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TOWANDA:

Wednesday Morning, February 21, 1849.

Stephen White, the Outlaw.

My story is not one of those strange tales of love, murder and suicide incident to the life of a city citizen; it is rather a narrative of bold, unscrupulous villainy, incited to a consummation of daring deeds by a love of the horrible and mysterious. It is a history of one among scores of like adventurers who formerly haunted our frontier line, but which are now fast travelling to the very outskirts of barbarous life. Thank God, my experience in them is nearly at an end, my knowledge of their recurrence fast dwindling away. The thoughts of blood, shed by wholesale for months, nay, years, growing out of one seemingly trifling quarrel, is terrible—the prostration of God's image by amiable wretches, who stealthily creep out of daylight to harem their murderous appetites, is horrible in the extreme, and may I never again look upon the palpable demonstration of "man's inhumanity to man," makes countless thousands mourn.

In the year 1811, when I was nearly forty years of age, I resided in the western part of a city of Virginia, near the head waters of the Great Kanawha, so called in contradistinction to the Little Kanawha. The whole region of Western Virginia was then an almost unbroken forest, with here and there a log cabin and clearing finely denoting the civilization of the rough hunter is a fit representation of civilized life) was making some progress into the hunting grounds of the Indians. There were perhaps some sixty families living within twenty miles of me, and as a five mile lighter was considered near enough to be a speaking acquaintance, we were all on terms of close intimacy and friendship. I am told that now a person can travel from Point Pleasant, at the mouth of the Kanawha, to Charleston (the head of steamboat navigation) and find the Kanawha valley alive with men, women and children—even the county around it, barren and desolate as it is, boasts its villages and farm houses, and that the track of the hunter is seldom seen on the very spots I had once supposed incapable of raising other food than wild game. But so it is everywhere. A few years more, and even the mountains of rock which bound our Western Territory, will stand as genuine, over the interests of a densely populated country.

Among the families in my immediate vicinity were the Tracys, the Whites, the Powells, the Harveys, the Vaughns, and the Messens. All these families contained numerous sons and daughters, of different ages, most of them as cool specimens of the backwoods growth as could generally be found on the frontier. With some of the juvenile members of these families the greater part of my tale will deal.

On a fine morning in September, ten or twelve young men, from eighteen to twenty years of age, gathered by appointment on a fine plain at the base of a high mountain which overshadowed a small lake and seemed to go upward into the sky like a dim cloud seen in the distance. We were all what is technically called good shots, and armed with rifles as true to the mark as any in the settlements. We had gathered that morning for a chase of deer that abounded in that region, and were then just out of the limits of a summer vacation. At about 8 o'clock the whole complement had arrived, and we easily seated ourselves under a large tree for a slight indulgence ere we started out.

"I was at the Blue Lick no later than yesterday," said Andy Powell, "and I'm with me with a white oak sapling, if I didn't eat three does and as fine a buck as ever lapped the water from the stream. Of course Sue was up and at 'em in a minute, but blame my soul, if she didn't miss tire for the first time in six months!"

"And you give 'em up?" said Hiram Tracy, inquisitively.

"Give 'em up, did you say?" rejoined Andy. "No, I give 'em chase, and I got high upon 'em with as beautiful a sight as I ever look in my life, when all at once my foot went under a creeping vine and I was floored!"

"The more fool you," said Stephen White, "and chase a buck. Andy Powell and an antlered buck carrying a face—perhaps you have lately lived in the settlements?"

"And if I have," said Andy, "I haven't much of my own nature of the beast. Perhaps, Steve White, when I want to get acquainted with the ways of the center I'll come and see if you're at home."

"And if you do," answered Steve, "you'll hear more than you ever heard before. As for the boys, they're gone, and I'm able to get my own young along how to shoot."

"As to signing a deer, snuffing a rabbit, or losing the bull's-eye," said Andy, "I don't give in to an chap that owns a rifle west of the settlements; and as for you, Steve White, I can whistle off a black-bird's head where you can't rattle the tail feathers. I don't often brag, but you know I can do it."

"I'll lay you a silver dollar to a pistareen, if you can borrow one," returned Steve, with a flushed face. "That I can drive a shingle-nail home the first time trying, at sixty yards, where you can't do it in half an hour."

"Double the bet and I will change places with you," said Steve, "and I will change places with you."

"Done! Done!" was echoed simultaneously from both sides, and the whole party, as with one accord, sprang to their feet. All was confusion for an instant, but the voice of Simon Vaughn rang clear above the din as he cried out in hoarse tones: "Down the whole of you. There shall be anything here but fair play and a clear field."

I, an instant we obeyed our recognized leader. The money was soon forthcoming in the proportions proposed by Steve White and placed into the hands of Simon Vaughn as referee. Another of the party then drew from the bottom of his rifle a mass of odds and ends, such as bits of string, old lead,

pins, tugs and ragged bullets, and selected a common shingle nail, with a rather large-headed head. This he quietly drove into the trunk of a sapling near by, and then setting the head of the nail, covered it with a small piece of white paper from his jacket. Thirty paces were then counted off toward the sun, and a huge rock placed upon the limits of the place allotted to the marksmen. In ten minutes from the time the quarrel had begun, Simon Vaughn announced the preparations as completed.

"There boys," said he, "you have both got the gun upon your backs, and a good glare upon the sapling. Look out for chances, take a steady aim, and pull with a clear conscience for the bit of white. I'll warrant you'll neither whim!"

The excitement was now intense. Both were capital marksmen, and had brought down their quantity of game each season far exceeding any others in the region. The men were in looks, appearance and manners perfectly antagonistic, and had long been pitted against each other in every manly sport. White was a very large, powerful fellow, with a breadth of shoulders and capacity of chest unequalled by any among us. He was in strength a perfect Sampson, and valued himself highly upon his superiority to any of his fellows in those arts which are invaluable to a Border settler. Possessing physical strength sufficient to ward him in seeking such adventures which savored of violence and danger, he was, in all intents and purposes, a downright, thorough head-bully, and yet, unlike most civilized bullies, he was no coward—no thought of fear, so hope of escaping danger and trouble ever occupied his mind. He coveted rather than avoided the perils of personal encounters, and was never so happy as when he could invoke a quarrel and mix up his temerarious powers with the others.

Andy Powell was his very antipodes. Slight in frame and small in stature, he looked the very impersonation of an antelope. His light curly hair and beautiful expressive features denoted more of feminine grace and beauty than many a coarse and strength; and yet no man among the dozen assembled there could boast of being his master in personal prowess. Incapable of excitement to anger, and ever ready with a pleasant smile and word for his friends, he was a universal favorite, and to use a common expression of our day, "was loved nearly as much as Steve White was hated." Our sympathies and hopes were all with Andy.

The toss-up of a pistareen gave Steve the first shot at the nail, and stepping quickly forward to his stand, he with a quick movement, denoting perfect confidence in his own powers, drew his rifle to his shoulder, and seemingly without taking aim, pulled the trigger. The ball cut the loose edge of the paper close to the rim, and hurried itself deep in the tree!

"A miss! A miss!" cried a half dozen voices in concert.

"What can you expect when a man sprays his paper over the whole tree like a sheet upon a line?" growled Steve. "But no matter, he can't make a better aim, and the next time I'll hude the nail for ever."

Andy Powell during this shot conferred had spoken not a word. But now his chest heaved, his eyes dilated, and his face flushed with sudden excitement. We all saw that he would drive his bullet as true as a rifle would allow, and watched his aim with interest.

Steve gasped slowly and evenly in his position as though about to draw upon a squirrel, he lowered his rifle slowly to its place, stopped and examined his priming carefully, again brought the piece to bear upon the mark, and after aiming steadily for about a minute, fired. The paper on the instant appeared, and the next moment a wild, terrific shout rent the air like the war-whoop of the Indian. Andy Powell was declared the victor! Every hand but one was extended to greet the victorious youth, every face but one was lit up with a smile of joy at his unexpected success—but one exception was Steve White.

And no one wondered at the terrible change in countenance. This was his first defeat—his first loss of a complete triumph over an adversary. He spoke no word, he uttered no complaint, he breathed no oath, but upon his face there gleamed the demonic furt that raged within, betokened anything but good to his victorious adversary.

"Andy, my boy," said Simon Vaughn with a cordial grasp of the hand, as Steve White slowly walked away from the group. "You've good blood and I am glad to see that you know enough to enjoy such a kind of triumph as yours is without making such a fuss about it. Some of the youngsters here would never let their neighbors hear the last of it, which, depend upon it, in the long run, is a worst kind of policy."

"I like to see a fellow have a little modesty, but it's the nature of 'em to brag and brag, and you can't drive it out of him any more than you can drive a snake on a side hill!"

"I haint any notion of bragging, Simon," said Andy, "for to tell the truth, I don't know how I hit that nail myself. I look good aim, and fired dreadful hard to be straight, but somehow or other my nerves were kinder outstry and I was afraid I'd miss the tree entirely; but luck was with me though, and if I have beat Steve White, why I am going to let it go at that. But Simon, I will say—"

Suddenly the sharp, quick report peculiar to the rifle was heard from a thicket near us, and simultaneously with the crack Andy Powell dropped to the ground like a dead limb. In an instant the blood was gushing from the forehead, his hunting shirt to the ground in a moment, and his cheek was blanched to a perfect white. All present, for a single moment, seemed astounded by the dreadful occurrence; but, quick as thought, five or six rifles were aimed at the spot from whence the shot had come, and their owners, with a single word, after the murderous ruffian concealed himself, No sound, as of a body falling to the earth, answered

every kind of noise. For nothing had been heard out of the woods, or thence issued, as if any one had fallen. The report of the rifle was the only sound that had been heard. The men looked at each other in amazement, and then, as if by a common impulse, they all started up and looked toward the thicket from whence the shot had come. The thicket was a dense growth of brush and saplings, and the only way to it was by a narrow path. The men looked at each other in amazement, and then, as if by a common impulse, they all started up and looked toward the thicket from whence the shot had come. The thicket was a dense growth of brush and saplings, and the only way to it was by a narrow path. The men looked at each other in amazement, and then, as if by a common impulse, they all started up and looked toward the thicket from whence the shot had come. The thicket was a dense growth of brush and saplings, and the only way to it was by a narrow path. 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