



CHAPTER IV

Snowbird felt very glad of her intimate, accurate knowledge of the whole region of the Divide. In her infancy the winding trails had been her playground, and long ago she had acquired the mountaineer's sixth sense for traversing them at night.

She felt that if she would stop to listen, there would be many faint sounds in the thickets—those little hushed noises that the wild things make to remain night-wanderers of their presence.

The wilderness began at once. Whatever influence toward civilization her father's house had brought to the wilds chopped off as beneath a blade in the first fringe of pines.

The animal on the trail behind her was taking no care at all to go silently. He was simply pit-patting along, wholly at his ease. He acted as if the fear that men have instilled in his breed was somehow missing.

If a person lies still long enough, he can usually hear his heart beating and the flow of his blood in his arteries. Any sound, no matter how faint, will make itself heard at last.

Some living creature was trotting along on the trail behind, keeping approximately the same distance between them.

Foregoing any attempt to ignore it, she set her cool young mind to thinking what manner of beast it might be. Its step was not greatly different from that of a large dog—except possibly a dog would have made slightly more noise.

Two hours before Snowbird had left the house, on her long tramp to the ranger station, Dan had started home. He hadn't shot until sunset, as he had planned.

He glanced at the place as he passed and saw that it was deserted. No smell of wood smoke remained in the air. Evidently Landy had gone down to the settlements with his pro-long testimony in regard to the

a heavy foot, and again and again she heard the brush crushing and rustling as something passed through. Sometimes, when the trail was covered with soft pine needles, it was practically indistinguishable.

The animal was approximately one hundred feet behind. It wasn't a wolf, she thought. The wolves ran in packs this season, and except in winter were more afraid of human beings than any other living creature.

He forced himself to go nearer. The buzzards were almost done, and one white bone from the shoulder gave unmistakable evidence of the passage of a bullet. What had happened thereafter, he could only guess.

Then he called Snowbird. His voice echoed in the silent room, unanswered. He called again, then went to look for her.

He leaped through the rooms to Lennox's door, then went in on tiptoe. And the first thing he saw when he opened the door was the grizzled man's gray face on the pillow.

"You're home early, Dan," he said. "How many did you get?"

"Not so bad but that I'm sorry that Snowbird has gone drifting twelve miles over the hills for help. It's dark as pitch."

And it was, Dan could scarcely make out the outline of the somber ridges against the sky.

"I'm not often anxious about her," he said slowly. "But it is a long walk through the wildest part of the Divide. Some way—I can't bar accidents tonight. I don't like to think of her on those mountains alone."

And remembering what had lain beside the trail, Dan felt the same. He had heard, long ago, that any animal that once tasted human flesh loses its fear of men and is never to be trusted again.

He rode one of Lennox's cattle ponies, the only piece of horse-flesh that Bill had not taken to the valleys when he had driven down the live stock.

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arson ring. Yet it was curious that no word had been heard of him. As far as Dan knew, neither the courts nor the forest service had taken action.

He hurried on, four miles farther. The trail entered the heavy thickets, and he had to ride slowly. It was as wild a section as could be found on the whole Divide. And just as he came to a little cleared space, three strange, dark birds flung up on wide-spreading wings.

He knew them at once. All mountaineers come to know them before their days are done. They were the buzzards, the followers of the dead. And what they were doing in the thicket just beside the trail, Dan did not dare to think.

Of course they might be feeding on the body of a deer, mortally wounded by some hunter. He resolved to ride by without investigating. He glanced up. The buzzards were hovering in the sky, evidently waiting for him to pass. Then, mostly to relieve a curious sense of discomfort in his own mind, he stopped his horse and dismounted.

The twilight had started to fall, and already its first grayness had begun to soften the harder lines of forest and hill. And after his first glance at the curious white heap beside the trail, he was extremely glad that it had. But there was no chance to mistake the thing. The elements and much more terrible agents had each wrought their change, yet there was grisly evidence in plenty to show what had occurred.

He got back quickly on his horse. He understood, now, why nothing had been heard of the evidence that Landy Hildreth was to turn over to the courts as to the activities of the arson ring. Some one—probably Bert Cranston himself—had been waiting on the trail. Others had come thereafter.

It told, very simply and plainly, that her father lay injured in his bed, and he was to remain and do what he could for him. She had gone for help to the ranger station.

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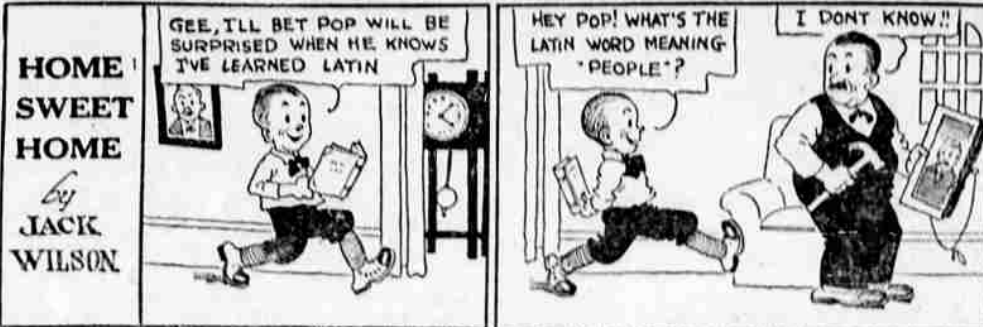
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HOT WATER ALWAYS AT HAND

Continuous Flow of Boiling Liquid and Steam From the Innumerable Geysers of Iceland.

The hot-water fountains of Iceland are on mounds averaging seven feet in height, the top of each of which forms the edge of a sort of basin. From these basins the steam of boiling water can be seen rising and the overflow of water is continuous.

At no time is it entirely safe to loiter in the vicinity of one of these bottomless basins, for the geyser has a way of spouting and gives no advance warning. Sometimes there will be a shoot of boiling water to a height of 15 feet, followed by a succession of jets.

Occasionally a basin will for some unexplained reason become entirely empty, or will give forth a "steam shoot," which, in the form of a column of spray and vapor at least 90 feet in height, presents a really magnificent spectacle.

For Those Who Believe in Dreams.

To dream of chickens, you will be the victim of a cowardly act. To eat one, you will expose a treacherous friend. To kill them, honor and glory. To cook them, you will injure a friend unintentionally.

Long Range Fire.

A gossip is never willing to repeat unkind remarks to your face. We recently heard one when accused of this try to justify herself by saying: "Gossip, madam, is a social attack conducted on the approved principles of modern warfare—you are not supposed to see the person at whom you are shooting."

Denmark Leads in Pigs.

Ireland, supposed to be the great country for pigs, has, in fact, only one pig for every three persons, while Denmark has one pig for each two human beings.

A Winter Catastrophe.

Little Howard had been accustomed to going for milk to a neighbor who kept a cow. One winter day he was told that the cow had gone dry and he could have no more milk until spring. The little fellow lost no time in running home and explaining to his mother: "Oh, mudder, the cow's frozed up and he won't have no more milk till spring!"

Natural Result.

"Some men are bashful when it comes to meeting their obligations," remarks an exchange. This may be because they are financially shy.

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