

The Strength Of The Pines

by Edison Marshall

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CHAPTER XV

The events that followed thereafter came in such quick succession as to seem simultaneous. For one fraction of an instant all three figures stood motionless, the two men staring, the grizzly half-leopard over his prey, his head turned, his little red eyes full of hatred. He uttered one hoarse, savage note, a sound in which all his hatred and his fury and his savage power were made manifest, whirled with incredible speed, and charged.

Hudson did not even have time to turn. There was no defense; his gun was strapped on his back, and even if it had been in his hands, its bullet would not have mattered the sting of a bee in honey-robbing. The only possible chance of breaking that deadly charge lay in the thirty-three degree rifle in Dave's arms; but the craven who held it did not even fire. He was standing just below the outstretched limb of a tree, and the weapon fell from his hands as he swung up into the limb. The fact that Hudson stood weaponless, ten feet away in the clearing, did not deter him in the least.

No human flesh could stand against that charge. The vast paw fell with resistless force; and no need arose for a second blow. The trapper's body was struck down as if felled by a meteor, and the power of the impact forced it deep into the carpet of pine needles. The savage creature turned, the white fangs caught the light in the open mouth. The head lunged toward the man's shoulder.

No man may say what agony Hudson would have endured in the last few seconds of his life if the Killer had been given time and opportunity. His usual way was to linger long, sharp fangs closing again and again until all living likeness was destroyed. The blood lust was upon him; there would have been no mercy to the dying creature in the pine needles. Yet it transpired that Hudson's flesh was not to know those rending fangs a second time.

On the hillside above, a stranger to this land had dropped to his knee in the shrubbery, his rifle lifted to the level of his eyes. It was Bruce, who had come in time to see the charge through a rift in the trees. The bear was on Hudson, and the man had gone down, before Bruce even interpreted him. Then it was just a gray patch, a full three hundred yards away. His instinct was to throw the gun to his shoulder and fire without aiming; yet he conquered it with an iron will. But he did move quickly. He dropped to his knees the very second that the gun leaped to his shoulder. He seemed to know that from a lower position the target would be more clearly revealed. The finger pressed back against the trigger.

The distance was far; Bruce was not a practiced rifle shot, and it bordered on the miraculous that his lead went anywhere near the bear's body. And it was true that the bullet did not reach a vital place. It stung like a wasp at the Killer's flank, however, cutting a shallow flesh wound. But it was enough to take his dreadful attention from the mortally wounded trapper in the pine needles.

He whirled about, growling furiously and biting at the wound. Then he stood still, turning his gaze first to the pale face of Dave Turner thirty feet above him in the pine. The eyes glowed in fury and hatred. He had found men out at last; they died even more easily than the fawn. He started to turn back to the fallen, and the rifle spoke again.

It was a complete miss, this time; yet the bear leaped in fear when the bullet thudded into the dust beside him. He did not wait for a third. His caution suddenly returning to him, and perhaps his anger somewhat satiated by the blow he had dealt Hudson, he crashed into the security of the thicket.

Bruce waited a single instant, hoping for another glimpse of the creature; then ran down to aid Hudson. But in driving the bear from the trapper's helpless body he had already given all the aid that he could. Understanding came quickly. He had arrived only in time for the Departure—just a glimpse of a light as it faded. The blow had been more than any human being could survive; even now Hudson was entering upon that strange calm which often, so mercifully, immediately precedes death.

He opened his eyes and looked with some wonder into Bruce's face. The light in them was dimming, fading like a twilight, yet there was indication of neither confusion nor delirium. There was, however, some indication of perplexity at the peculiar turn of affairs had taken. "You're not Dave Turner," he said wonderingly.

ner is up a tree. He didn't even wait to shoot."

"Of course he wouldn't," Hudson spoke with assurance. The words dimmed at the end, and he half-closed his eyes as if he were too sleepy to stay awake longer. Then Bruce saw a strange thing. He saw, unmistakable as the sun in the sky, the signs of a curious struggle in the man's face.

The trapper—a moment before sinking into the calm of death—was fighting desperately for a few moments of respite. There could be no other explanation. And he won it at last—an interlude of half a dozen breaths. "Who are you?" he whispered.

Bruce bowed his head until his ear was close to the lips. "Bruce Folger," he answered—for the first time in his knowledge speaking his full name. "Son of Matthew Folger who lived at Trail's End long ago."

The man still struggled. "I know it," he said. "I saw it—in your face, I see—everything now. Listen—can you hear me?"

"Yes."

"I just did a wrong—there's a hundred dollars in my pocket that I just got for doing it. I made a promise—to lie to you. Take the money—it ought to be yours, anyway—and here; and use it toward fighting the wrong. It will go a little way."

"Yes," Bruce looked him full in the eyes. "No matter about the money. What did you promise Turner?"

"That I'd lie to you. Grip my arms with your hands—till it hurts. I've only got one breath more. Your father held those hands only in trust—the Turners' deed is forged. And the secret agreement that I witnessed is hidden—"

The breath seemed to go out of the man. Bruce shook him by the shoulder.



He Opened His Eyes and Looked With Some Wonder Into Bruce's Face.

ders. Dave, still in the tree, strained to hear the rest. "Yes—where?"

"It's hidden—just—out—"

The words were no longer audible to Dave, and what followed Bruce also strained to hear in vain. The lips ceased moving. The shadow grew in the eyes, and the lids flickered down over them. A traveler had gone.

Bruce got up, a strange, cold light in his eyes. He glanced up. Dave Turner was climbing slowly down the tree. Bruce made six strides and seized his rifle.

The effect on Dave was ludicrous. He clung fast to the tree limbs, as if he thought a bullet—like a grizzly's claws—could not reach him there. Bruce laid the gun behind him, then stood waiting with his own weapon resting in his arms.

"Come down, Dave," he commanded. "The bear is gone."

Dave crept down the trunk and halted at its base. He studied the cold face before him. "Better not try nothing," he advised hoarsely.

"Why not?" Bruce asked. "Do you think I'm afraid of a coward?"

The man started at the words; his head bobbed backward as if Bruce had struck him beneath the jaw with his fist.

"People don't call the Turners cowards and walk off with it," the man told him.

"Oh, the lowest coward!" Bruce said between set teeth. "The yellowest, mongrel coward! Your own confederate—and you had to drop your gun and run up a tree. You might have stopped the bear's charge."

Dave's face twisted in a scowl. "You're brave enough now. Wait to see what happens later. Give me my gun. I'm going to go."

"You can go, but you don't get your gun. I'll fill you full of lead if you try to touch it."

Dave looked up with some care. He wanted to know for certain if this tenderfoot meant what he said. The man was blind in some things, but his vision was twisted and dark, but he made no mistake about the look on the cold, set face before him. Bruce's finger was curled about the trigger, and it looked to Dave as if it itched to exert further pressure.

"I don't see why I spare you, anyway," Bruce went on. His tone was self-reproachful. "God knows I hadn't ought to—remembering who and what you are. If you'd only give me one little bit of provocation—"

Dave saw lurid lights growing in the man's eyes; and all at once a conclusion came to him. He decided he'd make no further effort to regain the gun. His life was rather precious to him, strangely, and it was wholly plain that a dread and terrible passion was slowly creeping over his enemy. He could see it in the darkening face, the tight grip of the hands on the rifle stock. His own sharp features grew more cunning. "You ought to be glad I didn't stop the bear with my rifle," he said hurriedly. "I had Hudson

tricked—you wouldn't have found out something that you did find out if he hadn't lain here dying. You wouldn't have learned—"

But the sentence died in the middle. Bruce made answer to it, a straight-out blow with his fist, with all his strength behind it, in the very center of his enemy's face.

CHAPTER XVI

Dave Turner traveled hard and late, and he reached Simon's door just before sundown of the second day. Bruce was still a full two hours distant. But Dave did not stay to knock. It was chock-full, and he thought he would find Simon in his barn, supervising the feeding and care of the live stock. He had guessed right, and the two men had a moment's talk in the dusky passage behind the stalls.

"I've brought news," Dave said.

Simon made no answer at first. The saddle pony in the stall immediately in front of them, frightened at Dave's unfamiliar figure, had crowded, trembling, against his manger. Simon's red eyes watched him; then he uttered a short oath. He took two strides into the stall and seized the halter rope in his huge, muscular hand. Three times he jerked it with a peculiar, quivering pull, a curbing that might have been ineffective by a man of ordinary strength, but with the inconceivable might of the great foreman behind it was really terrible punishment. Dave thought for a moment his brother would break for a moment the whites began to show about the soft, dark pupils of his eyes. The strap over the head broke with the fourth pull; then the horse recoiled, plunging and terrified, into the opposite corner of the stall.

Simon leaped with shattering power at the creature's shoulders, his huge arms encircled its neck, his shoulders heaved, and he half-threw it to the floor. Then, as it staggered to rise, his heavy fist flailed against its neck. Again and again he struck, and in the half-darkness of the stable it was a dreadful thing to behold. The man's fury, always quickly aroused, was upon him; his brawny form moved with the agility of a panther. Even Dave, whose shadow eyes were usually wont to feast on cruelty, viewed the scene with some alarm. It wasn't that he was moved by the agony of the horse. But he did remember that horses cost money, and Simon seemed determined to kill the animal before his passion was spent.

The horse covered, and in a moment more it was hard to remember he was a member of a noble, high-spirited breed—a swift runner, brainy as a dog, a servant faithful and worthy. He stood quiet at last, his head hanging low, knees bent, eyes curiously sorrowful and dark. Simon fastened the broken strap about his neck, gave it one more jerk that almost knocked the animal off his feet, then turned back to Dave. Except for a higher color in his cheeks, darker lights in his eyes, and an almost imperceptible quickening of his breathing, it did not seem as if he had moved.

"You're always bringing news," he said. "If it's as important as some of the other news you've brought don't take my time."

"All right," the other replied sullenly. "You don't have to hear it. But I'm telling you it's of real importance this time—and some time you'll find out. He scowled into the dark face. "But suit yourself."

Dave walked clear to the door, then turned. "Don't be a fool, Simon," he urged. "Listen to what I have to tell you. Bruce Folger knows where that secret agreement is."

For once in his life Dave got a response of sufficient emphasis to satisfy him. His brother whirled, his whole expression undergoing an immediate and startling change. If there was one emotion that Dave had never seen on Simon's face it was fear—and he didn't know for certain that he saw it now. But there was alarm—unmistakable—and surprise, too.

"What do you mean?" he demanded. "Out with it!" His tone was really urgent now, not insolent as usual.

"Good Lord, man, don't you know that if Bruce gets that down to the settlements before the thirtieth of next month we're lost—and nothing in this world can save us? We can't drive him off, like we drove the Rosses. There's too much law down in the valleys. If he's got that paper, there's only one thing to do. Help me saddle a horse."

"Wait a minute. I didn't say he had it. I only said he knew where it was. He's still an hour or two walk from here, toward Little River, and if we have to wait for him on the trail, we've got plenty of time. And of

course I ain't quite sure he does know where it is."

Simon smiled mirthlessly. "The news is beginning to sound like the rest of yours."

"Old Hudson is dead," Dave went on. "And don't look at me—I didn't do it. I wish I had, though, first off. For once my judgment was better than yours. The Killer got him."

"Yes. Go on."

"I was with him when it happened. My gun got jammed so I couldn't shoot."

"Where is it now?"

Dave scrambled in vain for a story to explain the loss of his weapon to Bruce, and the one that came out at last didn't do him particular credit. "I—I threw the d—n thing away. Wish I hadn't now, but it made me so mad by jamming—it was a fool trick. Maybe I can go back after it and find it."

Simon smiled again. "Very good so far," he commented.

Dave flushed. "Bruce was there, too—fact is, creased the bear—and the last minute before he died Hudson told him where the agreement was hidden. I couldn't hear all he said—I was too far away—but I heard enough to think that he told Bruce the hiding place."

"And why didn't you get that information away from Bruce with your gun?"

"I didn't tell you the thing was jammed? If it hadn't been for that, I'd done something more than find out where it is. I'd stopped this nonsense once and for all, and let a hole through that tenderfoot big enough to see through. Then there'd never be any more trouble. It's the thing to do now."

Simon looked at his brother's face with some wonder. More crafty and cunning, Dave was like the coyote in that he didn't yield so quickly to fury as that gray wolf, his brother. But when it did come, it scared him. It had come now. Simon couldn't mistake the fact; he saw it plain in the glowing eyes, the clenched hands, the drawn lips. Dave was remembering the pain of the blow Bruce had given him and the smart of the words that had preceded it.

"You and he must have had a little session down there by the creek," Simon suggested slowly, "when your gun was jammed. Of course, he took the gun. What's the use of trying to lie to me?"

"He did. What could I do?"

"And now you want him potted—from ambush."

"What's the use of waiting? Who'd know?" The two men stood face to face in the quiet and deepening dusk of the barn; and there was growing determination on each face. "Every day our chance is less and less," Dave went on. "With this land behind him, he'd be in a position to pay old debts. I'm telling you. We should have met him on the trail and let the buzzards talk to him."

"Yes," Simon echoed in a strange half-whisper. "Let the buzzards talk to him."

Dave took fresh heart at the sound of that voice. "No one would have ever known it," he went on. "No one would ever know it now. They'd find his bones, some time, maybe, but there'd be no one to point to. They'd never get anything against us. I tell you—it's all the way, or no way at all. Tell me to wait for him on the trail."

"Wait. Wait a minute. How long before he will come?"

"Any time now. And don't postpone this matter any more. We're men, not babies. He's not a fool or a coward, either. And he's a shot—I saw that plain enough—and how'd you like to have him shoot through your windows some time? Old Elmina and Linda have set him on, and he's hot for it."

"I wish you'd got that old helper when you got her son," Simon said. He still spoke calmly; but it was plain enough that Dave's words were having the desired effect. "So he's taken up the blood-feud, has he? I thought I gave his father some lessons in that a long time since. Well, I suppose we must let him have his way."

"And remember, too," Dave urged, "what you told him when you met him in the store. You said you wouldn't warn him twice."

"I remember." The two men were silent, but Dave stood no longer motionless. He was shivering all over with malice and fury.

"Then you've given the word?" he asked.

"I've given the word, but I'll do it my own way. Listen, Dave," Simon stood, head bent, deep in thought. "Could you arrange to have Linda and the old hag out of the house when Bruce gets back?"

"Yes."

"We've got to work this thing right. We can't operate in the open like we used to. This man has taken up the blood-feud—but the thing to do—is to let him come to us."

"But he won't do it. He'll go to the courts first."

Simon's face grew stern. "I don't want any more interruptions, Dave. I mean we will want to give the impression that he attacked us first—on his own free will. What if he comes into our house—a man unknown in these parts—and something happens to him there—in the dead of night? It wouldn't look so bad then, would it? Besides—if we got him here—before the clan, we might be able to find out where that document is. First, how can you tell when he's going to come?"

(Continued Next Saturday)

PENDELTON JURY IS NOTABLE
Pendleton, Ore., Oct. 10. (United Press).—Jury selections in Umatilla county this term made history in two instances.

The first was the selection of Edith M. Fisk as foreman of the grand jury, the first woman to hold such a post in this county.

The second was the calling of Albert Minthorn, a full-blooded Umatilla Indian, on the trial jury venire. Minthorn is the first Indian to be called for jury duty during the 31 years Umatilla reservation Indians have held their citizenship.

LIGHTHOUSE JOB LONESOME NOW; KEEPER LONGS FOR OLD SAIL SHIPS

Chicago, Oct. 21.—Capt. Edwin J. Moore sighs. Thirty-nine years a lighthouse keeper. For the last eleven years he has not had a thing to do but sit back and watch the sleek steamers gliding along the horizon, miles away from shore. It's a lonesome job.

"What years ago this used to be a chummy sort," recalled Captain Moore, as he sat in the lighthouse at the foot of Central Street, in Evanston, and gazed out over the placid water. "I can remember when there were as many as ten sailboats out there on a calm day like this—sailboats waiting patiently for the breeze to spring up."

"What's a breeze nowadays? Who ever whistles for a breeze? Nobody, of course, unless it is some sailor on a little

catboat. The big boats, don't need breezes."

"Thirty-nine years ago I took this job as lighthouse keeper. I long for the old days. The days of sailboats. There were wrecks in those days. A lighthouse keeper had something to do. The last wreck I have on my books is October 18, 1911. A little wreck."

"In the thirty-nine years there has not been a life lost wrecks off my lighthouse. There have been many thrilling rescues, you can bet. There was romance to a lighthouse. Now all I can do is to keep inventory of old brooms, scraps of paper, odd bits of rope, things I used to throw away when they were worthless. Nowadays the government makes you keep account of all the odds and ends and has a survey made of them before you can scrap them."

POOR GIRL WEDS RICH MAN'S SON; RESULT QUESTION (Continued from page one)

whose life has been rooted in entirely different soil?

The mating of poverty and riches is not the only situation in which the question of the fitness of John and Mary to live together in unity arises. When the American heiress marries the Hungarian count, when the French girl comes overseas to wed her soldier boy—when ever two who are different in race, nationality, religion or in the varying matters of social custom and usage marry—there is a chasm to bridge.

The chasm is one of custom. It is filled with a dense growth of mutual ignorance.

What each of us has learned in youth, what each of us has seen at home, what each of us has inherited from a line of ancestors and has acquired through environment and training, is part of our life. I know a dear old woman, always had a loaf of bread resting on a board on the table at meal time. Next to the loaf lay a big bread knife. Whenever any member of the family wanted a slice of bread, he would take the knife out of an inch slot, and then dig his knife into the roll of butter in the center of the loaf, and spread the slice of bread as it lay in the palm of his hand.

Today this woman is a cultured member of the society which counts among its traditions and forms the use of thinly cut bread, previously sliced, butter plates and butter knives. But she confesses laughingly that she loathes the wafer slices and butter knives, and that she is an individual butter plate, and that there's nothing she so enjoys as a foray into her kitchen at night. For then she can cut herself a "proper hunk" of bread and lay the butter on with a right good knife.

A little thing this! But like most trifles—it is symbolic.

Should your circle be an unbreakable band when love calls and bids you marry? It is hard to forget the custom of your country. It is difficult to break away from the traditions of your blood. And the education which the daughter of a poor man receives from home and school and life itself is a preparation for the struggle, struggle, struggle, and indifference to many of the things which the son of a millionaire actually imbibes with his mother's milk.

Adaptable as we Americans are, there are radical changes which we can make only at the cost of a tremendous and conscious effort.

When a man or woman marries outside the accustomed social circle much extra effort is added to the required for the normal adjustment to living in the marriage partnership.

The "Cinderella myth" stops with wedding bells. The formula for the old-fashioned love story is "and so they lived happily ever after."

Realism is a bit different. I know two "Cinderellas." One had such a miserable time with the array of silver at all the dinners to which her new husband invited her that she seemed awkward and dull. In criticizing her manners, her new family made it impossible for her to show her fine fibes.

She had two years of anguish in a world which seemed to her food and its conversation in a way she couldn't digest and understand. She didn't bring up her baby to suit her husband and his clan. But she loved her prince, so she stuck to her new manners and lived happily ever after.

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Judge Refuses to Eject Poor Tenant

Chicago, Oct. 21.—Judge Henry M. Walker refused to order Larry Applehaus, quarterback for the Logan Square football team, to vacate his flat when he learned that the man was home in bed, suffering from a broken leg.

"I can't throw a man out of his flat when he has a broken leg," the judge told Mrs. Applehaus when she appeared with information that they had been served with notice to vacate. "I'd like to build a house for the owner and the tenant, but I haven't the money. Keep the flat until November 1 and then come to see me."

Broken Door Glass Enters Boy's Heart

Los Angeles, Oct. 21.—James Thomas, fourteen-year-old pupil in the Inglewood high school, in opening the door at the front entrance, broke the glass and a sharp pointed fragment struck him in the breast. He did not realize that it had penetrated deeply, as he felt no pain. Laughing and talking with schoolmates, he reached the campus and fell. The glass had entered his heart.

Mosquitos Infect Their Chief Enemy

Jacksonville, Oct. 21.—Dengue fever has been more prevalent than usual this summer, and a few weeks ago a campaign of extermination of mosquitos, which spread the infection, was begun, headed by City Health Officer W. W. McDonald. Now he is a victim of the disease and will be out of the fight for a couple of weeks. He says that as soon as the mosquitos got wise to the plan for their eradication they concentrated their efforts on him and inoculated him a few days ago while he was heading an oil-spreading raid into the swamp. The fever rarely is fatal, but it is very debilitating, and so long as breeding places for mosquitos exist the fever will recur every summer.

THEOLOGICAL PROBLEM

"Mother, 'sposing I died, should I go to heaven?"

"Yes, dear."

"'Sposing I died because a big bear swallowed me, would he have to go too?"

—Punch (London).

Serious Bladder Trouble.

"Could not stand nor sit nor was forced to cry out from intense pain," writes Henry Williams, Tarkio, Montana. "The doctors said I had inflammation of the bladder and an operation was necessary. Tried Foley Kidney Pills and improved at once. Tell all my friends about Foley Kidney Pills as it will save many from suffering and perhaps, as in my case, a dangerous operation." Bladder and kidney trouble demand prompt treatment. Foley Kidney Pills give quick relief. Sold everywhere.



Of this be sure Each loaf is pure.



YOUR STAFF OF LIFE

STAGE

From Noti, Elmira, Veneta—
Lv. Noti 8:30 a.m.
Lv. Elmira 9:00 a.m.
Lv. Veneta 9:00 a.m.
Lv. Veneta and Elmira 1 p.m.
To Veneta—
Lv. Eugene 11:30 a.m.
To Elmira, Veneta and Noti.
Lv. Eugene 4:00 p.m.
Offices—Draper's Store, Veneta, Main St.
Stage Terminal, Eugene, Seventh and Olive.
E. W. Inman, Mgr.
Veneta, Oregon.