

WAZAII

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CHAPTER XXI—CONTINUED

ONE of these late-comers was Sandy McTrigler. There were several reasons why Sandy had left the Yukon. He was "in bad" with the police who patrolled the country west of Dawson, and he was "broke."

Sandy, who always carried the latest fashions on the market, laughed at it. But it was the best his finances would allow of. He started south-up the McFarlane. Beyond a certain point on the river, prospectors had found no gold, and they pushed confidently beyond this point.

One afternoon he ran his canoe ashore on a white strip of sand. This was at a place where the stream had widened, and gave promise of at least a few colors. After such disgusting weeks as these Sandy was dangerous when he had the company of others. Alone he was harmless.

For a week Kazan and Gray Wolf had been hunting for a bush, waiting for the McFarlane and this was the first time since the preceding winter that Gray Wolf had caught the scent of man in the air.

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the face of the wind. Kazan caught a single whiff of the man-tainted air and his spine grew stiff. But blind Gray Wolf was wiser than the little red-eyed fox of the North. Her pointed nose slowly followed Sandy's progress. She heard a dry stick crack under his feet 200 yards away. She caught the metallic click over his gun-barrel as it struck a rock. The moment she lost Sandy in the wind she whined and rubbed herself against Kazan and trotted a few steps to the southwest.

At times such as this Kazan seldom refused to take guidance from her. They trotted away side by side and by the time Sandy was creeping up snake-like with the wind in his face, Kazan was peering from a fringe of river brush down upon the canoe on the white strip of sand. When Sandy returned, after an hour of futile stalking, two fresh tracks led straight down to the canoe. He looked at them in amazement and then a sinister grin wrinkled his ugly face. He chuckled as he went to his kit and dug out a small rubber bag. From this he drew a tightly corked bottle, filled with a pline capsule. In each little capsule were five grains of strychnine. There were dark hints that upon a time Sandy McTrigler had tried one of these capsules, and he chuckled again as he counted out a dozen of the capsules and thought how easy it would be to get this inquisitive pair of wolves.

Two or three days before he had killed a caribou, and each of the capsules he now rolled up in a little ball of deer fat, doing the work with short sticks in place of his fingers, so that there would be no man-smell clinging to the death-baits. Before sundown Sandy set out at right angles to the main trail, the baits, most of them he hung to low bushes. Others he dropped in worn rabbit and caribou trails. Then he returned to the creek and cooked his supper.

The next morning he was up early and off to the poison baits. The first bait was untouched. The second was as he had planned it. The third was gone. A thrill thrilled through Sandy as he looked about him. Somewhere within a radius of two or three hundred yards he would find his game. Then his glance fell to the ground under the bush where he had hung the poison capsule and an oak broke from his lips. The bait had been eaten. The caribou fat lay as scattered under the bush and still imbedded in the largest portion of it was the little white capsule—broken. It was Sandy's first experience with a wild creature whose instincts were sharpened by blindness, and he was puzzled. He had never known this to happen before. If a fox or a wolf could be lured to the point of touching a bait, it followed that the bait was eaten. Sandy went on to the fourth and the fifth baits. They were untouched. The sixth was torn to pieces. The wind was in the face and his capsule was broken and the white powder scattered. Two more poison baits Sandy pulled down in this manner. He knew that Kazan and Gray Wolf had done the work, for he found the marks of their feet in a dozen different places. The accumulated bad humor of weeks of futile labor found vent in his disappointment and anger. At last he had found something tangible to curse. The failure of his poison baits he accepted as a sort of climax to his general bad luck. Everything was against him, he believed, and he would not return to Red Gold City. Early in the afternoon he launched his canoe and drifted down stream with the current. He was content to let the current do all of the work today, and he used his paddle just enough to keep his slender craft head on.

He leaned back comfortably and smoked his pipe, with the old rifle between his legs. The wind was in the face and he kept a sharp watch for game. It was late in the afternoon when Kazan and Gray Wolf came out on a sandbar five or six miles down stream. Kazan was lapping up the cool water when the wind brought the danger signal to her she was alone. Two or three minutes before the scent came to her Kazan had left her side in swift pursuit of a snowshoe rabbit, and she lay there, her body under a bush, waiting for him.

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Sandy drifted quietly around a bend a hundred yards above them. If the wind had been right, or if Sandy had been using his paddle, Gray Wolf would have detected the danger. It was the metallic click of the old-fashioned lock of Sandy's rifle that awakened her to a sense of peril. Instantly she was thrilled by the noisiness of it. Kazan heard the sound and stopped drinking to face it. In that moment Sandy pressed the trigger. A belch of smoke, a roar of gunpowder, and Kazan felt a red-hot stream of fire pass with the swiftness of a lightning bolt through his brain. He stumbled back, and his legs gave way under him, and he crumpled down in a limp heap. Gray Wolf darted like a streak of fire into the bush. Blind, she had not seen Kazan wilt down upon the white sand. Not until she was a quarter of a mile away from the terrifying thunder of the white man's rifle did she stop and wait for him.

Sandy McTrigler ground his canoe on the sandbar with an exultant yell. "Got you, you old devil, didn't I?" he cried. "I'd 'a' got the other, too, if I'd 'a' had something besides this damned old rifle." He turned Kazan's head over with the butt of his gun, and the leer of satisfaction in his face gave place to a sudden look of amazement. For the first time he saw the collar about Kazan's neck. "It's a dog, Sandy McTrigler—a dog!"

CHAPTER XXII McTRIGLER dropped on his knees in the sand. The look of exultation was gone from his face. He twisted the collar about the dog's rump neck until he came to the worn plump, on which he could make out the faintly engraved letters "Kazan." He spelled the letters out one by one, and the look in his face was of one who still disbelieved what he had seen and heard. "A dog!" he exclaimed again. "A dog, Sandy McTrigler—a dog!" He rose to his feet and looked down at his victim. A pool of blood lay in the white sand at the end of Kazan's nose, and the dog's head was turned toward where his bullet had struck. His inspection filled him with a new and greater interest. The heavy ball from the muzzle of Kazan's rifle had struck the top of the head. It was a flat blow that had not even broken the skull, and like a flash Sandy understood the quivering and twitching of Kazan's shoulders and legs. He had thought that they were the last muscular throes of death. But Kazan was not dying. He was only stunned, and would be on his feet again in a few minutes. Sandy's eyes were filled with a wild creature whose instincts were sharpened by blindness, and he was puzzled. He had never known this to happen before. If a fox or a wolf could be lured to the point of touching a bait, it followed that the bait was eaten. Sandy went on to the fourth and the fifth baits. They were untouched. The sixth was torn to pieces. The wind was in the face and his capsule was broken and the white powder scattered. Two more poison baits Sandy pulled down in this manner. He knew that Kazan and Gray Wolf had done the work, for he found the marks of their feet in a dozen different places. The accumulated bad humor of weeks of futile labor found vent in his disappointment and anger. At last he had found something tangible to curse. The failure of his poison baits he accepted as a sort of climax to his general bad luck. Everything was against him, he believed, and he would not return to Red Gold City. Early in the afternoon he launched his canoe and drifted down stream with the current. He was content to let the current do all of the work today, and he used his paddle just enough to keep his slender craft head on.

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own hurt, and what he ascribed to the man he also attributed to the club. In his newer undertakings of things, born of freedom and Gray Wolf, Man and Club were one and inseparable. With a snarl he leaped at Sandy. The man was not expecting a direct assault, and before he could raise his club or spring aside Kazan had landed full on his chest. The muzzle about Kazan's jaws saved him. Fangs that would have torn his throat open snapped harmlessly. Under the weight of the dog's body he fell back, as if struck down by a catapult.

As quick as a cat he was on his feet again, with the end of the babiche twisted several times about his hand. Kazan leaped again, and this time he was met by a furious swing of the club. It smashed against his shoulder, and sent him down in the sand. Before he could recover Sandy was upon him, with all the fury of a man gone mad. He shortened the babiche by twisting it again and again about his hand, and the club rose and fell with the skill and strength of one long accustomed to its use. Blind, it was not Kazan's hatred of man, and the ferocity and fearlessness of his attacks. Again and again he leaped in, and each time the club fell upon him with a force that threatened to break his bones. There was a tense hard look about Sandy's cruel mouth. He had never known a dog like this before, and he was a bit nervous, even with Kazan muzzled. Three times Kazan's fangs would have sunk deep in his flesh had it not been for the babiche. And if the thoughts about his jaws should slip, or break—

CONTINUED TOMORROW.