind in your big canoe. My large boats are bringing up my stuff, and I'm alone with one man. I don't like your insinuations! You can't take your daughter back tonight, and I offered you my quarters -such as they are. But, as for this whispering assistant of yours, I take back my offer. He can't stay here!" The speaker's voice snapped like a brittle stick. "You understand English, don't you, Paradis?"

The room was silent. In the glance of the girl as she watched Jim's eyes blacken with anger, was amusement and approval,

With a swift movement the enraged Paradis jerked his hand back to his belt; but the squat Renault's fingers gripped his arm. The working features of LeBlond reflected his warring emotions. This man who had saved his daughter had also flagrantly affronted his friend. For a space his sense of gratitude and his loyalty to Paradis strove for mastery as he looked into the cold eyes which challenged his. Then he found his voice.

"You have insulted us, here, in your own house!" he burst out, "We want no hospitality from you." Then, as if ashamed, went on: "Oh, I'm grateful-I know what I owe you; but we'll

bid you good-night. Come Aurore!" His answer from the girl was contemptuous laughter, "Oh, you men are so funnee so funnee!" she cried. "So ridiculous! Because Mr. Stuart knocks down our Paul Paradis, and Paul fills your ears with a fool idea of word

not being sent ten miles against that I wind and sea, you forget that I'd be down there with the fish tonight if it hadn't been for Omar and Mr. Stuart. Pah! You men are all fools!"

She was serious now, her scornful gaze over-awing her father's uneasy eyes. In frank admiration Stuart watched her as she waited for Le-Blond's reply.

"I thank you for what you did for her," said LeBlond at length, turning defeated from the accusing eyes of his daughter. "Come, Aurore!"

Paradis and Renault sullenly left the room while the trader waited at the door for the girl who had not moved. "So you think, because of the hurt

feelings of your pretty Paul, I'll spend the night in front of a fire, with my back against a tree" she replied. "Well, I will not!" Over the bold features of LeBlond

crept an expression of helplessnessof impotence. It was patent to Stuart that this trader, whose energy and determination were bywords in the fur trade, was not the master of the girl who now faced him.

"I shall accept Mr. Stuart's offered hospitality," she continued. "As for you, mon pere, you can stay and help old Sarah, the cook, guard the



"And This Is Your Thanks to Him! Oh, I'm Ashamed of You-

sacred honor of your precious daughter-or you can leave her to Sarah and go and sit by your fire. I stay here. Do you understand English, Monsieur LeBlond?"

In the end, LeBlond and his daughter passed the night in the quarters of Stuart while the indignant Sarah tossed through sleepless hours, outraged by the thought that the roof above her should shelter the enemy who had boasted that the wolves should soon howl in the deserted clearing of Sunset House.

### CHAPTER II

Six years before, when the boat brigade of the North-West Trading company, in command of one of the partners, Louis LeBlond, had passed through Lake Expanse on the trail to Mitawangagama, the Ojibwas, who were camped at Pelican portage on the way south to the spring trade with the Hudson's Bay company, had been greatly excited. Turning in to the camp, LeBlond's head voyageur, Black Jules Renault, had announced in their native tongue that a trading station was to be built on the great Lake of the Sand Beaches two hundred miles north. Never again need they take the long trail south to Lake Expanse, but in the next long snows would find a warm welcome—a New Year's feast-and the best of trade goods ready for exchange for their fur at the new post.

In three years LeBlond had made serious inroads into the trade of the old company. He no longer could be

ignored. They must follow and fight him for the trade. But, on the word of hard-headed Andrew Christle, of Lake Expanse, inspector of a territory larger than an eastern state, the man who could now wrest a share of the trade from the firmly intrenched LeBlond would need a particularly long head, boundless nerve, and the tenacity of the beaver. Such a man, Christie told his superiors, in conclave at Winnipeg, he believed was now at God's lake in western Kiwedin-a young man with a fine war record and a local reputation for ability and judgment in dealing with the Indians. In two months a mail canoe brought

Jim Stuart orders from Winnipeg to report to Christie at Lake Expanse. A month later, with Omar Bolsvert and a gang of men, Stuart had cleared the forest and was peeling the logs for the building of Sunset House. The following three years had been for Stuart a well-nigh hopeless struggle for a foothold in the trade, for his rival possessed the Frenchman's uncanny talent for handling the Indians, backed by an experience of thirty years.

As he lay on his bunk in the trade house, after leaving Aurore LeBlond and her father in possession of his quarters, Jim Stuart's thoughts traversed the hours since mid-afternoon. To the man who, since the war, had been marooned in the forests of Kiwedin-Ojibwa for "The Birthplace of the North Wind,"-the coming of this vivid creature, swept into his life by the accident of wind and sea, bad been like the burst of a shell on a black night.

But strong as was the appeal of this dark daughter of Louis LeBlond to the eyes and senses of the man who had not seen three comely white women in as many years, she was, he realized, only a spoiled child; vain, headstrong, the pampered darling of a lonely father. Then his thoughts shifted to Mary Christie, the loyal, capable girl at Lake Expanse, who ministered with head and hands to the well-being and comfort of his chief, Andrew Christie, and who, except for five years' schooling in Scotland, had spent her life, without complaint, immured in the northern forests. He pictured her frank disdain of the dress and manners of the girl who slept over in his quarters-her outraged sense of propriety at the direct thought and speech of this self-possessed daughter of the free trader. She wouldn't understand this girl-would condemn her on sight as over-bold, light, unwomanly. But no one who had seen Aurore LeBlond grimly refusing to be swept from her grip on that canoe, as the seas buried her, could doubt the metal of her courage. She had proven that. Then he found himself comparing the blond comeliness of the decorous daughter of Andrew Christie with the dark loveliness of Aurore LeRland

The following morning Stuart with his guest to the beach where Le-Blond had preceded them to his waiting canoe

"I really think you about won Sarah over, when you patted her shoulder and put that silk scarf around her neck," he said. "I know Sarah pretty well, and the way that grin slowly widened across her face when you gave her the scarf and shook her hand makes me think she's forgiven you your gibodiegwason. Though, of course, she wouldn't admit it."

"She thinks me insane probably." "She didn't know what to think." Then, as they approached the shore, she said, hurriedly: "The split rock on the shore of the last of the islands -look there in a few days; you might

find something. Good-by, Mr. Jeem

Stuart." She gave him her hand. "Good-by, Miss Gibodiegwason." When LeBlond stepped into his big freight canoe he said to Stuart: "I thank you again for what you have Your people have seen fit to send you here to take the trade from Between the North-West and the Hudson's Bay there can be no quarter, But to you, yourself, I owe much.

Some day 1 may be able to repay."

### Goat Ranked Above Cow in Mountainous Lands

tinct and appear to affect disdain one for the other, sheep and goats are, and apparently always have been pastured together, the goats eating the brush and roughage which the more tendermouthed sheep will not touch.

In rough, rocky mountainous districts as is a great part of the land of Canaan, the goat is a more serviceable animal than the cow, more agile and wonderfully sure footed, content to wander about and pick a mouthful here and there, able to live without much more moisture than the heavy dews supply, long-lived, and generally free from sickness, especially from contagious diseases. They thrive best in the higher altitudes, and the wild

### Chinese Symbols

Among Chinese symbols the bat signifies happiness; Buddhist scepter, immortality; crow, evil; duck, conjugal affection; stork, tortoise or young stag, long life; crane immortality.

Although they keep themselves dis- | varieties which existed until comparatively recent days in Syria and about the Palestinian Lebanon, are always sought on mountain tops. As the Psalmist says: "The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats." It is worth noticing that among all his riches of flocks and herds, Job counted no goats. as was to be expected, since he lived on an Arabian plain where was abundant pasturage for his "fourteen thousand sheep and six thousand camels, and a thousand yoke of oxen, and a thousand she asses," (Job 29:12) as well doubtless as immense numbers of cows.

### Favored German Spot

The unusually beautiful scenery of the Hartz mountains in Germany and the plentiful variety of wild game are said to be great attractions to visitors. Elk, roe, fallow deer, wild swine and sheep come from the hills to feed on horse chestnuts, acorns, carrots and hay provided by the foresters on the hunting preserves.

watched the departing peterboro nose an ever-widening ripple out across the still lake which now mirrored the hills-for the wind had dropped in the night to a fiat calm-a voice at his side roused him from his thoughts. "We got a beeg job ahead, dis sum-

As the factor of Sunset House

Stuart looked into the grave tace of Omar. "We have, Omar, but I wish I knew where to begin. They heard at Lake Expanse that LeBlond got thirtythousand dollars worth of fur from Pipestone lake and the Sturgeon river country alone, this year. We didn't get a pelt-not one hunter from that

country !" "I hear, last night, somet'ing about

"You did? How d'yuh mean-"De men wid de cano' talk w'ile Le

Blond go to de house for de girl. Der talk about Jingwak." "Jingwak, the medicine man at Pipestone lake?"

"Ah-hah, you know how he get all de hunter to trade wid Lebiond-not one come to Sunset House?"

"No, but I'd like to," said the interested Stuart.

"Wal-Jingwak tell all dem peopl" dat dis place ees full of devil. I find dis out, for one of dat crew had fear to stay on de beach.

Slowly the blood filled the bronzed face of the man who listened.

"So they are bribing the medicine men, the conjurors, are they, to keep the trade from Sunset House?

It was clever of LeBlond, for the Pipestone Ojibwas, who came two handred miles south to trade, were a wild, superstitious lot, easily influenced by a medicine man-a shaman.

"W'at you t'ink of dat?" demanded the half-breed. "I tell you we got good job ahead, dis summer, w'en we get de trade stuff up from Lak' Expanse." "Omar, we've got to get some of

that Pipestone and Sturgeon river trade. We can't live on what we get from the rest of the country. What're we going to do?"

The swart Bolsvert rose from his squatting position. He was not tall, but his Scotch and French blood had united with the Ojibwa to create a rare example of nature's skill in the building of human thew and muscle: for in his compact one hundred and eighty pounds Omar carried power and stamina which had been a byword among the voyageurs of western Kiwedin. Deliberately reaching to the rear, the half-breed drew his skinning knife and, lifting a foot, stropped the blade slowly on his moccasin. "Dere ees one t'ing we can do wid M'sien' Jingwak." he said, significantly.

"You old wolf," laughed Stuart, "I believe, if I said the word, you'd hunt down this summer and stick that

Omar's small eyes met his chief's cryptically as he said: "Dere are manee way to kech a fox."

"Yes, and we must find one to beat this Jingwak; but we can't hurt him, you know. There are laws in this

"Law? Umph!" grunted Omar. "We got do somet'ing ver' queek !"

"We have, Omar," admitted Stuart, "If I'm licked here, I might as well look for a new job. The Company'll never forgive me. Christle knows what the job is here, but he's not satisfied with the small trade this year."

With an impulsive movement Boisvert grasped the hand of the younger man. "We not tru yet! Dis summer we go to Pipestone lake."

. . . . . Two days later, with the freight boats from Lake Expanse which carried the next year's supplies and trade goods for the little post and had been windbound at the head of the lake, came Esau Otchig, whose shoulders had rounded and lean face creased with furrows in the service of the company-old Esau, a full-blooded Ojibwa, who had served thirty years with Stuart's father and now followed the fortunes of the son. To the Indian, when the supplies were unloaded and the empty freighters had started back on the trail south. Omar related what he had overheard on the beachhow the hunters from the Pipestone country had been kept from trading at Sunset House by the tabu of the shaman, Jingwak,

"Ah-hah!" Esau muttered. "So dis Jingwak put de devil into Sunset Wal, we put de devil into House. Jingwak."

"Good!" agreed Stuart, "but how?" Esau's beady eyes met the widening grin of Omar as he answered: "Omar evair tell you w'at happen to Makwa. de beeg shaman at Wolf riviere, manee long snow back?"

Stuart shook his head. "No, what happened?"

"Dis Makwa, he t'ink he mak' de beeg medecine. He come an' say to de ole man at Wolf riviere, 'You geeve Makwa, de shaman, flour, tea, trade good, an' you get all 'Jibwa fur. You not geeve Makwa dis, an' free-trades, he get de fur."

"What did the Hudson's Bay mas say to that?"

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

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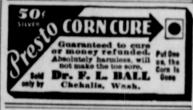
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