

FORBIDDEN VALLEY

by William Byron Mowery

SYNOPSIS: Curt and Sonya are traveling from Krasnoyarsk, millionaire crook, to the Canadian Northwest, at Russian Lake they find Ralph and Sonya Nichols, who are venturing into dangerous Indian territory on a scientific mission. Curt rescues Sonya from a dangerous half-breed, learns she is a Russian, and tries unsuccessfully to prevent her journey. Curt and Sonya are shot at by the half-breed, who escapes.

Chapter 15 MIDNIGHT SEARCH

"Twelve-thirty, Paul," said Curt. "We'd better start; our job'll take us an hour or more. This rain is our good luck—every body'll be indoors."

They stepped outside. The rain still beat down, but the thunder heads with their vivid flashes had passed on east, so that there was no danger of the lightning betraying them. The cabins and Indian tepees were all dark.

They went out the path to the Bay establishment. The store, twenty steps from Higginbotham's residence, was entirely dark, but to Curt's disappointment there was a light in the house. From a window on the north side a yellow shaft streamed out into the rainy blackness.

Leaving Paul at the fur press, he circled around to the north side and crept up behind a cord of wood. He dared not rise and look over the risk; the light would gladden on his wet slicker and give him away. Feeling about with his fingers, he located a loose stick, pulled it out and made an aperture large enough to peer through.

The room was Sonya Nichols'. With a chair drawn close to the window, Sonya was looking out into the night, an elbow on the window sill. The candle on the dresser turned her hair to a mass of thin-spun gold and lighted up the soft roundness of her arms and shoulders. She seemed too moody for sleep.

Less than ten feet away from her, Curt felt guilty for intruding on her privacy; but the expression on her face arrested him and he continued to watch. Evidently she thought herself alone with the night, and made no effort to hide her feelings, as she normally did. She seemed bitterly unhappy and worried, but the thing that struck him most forcibly was her hard-set purposiveness.

Seldom fooled in such matters, he knew that something wrong, badly wrong, lay behind her tragic reverie. At the moment, pressed by his own work and the need of hurry, he could not pause there long; but the incident left its impression on him.

Around with Paul again, he whispered: "It's all right; we won't be bothered. I'll go into the trading store myself. You stay here and keep guard. If anyone shows up, give that cluck of the hawk-owl in time for me to get out. The doors are locked, but I loosened the inside catch on this front window when I was here this evening. Give me a boost up, partner."

Paul stooped. Curt stood on his shoulder, raised the window noiselessly, wedged through, and dropped down inside the store.

He was not sure his work would get results, but the odds favored it. The clue he was after almost had to be in that trading post, for there was no station between Russian Lake and the Yukon, and none nearer than Fort Nelson on the Llard.

THROUGH the pitch dark he felt along the counter to the rear and found the desk where Higginbotham kept his books. He had scouted out the store thoroughly that evening and knew the exact ledger that he wanted. His fingers closed upon it, he drew it out and took it over behind the counter. Making himself a little barricade of boxes so that his flash glow could not be noticed outside, he began examining the book.

The record started with June first of the previous summer, and ran for exactly one year. Every transaction of the store, whether cash, trade or debt, had been entered by the methodical clerk. Several of the months were scanty, others heavy. By interpreting the little human stories behind the entries, Curt could reconstruct almost every happening at Russian Lake in the last twelve months, the people familiar with names, people, their occupations, the events in their lives.

Mary Talking-Water buys ten yards of flannel—charge. Peter Lame-Wind trades thirty lake trout for canvas to re-cover his canoe. Teeste LeNoir buys a carton of Savage .303 cartridges—charge. Sam Canoe-Tied-to-Shore trades a

no-2 otter for a fanged bear-super.

At that first sweeping examination Curt selected four names as meriting suspicion. On the next time through, three of them dropped out. Only one remained—the name of Teeste LeNoir.

"Teeste—Baptiste, the fellow was a half-breed. He was a trapper and he lived some distance from Russian Lake, for he did not get in often; from six to eight weeks elapsed between his visits. But when he did come in, he traded very freely. He was by easy odds the best customer that Higginbotham had."

Very plainly the fellow was buying for somebody in addition to himself. His food items were double and triple the needs of one man, and he bought cartridges for two rifles, a Savage .303 and a standard Mannlicher-Schoenauer.

Was he buying for some other trapper or crony of his? The items proved he was not. Cigarettes in cans of five hundred each, a radio, a score of unnecessary but costly heavily—no trapper would ever purchase those things. This unknown whom LeNoir was buying for had the luxury tastes of a city man and plenty of money to indulge them.

With his suspicion definitely focused, Curt turned again to the beginning of the record and started down across the LeNoir transactions, scrutinizing each item. In August the fellow had been hanging around Russian Lake, making little daily purchases like the other 'breeds idling there. His entries then were "charge."

The record gave a perfect picture of a "breed" loading away the open season. But in late September the whole situation suddenly changed. He seemed to have come into money in a twinkling, for he not only began buying heavily and paying cash, but he settled up a two-years' account in full. Where had he got the money for that? No guide was ever paid such wages. Late September—that was about the time when Igor Karakhan had come north into the Lillard's!

Half an hour before daybreak Curt straightened up from his long cramped study of the ledger and replaced the book where he had got it. Smoothing out all signs of his midnight visit, he joined Paul outside.

"Paul! We've done it!"

"What? No!"

"Can't be a doubt in the world! I found out who his contact man is. That trade record was a dead give-away."

Oblivious of the beating rain, they shook hands over their great luck.

BACK at camp, Paul smoked a cigarette and then turned in. Curt could not sleep; too much had happened in the last few hours. Licking a pipe, he started back to old John's tent, wanting to find out something about Teeste LeNoir so that he could strike up a friendship with the "breed."

At the flap-front he asked, "Hello, John; still up?"

"Come in, b'y. I'm down but I ain't to sleep."

Curt stepped in. Old John was stretched out on his elder poke, reading a fur-company almanac by light of a candle.

"Won't keep you awake, will I, John?"

"Not a speck. I do most of my sleepin' in the winter time, like an ole b'ar. Sides, I'm goin' out to run my fish net drackly."

Curt sat down on a box. "John, you know the Kioshees better than anybody else; what do you really think about this trip the Nichols are planning up the Lillard?"

"Son, I don't think about that proposition; I know. Sonya an' Ralph air goin' to get a peek of hot water. If they tempt to go above the pass, they're like to never get back to Russian Lake a-tall!" He groped in a pack and pulled out a curious bow. "Know what this is, b'y?"

Curt examined the strange weapon. It was made of two matched horns, with the butt ends fitted together, wrapped with sinew and cemented so cleverly that they looked like one piece.

"It's a ram-horn bow, John. I saw a couple of them once at Fort Nelson."

Old John nodded. "It's the stand-by weapon of the Kioshees. It's flat ordinary acc'rate but the most powerful bow you ever seen. Jist flex 'er once. Takes a good arm, don't it? That bow'll plunk an arser clean through a moose at fifty yard!"

(Copyright, 1933, William B. Mowery)

Curt, tomorrow, is handed a stunning jolt by Old John.

TALENT BOY'S LEG BROKEN BY AUTO

Byrd Abels, 12, son of Mrs. Beate Abels of Talent, who received a fracture of the left leg and other injuries, when struck by an auto, driven by J. D. Watkins of Medford, Calif., Saturday, was reported in a satisfactory condition at the Sacred Heart hospital today.

The boy was crossing the highway a short distance north of Talent with his uncle, George Atchison, when the accident occurred. He was brought to the hospital at 6 o'clock.

Watkins, according to the police report, failed to see the two on the highway until too late to avoid a crash.

Heating costs can be reduced. For complete heating service call Art Schmidt, 418-1862.

Real estate or insurance—leave to Jones Phone 696.

FIREMEN'S DANCE TO AID WORK OF SANTA

The Medford toy supply for Christmas, 1933, was swelled considerably Thursday night, when a large crowd attended the firemen's ball at Oriental Gardens. Arranged as a benefit to increase funds available for rehabilitation of toys to be distributed to needy children by the Lady Lions, the dance was "a huge success."

A pleasant surprise was realized during one intermission, when Frankie Rinabarger was presented in a feature dance.

The firemen Saturday, through their chief, Roy Elliott, issued thanks to all persons who responded to the dance invitation.

Christmas Cards. Time is getting short to get Christmas and New Year greeting cards. Order now. See the choice lines to select from at Mail Tribune Job Department. Prices reasonable.

S'MATTER POP—

By C. M. PAYNE



TAILSPIN TOMMY—"Familiar Grounds"—But Different Now!



BOUND TO WIN—No Boys Wanted



THE NEBBS—Oh! That's Different



BRINGING UP FATHER

By George McManus



FARMER KILLED IN ACCIDENT WITH GUN

BEND, Ore., Dec. 4.—(AP)—Accidental discharge of a rifle he was carrying was said today to have been responsible for the death Sunday of

Al Goodrich, prominent Cloverdale farmer at his ranch home. His body was found in a field near his house. It was apparent, the sheriff said, that Goodrich had dropped the rifle and that the weapon was discharged as the butt struck the ground.

MORE SATISFACTION CAN'T BE BOUGHT FOR 5¢



There's No Guesswork in Tribune A. B. C. Circulation