The Gold Wolf

W.A. Fraser

Table of Contents

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ALL day long Bulldog Carney had found, where the trail was soft, the odd imprint of that goblined inturned hoof. All day in the saddle, riding a trail that winds in and out among rocks, and trees, and cliffs monotonously similar, the hush of the everlasting hills holding in subjection man's soul, the towering giants of embattled rocks thrusting up towards God's dome pigmying to nothingness that rat, a man, produces a comatose condition of mind; man becomes a child, incapable of little beyond the recognition of trivial things; the erratic swoop of a bird, the sudden roar of a cataract, the dirge−like sigh of wind through the harp of a giant pine.

And so, curiously, Bulldog's fancy had toyed aimlessly with the history of the cayuse that owned that inturned left forefoot. Always where the hoof's imprint lay was the flat track of a miner's boot, the hob nails denting the black earth with stolid persistency. But the owner of the miner's boot seemed of little moment; it was the abnormal hoof that, by a strange perversity, haunted Carney.

The man was probably a placer miner coming down out of the Eagle Hills, leading a pack pony that carried his duffel and, perhaps, a small fortune in gold. Of course, like Carney, he was heading for steel, for the town of Bucking Horse.

Toward evening, as Carney rode down a winding trail that led to the ford of Singing Water, rounding an abrupt turn the mouth of a huge cave yawned in the side of a cliff away to his left. Something of life had melted into its dark shadow that had the semblance of a man; or it might have been a bear or a wolf. Lower down in the valley that was called the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge, his buckskin shied, and with a snort of fear left the trail and elliptically came back to it twenty yards beyond.

In the centre of the ellipse, on the trail, stood a gaunt form, a huge dog−wolf. He was a sinister figure, his snarling lips curled back from strong yellow fangs, his wide powerful head low hung, and the black bristles on his back erect in challenge.

The whole thing was weird, uncanny; a single wolf to stand his ground in daylight was unusual.

Instinctively Bulldog reined in the buckskin, and half turning in the saddle, with something of a shudder, searched the ground at the wolf's feet dreading to find something. But there was nothing.

The dog−wolf, with a snarling twist of his head, sprang into the bushes just as Carney dropped a hand to his gun; his quick eye had seen the movement.

Carney had meant to camp just beyond the ford of Singing Water, but the usually placid buckskin was fretful, nervous.

A haunting something was in the air; Carney, himself, felt it. The sudden apparition of the wolf could not account for this mental unrest, either in man or beast, for they were both inured to the trail, and a wolf meant little beyond a skulking beast that a pistol shot would drive away.

High above the rider towered Old Squaw Mountain. It was like a battered feudal castle, on its upper reaches turret and tower and bastion catching vagrant shafts of gold and green, as, beyond, in the far west, a flaming sun slid down behind the Selkirks. Where he rode in the twisted valley a chill had struck the air, suggesting vaults, dungeons; the giant ferns hung heavy like the plumes of knights drooping with the death dew. A reaching stretch of salmon bushes studded with myriad berries that gleamed like topaz jewels hedged on both sides the purling, frothing stream that still held the green tint of its glacier birth.

Many times in his opium running Carney had swung along this wild trail almost unconscious of the way, his mind travelling far afield; now back to the old days of club life; to the years of army routine; to the bright and happy scenes where rich−gowned women and cultured men laughed and bantered with him. At times it was the newer rough life of the West; the ever−present warfare of man against man; the yesterday where he had won, or the to−morrow where he might cast a losing hazard where the dice might turn groggily from a six−spotted side to a deuce, and the thrower take a fall.

But to−night, as he rode, something of depression, of a narrow environment, of an evil one, was astride the withers of his horse; the mountains seemed to close in and oppress him. The buckskin, too, swung his heavy lop ears irritably back and forth, back and forth. Sometimes one ear was pricked forward as though its owner searched the beyond, the now glooming valley that, at a little distance, was but a blur, the other ear held backward as though it would drink in the sounds of pursuit.

Pursuit! that was the very thing; instinctively the rider turned in his saddle, one hand on the horn, and held his piercing gray eyes on the back trail, searching for the embodiment of this phantasy. The unrest had developed that far into conception, something evil hovered on his trail, man or beast. But he saw nothing but the swaying kaleidoscope of tumbling forest shadows; rocks that, half gloomed, took fantastic forms; bushes that swayed with the rolling gait of a grizzly.

The buckskin had quickened his pace as if, tired though he was, he would go on beyond that valley of fear before they camped.

Where the trail skirted the brink of a cliff that had a drop of fifty feet, Carney felt the horse tremble, and saw him hug the inner wall; and, when they had rounded the point, the buckskin, with a snort of relief, clamped the snaffle in his teeth and broke into a canter.

"I wonder by Jove!" and Bulldog, pulling the buckskin to a stand, slipped from his back, and searched the black−loamed trail.

"I believe you're right, Pat," he said, addressing the buckskin; "something happened back there."

He walked for a dozen paces ahead of the horse, his keen gray eyes on the earth. He stopped and rubbed his chin, thinking thinking aloud.

"There are tracks, Patsy boy moccasins; but we've lost our gunboat−footed friend. What do you make of that, Patsy gone over the cliff? But that damn wolf's pugs are here; he's travelled up and down. By gad! two of them!"

Then, in silence, Carney moved along the way, searching and pondering; cast into a curious, superstitious mood that he could not shake off. The inturned hoof−print had vanished, so the owner of the big feet that carried hob−nailed boots did not ride.

Each time that Carney stopped to bend down in study of the trail the buckskin pushed at him fretfully with his soft muzzle and rattled the snaffle against his bridle teeth.

At last Carney stroked the animal's head reassuringly, saying: "You're quite right, pal it's none of our business. Besides, we're a pair of old grannies imagining things."

But as he lifted to the saddle, Bulldog, like the horse, felt a compelling inclination to go beyond the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge to camp for the night.

Even as they climbed to a higher level of flat land, from back on the trail that was now lost in the deepening gloom, came the howl of a wolf; and then, from somewhere beyond floated the answering call of the dog−wolf's mate a whimpering, hungry note in her weird wail.

"Bleat, damn you!" Carney cursed softly; "if you bother us I'll sit by with a gun and watch Patsy boy kick you to death."

As if some genii of the hills had taken up and sent on silent waves his challenge, there came filtering through the pines and birch a snarling yelp.

"By gad!" and Carney cocked his ear, pulling the horse to a stand.

Then in the heavy silence of the wooded hills he pushed on again muttering, "There's something wrong about that wolf howl it's different."

Where a big pine had showered the earth with cones till the covering was soft, and deep, and springy, and odorous like a perfumed mattress of velvet, he hesitated; but the buckskin, in the finer animal reasoning, pleaded with little impatient steps and shakes of the head that they push on.

Carney yielded, saying softly: "Go on, kiddie boy; peace of mind is good dope for a sleep."

So it was ten o'clock when the two travellers, Carney and Pat, camped in an open, where the moon, like a silver mirror, bathed the earth in reassuring light. Here the buckskin had come to a halt, filled his lungs with the perfumed air in deep draughts, and turning his head half round had waited for his partner to dismount.

It was curious this man of steel nerve and flawless courage feeling at all the guidance of unknown threatenings, unexplainable disquietude. He did not even build a fire; but choosing a place where the grass was rich he spread his blanket beside the horse's picket pin.

Bulldog's life had provided him with different sleeping moods; it was a curious subconscious matter of mental adjustment before he slipped away from the land of knowing. Sometimes he could sleep like a tired laborer, heavily, unresponsive to the noise of turmoil; at other times, when deep sleep might cost him his life, his senses hovered so close to consciousness that a dried leaf scurrying before the wind would call him to alert action. So now he lay on his blanket, sometimes over the border of spirit land, and sometimes conscious of the buckskin's pull at the crisp grass. Once he came wide awake, with no movement but the lifting of his eyelids. He had heard nothing; and now the gray eyes, searching the moonlit plain, saw nothing. Yet within was a full consciousness that there was something not close, but hovering there beyond.

The buckskin also knew. He had been lying down, but with a snort of discontent his forequarters went up and he canted to his feet with a spring of wariness. Perhaps it was the wolves.

But after a little Carney knew it was not the wolves; they, cunning devils, would have circled beyond his vision, and the buckskin, with his delicate scent, would have swung his head the full circle of the compass; but he stood facing down the back trail; the thing was there, watching.

After that Carney slept again, lighter if possible, thankful that he had yielded to the wisdom of the horse and sought the open.

Half a dozen times there was this gentle transition from the sleep that was hardly a sleep, to a full acute wakening. And then the paling sky told that night was slipping off to the western ranges, and that beyond the Rockies, to the east, day was sleepily travelling in from the plains.

The horse was again feeding; and Carney, shaking oh the lethargy of his broken sleep, gathered some dried stunted bushes, and, building a little fire, made a pot of tea; confiding to the buckskin as he mounted that he considered himself no end of a superstitious ass to have bothered over a nothing.

Not far from where Carney had camped the trail he followed turned to the left to sweep around a mountain, and here it joined, for a time, the trail running from Fort Steel west toward the Kootenay. The sun, topping the Rockies, had lifted from the earth the graying shadows, and now Carney saw, as he thought, the hoof−prints of the day before.

There was a feeling of relief with this discovery. There had been a morbid disquiet in his mind; a mental conviction that something had happened that intoed cayuse and his huge−footed owner. Now all the weird fancies of the night had been just a vagary of mind. Where the trail was earthed, holding clear impressions, he dismounted, and walked ahead of the buckskin, reading the lettered clay. Here and there was imprinted a moccasined foot; once there was the impression of boots; but they were not the huge imprints of hob−nailed soles. They showed that a man had dismounted, and then mounted again; and the cayuse had not an inturned left forefoot; also the toe wall of one hind foot was badly broken. His stride was longer, too; he did not walk with the short step of a pack pony.

The indefinable depression took possession of Bulldog again; he tried to shake it off it was childish. The huge−footed one perhaps was a prospector, and had wandered up into some one of the gulches looking for gold. That was objecting Reason formulating an hypothesis.

Then presently Carney discovered the confusing element of the same cayuse tracks heading the other way, as if the man on horseback had travelled both up and down the trail.

Where the Bucking Horse trail left the Kootenay trail after circling the mountain, Carney saw that the hoof prints continued toward Kootenay. And there were a myriad of tracks; many mounted men had swung from the Bucking Horse trail to the Kootenay path; they had gone and returned, for the hoof prints that toed toward Bucking Horse lay on top.

This also was strange; men did not ride out from the sleepy old town in a troop like cavalry. There was but one explanation, the explanation of the West those mounted men had ridden after some body had trailed somebody who was wanted quick. This crescendo to his associated train of thought obliterated mentally the goblin−footed cayuse, the huge hob−nailed boot, the something at the cliff, the hovering oppression of the night everything.

Carney closed his mind to the torturing riddle and rode, sometimes humming an Irish ballad of Mangin's.

It was late afternoon when he rode into Bucking Horse; and Bucking Horse was in a ferment.

Seth Long's hotel, the Gold Nugget, was the cauldron in which the waters of unrest seethed.

A lynching was in a state of almost completion, with Jeanette Holt's brother, Harry, elected to play the leading part of the lynched. Through the deference paid to his well−known activity when hostile events were afoot,

Carney was cordially drawn into the maelstrom of ugly−tempered men.

Jeanette's brother may be said to have suffered from a preponderance of opinion against him, for only Jeanette, and with less energy, Seth Long, were on his side. All Bucking Horse, angry Bucking Horse, was for stringing him up tout de suite. The times were propitious for this entertainment, for Sergeant Black, of the Mounted Police, was over at Fort Steel, or somewhere else on patrol, and the law was in the keeping of the mob.

Ostensibly Carney ranged himself on the side of law and order. That is what he meant when, leaning carelessly against the Nugget bar, one hand on his hip, chummily close to the butt of his six−gun, he said:

"This town had got a pretty good name, as towns go in the mountains, and my idea of a man that's too handy at the lynch game is that he's a pretty poor sport."

"How's that, Bulldog?" Kootenay Jim snapped.

"He's a poor sport," Carney drawled, "because he's got a hundred to one the best of it first, last, and always; he isn't in any danger when he starts, because it's a hundred men to one poor devil, who, generally, isn't armed, and he knows that at the finish his mates will perjure themselves to save their own necks. I've seen one or two lynch mobs and they were generally egged on by men who were yellow."

Carney's gray eyes looked out over the room full of angry men with a quiet thoughtful steadiness that forced home the conviction that he was wording a logic he would demonstrate. No other man in that room could have stood up against that plank bar and declared himself without being called quick.

"You hear fust what this rat done, Bulldog, then we'll hear what you've got to say," Kootenay growled.

"That's well spoken, Kootenay," Bulldog answered. "I'm fresh in off the trail, and perhaps I'm quieter than the rest of you, but first, being fresh in off the trail, there's a little custom to be observed."

With a sweep of his hand Carney waved a salute to a line of bottles behind the bar.

Jeanette, standing in the open door that led from the bar to the dining−room, gripping the door till her nails sank into the pine, felt hot tears gush into her eyes. How wise, how cool, this brave Bulldog that she loved so well. She had had no chance to plead with him for help. He had just come into that murder−crazed throng, and the words had been hurled at him from a dozen mouths that her brother Harry Harry the waster, the no−good, the gambler had been found to be the man who had murdered returning miners on the trail for their gold, and that they were going to string him up.

And now there he stood, her god of a man, Bulldog Carney, ranged on her side, calm, and brave. It was the first glint of hope since they had brought her brother in, bound to the back of a cayuse. She had pushed her way amongst the men, but they were like wolves; she had pleaded and begged for delay, but the evidence was so overwhelming; absolutely hopeless it had appeared. But now something whispered "Hope".

It was curious the quieting effect that single drink at the bar had; the magnetism of Carney seemed to envelop the men, to make them reasonable. Ordinarily they were reasonable men. Bulldog knew this, and he played the card of reason.

For the two or three gun men Kootenay Jim, John of Slocan, and Denver Ike Carney had his own terrible personality and his six−gun; he could deal with those three toughs if necessary.

"Now tell me, boys, what started this hellery," Carney asked when they had drunk.

The story was fired at him; if a voice hesitated, another took up the narrative.

Miners returning from the gold field up in the Eagle Hills had mysteriously disappeared, never turning up at Bucking Horse. A man would have left the Eagle Hills, and somebody drifting in from the same place later on, would ask for him at Bucking Horse nobody had seen him.

Then one after another two skeletons had been found on the trail; the bodies had been devoured by wolves.

"And wolves don't eat gold not what you'd notice, as a steady chuck," Kootenay Jim yelped.

"Men wolves do," Carney thrust back, and his gray eyes said plainly, "That's your food, Jim."

"Meanin' what by that, pard?" Kootenay snarled, his face evil in a threat.

"Just what the words convey you sort them out, Kootenay."

But Miner Graham interposed. "We got kinder leery about this wolf game, Carney, 'cause they ain't bothered nobody else 'cept men packin' in their winnin's from the Eagle Hills; and four days ago Caribou Dave here he is sittin' right here he arrives packin' Fourteen−foot Johnson that is, all that's left of Fourteen−foot."

"Johnson was my pal," Caribou Dave interrupted, a quaver in his voice, "and he leaves the Eagle Nest two days ahead of me, packin' a big clean−up of gold on a cayuse. He was goin' to mooch aroun' Buckin' Horse till I creeps−in afoot, then we was goin' out. We been together a good many years, ol' Fourteen foot and me."

Something seemed to break in Caribou's voice and Graham added: "Dave finds his mate at the foot of a cliff."

Carney started; and instinctively Kootenay's hand dropped to his gun, thinking something was going to happen.

"I dunno just what makes me look there for Fourteen−foot, Bulldog," Caribou Dave explained. "I was comin' along the trail seein' the marks of 'em damn big feet of hisn, and they looked good to me I guess I was gettin' kinder homesick for him; when I'd camp I'd go out and paw 'em tracks; 'twas kinder like shakin' hands. We been together a good many years, buckin' the mountains and the plains, and sometimes havin' a bit of fun. I'm comin' along, as I says, and I sees a kinder scrimmage like, as if his old tan−colored cayuse had got gay, or took the blind staggers, or somethin'; there was a lot of tracks. But I give up thinkin' it out, 'cause I knowed if the damn cayuse had jack−rabbited any, Fourteen−foot'd pick him and his load up and carry him. Then I see some wolf tracks clang near as big as a steer's they was and I figger Fourteen−foot's had a set−to with a couple of 'em timber coyotes and lammed hell's delight out of 'em, 'cause he could've done it. Then I'm follerin' the cayuse's trail agen, pickin' it up here and there, and all at onct it jumps me that the big feet is missin'. Sure I natural figger Johnson's got mussed up a bit with the wolves and is ridin'; but there's the clang wolf tracks agent And some moccasin feet has been passierin' along, too. Then the hoss tracks cuts out just same's if he'd spread his wings and gone up in the air they just ain't."

"Then Caribou gets a hunch and goes back and peeks over the cliff," Miner Graham added, for old David had stopped speaking to bite viciously at a black plug of tobacco to hide his feelings.

"I dunno what made me do it," Caribou interrupted; "it was just same's Fourteen−foot's callin' me. There ain't nobody can make me believe that if two men paddles together twenty years, had their little fights, and show−downs, and still sticks, that one of 'em is going to cut clean out just 'cause he goes over the Big Divide 'tain't natural. I tell you, boys, Fourteen−foot's callin' me that's what he is, when I goes back."

Then Graham had to take up the narrative, for Caribou, heading straight for the bar, pointed dumbly at a black bottle.

"Yes, Carney," Graham said, "Caribou packs into Buckin' Horse on his back what was left of Fourteen−foot, and there wasn't no gold and no sign of the cayuse. Then we swarms out, a few of us, and picks up cayuse tracks most partic'lar where the Eagle Hills trail hits the trail for Kootenay. And when we overhaul the cayuse that's layin' down 'em tracks it's Fourteen−foot's hawse, and a−ridin' him is Harry Holt."

"And he's got the gold you was talkie' 'bout wolves eatin', Bulldog," Kootenay Jim said with a sneer. "He was hangin' 'round here busted, cleaned to the bone, and there he's a−ridin' Fourteen−foot's cayuse, with lots of gold."

"That's the whole case then, is it, boys?" Carney asked quietly.

"Ain't it enough?" Kootenay Jim snarled.

"No, it isn't. You were tried for murder once yourself, Kootenay, and you got off, though everybody knew it was the dead man's money in your pocket. You got off because nobody saw you kill the man, and the circumstantial evidence gave you the benefit of the doubt."

"I ain't bein' tried for this, Bulldog. Your bringin' up old scores might get you in wrong."

"You're not being tried, Kootenay, but another man is, and I say he's got to have a fair chance. You bring him here, boys, and let me hear his story; that's only fair, men amongst men. Because I give you fair warning, boys, if this lynching goes through, and you're in wrong, I'm going to denounce you; not one of you will get away not one!"

"We'll bring him, Bulldog," Graham said; "what you say is only fair, but swing he will."

Jeanette's brother had been locked in the pen in the log police barracks. He was brought into the Gold Nugget, and his defence was what might be called powerfully weak. It was simply a statement that he had bought the cayuse from an Indian on the trail outside Bucking Horse. He refused to say where he had got the gold, simply declaring that he had killed nobody, had never seen Fourteen−foot Johnson, and knew nothing about the murder.

Something in the earnestness of the man convinced Carney that he was innocent. However, that was, so far as Carney's action was concerned, a minor matter; it was Jeanette's brother, and he was going to save him from being lynched if he had to fight the roomful of men there was no doubt about that in his mind.

"I can't say, boys," Carney began, "that you can be blamed for thinking you've got the right man."

"That's what we figgered," Graham declared.

"But you've not gone far enough in sifting the evidence if you sure don't want to lynch an innocent man. The only evidence you have is that you caught Harry on Johnson's cayuse. How do you know it's Johnsons cayuse?"

"Caribou says it is," Graham answered.

"And Harry says it was an Indian's cayuse," Carney affirmed.

"He most natural just ordinar'ly lies about it," Kootenay ventured viciously.

"Where's the cayuse?" Carney asked. "There ain't no thinkin' 'bout it," Caribou an

"Out in the stable," two or three voices answered.

"I want to see him. Mind, boys, I'm working for you as much as for that poor devil you want to string up, because if you get the wrong man I'm going to denounce you, that's as sure as God made little apples."

His quiet earnestness was compelling. All the fierce heat of passion had gone from the men; there still remained the grim determination that, convinced they were right, nothing but the death of some of them would check. But somehow they felt that the logic of conviction would swing even Carney to their side.

So, without even a word from a leader, they all thronged out to the stable yard; the cayuse was brought forth, and, at Bulldog's request, led up and down the yard, his hoofs leaving an imprint in the bare clay at every step. It was the footprints alone that interested Carney. He studied them intently, a horrible dread in his heart as he searched for that goblined hoof that inturned. But the two forefeet left saucer−like imprints, that, though they were both slightly intoed, as is the way of a cayuse, neither was like the curious goblined track that had so fastened on his fancy out in the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge.

And also there was the broken toe wall of the hind foot that he had seen on the newer trail.

He turned to Caribou Dave, asking, "What makes you think this is Johnson's pack horse?"

"There ain't no thinkin' 'bout it," Caribou answered with asperity. "When I see my boots I don't think they're mine, I just most natur'ly figger they are and pull em on. I'd know that dun−colored rat if I see him in a wild herd."

"And yet," Carney objected in an even tone, "this isn't the cayuse that Johnson toted out his duffel from the Eagle Hills on."

A cackle issued from Kootenay Jim's long, scraggy neck:

"That settles it, boys; Bulldog passes the buck and the game's over. Caribou is just an ord'nary liar, 'cordin' to Judge Carney."

"Caribou is perfectly honest in his belief," Carney declared. "There isn't more than half a dozen colors for horses, and there are a good many thousand horses in this territory, so a great many of them are the same color. And the general structure of different cayuses is as similar as so many wheel−barrows. That brand on his shoulder may be a C, or a new moon, or a flapjack."

He turned to Caribou: "What brand had Fourteen−foot's cayuse?"

"I don't know," the old chap answered surlily, "but it was there same place it's restin' now it ain't shifted none since you fingered it."

"That won't do, boys," Carney said; "if Caribou can't swear to a horse's brand, how can he swear to the beast?"

"And if Fourteen−foot'd come back and stand up here and swear it was his hawse, that wouldn't do either, would it, Bulldog?" And Kootenay cackled.

"Johnson wouldn't say so he'd know better. His cayuse had a club foot, an inturned left forefoot. I picked it up, here and there, for miles back on the trail, sometimes fair on top of Johnson's big boot track, and sometimes Johnson's were on top when he travelled behind."

The men stared; and Graham asked: "What do you say to that, Caribou? Did you ever map out Fourteen−foot's cayuse what his travellers was like?"

"I never looked at his feet there wasn't no reason to; I was minin'."

"There's another little test we can make," Carney suggested. "Have you got any of Johnson's belongings a coat?"

"We got his coat," Graham answered; "it was pretty bad wrecked with the wolves, and we kinder fixed the remains up decent in a suit of store clothes."

At Carney's request the coat was brought, a rough Mackinaw, and from one of the men present he got a miner's magnifying glass, saying, as he examined the coat:

"This ought, naturally, to be pretty well filled with hairs from that cayuse of Johnson's; and while two horses may look alike, there's generally a difference in the hair."

Carney's surmise proved correct; dozens of short hairs were imbedded in the coat, principally in the sleeves. Then hair was plucked from many different parts of the cayuse's body, and the two lots were viewed through the glass. They were different. The hair on the cayuse standing in the yard was coarser, redder, longer, for its Indian owner had let it run like a wild goat; and Fourteen−foot had given his cayuse considerable attention. There were also some white hairs in the coat warp, and on this cayuse there was not a single white hair to be seen.

When questioned Caribou would not emphatically declare that there had not been a star or a white stripe in the forehead of Johnson's horse.

These things caused one or two of the men to waver, for if it were not Johnson's cayuse, if Caribou were mistaken, there was no direct evidence to connect Harry Holt with the murder.

Kootenay Jim objected that the examination of the hair was nothing; that Carney, like a clever lawyer, was trying to get the murderer off on a technicality. As to the club foot they had only Carney's guess, whereas Caribou had never seen any club foot on Johnson's horse.

"We can prove that part of it," Graham said; "we can go back on the trail and see what Bulldog seen."

Half a dozen men approved this, saying: "We'll put off the hangin' and go back."

But Carney objected.

When he did so Kootenay Jim and John from Slocan raised a howl of derision, Kootenay saying: "When we calls his bluff he throws his hand in the discard. There ain't no club foot anywheres; it's just a game to gain time to give this coyote, Holt, a chance to make a get−away. We're bein' buffaloed we're wastin' time. We gets a murderer on a murdered man's hawse, with the gold in his pockets, and Bulldog Carney puts some hawse hairs under a glass, hands out a pipe dream bout some ghost tracks back on the trail, and reaches out to grab the pot. Hell! you'd think we was a damn lot of tenderfeet."

This harangue had an effect on the angry men, but seemingly none whatever upon Bulldog, for he said quietly:

"I don't want a troop of men to go back on the trail just now, because I'm going out myself to bring the murderer in. I can get him alone, for if he does see me he won't think that I'm after him, simply that I'm trailing. But if a party goes they'll never see him. He's a clever devil, and will make his get−away. All I want on this evidence is

that you hold Holt till I get back. I'll bring the foreleg of that cayuse with a club foot, for there's no doubt the murderer made sure that the wolves got him too."

They had worked back into the hotel by now, and, inside, Kootenay Jim and his two cronies had each taken a big drink of whisky, whispering together as they drank.

As Carney and Graham entered, Kootenay's shrill voice was saying:

"We're bein' flim−flammed played for a lot of kids. There ain't been a damn thing 'cept lookin' at some hawse hairs through a glass. Men has been murdered on the trail, and who done it somebody. Caribou's mate was murdered, and we find his gold on a man that was stony broke here, was bummin' on the town, spongin' on Seth Long; he hadn't two bits. And 'cause his sister stands well with Bulldog he palms this three−card trick with hawse hairs, and we got to let the murderer go."

"You lie, Kootenay!" The words had come from Jeanette. "My brother wouldn't tell you where he got the gold he'd let you hang him first; but I will tell. I took it out of Seth's safe and gave it to him to get out of the country, because I knew that you and those two other hounds, Slocan and Denver, would murder him some night because he knocked you down for insulting me."

"That's a lie!" Kootenay screamed; "you and Bulldog 're runnin' mates and you've put this up."

There was a cry of warning from Slocan, and Kootenay whirled, drawing his gun. As he did so him arm dropped and his gun clattered to the floor, for Carney's bullet had splintered its butt, incidentally clipping away a finger. And the same weapon in Carney's hand was covering Slocan and Denver as they stood side by side, their backs to the bar.

No one spoke; almost absolute stillness hung in the air for five seconds. Half the men in the room had drawn, but no one pulled a trigger no one spoke.

It was Carney who broke the silence:

"Jeanette, bind that hound's hand up; and you, Seth, send for the doctor I guess he's too much of a man to be in this gang."

A wave of relief swept over the room; men coughed or spat as the tension slipped, dropping their guns back into holsters.

Kootenay Jim, cowed by the damaged hand, holding it in his left, followed Jeanette out of the room.

As the girl disappeared Harry Holt, who had stood between the two men, his wrists bound behind his back, said:

"My sister told a lie to shield me. I stole the gold myself from Seth's safe. I wanted to get out of this hell hole 'cause I knew I'd got to kill Kootenay or he'd get me. That's why I didn't tell before where the gold come from."

"Here, Seth," Carney called as Long came back into the room, "you missed any gold what do you know about Holt's story that he got the gold from your safe?"

"I ain't looked I don't keep no close track of what's in that iron box; I jus' keep the key, and a couple of bags might get lifted and I wouldn't know. If Jeanette took a bag or two to stake her brother, I guess she's got a right to, 'cause we're pardners in all I got."

"I took the key when Seth was sleeping," Harry declared. "Jeanette didn't know I was going to take it."

"But your sister claims she took it, so how'd she say that if it isn't a frame−up?" Graham asked.

"I told her just as I was pullin' out, so she wouldn't let Seth get in wrong by blamin' her or somebody else."

"Don't you see, boys," Carney interposed, "if you'd swung off this man, and all this was proved afterwards, you'd be in wrong? You didn't find on Harry a tenth of the gold Fourteen−foot likely had."

"That skunk hid it," Caribou declared; "he just kept enough to get out with."

Poor old Caribou was thirsting for revenge; in his narrowed hate he would have been satisfied if the party had pulled a perfect stranger off a passing train and lynched him; it would have been a quid pro quo. He felt that he was being cheated by the superior cleverness of Bulldog Carney. He had seen miners beaten out of their just gold claims by professional sharks; the fine reasoning, the microscopic evidence of the hairs, the intoed hoof, all these things were beyond him. He was honest in his conviction that the cayuse was Johnson's, and feared that the man who had killed his friend would slip through their fingers.

"It's just like this, boys," he said, "me and Fourteen−foot was together so long that if he was away somewhere I'd know he was comin' back a day afore he hit camp I'd feel it, same's I turned back on the trail there and found him all chawed up by the wolves. There wasn't no reason to look over that cliff only ol' Fourteen−foot a−callin' me. And now he's a−tellin' me inside that that skunk there murdered him when he wasn't lookin'. And if you chaps ain't got the sand to push this to a finish I'll get the man that killed Fourteen−foot; he won't never get away. If you boys is just a pack of coyotes that howls good and plenty till somebody calls 'em, and is goin' to slink away with your tails between your legs for fear you'll be rounded up for the lynchin', you can turn this murderer loose right now you don't need to worry what'll happen to him. I'll be too danged lonesome without Fourteen−foot to figger what's comin' to me. Turn him loose take the hobbles off him. You fellers go home and pull your blankets over your heads so's you won't see no ghosts."

Carney's sharp gray eyes watched the old fanatic's every move; he let him talk till he had exhausted himself with his passionate words; then he said:

"Caribou, you're some man. You'd go through a whole tribe of Indians for a chum. You believe you're right, and that's just what I'm trying to do in this, find out who is right we don't want to wrong anybody. You can come back on the trail with me, and I'll show you the club−footed tracks; I'll let you help me get the right man."

The old chap turned his humpy shoulders, and looked at Carney out of bleary, weasel eyes set beneath shaggy brows; then he shrilled:

"I'll see you in hell fuss; I've heerd o' you, Bulldog; I've heerd you had a wolverine skinned seven ways of the jack for tricks, and by the rings on a Big Horn I believe it. You know that while I'm here that jack rabbit ain't goin' to get away and he ain't; you can bet your soul on that, Bulldog. We'd go out on the trail and we'd find that Wie−sah−ke−chack, the Indian's devil, had stole 'em pipe−dream, club−footed tracks, and when we come back the man that killed my chum, old Fourteen−foot, would be down somewhere where a smart−Aleck lawyer 'd get him off."

It took an hour of cool reasoning on the part of Carney to extract from that roomful of men a promise that they would give Holt three days of respite, Carney giving his word that he would not send out any information to the police but would devote the time to bringing in the murderer.

Kootenay Jim had had his wound dressed. He was in an ugly mood over the shooting, but the saner members of the lynching party felt that he had brought the quarrel on himself; that he had turned so viciously on Jeanette, whom they all liked, caused the men to feel that he had got pretty much his just deserts. He had drawn his gun first, and when a man does that he's got to take the consequences. He was a gambler, and a gambler generally had to abide by the gambling chance in gun play as well as by the fall of a card.

But Carney had work to do, and he was just brave enough to not be foolhardy. He knew that the three toughs would waylay him in the dark without compunction. They were now thirsting not only for young Holt's life, but his. So, saying openly that he would start in the morning, when it was dark he slipped through the back entrance of the hotel to the stable, and led his buckskin out through a corral and by a back way to the tunnel entrance of the abandoned Little Widow mine. Here he left the horse and returned to the hotel, set up the drinks, and loafed about for a time, generally giving the three desperadoes the impression that he was camped for the night in the Gold Nugget, though Graham, in whom he had confided, knew different.

Presently he slipped away, and Jeanette, who had got the key from Seth, unlocked the door that led down to the long communicating drift, at the other end of which was the opening to the Little Widow mine.

Jeanette closed the door and followed Carney down the stairway. At the foot of the stairs he turned, saying: "You shouldn't do this."

"Why, Bulldog?"

"Well, you saw why this afternoon. Kootenay Jim has got an arm in a sling because he can't understand. Men as a rule don't understand much about women, so a woman has always got to wear armor."

"But we understand, Bulldog; and Seth does."

"Yes, girl, we understand; but Seth can only understand the evident. You clamber up the stairs quick."

"My God! Bulldog, see what you're doing for me now. You never would stand for Harry yourself."

"If he'd been my brother I should, just as you have, girl."

"That's it, Bulldog, you're doing all this, standing there holding up a mob of angry men, because he's my brother."

"You called the turn, Jeanette."

"And all I can do, all I can say is, thank you. Is that all?"

"That's all, girl. It's more than enough."

He put a strong hand on her arm, almost shook her, saying with an earnestness that the playful tone hardly masked:

"When you've got a true friend let him do all the friending then you'll hold him; the minute you try to rearrange his life you start backing the losing card. Now, good−bye, girl; I've got work to do. I'll bring in that wolf of the trail; I've got him marked down in a cave I'll get him. You tell that pin−headed brother of yours to stand pat. And if Kootenay starts any deviltry go straight to Graham. Good−bye."

Cool fingers touched the girl on the forehead then she stood alone watching the figure slipping down the gloomed passage of the drift, lighted candle in hand.

Carney led his buckskin from the mine tunnel climbed the hillside to a back trail, and mounting rode silently at a walk till the yellow blobs of light that was Bucking Horse lay behind him. Then at a little hunch of his heels the horse broke into a shuffling trot.

It was near midnight when he camped; both he and the buckskin had eaten robustly back at the Gold Nugget Hotel, and Carney, making the horse lie down by tapping him gently on the shins with his quirt, rolled himself in his blanket and slept close beside the buckskin they were like two men in a huge bed.

All next day he rode, stopping twice to let the buckskin feed, and eating a dry meal himself, building no fire. He had a conviction that the murderer of the gold hunters made the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge his stalking ground. And if the devil who stalked these returning miners was still there he felt certain that he would get him.

There had been nothing to rouse the murderer's suspicion that these men were known to have been murdered.

A sort of fatality hangs over a man who once starts in on a crime of that sort; he becomes like a man who handles dynamite careless, possessed of a sense of security, of fatalism. Carney had found all desperadoes that way, each murder had made them more sure of themselves, it generally had been so easy.

Caribou Dave had probably passed without being seen by the murderer; indeed he had passed that point early in the morning, probably while the ghoul of the trail slept; the murderer would reason that if there was any suspicion in Bucking Horse that miners had been made away with, a posse would have come riding over the back trail, and the murderer would have ample knowledge of their approach.

To a depraved mind, such as his, there was a terrible fascination in this killing of men, and capturing their gold; he would keep at It like a gambler who has struck a big winning streak; he would pile up gold, probably in the cave Carney had seen the mouth of, even if it were more than he could take away. It was the curse of the lust of gold, and, once started, the devilish murder lust.

Carney had an advantage. He was looking for a man in a certain locality, and the man, not knowing of his approach, not dreading it, would be watching the trail in the other direction for victims. Even if he had met him full on the trail Carney would have passed the time of day and ridden on, as if going up into the Eagle Hills. And no doubt the murderer would let him pass without action. It was only returning miners he was interested in. Yes, Carney had an advantage, and if the man were still there he would get him.

His plan was to ride the buckskin to within a short distance of where the murders had been committed, which was evidently in the neighborhood of the cliff at the bottom of which Fourteen−foot Johnson had been found, and go forward on foot until he had thoroughly reconnoitered the ground. He felt that he would catch sight of the murderer somewhere between that point and the cave, for he was convinced that the cave was the home of this trail devil.

The uncanny event of the wolves was not so simple. The curious tone of the wolf's howl had suggested a wild dog that is, a creature that was half dog, half wolf; either whelped that way in the forests, or a train dog that had escaped. Even a fanciful weird thought entered Carney's mind that the murderer might be on terms of dominion over this half−wild pair; they might know him well enough to leave him alone, and yet devour his victims. This was conjecture, rather far−fetched, but still not impossible. An Indian's train dogs would obey their master, but pull down a white man quick enough if he were helpless.

However, the man was the thing.

The sun was dipping behind the jagged fringe of mountain tops to the west when Carney slipped down into the Valley of the Grizzley's Bridge, and, fording the stream, rode on to within a hundred and fifty yards of the spot

where his buckskin had shied from the trail two days before.

Dismounting, he took off his coat and draping it over the horse's neck said: "Now you're anchored, Patsy stand steady."

Then he unbuckled the snaffle bit and rein from the bridle and wound the rein about his waist. Carney knew that the horse, not hampered by a dangling rein to catch in his legs or be seized by a man, would protect himself. No man but Carney could saddle the buckskin or mount him unless he was roped or thrown; and his hind feet were as deft as the fists of a boxer.

Then he moved steadily along the trail, finding here and there the imprint of moccasined feet that had passed over the trail since he had. There were the fresh pugs of two wolves, the dog−wolf's paws enormous.

Carney's idea was to examine closely the trail that ran by the cliff to where his horse had shied from the path in the hope of finding perhaps the evidences of struggle, patches of blood soaked into the brown earth, and then pass on to where he could command a view of the cave mouth. If the murderer had his habitat there he would be almost certain to show himself at that hour, either returning from up the trail where he might have been on the lookout for approaching victims, or to issue from the cave for water or firewood for his evening meal. Just what he should do Carney had not quite determined. First he would stalk the man in hopes of finding out something that was conclusive.

If the murderer were hiding in the cave the gold would almost certainly be there.

That was the order of events, so to speak, when Carney, hand on gun, and eyes fixed ahead on the trail, came to the spot where the wolf had stood at bay. The trail took a twist, a projecting rock bellied it into a little turn, and a fallen birch lay across it, half smothered in a lake of leaves and brush.

As Carney stepped over the birch there was a crashing clamp of iron, and the powerful jaws of a bear trap closed on his leg with such numbing force that he almost went out. His brain swirled; there were roaring noises in his head, an excruciating grind on his leg.

His senses steadying, his first cogent thought was that the bone was smashed; but a limb of the birch, caught in the jaws, squelched to splinters, had saved the bone; this and his breeches and heavy socks in the legs of his strong riding boots.

As if the snapping steel had carried down the valley, the evening stillness was rent by the yelping howl of a wolf beyond where the cave hung on the hillside. There was something demoniac in this, suggesting to the half−dazed man that the wolf stood as sentry.

The utter helplessness of his position came to him with full force; he could no more open the jaws of that double−springed trap than he could crash the door of a safe. And a glance showed him that the trap was fastened by a chain at either end to stout−growing trees. It was a man−trap; if it had been for a bear it would be fastened to a piece of loose log.

The fiendish deviltry of the man who had set it was evident. The whole vile scheme flashed upon Carney; it was set where the trail narrowed before it wound down to the gorge, and the man caught in it could be killed by a club, or left to be devoured by the wolves. A pistol might protect him for a little short time against the wolves, but that even could be easily wheedled out of a man caught by the murderer coming with a pretense of helping him.

Suddenly a voice fell on Carney's ear:

"Throw your gun out on the trail in front of you! I've got you covered, Bulldog, and you haven't got a chance on earth."

Now Carney could make out a pistol, a man's head, and a crooked arm projecting from beside a tree twenty yards along the trail.

"Throw out the gun, and I'll parley with your" the voice added.

Carney recognized the voice as that of Jack the Wolf, and he knew that the offered parley was only a blind, a trick to get his gun away so that he would be a quick victim for the wolves; that would save a shooting. Sometimes an imbedded bullet told the absolute tale of murder.

"There's nothing doing in that line, Jack the Wolf," Carney answered; "you can shoot and be damned to you! I'd rather die that way than be torn to pieces by the wolves."

Jack the Wolf seemed to debate this matter behind the tree; then he said: "It's your own fault if you get into my bear trap, Bulldog; I ain't invited you in. I've been watchin' you for the last hour, and I've been a−wonderin' just what your little game was. Me and you ain't good 'nough friends for me to step up there to help you out, and you got a gun on you. You throw it out and I'll parley. If you'll agree to certain things, I'll spring that trap, and you can ride away, 'cause I guess you'll keep your word. I don't want to kill nobody, I don't."

The argument was specious. If Carney had not known Jack the Wolf as absolutely bloodthirsty, he might have taken a chance and thrown the gun.

"You know perfectly well, Jack the Wolf, that if you came to help me out, and I shot you, I'd be committing suicide, so you're lying."

"You mean you won't give up the gun?"

"No."

"Well, keep it, damn you! Them wolves knows a thing or two. One of 'em knows pretty near as much about guns as you do. They'll just sit off there in the dark and laugh at you till you drop; then you'll never wake up. You think it over, Bulldog, I'm "

The speaker's voice was drowned by the howl of the wolf a short distance down the valley.

"D'you hear him, Bulldog?" Jack queried when the howls had died down. "They get your number on the wind and they're sayin' you're their meat. You think over my proposition while I go down and gather in your buckskin; he looks good to me for a get−away. You let me know when I come back what you'll do, 'cause 'em wolves is in a hurry they're hungry; and I guess your leg ain't none too comf'table."

Then there was silence, and Carney knew that Jack the Wolf was circling through the bush to where his horse stood, keeping out of range as he travelled.

Carney knew that the buckskin would put up a fight; his instinct would tell him that Jack the Wolf was evil. The howling wolf would also have raised the horse's mettle; but he himself was in the awkward position of being a loser, whether man or horse won.

From where he was trapped the buckskin was in view. Carney saw his head go up, the lop ears throw forward in rigid listening, and he could see, beyond, off to the right, the skulking form of Jack slipping from tree to tree so as

to keep the buckskin between him and Carney.

Now the horse turned his arched neck and snorted. Carney whipped out his gun, a double purpose in his mind. If Jack the Wolf offered a fair mark he would try a shot, though at a hundred and fifty yards it would be a chance; and he must harbor his cartridges for the wolves; the second purpose was that the shot would rouse the buckskin with a knowledge that there was a battle on.

Jack the Wolf came to the trail beyond the horse and was now slowly approaching, speaking in coaxing terms. The horse, warily alert, was shaking his head; then he pawed at the earth like an angry bull.

Ten yards from the horse Jack stood still, his eye noticing that the bridle rein and bit were missing. Carney saw him uncoil from his waist an ordinary packing rope; it was not a lariat, being short. With this in a hand held behind his back, Jack, with short steps, moved slowly toward the buckskin, trying to soothe the wary animal with soft speech.

Ten feet from the horse he stood again, and Carney knew what that meant a little quick dash in to twist the rope about the horse's head, or seize him by the nostrils. Also the buckskin knew. He turned his rump to the man, threw back his ears, and lashed out with his hind feet as a warning to the horse thief. The coat had slipped from his neck to the ground.

Jack the Wolf tried circling tactics, trying to gentle the horse into a sense of security with soothing words. Once, thinking he had a chance, he sprang for the horse's head, only to escape those lightning heels by the narrowest margin; at that instant Carney fired, but his bullet missed, and Jack, startled, stood back, planning sulkily.

Carney saw him thread out his rope with the noose end in his right hand, and circle again. Then the hand with a half−circle sent the loop swishing through the air, and at the first cast it went over the buckskin's head.

Carney had been waiting for this. He whistled shrilly the signal that always brought the buckskin to his side.

Jack had started to work his way up the rope, hand over hand, but at the well−known signal the horse whirled, the rope slipped through Jack's sweaty hands, a loop of it caught his leg, and he was thrown. The buckskin, strung to a high nervous tension, answered his master's signal at a gallop, and the rope, fastened to Jack's waist, dragged him as though he hung from a runaway horse with a foot in the stirrup. His body struck rocks, trees, roots; it jiggered about on the rough earth like a cork, for the noose had slipped back to the buckskin's shoulders.

Just as the horse reached Carney, Jack the Wolf's two legs straddled a slim tree and the body wedged there. Carney snapped his fingers, but as the horse stepped forward the rope tightened, the body was fast.

"Damned if I want to tear the cuss to pieces, Patsy," he said, drawing forth his pocket knife. He just managed by reaching out with his long arm, to cut the rope, and the horse thrust his velvet muzzle against his master's cheek, as if he would say, "Now, old pal, we're all right don't worry."

Bulldog understood the reassurance and, patting the broad wise forehead, answered: "We can play the wolves together, Pat I'm glad you're here. It's a hundred to one on us yet." Then a half−smothered oath startled the horse, for, at a twist, a shoot of agony raced along the vibrant nerves to Carney's brain.

In the subsidence of strife Carney was cognizant of the night shadows that had crept along the valley; it would soon be dark. Perhaps he could build a little fire; it would keep the wolves at bay, for in the darkness they would come; it would give him a circle of light, and a target when the light fell on their snarling faces.

Bending gingerly down he found in the big bed of leaves a network of dead branches that Jack the Wolf had cunningly placed there to hold the leaves. There was within reach on the dead birch some of its silver parchment−like bark. With his cowboy hat he brushed the leaves away from about his limbs, then taking off his belt he lowered himself gingerly to his free knee and built a little mound of sticks and bark against the birch log. Then he put his hand in a pocket for matches every pocket; he had not one match; they were in his coat lying down somewhere on the trail. He looked longingly at the body lying wedged against the tree; Jack would have matches, for no man travelled the wilds without the means to a fire. But matches in New York were about as accessible as any that might be in the dead man's pockets.

Philosophic thought with one leg in a bear trap is practically impossible, and Carney's arraignment of tantalizing Fate was inelegant. As if Fate resented this, Fate, or something, cast into the trapped man's mind a magical inspiration a vital grievance. His mind, acute because of his dilemna and pain, must have wandered far ahead of his cognizance, for a sane plan of escape lay evident. If he had a fire he could heat the steel springs of that trap. The leaves of the spring were thin, depending upon that elusive quality, the steel's temper, for strength. If he could heat the steel, even to a dull red, the temper would leave it as a spirit forsakes a body, and the spring would bend like cardboard.

"And I haven't got a damn match," Carney wailed. Then he looked at the body. "But you've got them "

He grasped the buckskin's headpiece and drew him forward a pace; then he unslung his picket line and made a throw for Jack the Wolf's head. If he could yank the body around, the wedged legs would clear.

Throwing a lariat at a man lying groggily flat, with one of the thrower's legs in a bear trap, was a new one on Carney It was some test.

Once he muttered grimly, from between set teeth: "If my leg holds out I'll get him yet, Patsy."

Then he threw the lariat again, only to drag the noose hopelessly off the head that seemed glued to the ground, the dim light blurring form and earth into a shadow from which thrust, indistinctly, the pale face that carried a crimson mark from forehead to chin.

He had made a dozen casts, all futile, the noose sometimes catching slightly at the shaggy head, even causing it to roll weirdly, as if the man were not dead but dodging the rope. As Carney slid the noose from his hand to float gracefully out toward the body his eye caught the dim form of the dog−wolf, just beyond, his slobbering jaws parted, giving him the grinning aspect of a laughing hyena. Carney snatched the rope and dropped his hand to his gun, but the wolf was quicker than the man he was gone. A curious thing had happened, though, for that erratic twist of the rope had spiraled the noose beneath Jack the Wolf's chin, and gently, vibratingly tightening the slip, Carney found it hold. Then, hand over hand, he hauled the body to the birch log, and, without ceremony, searched it for matches. He found them, wrapped in an oilskin in a pocket of Jack's shirt. He noticed, casually, that Jack's gun had been torn from its belt during the owner's rough voyage.

The finding of the matches was like an anesthetic to the agony of the clamp on his leg. He chuckled, saying, "Patsy, it's a million to one on us; they can't beat us, old pard."

He transferred his faggots and birch bark to the loops of the springs, one pile at either end of the trap, and touched a match to them.

The acrid smoke almost stilled him; sparks burnt his hands, and his wrists, and his face; the jaws of the trap commenced to catch the heat as it travelled along the conducting steel, and he was threatened with the fact that he might burn his leg off. With his knife he dug up the black moist earth beneath the leaves, and dribbled it on to the heating jaws.

Carney was so intent on his manifold duties that he had practically forgotten Jack the Wolf; but as he turned his face from an inspection of a spring that was reddening, he saw a pair of black vicious eyes watching him, and a hand reaching for his gun belt that lay across the birch log.

The hands of both men grasped the belt at the same moment, and a terrible struggle ensued. Carney was handicapped by the trap, which seemed to bite into his leg as if it were one of the wolves fighting Jack's battle; and Jack the Wolf showed, by his vain efforts to rise, that his legs had been made almost useless in that drag by the horse.

Carney had in one hand a stout stick with which he had been adjusting his fire, and he brought this down on the other's wrist, almost shattering the bone. With a cry of pain Jack the Wolf released his grasp of the belt, and Carney, pulling the gun, covered him, saying:

"Hoped you were dead, Jack the Murderer! Now turn face down on this log, with your hands behind your back, till I hobble you."

"I can spring that trap with a lever and let you out," Jack offered.

"Don't need you I'm going to see you hanged and don't want to be under any obligation to you, murderer; turn over quick or I'll kill you now my leg is on fire."

Jack the Wolf knew that a man with a bear trap on his leg and a gun in his hand was not a man to trifle with, so he obeyed.

When Jack's wrists were tied with the picket line, Carney took a loop about the prisoner's legs; then he turned to his fires.

The struggle had turned the steel springs from the fires; but in the twisting one of them had been bent so that its ring had slipped down from the jaws. Now Carney heaped both fires under the other spring and soon it was so hot that, when balancing his weight on the leg in the trap, he placed his other foot on it and shifted his weight, the strip of steel went down like paper. He was free.

At first Carney could not bear his weight on the mangled leg; it felt as if it had been asleep for ages; the blood rushing through the released veins pricked like a tatooing needle. He took off his boot and massaged the limb, Jack eyeing this proceeding sardonically. The two wolves hovered beyond the firelight, snuffling and yapping.

When he could hobble on the injured limb Carney put the bit and bridle rein back on the buckskin, and turning to Jack, unwound the picket line from his legs, saying, "Get up and lead the way to that cave!"

"I can't walk, Bulldog," Jack protested; my leg's half broke."

"Take your choice get on your legs, or I'll tie you up and leave you for the wolves," Carney snapped.

Jack the Wolf knew his Bulldog Carney well. As he rose groggily to his feet, Carney lifted to the saddle, holding the loose end of the picket line that was fastened to Jack's wrists, and said:

"Go on in front; if you try any tricks I'll put a bullet through you this sore leg's got me peeved."

At the cave Carney found, as he expected, several little canvas bags of gold, and other odds and ends such as a murderer too often, and also foolishly, will garner from his victims. But he also found something he had not expected to find the cayuse that had belonged to Fourteen−foot Johnson, for Jack the Wolf had preserved the

cayuse to pack out his wealth.

Next morning, no chance of action having come to Jack the Wolf through the night, for he had lain tied up, like a turkey that is to be roasted, he started on the pilgrimage to Bucking Horse, astride Fourteen−foot Johnson's cayuse, with both feet tied beneath that sombre animal's belly. Carney landed him and the gold in that astonished berg.

And in the fullness of time something very serious happened to the enterprising man of the bear trap.