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BEYOND ROPE AND FENCE

"Beyond Rope and Fence"

DAVID "GREW"

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To you, dear old Dora, who inspired this book, I dedicate it. I regret most poignantly that life has ordained that you may never know, despite my caresses and my quart measures filled to overflowing with oats, how deeply I have sympathised with you in those moments when you stood motionless before me and I could see by the strange, sad light in your eyes that you were dreaming of long departed, happy years of freedom on the plains.

D. G.

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FOREWORD

In the fall of the year, the farmers and the ranchers of the northwest prairies of Canada release their horses for the winter. Strange as it may seem to those of us who shudder at the very thought of raging blizzards on the open plains, the horses that are left free to roam over unsheltered space and are obliged to dig down through feet of snow for their grass, not only survive the severest winters but are generally found fat and strong the next spring.

If while you are out riding you happen upon a group of these free horses, they will stare at you curiously until they begin to fear that you have come to gather them up and to take them back to the farm yard, then with angry, defiant tossing of heads they will turn and gallop out of reach, going so fast that you will not see them for snow dust. The horse you are riding, if he has ever enjoyed a winter of that freedom, will struggle to get away from you so that he may join them. Because you will not let him go, he will show his displeasure like a petulant child and long after

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you have forced him to abandon the attempt to get loose, long after the happier group has disappeared, he will keep turning his head back and calling yearningly to them.

The farmer who releases his horses in the fall rarely loses any of them. Every farmer knows every horse within a radius of twenty-five miles or more, knows them by name and colour, knows their histories and peculiarities. When the farmer is in doubt as to who some distant rider may be, you can hear him think aloud thus:

"That's Skinner's sorrel, Billy. Skinner's goin' for his mail." Or: "That's Spicer's white nag, Madge. I'll bet Spicer's comin' to see about them oats."

So in the spring of the year, when the farmers are all out searching for their horses, they know those they come upon, and if some farmer sees Skinner's sorrel, Billy, he will drive him in the direction of Skinner's homestead, talking to Billy as he does so, in some such fashion as this:

"Well, Billy, you little devil, you ain't any the worse for the worst winter in twenty years. You're fat as a pig. Go on now, get home! I know you don't like the idea of gettin' back

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to work, but it's soon seedin' time, you know!"

The farmer who works beside his horses daily, who gets to understand every expression of these beautiful, intelligent creatures, always talks seriously to them. This sounds strange to us until we have come in contact with these animals for a short time, when, hardly being conscious of it, we soon start talking to them ourselves. They certainly understand many words and I have seen evidences of horses recognising at once what sort of temper or mood men happen to be in as soon as they approach them.

Just as they learn to understand us, we learn to understand them. Every neigh or whinny takes on the meaning of a word, and their scowling or angry shaking of heads, and their protests against certain discomforts we impose upon them appear as clearly as the similar expressions of people. The most amazing fact, however, that slowly dawns upon us, is the fact that these lovely animals live in a conscious world of their own, not half so different from ours as we had allowed ourselves to think.

The rancher is not as intimate with the horses he breeds and rears in virtual wild-

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ness on the vast ranges which he leases from the government and about which he builds his barbed wire fences. Naturally so. He has from several hundred to several thousand horses and they are virtually in a wild state until he sells them, when they are broken-in and most of the untamed spirit is crushed out of them by heavy labour.

A rancher can rarely tell you how many horses he has. During the spring when colts are most often born, his stock may double for all he knows. He does not attempt to find out until the fall, when he rounds them up. The young colts are separated from their mothers and branded. The poor young things are tied and thrown and the red hot iron, with the shape of each rancher's particular brand, is pressed upon the shoulder till the insignia is burned through hair and skin, where the mark remains as long as the creature lives.

The ranch horses are wilder and more spirited than the farm horses, but when the latter are released for the winter, they often mix with the former, breaking up into groups of those who seem to feel themselves more congenial to each other. Every animal has a character and personality of his own, and while he will

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get along beautifully with one horse, he will fight all the time with another. From my observation, it seems to me that the wild free horse does much less quarrelling than the horse that has toiled on the farm, which would indicate quite clearly how much like ours his nature is.

Very few of the great herds that rustle for themselves all winter long die while they are away. Those that die are horses that either have been kept in the barn too late in the season or else that were in a starved condition when they were released. A horse that has been kept in the barn till after the cold season has set in and has been inured to the warmth of the barn, when suddenly exposed to the unsheltered open plains, if the weather happens to be severe, will sometimes die because it finds it is unable to adjust itself to the change in temperature.

But there is one peculiarity of horse nature which sometimes kills the best horse, not only in the wilds but in the pasture or barn yard, if no one is about to come to its assistance. Every horse loves to roll. He will lie down on a sandy spot or on the snow and roll over from side to side. It sometimes happens that

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he selects a spot that has a deep rut, or that is near a wall, a stone, or a straw-stack. He will roll over and strike the wall or the straw-stack or get caught in the rut in such a way that he cannot force himself back. He will remain helpless on his back till some one comes to his rescue. If he gets no assistance he will die in a very short time, sometimes within less than an hour.

But I am interested in the horse as a fellow being, subject as we are to limitations; and, to a degree less perhaps than we are, capable of joy and sorrow. In so far as these beautiful creatures are able to communicate to others an indication of the emotions out of which their lives are built, I have taken my story directly from them. My story, too, comes fresh from the prairies. I did most of its planning while riding on horseback over hundreds of miles of rolling Alberta plains, often coming upon hills from which I could see a perfectly circular horizon without a sign of human life, save perhaps some telltale arrangement of stones, laid on the hilltop by Indians whom fate had long since swept from the plains of their fatherland. At such times my pony, whose wild and exciting history forms

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the greater part of this story, seemed as much moved by the open vastness and the stillness as I; and, each in his own way, we held communion with the spirit of the wilderness.

D. G.

Langmark, Alberta, Canada.

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CHAPTER I

FOR THE LOVE OF HER FOAL

ROLLING hills and shallow valleys—
an ocean of brown waves with fast
drying sloughs, like patches of sun-
shine on the surface of the sea—such
was the Canadian prairie that autumn
day—such were the miles and miles of Alberta
range, bounded by a barbed wire fence that
was completely lost in the unobstructed play of
sunshine. It was an open wilderness, so vast
that it seemed to stretch on almost endlessly
beyond the horizon, which lay desolate and
unbroken like a rusty, iron ring, girding the
earth. Its immensity, by an inexorable con-
trast, dwarfed everything that crept over the
surface of the plains into a helpless puniness.

The hundred horses on the range, scattered
and grouped by their predilections for each
other, looked, in the distance, like ants crawl-
ing over the surface of a rock. Within sight

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of each other, bound by the ties of race, they nevertheless had their loves and their preferences. Most of the mothers with their little colts grazed in a group by themselves; while a few mothers, as if they felt that their children were better than their neighbour's children, kept themselves apart from the herd, though always within sight.

Among the latter was a shapely, light-brown or buckskin mare who was grazing peacefully about her precious, buckskin coloured daughter. The little one was asleep on the grass. Her graceful little legs were stretched as far as she could stretch them. Her lovely little head lay flat on the ground. Her fluffy tail was thrown back on the grass with a delicious carelessness.

She was only six months old, but already the very image of her mother. From the white strip on her forehead and the heavy black mane down to the unequal white spots on her two hind fetlocks, she was like her. Only her wiry, delicately wrought little legs seemed somewhat too long for her.

Suddenly the old mare's head went up high in the air; her grinding teeth ceased grinding as a broken machine comes to a dead stop; and

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the round, dilated, knowing eyes pierced the slight haze in the atmosphere. The little head on the grass raised just a bit, looked inquiringly at her beloved mother—quite near; then with the innocent confidence of childhood, dropped back again, rubbing the soft fragrant grass in an ecstasy of contentment.

But the old mare continued to gaze intently, standing motionless as a stone. She saw that all the other horses were gazing just as intently as she was. Small moving objects—two men on horseback—had broken over the line of shadow along the southern horizon. One of them was loping away to the right and the other to the left. The old buckskin mare had already lived more than twenty years. Not only had she herself suffered at the hands of man, but she had had so many of her babies taken from her and cruelly abused—often before her very eyes. Her mother's heart began beating fast and apprehensively.

The other mares, not far from her, also showed signs of extreme nervousness. The buckskin saw them run off for a short distance as if in panic, then stop and gaze anxiously at the approaching riders. It was time to act. She looked questioningly a moment toward

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the north; but she realised that that direction would soon be closed to her, for she could tell that the riders, loping straight north, meant to turn in time and come back upon them.

She called nervously to her little one. The little thing sprang to its feet, sidled up to her and gazed at the dark specks that were coming together in the north, with fear glowing moist in her large, round eyes.

Until she had seen a group of horsemen dismount, one day, she had thought that man was a monstrous sort of horse with a frightful hump on its back. What little she had been able to learn about him since that time had served only to intensify her fear of him; and despite her abiding confidence in her mother, she trembled timorously as she heard the ominous hoof-beats in the distance.

The animals instinctively gathered into a bunch and started away at full speed. While one of the horsemen remained some distance behind, ready to prevent the group from going off to either side, the other plunged into the midst of them and deftly separated the mothers and their colts from the rest of the bunch. Then they allowed the single horses to run off to the north at their will; while they came

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together behind the mothers and their colts and drove them southward toward the long line of shadow that lay like a black elongated reptile, below the horizon and parallel to it.

That long line of shadow, which widened as they neared it, was a great canyon which the Red Deer River had cut out of the level plains. From the jaws of the mouth of the canyon, which were a mile or so apart, the floor of the prairies fell away sheer in places, to a depth of a thousand feet. In many spots there were several parallel cuts in the edge of that floor. Where, during the ages, the elements had been unable to remove the loose earth, it lay along the bank in steep hills which rose up from the bottom of the canyon like gigantic teeth, all crumbling more or less, all dotted with stones and covered here and there with blotches of sagebrush and cacti.

In the centre of the flat-bottomed canyon, as if an ancient torrential flood had spent itself and narrowed down at last to a small, shining stream, a quarter of a mile in width, ran the Red Deer River. In the middle of the half-mile wide space between the river and the hills that made the wall of the canyon, stood the buildings of the ranch. The house, a small

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shingled structure, stood on the east end of the spacious, sandy yard; while opposite and facing it was the long, red barn with its open door below and the gaping window space in the loft above. North of the barn and against its blind wall there was a big corral, divided into two parts by a partition. The corral walls as well as the partition were made of logs laid horizontally, a foot apart and rising to a height of some eight feet. Each of these two sections had huge swinging gates which opened inward.

As helplessly as the waters of Niagara, the frantic mothers, stealing side glances at their little ones and feeling them at their sides, poured down the steep incline, between the giant teeth, into the mouth of the canyon, slipping, sliding, and leaping downward riskily, in haste and fear. On the level bottom of the canyon, the buckskin mare made an attempt to turn from the path which led to the rancher's buildings in the hope of getting to the river beyond; but one of the horsemen divined her rebellious intention and shot by her like a flash of light, heading her off and forcing her back. She realised the futility of baffling their superior wills; but went back

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with an angry shake of her wise old head and a deliberate scowl of hatred for the tormenting man and the servile horse under him who was betraying his kind.

However the old mare happened to feel, the little buckskin, since the forces of evil had as yet made no attempt to separate her from her mother, shook the fear from her heart and took all the delight there was to take in this unexpected excitement of the day. Healthy to the last cell in her body, the race had merely accelerated the circulation of her blood; and the ease with which she was able to keep up with her mother made her conscious of a great and thrilling power. Her eyes and nostrils dilated, her mane bristling and her tail unfurled, her springy legs carrying her with ease, there was an expression of boundless joy in the motion of her graceful body.

The gates of the corral stood wide open. Being so driven that they could not swerve from the path, half the group poured into one section of the corral and the other half into the other. When they turned at the opposite walls realising that there, there was no way out again, and came back toward the gates, they saw the men closing them.

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Only the soul that has been trapped knows the crushing torment of four relentless walls. Round and round they went, madly and stupidly, and clouds of beaten earth rose from under their feet and choked them. Finally becoming aware of the fact that the men were not pursuing them any longer, they packed into a corner of the corral and, looking over the corral walls and between the logs, sought to learn what they were doing. They saw one man building a fire in the open, but a few paces from the corral; while the other was calmly and portentously making preparations that were only too familiar to the old mares.

The little buckskin, beside her mother, always beside her mother, clinging to that big beloved body as the soul clings to life, was wedged into the very corner and right against the logs of the wall, so that her frightened eye, in the middle of the open space between two logs, could see the rancher's house some four rods away.

Her sides were still throbbing violently when she saw the house door open. A little girl appeared. The little filly did not know what kind of animal that was except that she guessed that it was some sort of man.

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She perceived with renewed trepidation that the little girl was hopping and skipping directly toward her. In her fright she pressed tight against her mother, but her mother, much more concerned with the men and apparently indifferent to the little girl, would not move an inch. When suddenly the little buckskin felt the touch of the little girl's hand on her back, she called out frantically to her mother. But the old mare bent down her long neck, touched the little head with her soft, warm lips, murmured reassuringly and then looked away again. By that time the filly realised, uncomfortable though she was, that the little hand was not going to hurt her.

The little girl climbed up two of the logs, moved slowly toward the little buckskin's head, talking softly and coaxingly as she moved. The filly listened with ears pricked high. In the stream of meaningless prattle, the foal became aware of the existence of the combination of sounds, "Queen," as one becomes aware of a constantly repeated melody in a piece of music. By the time the little girl had carefully pushed her head through the space between two logs, directly in front of the filly's muzzle, the little buckskin,

though frightened again, became exceedingly curious. There was something very disarming about that soft voice and the soothing repetition of the word, "Queen." She cautiously stretched her muzzle, sniffing at the little mouth, moving it closer and closer and just when she touched the little girl's face, with a cry of delight the little girl kissed her fervently on the nose.

She drew her muzzle away quickly and looked with a frightened eye. It had interrupted her attempt to sniff, however, and once more assured that there was nothing harmful about the little girl, she made a second attempt. The little girl continued calling her, "Queen," coaxingly, till the little muzzle touched her lips again and once more she kissed her, crying out again with delight.

This sweet, unofficial christening might have resulted in a beautiful, enduring friendship, but a sudden, terrific patter of feet in the next corral came through the air accompanied by a nauseating cloud of smoke, and all was confusion again. Round and round their section of the corral they swept again till they realised that the men were not yet molesting them. When they stopped to investigate, little

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Queen saw a man in the other section of the corral rush toward a mare with a long hideous stick. She saw him strike the colt that tried to follow her and saw the colt run back into the corral while the mother had run out. She could not quite understand what he was doing; but she experienced an overwhelming fear of losing her mother, and clung to her beloved sides with more tenacity than ever.

The other section of the corral was finally cleared of all the mares who, standing on the outside, would not go away; but in concert rent the air with their cries of protest. Queen was so curious that, despite her beating heart, she moved to where she could see what was going on. She saw ropes flash through the air and immediately after, a little colt fell to the dusty ground. The cry from the little one's mother was answered by a stifled cry from the ground and as Queen, unable to stand still for fear, listened to that cry, there suddenly began coming to her the odour of blood and burning flesh. Madness seized upon them once more and the dizzying whirl round the choking corral gave them some relief. They finally stopped to rest a while, only to have another colt thrown and his cries and

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the smell of burning flesh set them through the frenzied motion round the corral, all over again.

Most of the afternoon it took before all the colts in the first section had been branded and mutilated. It was a noisy, dusty, cruel process; and the men, perspiring heavily, their faces wet and black with the dust that settled on them, looked like tormenting imps of hell; but they were no more to be blamed for the cruelty that was theirs to do than were their helpless victims.

All that clamour of pain and struggle could not disturb the mist-like loneliness that brooded over the far-reaching distance. On the other side of the river, visible beyond less rugged banks, stretched a lifeless country of hills and plains, so desolate and so motionless that the very stones that dotted them seemed with their feeble reflections to be futilely protesting against their destitution.

A pause came to the torturous struggle. The gate of the first corral was opened and the sickened little colts shambled out into the open where their frantic mothers caressed them, then led them away to the east. The men walked off and disappeared in the house.

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Taking advantage of the silence and the respite, the still captive colts, one after another, took to sucking. It was not very long, however, before they were interrupted by the reappearance of the men. The skin on every captive began to tremble and the eight mothers with their eight colts packed into one corner.

One man, carrying a long stick, entered the section and advanced to the middle while the other stationed himself at the gate. First the man with the stick forced the group to move into the opposite corner, then, after a long struggle, he singled out the buckskin mare. He had driven her toward the gate but a few feet, when little Queen, bending so low that she passed under the stick, rushed out of reach of it and gained her mother's side. Had it not been for the vigilance of the man at the gate they would have both escaped. It was getting to be late in the afternoon and the man was tired and impatient. As with most impatient people, his common sense gave way to his impatience. He was not only determined to get the buckskin mare out first, but he was even more anxious to punish her. He singled her out again and reaching her, struck her

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with his stick. In pain and fright, the mare rushed for the gate. It was partially opened and she was half way out when a cry from little Queen, who saw her leaving her, brought her to her senses.

Rebelliously, she reared and fell with full force upon the gate. It swung violently backward, striking the man who held it so severely that it knocked him off his feet and sent him rolling to the wall. The second man who was trying to prevent Queen from following her mother was away over at the other end of the corral. The gateman's cry and the image of him on the dusty ground, so confused the other that for a few moments he stood still, unable to move a muscle. When he saw his partner pick himself up, he realised that he should have hurried to the gate and closed it; but by that time the whole group had escaped and were racing for the hills, the buckskin mare in the lead and her precious Queen eagerly behind her.

With a majestic toss of her head, conscious of having scored a victory, and determined to keep it, the buckskin mare fled across the flats. It was now not only the overwhelming desire to get away. Vaguely she realised that she

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had crossed the man's will and that that was a punishable offence.

The mothers whose foals had been branded were off on a field at the foot of the hills. The field had yielded a crop of oats and the oats had been reaped and taken from the field; but there was still enough grain left to make it worth their while to remain there. If, when they followed the fugitives with their eyes, they had any desire to go along, they knew that their sickened colts would not go with them.

The buckskin mare gave them hardly a glance. She struck up the steep incline with risky speed, bent upon getting out of the men's reach, as soon as was possible. The men, on the other hand, were at a disadvantage. Before they could saddle their ponies, the mares, they knew, would be off somewhere at the other end of the range. They realised, too, that the mares were now so excited that they would have very great difficulty in rounding them up. They were angry at the rebellious mare, but these animals were their property and they did not want to hurt them. Another struggle at that time, they felt, might even endanger their own lives. The man who had been

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knocked over was not only as tired as the other fellow was, but he was aching from head to foot. Besides, the afternoon was rapidly giving way to early evening. They decided to finish the branding on the following day.

But to the buckskin mare the spaces behind her seemed peopled with imaginary pursuers, and she struggled up the slippery incline as if her very life depended upon getting to the top and away. The rest of the mares that fled with her and their little ones seemed to find greater difficulty in getting to the top, but they followed as eagerly. Rocks and sand rolled thunderously down behind them and the dust rose from the mouth of the canyon like volcanic smoke.

When they finally reached the level plains above, the old mare was white with foam. They had that afternoon been rounded up in a hollow toward the northeast of where they now were and fear of being rounded up again sent the buckskin mare to the west. Her usual fear of man, many times intensified by the feeling that now she would be severely punished for breaking loose, aroused in her old head the instinctive desire of the animal that is pursued, to get under cover. Though

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there was neither sight nor sound of any one behind her, she ran with might and main for the coulee that she knew was a mile and a half to the west, and until she had turned over the lip of the coulee and had reached the very end of its slope, she did not slacken her pace, several times almost breaking a leg in badger holes that she avoided by only a hair's breadth. Down in the gulch there was a path, made by the water of the melted snow in spring as it had wound its way to the river. Along this path, which led northward, they trotted without stopping till they came to where the range fence forced them to halt.

Here at last they rested, though the buckskin mare kept anxious vigil for the first sign of any one pursuing them. The mothers began grazing slowly while their young, moving with them, strove to get the milk they felt belonged to them. As soon as the colts had had all the milk there was for them they went leisurely in search of tender grasses and soon all were grazing as if nothing had ever happened.

But the buckskin mare was still worried. She walked to the two wires that barred her way and with her head above the upper wire

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she gazed to the north. A quarter of a mile away, the coulee ended. Its floor curved upward like the bottom of a ship. Where it ended and the prairie floor began there was a cluster of sagebrush. The evening was rapidly turning the sage into a silhouette against the bright background of the sky. Fear of pursuit came back with the coming of the night and the old mare roused herself. With a sudden impulse she backed away from the wires and dropped to her knees. Pushing her head under the lower wire she moved cautiously forward, an inch at a time. Slowly she felt the wire move backward over her body and each time the barb dug through her skin she stopped and tried to crouch lower. With a sharp scratch it rolled over her withers and stuck painfully into her back. She tried again to crouch down lower, but failing to rid herself of the barb, she rested a moment.

The barb hurt her considerably and she made a strenuous effort to lower herself out of its reach, and in so doing pressed her outstretched muzzle right into a rosebush. While the pain of thorns still pricked her lips there was a sudden flash of white right before her eyes and a thump on the ground as if a rock had

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been thrown at her. With all the strength in her body, forgetting in her fright the wire on her back, she sprang backward to her feet, snapping the lower wire and stretching the upper one as if it had been a string.

Her frightened jump, the momentary struggle with the upper wire that had caught in her mane, and the cry that escaped her, set the group into a stampede, and she herself when finally freed from the entangling wire, dashed off to the rear for a dozen rods. The slopes of the coulee were dotted with the mares and colts who had fled in every direction. Outside the range and on the rim of the coulee lay a silly rabbit, stretching himself and gazing down with foolish eyes.

There was nothing dangerous visible and nothing in the air to worry her, so the old mare started slowly and cautiously back again toward the one wire now hanging limply, and, in one place, less than two feet from the ground. There she sniffed about carefully and suddenly raising her head, she caught sight of the rabbit, as he was bounding away.

There were many things that the old buckskin was afraid of, but a rabbit was not one of them. Realising that she had allowed herself

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to become alarmed at nothing, she went at her task with greater determination. She was about to get down to her knees again when she realised that the remaining wire was now low enough for her to step over it. Carefully lifting each leg, her skin quivering with her excitement, the buckskin mare stepped over the wire into freedom; and little Queen, frightened to see her mother beyond the fence, made it with a single leap.

The old buckskin was for running now as fast as she could for the north, but she wanted the rest of the mares to go with her. She turned to look at them. There they were grazing at various points with absolute indifference to the great achievement she had consummated. She called to them to follow, but beyond a busy reply they paid no heed to her. When, however, they heard the sound of her tearing the more abundant grass outside the range, they awoke to the fact that they were not getting all they might get. Whereas the ideal of liberty had been an abstraction to them, the fact of abundant grass was a reality, and it was not many minutes before, one by one, they had all made their way over the hanging wire.

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The late autumn nights had steadily grown colder and, since hollows are colder than the higher portions of the prairie at night, they moved rapidly to the plains above. Round about them lay the silent night, dark and infinite, and the stars looked down upon its hidden desolation. Closely together they grazed, lips fairly touching lips, without protest or impatience. As they grazed, they moved on to the north, and the rhythmic *tear-tear* of grass interspersed with rhythmic footfalls was the accompanying cadence of their half-unconscious flight.

Some four miles from the range, they slept for the night on a low round hill and when dawn came they found the earth covered white with frost. The sun rose, putting a slight tinge of red into the whiteness, and Queen was so curious about it she went looking for the spots where it was thickest and licked it off the sage or rosebushes.

To warm up they raced for half an hour, following the old buckskin to the north, then spent the rest of the morning grazing and moving leisurely. It was well on toward the middle of the day when an open triangle of honking geese, high in the air, made them look

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up. The old mare watched the geese move across the sky till they were lost in the south and was just about to return to her grazing when she saw two small objects appear on the horizon. They were so far away that they were indiscernible, but she did not wait to make certain what they were. With a call that frightened the little herd she turned north and fled.

For several hours they raced on toward the heart of the wilderness; then complaint on the part of the little ones, who did not like this endless running, stopped them. But they had rested only a few minutes when they discovered the rancher and his assistant rounding a hill about two miles behind them. The frantic mothers, remembering yesterday's struggle, fled at top speed, never slackening for a moment till, nearly twelve miles farther north, the little ones deliberately hung back. When, however, half an hour later, their pursuers surprised them by coming up on top of a hill only half a mile to their rear, the colts fully realised the danger and from that time on they sped along without a murmur.

The afternoon wore along toward evening and though, as the shadows began lengthening,

they felt that their pursuers had abandoned the pursuit, they did not cease running until the thickening darkness gave them a greater feeling of security. Even then their rest was a nervous one. They grazed with ears pricked and when they felt that their little ones would follow they started off again, going at a steady trot.

They came, late in the night, to a hollow in the middle of which was a huge shadow, which they recognised was a stack of hay. There were no lights about anywhere, nor was there the slightest trace of man in the air. A cold wind had blown up from the west and their wet bodies were made uncomfortably cold. Lying down on the open plains in that condition, they knew, would not give them much rest. They felt the need of rest even more strongly than that of food and the haystack offered protection against the wind. So they approached very cautiously.

Something white at its base seemed to have moved as they neared it, and the whole herd stopped to look and to sniff. The old buckskin mare, who was now, as she had been all the time, in the lead, took a few steps farther and sniffed again. She smelled rotten hay

and with that smell came the smell of warm bodies of horses. She called out inquiringly.

In answer to her call, the white object at the base of the stack, raised itself laboriously from the ground and replied with a lazy, sleepy whinny. Immediately the little herd started toward the stack. She found the white object to be a white mare and in the rotten hay lay her jet black colt, complaining impatiently because his mother had disturbed him by getting up, and he felt disagreeably cold.

The hay was very old and very rotten, but they had not come there to feast. What they wanted was shelter from the hard wind and each one went looking for a good place to rest in. The buckskin mare almost stepped on the leg of an old work-horse. In spite of her annoying him, he whinnied so good-naturedly that she decided to stay right there near him. Queen pushed herself into the hay beside the old work-horse and her mother lay down in front of her. Protected against the wind on all sides she was soon very comfortable and cosy and fell fast asleep.

CHAPTER II

TO THE NORTH!

T was in the very early hours of the morning when little Queen was rudely awakened by the sudden rising of her mother, upon whose warm flank her little head was lying. As her consciousness lighted up, she became aware of a most disturbing odour in the air. Forms of restless horses moved about in the semi-darkness and the rhythmic sound of hoof beats told of threatening danger. Her mother was standing next to the white mare in a group that seemed transfixed by a reddish light which came from the southwest. In the distance, on the horizon, was a low crescent of fire. Far away as the fire was, Queen could see the flames creeping. It looked very much like a vast herd of glowing creatures, among which, now and then, one leaped high above the others.

Terrified so that the very muscles in her body quivered, she sprang toward her mother and pushed her way in between the two mares.

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Fire had been part of the horrible process in the corral, but that fire had been as nothing to this. She was afraid! She wanted to run, and she worried about their standing still.

The black colt on the other side of his white mother was not the least bit frightened. He had as yet met with nothing baneful in fires and they only interested him. At that moment, having slept well and fed well and feeling unusually good, he wanted very much to frisk about and play. He trotted over to Queen and mischievously butted her from behind, pushing her half way out from between the two mares. Queen was much too nervous to tolerate his playfulness. With an impatient toss of her head she moved back against her mother and called for help. The old buckskin herself was in no mood for trifling and drove the black colt away with an angry threat. The white mare, who was as indulgent a mother as the buckskin, took the matter so seriously that there would have been trouble but for a sudden blast of wind, loaded with smoke.

There was a hurried clatter of hoofs and the herd started away as with one impulse. Down slopes, through wide hollows, up hills, leaping over badger holes and stones, they

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ran, half enjoying the excitement. Occasionally they stopped to look back with glaring eyes upon the flames that swept along in their wake, still far, but unmistakably nearer every time they stopped.

With the coming of full daylight the flames lost their brilliance and the colts, tired of running, would stop every once in a while and noisily protest to their mothers, who kept a short distance ahead of them. They would then walk slowly and whinny till a new gust of wind with a new offensive cloud of smoke would frighten them and send them on again with renewed energy.

But their endurance was rapidly giving out and toward the middle of the day they refused to run any more. Their mothers, a few paces ahead of them, called to them solicitously, ran on as if they meant to desert them, then seeing that that did not move them, they came back calling coaxingly and tried to encourage them. A step at a time, their heads bobbing wearily, their sides wet, they lumbered along complainingly.

The prairie fire kept gaining upon them. The mothers' anxiety turned into desperation. They came back to them and getting behind

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them fairly pushed them along. Suddenly a blazing thistle, driven by the gale, rolled into their midst. All weariness, all aches and pains were at once forgotten. As if they were controlled by a single mind, they bounded forward, re-entering the race for life with an energy which they themselves did not know they had.

The sun with smiling indifference moved rapidly down the lower half of its diurnal arc. The wind tore along behind them with irregular force and with a constant changing of direction. The smoke it had borne all day had grown less and less perceptible. The weight of Queen's body dragged more and more irresistibly downward. Her head began swimming in waves of weariness that were inundating the whole of her body; but she struggled on bravely, though she vaguely felt that it would not be long before she would be forced to give up the struggle. Then, as she reached the top of a hill, she beheld through the film of moisture on her eyes, the mares and the stronger colts who had gone on ahead, now grazing on the other side of a long, black, dried mud spot down in the hollow.

That the wind had veered decidedly, taking

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smell and smoke and fire off to the east, they had not even noticed. They had been running unnecessarily for some time, impelled by the fear of the burning thistle. The sight of the herd grazing with apparent fearlessness reassured them. Most of the stragglers walked on ahead to join them, but Queen selected a soft spot on the grass and dropped to the ground with a sigh.

Hunger had no power over her now. She stretched out her legs and her head and relaxed, sinking willingly into the stupor that swept over her. Her mother near her cropped the delicious grass with avidity; but the long-drawn sighs that came from her little one and the rapid sinking and swelling of her wet sides, worried her. She walked over to Queen, whinnied softly and licked the perspiration from her little body. Little Queen continued to breathe heavily but a note of relief entered the sound of her breathing, and now more comfortable she fell asleep.

But if Queen had gone to sleep thinking that her exhausting journey was over, she was doomed to disappointment. She woke shortly after she had fallen asleep, with a most intense desire to drink. On the hill above the hollow

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she saw the greater part of the herd already moving on. Some of the mares and their colts near Queen were starting away and her mother was calling her, very evidently moved by the same urge. There was nothing behind them forcing them to go. There was no discussion of any sort to make clear the need for going. In the mind of each of them there was the image of a slough. It was a sort of composite image of all the sloughs they had ever drunk from and with that image like a mirage on the prairie distance before them, they doggedly hit once more the unbroken trail to the north.

All day and most of the evening they continued the discouraging advance without coming even to the bed of a dried-up slough. That night they grazed a little and slept a little, but the thirst for water, somewhat weakened by the coldness of the early night, soon reasserted itself and sent them restlessly going again. The morning brought some relief. The ground was covered with a thick frost and the grass they ate partially quenched their thirst. But by the time the sun was quite high on its arc they were as thirsty as ever and soon commenced the weary march once more.

It was in the early evening that they came

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at last upon a half-dried slough toward one end of which there was a good sized hole full of water. The surface of the water was covered with a layer of ice. With her hoof one of the mares made a large hole in the ice and as many as could squeeze into the first circle around it, drank till some of the others began to fear that there would be no water left for them. Some pushed the drinkers greedily and even nipped at them but the others just waited patiently.

Her mother was one of the first to drink, but little Queen waited till she saw two of the horses—strangers to her—turn away. The old work-horse whose good nature had impressed itself upon her at the haystack, and who by daylight seemed even more kindly disposed, his sorrel coat somehow intensifying his harmlessness, took half the space they left and Queen walked up beside him. The old fellow's upper lip trembled in soft assurance of his friendship. Very grateful to him Queen bent down and drank, a few inches away from his head, keeping her eyes on the reflections in the water, raising her head hastily just as soon as one of the reflections moved.

The world seemed altogether different to

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her after that drink. It seemed as if every wish of her little soul had been gratified. She was still tired but it was not a very painful tiredness and not strong enough to keep her from preferring the tender grasses in the old slough to resting.

Night came again. The wind completely changed. It blew strong and cold now from the southeast. The sky was very clear and in the north just above the horizon many lights quivered. The old buckskin mare settled down comfortably in the midst of the other mares and little Queen nestled up against her warm body. With her head upon her mother's flank she delighted in her comfort and gazed at the northern lights, whose brilliant display did not seem to worry the older horses. Yet so long as Queen's eyes were open they were fastened upon those lights; and so long as the little brain was awake it kept wondering with a bit of fear what they might mean, for they were different from fire yet moved as fire did.

She had slept a long time when she was awakened by the sound of anxious neighing that seemed far away and yet filled the air above the little valley. Upon opening her eyes she beheld the northern lights so clear

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and so near that she trembled for fear of them, and was certain that the disorderly running about that she heard was due to the same fear. But when her mother jumped up and she followed, she discovered that the frightful odour of fire was coming on the wind from the south, where she had last seen the flames creeping behind her.

The same confusion, the same bewildering excitement and again the wearing race for life began. That they ran directly toward the northern lights convinced her that these were as harmless as the moon and stars. With very few differences this flight was like the first. Though the discomfort of it was even more hateful to her, Queen felt no impending breakdown and without realising it, she was stronger now.

Dawn came and soon gave way to a somewhat dull day. The wind changed several times and finally for a while died down altogether. There was no trace of smoke in the air; but the south was now established as a region of horror and they continued their flight northward till late in the afternoon.

They ran down a steep hillside dotted with many knolls and stones and came into an

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elongated, bowl-like valley toward one end of which there was a small spring lake. There they stopped to drink, to graze and to rest.

Just as the air in that valley bore no trace of smoke, the plains that stretched away from that valley bore no trace of man. A few grass-overgrown buffalo trails led from the lands above to the deepest part of the ancient lake and a bleached buffalo skull beside the main trail told the story of a day and its life that had passed.

A coyote den at the opposite end of the bowl and half way up the slope gave the only evidence of life about the lake. The rim of the bowl shut away the barrenness of the prairies above. The very dome of heaven rested upon the rim of that bowl and vast primordial spaces interposed protection against man's greedy intrusions.

Little Queen drank some water at the ice hole, drank the milk that nature had prepared for her with all the care and concern of her mother's love, then slept away another night at her beloved mother's side, never even dreaming that this night was shutting fast forever the doors behind which lay the closed first period of her life.

CHAPTER III

DEATH IN THE HOWL OF COYOTES

LITTLE QUEEN was awake at the very first peep of dawn. With her soft muzzle pressed against her mother's warm flank, she watched the beautiful unfolding of morning. Red streaks appeared above the southeastern horizon and tinted the heavy clouds that were slowly and ominously coming out of the north and packing the centre of the sky. The air was clear and cold. The earth and all things on it were covered with a thick layer of frost. Every blade of grass was dressed in fanciful and luxuriant whiteness. Every hair on her mother's body had turned white and thick save on a small spot on her flank where the warmth of her little head had driven the frost away.

All around her lay the still forms of mares and colts and horses. Many of the strangers had already distinguished themselves from the

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others in her mind. The whiteness that covered them all interested little Queen. She had seen that whiteness on them before, but never had she seen them so completely covered with it.

She turned her little head to see whether her own body was covered with it. The discovery that it was rather pleased her; but the lifting of her head resulted in a slight annoyance. Her lip touched the frost and became wet and cold. She began to rub the wet lip on the warm spot of her mother's flank. Her mother called sleepily to her as if the movement bothered her, so she pressed the lip tight against the warm spot, delighting in its comfort. In that position she watched the details of the world about her as they appeared in the growing light.

A short distance before her, beyond two mares' backs in front and nearer to her, she spied the black head of the mischievous colt only partially covered with frost. He was apparently still sound asleep. She was gazing at the two frost-covered ears with uneasiness and irritation, when suddenly as she raised her eyes a bit, she saw a coyote come out of his den way off on the other slope of the val-

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ley. She watched him with fear and absorbed attention. She remembered having seen one, once before, somewhere. She remembered too that her mother had become alarmed at sight of him and she began to worry as she watched. She saw that he was interested in the forms lying about her. She saw him stretch lazily, yawn and gaze down at them. He trotted away up to the very rim of the bowl and there he sat down on his haunches and continued looking at them.

Little Queen lowered her head not to be conspicuous and continued from that position to watch his every move. She had been looking so intently at him that she did not notice a second coyote only a few paces from the first. When she did notice it, one of the horses jumped to his feet, shook the frost from his body and began running about to warm up. Another of the horses followed the first and when little Queen turned to look at them, she lost sight of the coyotes. She searched for them on the whiteness, for some time, then discovered them sitting so still that she had mistaken them for stones; but the horses that had got up ran off in their direction and she saw the two coyotes take to their heels.

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The manner in which they loped away, continually looking back as they went, showing that they were afraid that the horses meant to run after them, lessened Queen's fear of them slightly; and, tired of lying there, she too, rose to her feet and shook the frost from her body. Like the big horses she felt that she wanted exercise so she frisked about her mother, keeping an eye all the while upon the black colt who had by this time awakened and who was now sleepily watching her.

But as her blood began to circulate rapidly, her delight in motion grew apace and in her delight she forgot the black colt and the coyotes. The circle about her mother was altogether too small for the expression of her joy and she undertook to make a circuit about the lake with the two other horses that were running. She had gone only half way when she became aware of the black colt, racing after her.

She did not see him till she had turned and as soon as she spied him she sent an urgent call for help to her mother, and bounded away with eyes aglow. Her call brought her mother to her feet. The old mare galloped away in the opposite direction, intending to

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meet her before the black colt got to her. The excitement roused the last of the sleepers and soon the air was filled with the thumping of lively hoofs. Only the old sorrel work-horse got safely out of the way and went on, indifferent to the racket, to eat his breakfast.

The buckskin mare got to her daughter in time to prevent the colt from fleeing and nipped him savagely on the hip. In the meantime his white mother had reached him and quite naturally interceded in his behalf. She made an attempt to nip the buckskin mare, but backed away in time to avoid two buckskin legs which had shot into the air. The white mare then turned quickly around and with her hind legs replied in kind.

The rest of the horses seemed to think it just the proper fun to accompany morning exercises and after a few moments of exhilarating kicking there followed a joyous stampede resulting at last in their division into smaller groups, each group in its own corner grazing away peacefully as if nothing had ever happened.

After a preliminary breakfast of milk, little Queen joined her mother in a profitable search for the sweetest blades of grass, and grazing

side by side they wandered from the lake shore, up the slope and away over a level bit of prairie to another hollow where a slough had completely dried up, leaving a small, barren, muddy bottom exposed. The grass was exceptionally good around that spot and when little Queen had eaten all she could eat, she stretched out on the ground in the early afternoon and slept a long while.

She awoke suddenly. She was very cold and felt that she had been cold for a long time. A gloomy heaviness hung in the air and the sky was thick with threatening clouds. All the desires in her little soul merged into the one great desire to get to her mother. She jumped to her feet intending to stretch and r'd the joints of the sleepy feeling, when there came upon her the fear that she was alone. She looked anxiously and rapidly in several directions and then sprang off into space. A great wave of uneasiness reached up from her heart and confused her.

She had been running around for some time when she discovered four buckskin legs sticking up out of a trough-like hollow in the dried mud. She rushed with fear to her mother who lay motionless upon her back, either unable

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to get up or strangely unwilling to. She was very glad to see her and much of the fear that she had just experienced left her at the very sight of her beloved mother; but she slowly became conscious of something incomprehensibly dreadful in the situation.

Queen looked at her curiously and called half anxiously, half admonishingly, as if to say, "Why do you lie there like that when I want you, and want you standing up straight as one ought to stand?" Receiving no answer to her calling Queen ceased and gazed at her with growing terror. There was something so frightfully unusual about her. Queen began to shake herself as if she hoped to shake off the something that seemed to cling to her and dim and blur everything for her. She sniffed at the dear old head and sprang away in terror. There was a pool of blood near the open mouth and the beloved lips, always so warm and so soft, were cold and strangely hard. She became more and more alarmed and confused. But in her little soul there was still hope. Her beloved mother, so capable of solving the hardest problems, would solve this one. She approached again and sniffed and sniffed and called and called.

But the more she sniffed and called in vain, the more intense grew her fear.

She raised her little head high and gazed anxiously away through the thickening gloom. A last flock of geese was flying south and the familiar honking which before this had only aroused her curiosity, now filled her with foreboding and loneliness. Loneliness was a state of mind heretofore unknown to her; but now it brooded over the plains like a nebulous dragon dropped from some other world, waiting for an opportunity to devour her.

She walked off slowly and listlessly to where she had been asleep, intending to while away the time by grazing until her mother should wake up; but she could not eat. It was not many minutes before she was walking right back again, calling more loudly than ever. Getting no response, she stood still, and looked at the body she loved, trying very hard to understand.

All the while the day waned. The sky grew blacker. The wind blew stronger and in the air the something that had been threatening all day seemed to have come nearer. Grass blades and rosebushes nodded mourn-

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fully over all the lonely earth, and little Queen imagined, as she turned round and round to look into every gloomy direction, that the prairie had become peopled with dangerous forms who always fled from sight just as she turned her eyes toward them.

She made several attempts to graze; but she could not eat. A sickening feeling like a lump in her throat barred the way for food and she had strangely lost all desire to eat. At her mother's side she remained as the long, fearful moments dragged, sniffing at her occasionally, calling to her at times in the tone of one who expects no response and looking off into the desolate wastes with a half-formed wish that something would arrive to help her, yet fearfully worried of what might come.

Darkness began lowering more rapidly and the wind swept over the plains moaning with disturbing sadness. Little Queen became desperate. She pushed at her mother with her nose in passion born of fear, then realising how useless that effort was, called with all her strength and ran about her without plan or purpose.

Flakes of snow had been falling now and then for some time. They began to fall more

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rapidly and to choke up the atmosphere, whirling through it with a sort of light indifference and cruelly, boastingly foreshadowing the approach of a more heartless blizzard. Queen decided at last that there was nothing for her to do but to lie down beside her cold mother and to wait for morning. She was whimperingly lowering herself to the ground when she caught sight of the skulking form of a coyote in the gloom to her side and sprang back upon her feet.

Again she began to urge her mother to get up. She pushed the rock-like side with her little nose, but she stopped very soon with the conviction that it was useless and that she had better keep her eyes on the coyote. She centred her attention now upon the form that moved about in the dark grey gloom and discovered a second form behind the first. In an effort to move nearer to her mother, she stepped on the hard side, tripped and fell; and as she got up to her feet again, there came out of the boundless horror of the wind-swept night a blood-curdling howl. Leaping clearly over her mother's body she fled from it, and loped away in the direction of the bowl-like valley and the lake.

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Some of the horses were still grazing near the lake, as if they realised that a blizzard was coming and desired to store away in their bodies all the food they could gather. They cropped the grass most rapidly as the wind tore at their tails and manes. Most of the mares were lying down with their colts and one horse was drinking at a hole in the ice; while the old sorrel work-horse stood near him patiently waiting for his turn at the water. With an anxious whimper she sidled up to the old sorrel who replied at once with his soft, tremulous whinny of good will. When at last he drank, she cautiously lowered her head too, and seeing that he had no objections, she drank as if there were fires in her little heart that she would quench. When he raised his head and started away, she pulled her head out of the water and ran after him as if it had been her mother that had started away and was about to leave her behind.

The old sorrel lumbered off to the spot where he had slept the night before and Queen forlornly followed him, stopping several times as she went to look into the darkness where she had left her mother and where she still hoped to find her when the day came again.

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The old fellow painfully lowered his body, groaning like a rheumatic old man. Many years had he toiled in the harness and his limbs were stiff. Queen waited till he was at rest, then she approached him humbly and whinnied questioningly. From the ugly old head came a soft, barely audible neigh which was different from that of any horse she had ever heard. It encouraged and consoled her little heart with a friendliness without which she might have died that stormy night.

She whimpered like a baby that was cold and lay down beside him. Then as the wind annoyed her she moved as near to him as she could get. There came upon the cold, stinging, moaning wind another coyote howl, long-drawn, shrill, mad, and lustful. It seemed far away but inexpressibly terrifying. Little Queen raised her trembling head. The old sorrel pricked his ears. But she saw the big pointed ears go back into place again and the big shadowy head take its former sleepy position. He was not afraid, she was glad of that; but she was afraid. Strange images, visions she sought to drive from her mind by closing her eyes, tormented her.

She was lying right against his back.

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Slowly she lowered her head upon his neck, testing his willingness by degrees. When her head was finally resting fully on his neck, he only whinnied softly, and Queen tried her best to reply gratefully. A feeling of ineffable gratitude swept over her with the warmth of his body.

All through the night she thought of her mother, when awake, and dreamed of her when asleep. A thousand times she broke from her light snatches of slumber, from her horrible dreams of coyotes, to pierce the storm-filled gloom with her terrified eyes, expecting hopefully to find her mother standing over her and looking down upon her; but only the emptiness of the night, obliterating the world she had known, shrieked with an uncertainty that filled up her soul.

CHAPTER IV

A SEEKING THAT FOUND

IT is only the foolish who bewail the inevitable with wasting passion; it is after all the wise who accept it and make the most of things. Because the inevitable is so much more the ruling force in animal life, animals adjust themselves more quickly to new conditions. Conceited man attributes that early adjustment to a lack of feeling. Yet when little Queen awoke on the first morning of her orphanage, there had already come into her eyes and upon her head a perceptible sadness, the sadness of resignation.

A great change had come over the world in that single night and so different did it seem from what she had known it to be, that as far as she could think, the night might have been a space of years; that years might have elapsed since her mother, who hitherto had always warmed and fed and protected her, now had ceased to warm and feed and protect her.

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How white the world was! The little white flakes that had fluttered about in the air at nightfall had covered up all things with a heavier whiteness than that of any frosty morning in her experience. And she expected that with the coming of the warmth of day it would all disappear. Yesterday it had taken the forms of the things it had covered, this morning only the heads of the horses stuck up out of the drifts of it; while stones and coyote dens had been completely wiped out of existence. Her own feet were out of sight. She jumped up to see whether it would interfere with her jumping up, and was glad to note how easily it was shaken from her body. She took a few steps, discovered that it was disagreeable to wade through and stopped. On the white rim of the bowl stood a flock of prairie chickens as if they had been discussing the great change. She watched them half interestedly. They were birds, and birds were not to be feared. She looked over them and beyond them. There, somewhere, she felt was her mother. She took a hasty step in that direction and stopped again. She was afraid to go.

She lowered her head and listlessly tasted

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some of the snow. It was not food, she knew that at once; and it turned into water in her mouth. One wants water badly when one wants it, but one cannot live on water. How was one to eat when there was no grass in sight and no mother about with the more substantial milk? She looked and looked away over the whiteness till her eyes, taxed by its reflection, ceased seeing altogether for a few minutes. But as soon as she could see once more, Queen began to search for her mother and this search, each succeeding day with less hope and enthusiasm, she never wholly abandoned. She sniffed at every mare about her, calling plaintively and knowing her mistake in the indifference with which some of them listened to her appeal or the annoyance which others were too ready to show.

The old sorrel got up at last and shook the snow from his back. She watched it falling in showers of white dust and through the sides of her eyes she saw a number of other horses do as he had done. She saw him take big bites of snow and shake his head quickly as he did so, so she too ate some more of it and shook her head up and down. When he lum-

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bered away, sinking into the deep drifts as he went, she followed him.

Off on the slope horses were energetically pawing the snow and Queen wondered what they were doing. When the old sorrel, somewhat clumsily, beat the snow with his heavy front foot, she watched him curiously. She saw him laboriously expose the brown grass underneath and the sight of the grass relieved her, for she had been worrying about its disappearance. Though the snow was still packed in between the blades, he cropped up the grass just as soon as it appeared. She then watched for the next bit to appear and tried to get a bite before he had it all. She succeeded in getting only a few blades and since he did not seem to mind it, she tried to be quicker next time. She did get a mouthful occasionally but it was not enough for her appetite and it finally dawned on her that she ought to work for herself. She pawed the snow very close to him and as soon as she spied him eating, she would seize as much of the grass he had uncovered as she could, then quickly go back to her own.

A hundred times that morning she wearied

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of pawing snow, and each time her head would raise and she would look wistfully off into space with the irrepressible impulse to go looking for her mother; but she did not know which way to go. In every respect, in every aspect, her life and the earth had changed in the night. When, as she looked, it seemed to her that a certain direction was the right one, she would think of the coyotes and fear would extinguish the impulse. She made several attempts to get the old sorrel to go with her. She would start off in what appeared to her the right direction, and walking a few paces would stop and call to him. He would pay no attention to her for a while; then as if to stop her calling, he would walk over to where she was and begin to paw the snow there. But it took so much energy and so much time to get him over each bit of space, that she made little headway; and when darkness began dulling the whiteness, her fear of the coyotes who seemed to people the shadows became so intense, she did not dare to leave the sorrel even to the extent of a few paces.

Several very sad, dull days went by. Then came a day during which the sun shone for a while and made her feel better. But it melted

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the surface of the snow and the cold evening froze it into ice. The struggle for grass became harder and her constant slipping made life very disagreeable.

She saw the black colt now and then. Though he was livelier and far more happy than she, he made no attempts to molest her. Tolerance characterised every move of every member of the herd. The rigours of the sudden winter seemed to strengthen the racial bonds of these good-natured creatures. Each one went his plodding way, thankful for the silent companionship of the herd and showing his appreciation by refraining from any offence to his neighbour.

Queen clung to the old sorrel though she did not thrive on his passive fosterage. She was losing weight rapidly. Her eyes dulled, her head began hanging low and even her long winter hair could not fill in the hollows between her ribs.

In pawing snow she found that her strength was not equal to the desire for food; and, resting often, she was almost always hungry. As she became weaker from day to day, she became more and more unhappy, and longed more and more intensely for her

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mother, who was nevertheless growing dimmer and more distant in her mind.

There came a grey day. A north wind whistled over the hard crust on the snow and loaded, black clouds dropped more white flakes with listless irregularity. Something pervaded the air of this day which was so similar to the day when she had lost her mother that she became irresistibly restless. All day this restlessness made it hard for her to dig. Late in the afternoon she started away with a suddenness that she herself could not understand. Up the slope and over the plains she went, sinking into deep drifts, pulling out again and going on without a pause, pursuing the image of her beautiful mother that had suddenly lighted up in her soul and as suddenly gone out again, before she could touch it. Somewhere in the dismal swirl it was and she struggled bravely but blindly after it, calling in vain as she went.

For fully an hour she plodded through snows that were piling up a foot above the harder crust, slipping, bruising herself on the jagged ice, resting when she could not go on any farther and coming at last to an understanding that she had been madly pursuing

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nothing, that she was lost, and that she wanted the protection of the old sorrel. She called to him again and again before she stopped to listen for a reply and suddenly became aware of an agreeable sound floating on the wind.

She called again striking out meanwhile in the direction from which she instinctively felt the sound had come. Night was close at hand. The light that was still left was weakened by the showers of snow flakes that now fell rapidly and without interruption. Again it seemed to her she heard a reply. She spent more energy in calling than she did in pushing on, occasionally falling into a deep drift and remaining there for some time before she made an effort to extricate herself. Who it was answering her in the fast darkening night, she did not know. All she knew and felt with every living cell of her being was that in the cold desolation that was submerging her, the thing that was answering her could save her from the unthinkable horror of being alone.

Her strength ebbed fast from her limbs, only the steadily nearing whinny made her last efforts possible. Then suddenly, much sooner than she expected it, a black object appeared in the darkened snows before her. The last

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whinny was more distinct than any of the others. Before her, struggling toward her as she had been struggling toward him, was the black colt. If Queen had had any strength left, she would have bounded off to the side; but she could not move.

It did not take her long, however, to learn that the black colt had not come to molest her. Where he had been, how he came there, or that he might all this time have been following her, did not concern her. His whinny was most conciliating and in the warmth of his body was comfort and salvation. He was almost as completely worn out as she was. She rallied enough strength to kick the snow from her legs so that she could lie down. Whinnying all the while, he cleared a space beside her and there they spent the howling night.

It was somewhere about the middle of the next day before the cutting wind subsided and the snow ceased falling. The black colt who was completely covered with snow, broke out first and Queen followed him at once. They had not gone more than a few yards when they saw the head of the white mare rise above the rim of the bowl-like valley. As soon as she

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spied her colt the white mare began to neigh eagerly, her piercing call echoing from the hills and bringing her the baby response that thrilled her out of patience. Snorting and puffing she plowed the deep snow which fell away from her like spray from the keel of a ship.

When she reached him at last, she caressed him with tremulous lips, running them along his little forehead, between the two small ears, and down his mane and back. Caresses make life worth while, but they have their time and their use and the black colt was hungry. He struck out at once for his milk. But his mother had whinnied for him all through the long dark night and her excitement at having found him again was so great she hardly knew what she was doing. He slipped from her caresses. Her lips craved the touch of him. Little Queen had come with him out of the unknown where she had feared he had been swallowed up. So it happened that her exuberant caresses fell partly upon little Queen.

It was like having refound her mother to Queen. Changed, yes; but life is all change! She switched her little tail and danced about the white mare, finally sliding along her other

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side and reaching out and seizing the second dug. The black colt, little Queen's erstwhile tormentor, touched noses with her as she drank, and shared his milk with her without the slightest sign of objection.

No figures affected his philanthropy. Fractions, division, these abstractions never entered the sphere of his mind. The philosophy of that period of his life may be summed up in the precept: "Drink all there is to drink, all you happen to find, and if still hungry, eat grass and try again later."

Every time he went for his milk, Queen took the other side as if she had never known another mother. Though the white mare often showed a natural predilection for her son, she adopted little Queen because no thought presented itself to her mind against tolerating her, especially since she and her little son had become inseparable.

They played together, rested side by side, drank and thrived together; and so over little Queen's grievous orphanage rose the sun of a happier youth.

CHAPTER V

MAN, THE USURPER

THE winter was a hard one. The skies were persistently and monotonously dull. A few moments of sunshine were invariably followed by days of howling winds and leaden skies. Blizzard succeeded blizzard and the hollows filled so full of snow that it became dangerous for colts to wander off alone and they clung to their mothers' sides.

During the short periods of daylight, the horses, the mares, and the colts broke up into groups and wandered away as far as the deeps allowed or hunger urged; but each night they congregated in the same corner of the valley. This nightly congregating kept the snow in one big spot firmly trodden to the ground and raised two walls with the rest of it, in the lee of which they obtained the comforts of an airy barn.

Many a night when the shrieking wind overhead poured shower after shower of dry snow

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over them, covering them as with a blanket, little Queen, lying close to the black colt and his white mother, indulged in a happy gratefulness for the comforts she experienced. Where man thinks and knows, animals feel. Experience had taught her in sensations and emotions, which she had not forgotten, what discomfort and disagreeableness were. The change in conditions which she now experienced brought into her mind sensations of a gratefulness which expressed itself in an ardent love for the colt and the white mare, a love which slowly overflowed toward and encompassed all the horses of the herd.

The nights were very long. The sun rose and set so far to the south and the arc it made in its daily course was so small that a drink or two of her share of the black colt's milk and the procuring of a single meal on the deep, hidden grass, spent the day. When the shadows of one night, driven out by the dawn, came back so soon in the next night and there was nothing to do but sleep, sleeping became tiresome, and the necessary shifting from side to side kept the mind awake and active. Impressions made and forgotten rekindled like embers in the windblown ashes of a fire.

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These impressions, varied as they were, and so largely without order of time or place, were nevertheless as useful to her as experience is useful to us. It was out of this experience that she built the individuality of her character, and only those who are totally ignorant of animalkind can deny that they have character and individuality.

Often the phantom form of the old buckskin mare came to haunt the dreams of little Queen and always on the following day she pawed the snow less energetically and gazed wistfully away over the endless prairie snows, puzzled over the incongruity of her mother's coming in the dark hours and never by daylight when she could enjoy her most.

She was comfortable and happy in her second fosterage and thrived well upon it; yet these persistent dreams of her nights haunted her wakeful days and in time left on her beautiful head marks of sorrow, vague and intangible, but unmistakably there, adding a charm to that head that it never lost.

Then the days began lengthening. The sun climbed higher in the sky and broke through the spell of winter's clouds with a smiling kindness that stirred every cell in Queen's

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body. Spring came upon the stern winter as a rosy dawn breaks upon an unpleasant night. The white-packed hollows began smiling to cloudless skies with a silent and radiating wetness and the snows shrank away, exposing brown spots. The earth began to emit intoxicating odours of growth and the valleys filled with cool, trembling water. Like living things born in the night these rippling pools appeared everywhere.

Birds came daily in greater numbers from the south and their songs augmented the nameless urge that the south winds bore and filled the desolate wilds with friendliness and goodwill. Before the snows had completely disappeared, a layer of thick green grass began carpeting the earth and myriads of delicate crocuses studded the green with colour-illuminated stars.

Long as the days were becoming, the colts found them all too short for the full expression of the joy that spring was giving them. Nights came altogether too soon and the vapoury light of early dawn revealed them already romping over the plains, seeking to rid their joints of the sleepy feeling that the long winter had given them. In wide circles they ran, plung-

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ing through sloughs, jumping, kicking at the air, pretending to bite each other in violent anger, stopping only when hunger demanded it.

Changes met them wherever they looked. The earth itself and all life upon it seemed to have become an endless play of the forces of change. Just as each day was in itself a succession of changes, white light merging into the tinted colours of evening, fading out in night and breaking again into the colours and the light of a new day, so one day was different from another and they felt themselves each day changing from what they had been the day before.

Queen was only vaguely conscious of these changes in herself, and in her companions, but one change was clearest of all. Most easily perceptible of all, this change, in a way, represented them all. It was the change which she one day realised was taking place in the black colt. Something was very apparently happening to him. His black hair fell rapidly, as she had realised her own hair was falling; but the black colt was steadily growing less black, turning white as night turns to day. When he was white enough to startle

her, she realised that henceforth he was to be white as his mother was. So distracting was this change, however, that she sometimes looked at him with the feeling that he was another colt, and in those rare moments she experienced a peculiar depressive emotion, like the feeling she had experienced when she was standing before her dead mother, looking confusedly down upon her. Yet she knew that it was he. There were fortunately other characteristics that remained unchanged. In time, of course, she got quite used to the change in his appearance; but she never forgot that he had been black. The image of him, the picture that rose in her mind when she thought of him and when he was not immediately before her, was a changeable image which was black one moment and white the next.

If Queen had been in the habit of applying to every image in her mind some name, she would have called him, "White-black." Possibly she might have added the word or the idea, "big," for he was much bigger than he had been; but, since that quality applied to all the colts, she would probably have left that off.

By the varying degrees of this quality in
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the many colts, as well as by the many other qualities she learned belonged to all or to each of them, Queen knew one from the other. All through the long winter her companionship had been restricted to the black colt and his mother, but now, the common desires of youth brought the colts together and led them in time to abandon the companionship of the mares and the adult horses. Some of them went back every day to their mothers for milk, but they all played by themselves and even at night they rested in a group together, away from their mothers. Though their mothers had their own social life and activities to occupy them and did not mind the daily absence of their overgrown foals, their maternal instincts, their anxiety over their erstwhile babies, was still very great. In spite of this division of interests, in spite of this habitual grouping, they lived near each other and at the first sound or sign of danger, they gathered and fled in concert.

The old desire for her mother, the longing, the urge to go forth and to seek, had lost what little definiteness it had had and had turned into an impulse to go, which spasmodically welled up in Queen and sent her loping over

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the plains without purpose. Always as soon as he saw her start away, White-black loped after her and always the rest of the colts followed. Sometimes the older horses and mares, mistaking the escapade for a sign of danger, would lope after them.

First happening occasionally, this game began to take place daily and even several times a day. Just as the colts and other horses got into the habit of following her, Queen acquired the habitual desire to be followed.

It happened one morning that the big brown colt led the race. Jealousy seized at the heart and mind of Queen and she exerted herself to the very end of her strength to get ahead of him, as if her life depended upon doing so. She puffed and snorted and pumped away with her thin long legs, but could not even get abreast of him. Behind her she could hear the milder snorting of White-black. Suddenly she veered to the left. She was exhausted and intended getting out of the way of the herd; but she felt White-black veering with her and knew that the others were following him.

Quickly she seized the opportunity. She exerted herself with renewed hope and sped

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on harder than ever and soon the brown colt found himself alone. To the left was the whole herd racing madly after Queen, in an ecstasy of motion. He turned and followed them, trying hard to catch up, but realising that he had lost. On the other hand Queen had discovered a trick whereby the newly acquired leadership could be kept, and she meant to keep it.

Their food grew in abundance wherever they turned. The grass was rich and juicy; wild plants, sweet and delightful to the taste, grew abundantly on the hillsides; and water, cool and refreshing, trembled in every hollow.

Plenty to eat and a great deal of exercise to sharpen the appetite filled out all the depressions in Queen's body and because she was too active to be fat, she became delightfully plump. Her hair now shorter was sleek and its gloss flashed in the sunlight. Her mane was luxuriantly thick and wavy. Part of it came down between her ears and over the white spot on her forehead, down to her eyes, giving her magnificent head, with the imprint of sadness upon it, a touch of queenliness that few queens possess.

We all love beauty without being able to

say just what it is. The colts felt a something about her which aroused in them a sort of homage, spontaneous and unquestioned. White-black, strong and good-natured, kept the other colts at a safe distance; but they availed themselves of every chance to touch her, to graze where she was grazing or to run alongside of her. Sometimes White-black resented the attention some big fellow offered and started a quarrel which resulted in his defeat. At such times he would assume the attitude of one who had been convinced of being wrong. After all he was yet too young to be serious in his love affairs and his affection for Queen was due more to their having been reared together than to anything else.

Queen loved them all, but she loved White-black most and every colt knew it. Many a quarrel ended in his victory because of her attitude rather than his strength, but he did not know that. Next to him Queen favoured the white mare and next to her, the old sorrel work-horse. White-black understood her love for his mother; but he could not fathom her predilection for the old horse. For a long time, when the old sorrel out of pure reminiscent fondness approached Queen, White-

black would lose his temper, kick at the old horse and attempt to bite him; but where Queen sometimes allowed the colts to fight it out between themselves, she invariably interfered in any attempt to wrangle with the sorrel by taking part in it on his side. In time, White-black learned to let him alone.

The lull of the summer began to creep into the long days, and mosquitoes and nose-flies in vast numbers came to blight the sweetness of the spring wilds. The mosquitoes, annoying as these bloody little pests were, were not half so bad as the nose-flies. The very sight of their long beaks and yellow backs would drive the colts frantic. Grazing quietly, they would suddenly begin bobbing their heads up and down and then start away over the plains as if something frightful were after them.

This murderous pest always started an attack by buzzing around the nose like a bee, then landing on the breast it would creep up the neck till it reached the muzzle, where it would quietly settle down. Puncturing a hole in the tender nose, it would insert its beak and drink freely and unshakeably, then fly away leaving a hurt that burned for hours. When they first appeared, the older horses,

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knowing them, would keep their noses in the grass as they grazed, or they would, when through grazing, gather in groups and rest their chins firmly upon each other's backs, thus giving the pest no chance to creep up. In time the colts learned to protect themselves in the same way.

When sultry spells were suddenly broken by gusts of unbridled winds, which would carry the pests away, the colts would give themselves over to eating and drinking and merrymaking.

There came a sultry spell in the early days of summer. Every chin was resting upon some friend's back. Tails switched ceaselessly and feet stamped the ground with drowsy rhythm. The air was still. Not a blade of grass moved. The silence was broken only by the nauseous singing of mosquitoes and the monotonous droning of nose-flies.

Suddenly there came upon the still, warm air the tattoo of distant hoof-beats. Two horsemen, coming up over a hill to the south, were just in the act of separating with the obvious intention of coming together on the other side of them, when Queen discovered them. Instantly the group broke up, and

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colts and mares and horses mixed in a noisy stampede.

When the older horses wearied of the race, they stopped to look back anxiously at the pursuing riders; but Queen, in whom the fear of man, dormant all winter, had now awakened with great intensity, tore away to the north, snorting as she went, her tail at an angle behind her, loping as fast as she could despite the heat and the insects.

She came breathlessly to the summit of a rather high hill and turned to look back. Some of the colts and some of the faster adults were there with her, but the white mare and the old sorrel were not there. Half a mile behind them she could see the riders, now facing south; and beyond them she saw the part of the herd which they had captured.

White-black was standing beside Queen when he suddenly discovered the loss of his mother. Neighing loudly and distractedly, he started down the hill after the men. Queen was afraid to go with him, yet she did not want to let him go alone. She followed him, calling to him as she went; but White-black persisted. When they got within a quarter of a mile of the men, they saw one of them

turn off to the side and then turn backward. White-black then realised the danger of continuing after them. Judging by horses he had known, horses reared in barnyards, the man thought that it would be a simple matter to get the rest of them, now that he had captured some of them; but he was mistaken.

It was anything but a simple matter. Queen stopped so short that one of the colts, following along behind, hurt himself, running into her. With a stamp of her strong front leg, she turned north and once more led the race for freedom.

All afternoon they ran as fast as their strength would allow. The smell of man hung in the air before Queen's nose, poisoning her blood with hate of him. She had little time to question, yet her whole soul, confused by fear and the urgent need to make distance, sought the why of this two-legged creature, always breaking in upon their peace and always hurting them.

At last they began to feel that no one was pursuing them and stopped to investigate. There was not the faintest glimpse of anything on hill or horizon and in the air there was no trace of man. In the evening they

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fed about a slough and at night they slept on the north side of it with their heads turned toward the south.

Early next morning White-black was seized again by an intense longing for his mother and braving the terrors of captivity, he started again in search of her. They were trotting and walking along leisurely, searching the spaces constantly when they came upon a hill from where they spied a number of horses galloping toward them. They got frightened and turned back north, but soon stopped again to ascertain who it was that was coming, and so these horses gained upon them.

They proved to be three of the colts and a big mare who had somehow broken free from the cunning little men. They were so excited that they would not stop to sniff noses. While they passed through the group they trotted, but as soon as they were on the other side they broke away in a gallop. Queen and White-black and all the rest caught the contagion of their fear, abandoned their search for those who were lost to them and ran with the feeling that danger of captivity had become imminent once more. And for almost a week they continued their desultory flight.

When the fear of the little men creatures had lost some of its intensity, White-black and Queen made several attempts to find the white mare. Her form seemed to flash across the prairies like patches of sunlight, seen only at the vanishing moment. Often they called loud and long trying in vain to pierce the unknown and waiting hopelessly for a reply.

But this, too, was the inevitable, and railing and fretting was no solution. In time the hunger for his mother shrank back into the depths of White-black's limited soul and the full ardour of his love fell to the lot of Queen. And Queen felt in the touch and the presence of White-black a compensation for the aches in her soul, which, like wounds, had healed, but had left their scars for life.

CHAPTER VI

HOW MAN BREAKS THE SPIRIT AND THE BODY

THE summer days dragged along hot and enervating. Mosquitoes and nose-flies in countless numbers became more and more annoying as the sultry period prevailed. It made grazing during most of the daytime very disagreeable. All through these long days they stood dozing in small bunches, their chins resting upon each other's backs, their tails switching mechanically. When a momentary gust of wind came along, they would run down to the sloughs for water. There they would drink till the stinging of the pests, who were always in greater numbers above the tall, wet, slough grass, would make the place unendurable, then they would gallop away to the hill tops for relief.

Beautifully tolerant of all things, always moved by the spirit of "live and let live," Queen could not understand men and insects. She could easily see why one horse might kick at another when the other came along and

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greedily seized upon his find of grass; but the desire to attack without reason or excuse, as it seemed to be in the character of men and insects, was unfathomable and wholly foreign to her nature. Whenever men appeared there was fear and confusion and anguish. So, too, as soon as insects arrived, there was pain and discomfort.

Had she been a meat eater, she would have perceived some connection between the joy of eating and the tragedy of being eaten; but Queen belonged to the sweetest-tempered race on earth, whose sustenance required neither pain nor blood, and so she could not understand, and being unable to understand, she feared.

There followed a period of windstorms which carried the pests away. For a long time the herd enjoyed once more the freedom of the wilds; but another hot spell came and one day as they were eagerly seeking the higher places, they ran into a cloud of a new kind of insect, which was worse than anything they had ever experienced. This new pest settled upon them in such numbers that they changed the appearance of their heads and when in fear they tried to shake them off, the insects

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crept into their ears and noses, stinging viciously.

It was now the last part of the summer, the time of the year when young ants, having acquired their wings, began swarming; and this was one of the summers when these ants were more annoying than they usually are. Queen did not remember ever having come upon this pest before, and felt that it was peculiar to the particular neighbourhood in which they happened to be at the time. Accordingly, when first attacked by an unusually large swarm, she turned to the south, and the herd loped at her heels. By running, they rid themselves of the young ants and so continued running, till the cool of the evening cleared the air of all insects.

Next day, however, they ran into another swarm and again took to flight. Thus they were driven back again into the vicinity of the bowl-like valley. There because things seemed familiar they remained.

A season of constant raining followed. The cold, the excessive wetness, and the strong winds drove all pests from the plains. The rainy season passed and frosts came night after night, spreading layers of white dew on the

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grass and freezing the surface of the spring lake. The exhilarating days of autumn were at hand, cool, clear, and sunny. The peaceful nights scintillated with the colours of the aurora borealis and the unhindered brightness of the stars. Life became again a protracted festival.

They were startled one afternoon by the sudden appearance of four strange horses who came plodding along in single file from the south. Queen discovered them first as they were coming down the slope of a hill. Like the rest of the herd she stopped grazing and stared at them curiously. Because she saw no men on them or near them and because they came so wearily, so unenergetically, she was not afraid of them, though she regarded them with suspicion.

When they came within a few hundred feet, the herd moved off to the side, from where they studied them curiously to learn their intentions. But the strangers did not even look toward them. Doggedly bobbing their weary heads, they made straight for the lake. The leader was a big, red horse with an ugly pugnacious face, the nose bone of which curved, very peculiarly, outward. His hip bones pro-

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truded out of deep hollows in his back and his sides, fallen in, revealed distinctly every hair covered rib. Behind him lumbered a white mare so bent upon limping fast enough to keep up with him that she did not take her eyes off him. The third was a miserable-looking bay pony and the last was an old jade, black as a crow. All were thin and bedraggled and two of them had sores on their necks and breasts. The white mare seemed to have suffered most, for one of her hind legs was swollen to twice its normal size, and she limped very painfully.

When the queer-looking procession caught sight of the lake, they broke the line and ran down to the water, where they drank as if they had been without water for many days. While they were drinking the herd surrounded them, intending peacefully to sniff noses with them and to find out who and what manner of horses they were; but the ugly leader met the first approach with a kick and an angry whinny. They soon discovered that though the other three horses were not as mean, they, too, were ill-tempered and disagreeable. The first attempt at understanding resulted in a noisy quarrel and a stampede. When they set-

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tled down to grazing, the herd was off by itself and the four strangers were in a corner of the valley not any too near each other.

Queen did not like these strangers at all. She felt that they were responsible for the unpleasant feeling that now seemed to hang in the very atmosphere. She did not know then that slavery and cruelty such as these poor creatures had endured would sour the best-tempered horse. What that slavery really meant she had yet to learn.

In spite of her feelings toward the four newcomers, there was something about the white mare that made Queen interested in her. She kept raising her head and looking toward her and one time as she did so, she saw White-black approaching her. When Queen saw them sniffing noses and touching each other eagerly, she trotted over to them. This time instead of limping away at her approach, the white mare waited for her. She seemed glad to touch noses with Queen; but Queen felt uncomfortable. The old kindly spirit that had made the white mare so lovable had given way to a disagreeable impatience and suspicion; and her presence set two emotions struggling with each other in Queen's heart.

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The subtle odour that made Queen think of some of those distant, weary, winter nights when she lay close against her old foster mother, drew her emotionally to the old mare; while the odour of man and barn repelled her. Over these emotions like a black cloud in the sky, hovered a new-born fear as if she had discerned in the poor mare's condition the warning: "Beware of man for thus he breaks the spirit and the body."

At dusk Queen led the herd in a race over the plains. The poor white mare who now clung to Queen and to White-black tried to follow; but she did not go very far before in her eagerness she tripped and fell. Queen and White-back went back to her and grazed about her. They began to feel that there was something terrible going to happen to her and they watched her curiously.

That night all three of them lay near each other. White-black and Queen were fast asleep in the latter part of the cold night, when they were awakened by a cry from the white mare. Queen jumped up in time to get out of the black old jade's way. The night was cold and he was very thin-blooded. Unable to keep warm he had gone in search of a warmer place

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and in his clumsy way had stepped upon the white mare's swollen leg. White-black nipped him on the back and with a cry of protest he lumbered away into the darkness. When Queen went back to sleep she was very much disturbed by the white mare's groaning. Several times she woke up and whinnied to her, but the groaning continued at intervals all through the night.

Next day Queen noticed that blood was running from her swollen leg, and by night-fall the white mare was nowhere to be seen. Queen looked for her for a while and she saw that White-black too was anxious about her, but they did not find her that day nor the next, though they searched for her constantly as they went about their grazing.

The dull days of early winter came back, grey and silent and ominous. Geese flew over them daily on their way to the south and their honking filled Queen with an ineffable sadness. Suddenly one day as she was grazing by herself she came upon the body of the white mare. She touched the cold, hard nose with her own and sprang away frightened. She did not try to sniff again. Now she knew that this was death and hurried away.

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White-black was grazing almost a quarter of a mile away. Queen trotted over to him and whinnied repeatedly. He answered her, but he did not know what ailed her. She walked away a short distance and called him. First he replied while grazing, then at the second call, he raised his head and walked toward her. But he was no sooner pulling away at some grass there, when he discovered that she was some distance away again and calling as hard as ever. For some reason known only to her she was leading him away to the north again and though he went reluctantly at first, with the rest of the herd following him, they were soon well on their way. A few miles from the lake, they stopped, however, for fear that they might not come upon water. There were in this group no more than a dozen of them, all colts that had been brought up together, and they were glad to be by themselves, though as they moved on, the rest of the horses, miles behind, moved after them. When a snowstorm came and filled all the hollows, they began once more moving northward in earnest. Forces they could not understand impelled them. Thus they abandoned forever the scenes of their youth.

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The winter passed like a night of pleasure. Protected on the north by a strip of woodland many miles long, Queen and her companions slept the long nights away. The snow, deep in many places, was not very deep near the wall of poplars and feeding came comparatively easily. On sunny days they spent as much time chasing each other through the deepest drifts as they did in pawing for grass. The dry snows made warm blankets and the howling winds, shrieking in the poplars, provided music for their enjoyment of life, often sad, but for all its sadness, sweet.

They were big and strong now. Blood flowed rich and freely through their veins and the hair on their bodies, which was as long as the hair on the bears that at very rare intervals showed themselves and disappeared, kept them warm. The elements, no matter how savagely they raged, could not become disagreeable.

A few weeks of springtime with open plains to lope over and new grass, and they grew daily stronger and fleeter. Sorrows of the dead past were forgotten and the joys of the present were so all absorbing that even man seemed

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to have become extinct, as far as they were concerned.

To the joy of unlimited space, of surging healthy blood, of plenty to eat and drink, of peaceful and constant companionship was added the aesthetic pleasures of love. Having first discovered in themselves preferences for members of the opposite sex, they began to see traits and characteristics in their choice which thrilled them.

There were, of course, petty quarrels now and then, since love will not come unaccompanied by strife, and nature is not always provident, or when she is provident, so often disorderly. There were some disappointments and the weak, helpless here as the weak are helpless everywhere, often had to give way to the strong; but the tragedy that follows love among ferocious and greedy animals never marred their happier relations; and even the weaker ones found love requited. Life on the rim of love was so rich, Nature beyond love was so lavish, hurts healed before the wounds reached the flesh.

But to Queen and White-black life was a game in which even tiredness had its delight. Strong and healthy and beautiful, admired by

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the rest and followed in their every whim, they played through the uninterrupted carnival of laughing spring and smiling, drowsy summer. When winter came again, they met it without fear, willing to wade through deep snows, accepting the violent lashes of wind and blizzard, warming their hearts in the expectant joy of another spring and another summer, looking upon life, in their innocence, as an endlessly interesting cycle in which winter was the greatest discomfort and spring its eternal retribution.

CHAPTER VII

THE CONSPIRACY OF MAN AND COYOTE

THEN came an early spring. Geese returned from the south. The sadness in their honking had given way to the exaltation of rebirth. The snows melted almost in a day. Hundreds of wild ducks populated the many sloughs in the hollows, and filled the delightful evenings with the soft calling of their love-making. In the still nights or as she lay through the rest periods which she now so strangely needed, Queen kept her ears pricked high to catch the last faint sound of every love call and the air now almost always vibrated with some one form or another of these calls.

White-black, still a playful colt, thrilled her with his presence or the touch of his lovely nose; but something sweet and remote was mysteriously laying hold upon the love in her heart. She liked to half close her eyes and doze, floating as she dozed, on the waves of this new emotion. It seemed a joyous feeling

all her own and unlike any joy she had ever experienced before. It was a joy she felt within, a joy that expressed itself best in dreaming rather than in the activity that her other joys had always stimulated.

She liked to wander away by herself. White-black would follow her about a good deal and sought to arouse her old play spirit; but when he realised that he could not influence her any more as he used to, he learned to let her alone. She seemed to have lost her agility and preferred to be on the outskirts of the circle of the herd where she could move about with less excitement. She liked to wander around the small ponds and listen to the croaking of frogs, always lingering till the night shadows lay thick over all things and she heard the ineffable half murmur, half song of wild ducks, as they paddled along in the stillness of the night.

Often by day she would stop her shuffling gait and with her nose down among the blades of grass, she would watch the little sandpiper, wondering what he meant with his heart-rending *pee-weet* and his eternal seeking. Sometimes she would stand for a long time and watch the brown curlew and listen to his

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persistent, lugubrious complaint. All these sounds, these melodious cries of strange little souls, somehow responded harmoniously to voices and emotions in her own soul, and she looked upon them as fellow beings of the wilds she loved, knowing each by the sound of his voice.

So too the woods interested her, though she had never penetrated them very far, because the woods were confining and she loved the open where one could see and run in all directions. Yet she loved the trees because these new emotions which had mysteriously come to her made her more observant than she had been. She realised more fully than ever before that woods and plains and skies had moods in each of which they were different, and these revelations broadening her outlook upon her surroundings made her, in a way, more capable of joy.

To White-black she was a puzzle. Yielding to her desire to be alone and interesting himself in other friends, he nevertheless kept an eye on her. There came a period in which he missed her entirely. Day after day, he went looking for her and then one day he found her in the woods, on an open grassy spot, cut off

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from the plains by a small pond and a thin wall of poplars. She was licking a small black colt that was trying very hard to stand on its long, shaky legs.

White-black was so glad to see her he began to neigh excitedly and caper about the water's edge. Then, wading across the pond, he ran toward her; but she sprang between him and her baby with an angry whinny, ears down, eyes glowing and her lips curling threateningly. He stopped a few paces from her and whinnied placatingly; but she threatened him again and he was afraid to approach. He gazed at her from where he was for a few minutes, then like a man who, failing to understand, shrugs his shoulders, he lowered his head and began to graze, looking up occasionally to see if she had changed her attitude in any way. At last, discouraged, he walked to the pond, took a long drink, waded across and disappeared.

For several days Queen kept to herself in her own little pasture in the woods. She knew just where the herd was and what they were doing at all times for she watched them almost as anxiously as she watched over her little son. Her baby grew stronger every day,

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spending most of his time romping about the limited space, learning to use his awkward legs; and as he grew stronger, the desire to return to the herd began to make Queen restless.

At last she led the little fellow carefully around the pond, but just as she reached the open space she saw the herd gathering as if danger threatened. She stopped short, raised her beautiful head and with one long nervous sniff took in the whole situation.

Man again!

She could not see the horseman, but she heard the faint, far away patter of hoofs and the scent of man trickled through the air. She turned about and looked at her little one who was innocently indifferent to what worried her and extremely interested in the open space of which, being behind her, he had caught but a glimpse. She knew that if she attempted to join the herd and fly with them, he could not follow her. She could hear, as she tried to decide what to do, the sudden clamour of hoof-beats as the herd broke into a race for safety. She did not even turn to see them go. With utmost haste she glided under cover.

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She was not content with what safety the little pasture offered. As if she had been a creature of the woods, she picked her way through thorny shrubs and under heavy branches, till she came to a secluded spot that satisfied her and there she lay down to regain her composure.

For almost a week she lived like a deer, hiding in the woods and coming out by night to graze and to seek the herd which she hoped would return. Then as the days went by and she had come upon no trace of man in the air of the open prairies, she ceased going back into the woods, and divided her time between her baby, feeding, and looking wistfully and hopefully over hill and hollow for her lost companions, calling, calling, calling till the solitudes echoed with the anguish in her heart.

Her interest in the small living things that went about the daily business of their little lives revived and the anxious searching of the plains often gave way to an absorbed study of her little neighbours. She came upon a mother duck, one day, who was waddling down the old buffalo trail with a brood of tiny little ducklings, only a few yards away from her. Queen slackened her pace when she saw that

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the mother duck was getting excited, and watched them. The old duck walked on as rapidly as she could, turning her head from side to side as she scrutinised Queen first with one eye and then with the other, and though she did not seem to consider her a very grave danger she called her little ones and swerved off the path. The old duck was apparently leading them to the slough, but she hadn't gone very far when a lean and hungry-looking coyote shot out from a cluster of rose-bushes.

Instantly there was a frantic whir of wings and while the mother duck flew almost upon the coyote, the little ones scattered, dropping down under bushes or flowers or disappearing in gopher holes. Queen was too much worried about her own baby to notice at the time what happened to the duck. She sprang protectingly toward her foal and then when she looked up she saw the coyote running eagerly after the duck, who acted as if one of her wings were broken. Flopping with one wing she cried with fright and half flew, half ran on ahead of him. The foolish coyote thought she was wounded and licked his chops as he ran, anticipating a good meal.

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The old duck appeared to be losing; but always just as the coyote was about to seize her she flew off with a cry. Thus she led him far away and out of sight. But before Queen had started off again for the slough, she saw the anxious mother duck come flying from the opposite direction. Queen turned from her to where the coyote had disappeared wondering whether he was coming back. The joyous peeping of the little brood who appeared in all directions at the first call of their mother, reassured her and she followed them down to the pond.

The duck and the little ones set sail as soon as they touched the water, and paddled away triumphantly to the centre of the slough where among the rushes no foolish coyote could threaten them. The lesson of duck wisdom impressed itself deeply on Queen's mind in a series of pictures, and she sensed acutely the trick the duck had played upon the coyote. She hated the coyote because she feared him. The very sight of him made her uncomfortable and she did not let the little one out of her sight for an instant. Even when she drank, the image of the beast would come into her mind and between sips she would raise her

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head and stare all around her to make sure that he hadn't come back; for from that time on, she seemed to expect him to show up at any moment.

Long as the days were at this time of the year, they succeeded each other rapidly and each day added to the weight of loneliness on Queen's heart. Ducks came in great numbers, returning from their sojourns into the land of motherhood with flourishing broods. Gophers appeared everywhere. The saucy little fellows would sit up on their haunches a yard away from Queen's head and defy her with their queer little barks, which betrayed much more fear than defiance. The colt would look at them with his large, round eyes, sometimes making an attempt to approach them but as soon as he came too near they fled. Coyotes began to show themselves more and more often, and every time Queen came upon one, even the clear memory of the duck playing her trick could not prevent her heart from throbbing with fear.

A variety of flowers appeared, one kind giving way to another, and the sloughs on the open began to shrink daily. The woods retained their ponds, cool and clear, and in the

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darker corners, among the tall poplars, there were still shrunken drifts of snow.

In spite of the abundance of food and water, in spite of her growing interest in her baby who played about her in perfect contentment, and played more and more delightfully, Queen's longing for her companions reached overwhelming proportions and at last she started away from those solitudes in search of the herd.

For several days she travelled toward the east along the wall of the woods. She came to where the woods ended and a vast treeless plain stretched away beyond vision. From the pointed end of the woods, an old, partially overgrown buffalo trail cut diagonally across the prairie, running comparatively straight southeast. There she remained for a few days as if unable to decide which way to go. Then, one day, when she had followed the buffalo trail for several miles she came upon signs of the herd. This puzzled her, for experience had taught her not to go south; yet here was unmistakable evidence that they had gone south; and *they* were her goal. Despite her disinclination to go in that direction, she went on eagerly, moving each day as far as her colt

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would go without protest, and resting when he refused to go any farther.

One evening, long after the woods had faded out of sight, when her baby balked at the daily increase in the distance she urged him to make and deliberately lay down on the path, she saw what seemed to be two horses, grazing. Queen broke the stillness with an impassioned whinnying that puzzled the little fellow. The fact that she was standing with her back to him and whinnying so frantically interested him. That she might be calling to any one but himself was entirely beyond his experience. Feeling that she was looking for him, he got up and sidled up to her, touching her neck with his little nose. Queen bent down and covered him with caresses; but to his dismay, she soon returned to her calling, keeping her head high and looking away into the shadows.

The darkness obliterated the two horses and Queen, unable to stand still, started away again, the little fellow complaining plaintively as he lumbered after her. When, however, he lay down once more, she yielded and there they spent the night.

Her night's rest was a troubled one. What

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with other emotions tormenting her, there was a strong scent of man in the air that kept her awake and watchful. When dawn came at last, she saw the two horses, still grazing but much nearer to her. Beyond them she saw two black mounds, like malignant growths on the body of the plains. In these mounds, she knew, lived man.

She was afraid to go any closer to the mounds so she called loudly to the two horses who finally responded by starting in her direction. When she saw them coming, she hastened to meet them, despite her fear. She whinnied loudly as she went and when the foremost of the two horses replied to her, his voice sounded familiar. Who it was she did not know but she started toward him on a gallop and as soon as she touched his nose, she remembered the old sorrel work-horse of the spring lake in the bowl-like valley of her childhood.

Where he had been, how he had got up there, what he was doing, these were facts Queen could not find out, nor did she experience any desire to find out. Life to her was somewhat of an abysmal night with beautiful, star-like gleams of understanding. The past

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to her was an ally of death not to be thought about and the future became important only when it turned into the present. The sole value of the impressions that she carried in her memory lay in the help they offered for the understanding of the impressions that the present was making and Queen never wept over them.

There was the old sorrel before her! The memory of what he had been to her, inundated by floods of time and other experiences, had gone out like the stars at dawn. But now, certain odours and sounds and qualities too delicate for words, like the evening that follows every dawn, brought the stars back to her sky and she strove to express the almost inexpressible satisfaction she experienced.

The other horse was a stranger and so Queen was wary of him. She sniffed noses with him, suspiciously and kept away, refusing to allow him to go near her colt whereas the old sorrel sniffed all over him without her protest.

But the pleasure she derived from the momentary satisfaction of the longing for companionship, inadequate as it was, had its price. Her excitement was so great that she did not

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notice the coming of another horse with a man on his back, till he was already dangerously close. With an anxious call to her little one she dashed away in the direction from which she had come. The two horses went with her.

It was not long however before she saw the man through the corner of her eye, urging his straining horse, apparently to get ahead of her. Queen was not running as fast as she could, for she knew that her baby could not keep up with her. But the sight of the man at the side of her bewildered her. She leaped out of his way, leaving him a hundred feet behind only to realise at once that her colt was not with her. She swung off to the side and turned to see the man driving the old sorrel, his companion, and her own colt off towards the black mounds.

Her eyes fairly bulging out of her head, her lips frothing, Queen leaped back after him, calling frantically to him as she ran. As soon as the little thing heard her, he turned to run back, but instantly the man threw a rope and caught him round the neck, hurling him to the ground. The two horses ran on toward the mounds, but the man stopped, dismounted and battled with her frightened, crying baby.

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The desire to hurt was foreign to Queen's nature, but when she saw her foal on the ground struggling with the man who was apparently getting the better of it, she ran toward the monster with murder in her heart. The man saw her coming and with the other end of his long rope he struck her head a terrible blow. She jumped back in terror. Before she had aroused enough courage to make another attack, the man had completely tied the little thing so that it could not move a limb and, mounting his horse again, he rode away.

Queen rushed to her little son with a sense of relief but that feeling soon gave way to one of painful solicitude. She had her baby and the man had left, but the baby was helplessly tied. It was changed with a change like death. The monstrous two-legged creature had cast a spell upon it. She ran around it frantically, called to it encouragingly, licked it tenderly, then ran off a few paces, urging it to exert itself and follow her.

Then to her horror, she saw the man coming back. This time he had the sorrel and his companion with him. She grew desperate. She bit at the rope with nervous haste, trying to drag her colt away with her, but her efforts

resulted only in hurting it and at the first cry of pain, she stopped. Until the man was so near that he struck her with the long binder whip which he had brought with him, she would not leave her baby and then she only kept out of reach of the whip. Finally, in desperation, unable to decide upon anything that she might try to do, she stood and watched; while the man was busy, preparing the ropes on the stone boat which the two horses had been dragging after them.

One thing at once hurt and puzzled her, and that was the nonresistance of the old sorrel. There he stood covered with the bewildering straps with their glittering buckles, making no attempt to run from the man nor to help her. He did not even call to her.

She tried to make out how the man succeeded in holding the two horses though he was not even looking at them. Her deliberations, however, were suddenly interrupted by the man's leaving the stone boat and going to her little one. When she saw him drag the colt to the stone boat, she went mad again and rushed at him with bared teeth; but as soon as he straightened himself and turned to her, she fled.

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Her hatred included the old sorrel when she saw him start away dragging her baby off. She sprang at him from the side and nipped him savagely. The old fellow got frightened and backed up almost stepping upon the helpless little colt on the stone boat. The man got angry. He jumped from the stone boat and with his long whip struck her with all his strength squarely upon her tender nose. The pain took her breath away. She reared on her hind legs in a fit of agony, then dashed out of reach, and the man drove off with her colt.

Bewildered by her anguish, she ran after him, rending the air with her cries, zigzagging from one side to the other. When the man reached one of the black mounds, his sod barn, Queen remained at a distance, running around the place in a wide circle and running steadily as if she found relief in activity.

The man disappeared in the black mound, but when Queen ventured nearer, for fear that she would again attack the old sorrel, the man poked his head out of a hole in the wall and yelled at her; and she turned and ran. When she started for the barn again, the man came out altogether. She was forty rods away when she turned and as she did so she heard

the strong, healthy call from her colt, muffled by the confinement of the barn; but apparently free as if he were untied. She replied with all her strength and ran toward the barn, stopping a hundred feet away and watching the man, as he fastened the barn-door securely.

She saw him unhook the horses from the stone boat and then drive them over to a queer looking instrument that lay near the house. Then she saw them start away with the plow dragging behind the horses. They were coming toward her so she loped away to the right. When she stopped, she saw that they were not following her but were going off toward the south. Considerably relieved she watched them go till they were lost from view behind a hill.

She trotted up to the first of the two mounds, the man's small, sod house and cautiously sniffed about for a few minutes to make sure that there was no other man about. The odours there were unendurable, but everything was motionless, and at a call from her little one, she ran to the barn. For a while she ran round and round it as she called, then suddenly she spied his little head through a

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hole in the wall. She attempted to thrust her head in. She just managed to touch him with her hot lips, but the fear of the evil-smelling barn forced her to withdraw her head, in spite of her desire to keep touching him. She had the feeling of being trapped herself and immediately loped away again. A thorough examination of the house and the plains, however, assured her that she was still free and that the man was not returning.

Again and again she thrust her head into the hole, and despite the nauseating odours she prolonged her caresses every succeeding time that she put her head through the window. Yet she realised that that was not giving her back her baby. At the same time the touch of his beloved head intensified the fire in her heart and she began desperately to seek some way of getting him out.

There was a pile of manure back of the barn which sloped upward till it almost reached the flat, straw roof. She ran around the barn in an attempt to find some opening and every time she came to the heap of manure she was forced to enlarge the circle she was making. With a look in every direction, to make sure the man was not returning, she

suddenly started up the pile of manure and carefully stepped upon the roof of the barn.

She had only taken a step forward, though, when she felt the roof giving way under her feet. This frightened her and she attempted to turn back much too hastily. Before she could get back to the pile of dirt, half the roof together with a part of the wall caved in, dropping her down into the barn on top of the débris. She was very badly frightened. Without stopping even to look for her colt, she leaped over the remaining portion of the wall taking half of it with her.

She did not turn to see what she had accomplished but fled in terror over the fields. When her courage returned, she looked back and happily discovered that still the man had not returned, nor was there any other sign of danger. On the other hand her little colt was now standing near the broken wall, his head and shoulder sticking up above it, calling frantically. She then hurried back with all her speed, caressing him as if she hadn't seen him for weeks, and urging him, in her dumb way, to come out.

He tried very hard to get over the barrier, but could not make it. To show him how to

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do it, she jumped in again and as she jumped she knocked another layer of sod into the barn. Then as she was about to leap out a second time she heard a familiar whinny behind her. Turning nervously, she made out in the gloom of the other end of the barn, two horses, one of them her mate. Poor White-black was standing listlessly in a cage-like stall, securely tied to the manger. His voice was weaker than it had ever been, and his calling seemed strangely half-hearted. A great desire to touch his nose came over her, though the fear of the barn, the frightfully nauseating odours and the slippery, dirty floor, all urged her to fly before some mysterious force should seize her and hold her there. All she was able to do was to call to him from where she stood trembling near the opening in the wall, ready to jump at the first sign of danger. The sound of her own voice in the confines of the gloomy barn terrified her. With a single bound she leaped over the broken wall, taking so much more of it with her, lowering it so decidedly that the little fellow was able to climb over it.

With a last heartfelt call to White-Black, appealing to him to follow her as he used to follow her in the days that had gone, Queen

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raced once more toward the haven of the north, ran against all feeble protest of her little son, ran till the loathsome mounds vanished from the undulating plains.

In a hollow where a spring slough had turned much of the earth into mud and then had partially dried up, Queen drank, fed her baby; and, because he would go no further, she grazed while he rested. She felt very unsafe and gazed incessantly and fearfully toward the hilltop behind her. Two images she expected to see coming over the brow every time she looked up. She expected and feared to see the man coming after her and she expected and hoped to see White-black. Neither came, but both haunted her stormy mind and allowed it no peace.

Fear urged her to be off and away but every time she started, her little fellow refused to go with her. He would raise his head painfully from the grass and call to her but he would not get up. He had not taken all the milk there was for him and he acted very peculiarly, but Queen's fear was implacable. She pretended to leave him and ran all the way up the other slope of the hollow. He called to her in a frenzy of fear, but though her heart beat

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fast for him, she did not reply and when she began to disappear over the summit of the hill he got up in haste and ran with all his strength till he found her but a few feet from the summit. She whinnied to him lovingly but continued her trot and he wearily followed her.

A peculiar note in his cry, some distance farther on, made her turn round to look at him. She saw him touch his shoulder with his little nose and as he touched it she saw a swarm of insects fly off from the spot. She walked back to him and discovered a deep gash that ran across his breast and up his other shoulder. The hideous cut was covered by lumps of coagulated blood and the insects settled back on it as soon as he withdrew his nose.

She proceeded at once to lick the wound till she found it was bleeding again and stopped, bewildered by the dripping blood. But the bigger problem presented itself anew. She looked up suddenly and spied, on the horizon in the direction from which she had come, a black moving object. She was certain that it was the man coming after her and springing forward a few paces stopped suddenly when she found that her colt was not following her,

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She stamped her foot frantically, calling to him with more terror than urge.

He started bravely after her, but the more he ran, the more his wound opened, and the coagulation that had taken place and was trying to take place failed to save him. Queen, who loved him with magnificent passion, did not know that her running was killing him. What could she have done if she had known? The man was fast gaining in the chase. Man always gained, save where death entered the race and death was slowly defeating this man.

At last, the little fellow dropped, exhausted. When she hurried back to caress and to urge him on, she knew that he could go no further. The man had disappeared behind a hill. Queen ran back with a mad, desperate impulse to bar his way to her little son. The image of a mother duck flying into the face of a coyote, flashed through her brain. She ran down one hillside and up another, her throbbing sides wet with perspiration, and in the valley below that, she saw him.

He was somewhat to the right of her. Seeing her he turned to the left. She, too, turned left and she ran trying to keep a hill between them. As soon as she heard him coming over

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the hill that was between them she raced over the next hill. In that way she led him several miles north, then running for the first time as fast as she could go, she fled west.

On the top of one of the hills, she stopped finally and looked back. She saw the man turn homeward and before he should see her, she dropped down into a valley and there she started back to her colt, running now as fast as ever, though her sides were white with foam. When she got to a second hilltop and found that the man had disappeared and that there was no trace of him in the air, she loped along a bit more easily.

The belated summer evening was coming at last. The sun, very red and big, lowered on one side of her and high in the heavens the moon grew brighter. She came to a slough and drank. She gulped the water a moment, then raising her noble head, pricked her ears and listened, the water dripping from her mouth. It seemed to her that she had heard a coyote somewhere in the distance. She grew troubled and fearful again, running in her confusion beyond the hill where she should have turned.

Instead of going right back she turned

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south and when she ran into the trail of blood that his open wound had left on the grass, she was quite some distance away from him. But she was on his trail and with her nose low to the ground she trotted along hopefully till she was suddenly startled by the hideous cry of a coyote. She stopped, completely terrified, and listened. A cry of a second coyote, nearer, responded to the first from the other side of the hill before her.

With a few bounds she was at the top of the hill. Not a dozen feet down the slope sat a coyote over the lifeless body of her colt. He had eaten a great deal and was heavy with meat. He was so completely surprised that he could not move for a moment. It was too late to move. She was so close to him that he was afraid to turn. He bared his teeth in a feeble effort at defiance and snarled, but Queen was too furious to think of herself. With all the strength of madness she hurled herself upon him and over him, leaping away in terror and carrying with her the sensation of hoof crushing bone. When she was quite certain that there was nothing pursuing her, she thought he had run away and so nervously trotted back to her baby.

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She came back cautiously a step at a time, her eyes gleaming like burning coals, her skin quivering with fear. She saw the black shadowy mass that was her colt and then she made out a second black mass beside it. A few steps nearer and she began to feel that she had rendered the coyote motionless, but when she got quite close she saw the beast's hind legs kick backward in the throes of death. Queen did not know that he was dying, but she did know by the motionlessness of his head that she had him at a disadvantage and she approached with less fear and beat at him with her hoof just as she had many a time beaten a hole in the ice over a pond.

Finally she revolted against a task so foreign to her nature and turned as if with sudden realisation of something overwhelmingly terrible, to the almost unrecognisable body of her foal. But she only sniffed once and sprang away with a snort and cry. Round and round the hilltop she ran expressing the agony in her soul with loud and plaintive, fearful calls to which there was no answer in all the infinity of space.

The odours were maddening. The place became unbearable and in her soul the desire for

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the companionship of the herd flared up like a great light in the torturous darkness. It was as if she saw them somewhere in the gloomy spaces and running would bring her to them. So she loped and trotted northward, all night. At dawn, too weary to continue on her feet, she lay down to rest and as she rested she cropped the grass about her. A few hours of rest and she was ready to continue her anxious journey.

When toward noon she came to where the familiar woods appeared on the horizon Queen accelerated her pace. It was there in that woods that the beloved little thing had come to her, and she loped as if she expected to find it there again. Forgotten were all the aches in her muscles. What pain of body can outweigh the pain of mother mind at the loss of her baby? Deny the animal all the finer emotions you like! Mother love is too obvious a quality of the lowest animal life to be denied.

But the moment Queen saw the familiar trees, the moment she entered the shadowy, fragrant atmosphere of the woods where the little thing had been born, the image of it, wandering about elusively in the solitude, came plaintively calling into her soul and she

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turned back upon the trail of sorrow. Back over the plains she ran, as if her speed could save it, ran as if some evil man creature were carrying it away, running off with it, ahead of her, just out of sight.

An overwhelming sense of bodily weariness came over her at sundown and she lay down to sleep; and all through her heavy slumber, she pursued her elusive baby and struggled with monstrous man and hungry coyote.

CHAPTER VIII

RETRIBUTION

VERY dawn on the plains is the miracle of creation, and the best philosophy for man or animal lies in this daily beginning. "Endure Sorrow's night," says the dawn, "then rise with me and plan for the day."

Before her on the emerging plain lay a suspicious-looking stone. Without moving her head, Queen regarded it a long time. It was altogether too woolly for a stone. Her scrutiny brought strange sensations and her heart began to beat rapidly. A gust of soft morning breeze swept down from the hill and the stone moved. Queen sprang to her feet.

With its hungry face turned toward her, the coyote glided away. Sorrow's night was over and Queen loped after him with a new notion of life. The faster and the more fearfully he ran, the more faith Queen acquired in her own superiority, the more consolation she derived from the hope and the will to crush him, as she had crushed the other one.

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He swung off toward the northwest. She too turned northwest. He stopped to sit down on his haunches and to look back at her, to learn if possible the purpose of this uncanny mare. But as soon as he sat down she seemed to increase her effort to reach him. When she got too near, he bounded away out of reach. When he tried to turn in a new direction, she turned and headed him off, forcing him north against his will.

Wherever he went she pursued him doggedly. Over hills, down into valleys, around sloughs, she went driven by emotions she had never experienced before. But while these emotions drove her, others retarded her and the coyote began to leave her farther and farther behind, growing smaller and smaller in the distance. Finally Queen abandoned the chase and turned with satisfaction to grazing.

Long after he had disappeared, however, Queen scrutinised the indistinct spaces in which he had sunk out of sight. She had been grazing a long while and had almost forgotten about the coyote, when she looked up once more and discovered a tiny object moving on the sky-line. There was no doubt in Queen's

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mind as to what that object was. She galloped away at full speed and did not stop till she was out of breath. For a while she lost sight of the object, because of a deep and winding hollow through which she was obliged to pass, but when she reached a high place again, she beheld with great joy a group of horses still so far away that they did not notice her coming.

She called constantly as she ran, though she did so more to express her own excitement than with any hope of getting their attention. When at last they heard her, every head went up and every pair of ears turned forward. The big, brown colt, her old rival in the race, left the group first and started for her. As soon as she recognised him, Queen knew that she had found her old companions. Her joy was insuppressible. She rushed from one to the other and caressed the little colts till they fled in terror of her passion.

There was a brown, fuzzy little fellow, the foal of a big, good-natured sorrel mare. Queen caressed it emotionally. The little fellow endured it without any kind of manifestation for a little while, then suddenly he decided to take advantage of the situation.

RETRIBUTION

Queen gave him her milk most willingly, but his mother watched the performance with growing dissatisfaction. When he had had about all he could have she jumped at him to prevent him from going back for more and incidentally showed her jealousy by pretending to bite Queen. Queen sprang out of the way, manifesting clearly her disinclination to fight over it.

In spite of the big mare's protests, Queen fed him again before nightfall. When the mother objected again, she relinquished temporarily and led the whole group in a merry race round the hill top. Her desire to be active, born of emotions that would not down within her, was contagious. She could not rest and every time she started off with a toss of her head, the herd was at her heels.

In spite of all the weary days of journeying in the tragic period that had just passed out of her life, so tense was Queen's joy at meeting her companions, so full was her life again, now that she had friends to love life with, and a colt to drink her milk, that she seemed to have lost the faculty of feeling weariness, and frisked about in the shower of moonlight like a gratified colt.

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Not far off lay the carcass of a dead horse, from which life, tired of baffling snows all winter and toiling for man all summer, had departed. Over this carcass a pack of coyotes were savagely feasting and their hymns to the god of coyotedom disturbed Queen's revelry. Several times she ran off a short distance in the direction from which the insane howling was coming. Every time she started off the herd started with her. Locating the coyotes half way down the long slope, Queen first circled around the hilltop, then suddenly turned down the slope at breakneck speed. Like an ocean wave the herd swept down the incline.

The coyotes were taken completely by surprise. Not until the herd was almost upon them did they attempt to escape, fleeing then chaotically in all directions. But the horses also spread out to avoid the carcass; and with momentum stronger than their fear, they stampeded across the paths of the fleeing pack. Most of the scavengers escaped but one was struck down. At the foot of the hill Queen turned back to the dismay of the herd. They watched her curiously as she trotted, some distance ahead of them, up the incline.

RETRIBUTION

She came to the miserable creature whose back had been broken. Unable to move his hind legs, he dragged them along behind as he crept away with his forelegs. But Queen did not let him get away. The herd had by this time timorously come after her. Stepping back a moment before the flashing teeth and the gleaming eyes she rushed at him again and struck him upon the head with a sharp, front hoof. She struck him again and again as if moved by the terror of the thing she was doing. The herd had come up toward her but when they saw her attacking the coyote they got frightened and ran away. Queen then abandoned the lifeless form and ran to join them.

Far away on the moonlit sky line sat the rest of the coyote pack, their nozzles turning periodically to the moon and baying madly against the betrayal of their god. Never in all their savage experience had they come upon such a herd of horses and never again would they expose themselves to its madness.

Without vote or discussion, without struggle or rivalry, Queen assumed her regency. Her will became the will of the herd. Queen she became in earnest, in the highest sense of the word, ruling neither for gain nor power,

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ruling solely for love of freedom and her companions. And her ruling was the salvation of the herd and the consternation of the homesteaders whose wretched shacks skirted her domains.

CHAPTER IX

SLOWLY MAN CREPT NORTHWARD

HE prairie grass began once more to wither and grow grey. The winds assumed again their autumnal sadness and moaned with an aimless complaint. Again dead thistles began rolling over the plains, expressing somehow in their helpless rolling the relentlessness of change. Frosts rewhitened the morning earth and geese honked again on their flight to the south.

The herd was grazing on a hillslope. On the top of the hill stood Queen. The wind was tugging away at her mane and tail, but otherwise she was as motionless as the hill she was standing on. Her eyes were fixed upon two horses coming from the southeast and more than a mile away.

Once or twice the brown colt, now a full grown stallion, fat and almost clumsy, raised his head to look as she was looking; but most

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of the others were busy seeking better grasses and wild plants they liked, until Queen, with a partially suppressed whinny of excitement trotted away to meet the newcomers. At once the peaceful scene broke into activity.

But when they had come within a quarter of a mile of the two horses, they stopped. A white horse that made Queen think of White-black, tied to a sorrel horse that made her think of the old sorrel work-horse, running as fast as they could under the circumstances, were coming toward them, by fits and starts. The white horse, as he came, kept stepping backward and raising his head every once in a while, only to leap forward again a few paces. Always as he leaped forward something dragged him back by the head. They would run on together for a short distance and then the same thing would happen again.

When they got very near, in spite of her interest, Queen's fear of the scent of man which clung to them got the better of her and she led away till the apparition was out of sight. There the herd waited for its reappearance. When they did appear the herd fled again. This they kept up for the greater part of the day. Toward evening Queen made another

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attempt to find out just what was wrong. By this time she was convinced that there was no man with them anywhere, and the labourious manner in which these miserable creatures followed them mitigated her fear of their being dangerous.

She went round on a curve and stopped some fifty feet from the two weary animals. The sorrel, now about a foot behind the white horse, snorting as if he had great difficulty in breathing, took the opportunity during the moment's rest to brace his body with his front legs against the pulling of the white one. The white one, driven by some fear, began pulling and tugging as soon as he had caught his breath; but he couldn't budge the old fellow an inch. Queen advanced fearfully. The scent of man, despite the fact that there was no man about, worried her even as the growing certainty that these were her old companions drew her toward them. Finally she ventured near enough to touch the white nose that came forward a few inches to meet hers. White-black it was! Poor, abused White-black, covered with barn dirt, his sides fallen in through struggle and lack of sufficient food. A touch of the old sorrel's nose brought him

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to his proper place in her mind and Queen ran from one to the other, feeling vaguely that the spell of the dirty barn was still holding both of them in captivity, and trying to arrive at some plan of helping them, yet not having the faintest idea of what to do.

The old sorrel was by far the weaker one of the two. He was evidently just about exhausted. His poor old sides expanded and contracted rapidly and his dirty flanks were literally wet with foamy perspiration. Though White-black took advantage of their halt and grazed as far as the entanglement of straps that held him fast to his mate would allow; the old sorrel made no attempt to eat. His harness had slipped down his side and one of his front legs was caught in a loop in one of the straps that hung from his neck.

The weary old sorrel had hardly regained his breath, when Queen spied a man on horseback coming after the pair. The herd dashed away to the north while White-black, dragging the exhausted sorrel behind him, brought up the rear. The old sorrel did the best he could. The lines tying his bridle to White-black's bridle pulled painfully at his lips, the corners of which were red with blood.

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Strength was ebbing rapidly from him and he moved through space as if he were dazed.

Suddenly one of his front legs went into a badger hole. The old fellow went down with a groan. The groan was immediately followed by several sharp, successive snaps and White-black was free from his poor, wretched, old mate. And the poor old sorrel, too, was free, free from all future agony.

The hanging straps impeded White-black's flight, but the darkness came to his rescue. The herd had ceased running. The hoof-beats of the man's saddle pony were dying away in the distance. By morning when the man reappeared on the horizon, White-black, still burdened by his heavy harness, was free enough to be able to keep up with the herd, for what was left of the lines, stepped upon so many times during the night, now hung above his knees.

For more than a week, the man persisted in his futile attempt to catch the white horse; then, because his saddle pony was completely exhausted, racing daily with the weight on his back, he gave up the chase with a vicious hope that White-black would strangle himself in the harness he carried with him, and a

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curse upon the wild western broncos that were "no good anyway."

But White-black had no inclination to pass out of existence that way, nor did his notion of value coincide with that of his would-be owner. He did everything he could think of doing to rid himself of his trying encumbrance. He would lie down every once in a while and roll in the hope of thus rubbing the harness off. In time, he managed to loosen the crupper so that it let the greater part of the harness, the part that covered his back and sides, slip down on one side of him and drag on the ground.

This only intensified his discomfort, for every horse that went near him was sure to step on some strap. Every time some one stepped upon a strap, however, there was one strap less dragging after him, and in a few days the whole network of straps was torn from the hames. One day while he was grazing, the hames suddenly loosened and fell off and the collar fell down upon his head. A little help with one hoof got it completely off his head, and so he was free from all but the bridle. The bit was tormenting enough but since it did not entirely prevent his grazing

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and his drinking, and the straps hanging down did not interfere with his running, he was virtually free again.

It was during the middle of the winter that he was relieved of this last link in the chain of his captivity. There came a severe blizzard that kept them lying huddled into each other with nothing to do for a long time. Queen had always been annoyed by these straps that clung to White-black and lying close to him, she stretched her neck and began to chew at them. While she chewed at the straps, White-black ground his teeth in his persistent effort to dislodge the bit, and suddenly it fell from his mouth.

When next spring the homesteader, in another vain attempt to recapture his valuable white horse, got near enough to the herd to see that White-black did not have on him a piece of all the harness with which he had run away, he could hardly believe his eyes. That night he told his neighbours:

"That mare's got the devil in her. She just took them there harness right off him. I know it. How else could he get 'em off? When the critters ran away they both had all their harness on. How in thunder did he get

his bridle off? Tell me that! She's a devil, that mare! I'll tell y'u she went for me like a witch the day I got her colt. I went away and left her round the barn thinkin' I'd get her with the help of Colter; but I reckoned on her bein' a mare—not a devil! She opened her mouth just like a wolf. I swear it!"

Because she was able to defend herself against man's tyranny, they accused her of having the devil in her; because she was wise enough to retain her liberty, they cursed and hated her. Yet they had ample reason for hating her. Within two years after the loss of White-black, not a homesteader dared release his horses in the fall as they had been in the habit of doing. To release them was in all probability to lose them.

But keeping them in the barns all winter meant the necessity for gathering much greater quantities of hay than they were accustomed to gather, and, worse than that, it meant horses with less energy for seeding time in the spring.

Every spring, all manner of attempts were made to capture Queen but every attempt ended in costly failure. Some of the older

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and weaker horses were taken from the herd each year, but Queen and all the younger horses remained free. Once Queen learned that she was being pursued, it was impossible for them to get within a mile of her.

When these futile attempts to capture her became too annoying, Queen would invariably turn to the north. The ominous barbed wire fences which year after year encroached upon the wild, somehow never appeared on the northern horizon. North, always north, she went, maneuvering with such cunning about the hills and through the deeper valleys, that for every mile she was able to put between herself and her pursuers, they were obliged to travel five.

The Canadian Government embarked upon a campaign of advertisement to urge farmers in the United States to go north and take up homesteads in Alberta. Men sold their farms in the northwestern states and moved across the border. Every year a new crop of homesteader's shacks appeared to baffle the desolation. To be sure, many a shack built hopefully one year stood gaping like a skull the next; but in spite of the discouraging features of the country, much of the encroachment

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yearly made upon Queen's domains was permanent.

Every springtime with the blossoming of the wild rose-bushes and the prairie cacti, new fence posts with their glittering lines of barbed wire cut some small portion of her territory on the east, the south and the west. Slowly man crept northward and with an in-born faith in the justice and the security of the wilds, Queen fled at his approach.

CHAPTER X

THE DOORS OF THE TRAP SHUT

HE years rolled by. Old tragic hurts were dulled by the mists of passing time and every hour of the unfettered present came bringing some new joy. New children came to Queen and in the love of each succeeding one, Queen rejoiced as if it were the first and only one. Carefully she led them all to the doorway of maturity and there, since life willed it so, she gave them over to the herd, to live and provide for themselves and to abide by the unwritten laws of the herd in the finest exemplification of the Golden Rule on earth. The friends who died or who suddenly disappeared she would miss for a long while, sometimes spending months in search of them, then she would transfer her love of them to some other member of the brotherhood, just as she transferred her mother-love from the older to the younger of her offspring.

The shadowy creatures of the receding past often came, walking into the dozing memory

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at nightfall. Queen would remain lying, chewing absent-mindedly and watching them, her contentment undisturbed, loving the sadness that clung to them, as we love the sadness that clings to our sweetest music.

There came a spring of unusual activity on the part of man, and his daily appearance intruded so threateningly upon the herd, that they abandoned the land which had become endeared to them and journeyed north almost steadily for many days.

They came upon a pleasant valley abounding in delicious, virgin grass and many small ponds; and they took possession of it. But at midnight, while they were resting, they were suddenly aroused by a shrieking noise which was followed by a long-drawn rattle, like distant thunder.

The sound died out and did not come again, but an attenuated cloud of smoke swept across the valley. Though the rest of that night was undisturbed and the air, from then on, was clear, they kept awake and fearfully restless. At dawn they abandoned the valley though they saw nothing that was alarming; and as they moved northward, they came upon a railroad track.

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On the other side of the track the land stretched away silent and desolate, merging at the northern horizon in a long, narrow shadow, as of woodland. The tracks remained perfectly motionless and the herd slowly ventured near them. While some of the horses looked on curiously, some of the headstrong young colts to the dismay of their mothers, walked upon the tracks and sniffed at them. Seeing that nothing happened to them, the herd started at once to cross.

Half a mile north of that they came upon another elongated slough which had been hidden by a hill. Always glad to see water, they trotted down in concert and took possession, once more intending to end the journey. But toward evening while the colts were expressing the joy of life in a gambol about the water, they were startled by another shriek like the one of the night before, and associating it somehow with the tracks, they tore up the slope to see what it was.

In the distant east glowed a light, like the harvest moon. It gleamed from the centre of a black, fear-inspiring object from which clouds of smoke poured into the air and streamed backward into space. They gazed

upon it for a few moments as if transfixed, then when they realised that it was coming rapidly nearer, they broke down into the valley, splashing through the slough and sped up the other slope. On the top of that hill, they stopped to look back. The thing was already thundering past them, shutting away the whole of the south with a long, black line of smoke in which sparkled a thousand star-like eyes of fire.

Had they remained to look at that line of smoke, they might have lost the fear of it. Within a few minutes it went as it had come. The sweet evening air cleared and settled down to the silence they loved. But such is the way of destiny that a thing of smoke and illusion may wield a power greater than that of iron or mind.

They did not wait long enough to see what it really was. An impassable wall had arisen behind them. A guard of ferocious beasts had rushed across their path, shutting from them forever the old south world they knew so well. To Queen it was, in the vaguest sense, somewhat more than that. The apprehensions of the moment were dispelled by the widening distance between them and this

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weird thing they feared; but a new anxiety crept into Queen's heart, like a snaky creature, and grew bolder there as the danger it forecast approached. It was the fear of the hunted for the cage. It was as if she had entered an enormous trap and had seen the door shut upon her.

They instinctively kept to a strip of wild prairie several miles in width. On the eastern and western horizon they saw from time to time shacks and barns and fences and huge squares of black, plowed earth; and from the distances came at long intervals the muffled barking of dogs. The feel and the smell of man was in the air, and they found that air hard to breathe. They grazed when hunger asserted itself and rested when the younger colts refused to go on, but continued their migration.

They came to a country where there were no shacks and no fences, where the evenness was broken only by promising patches of woodland. There the earth seemed destitute of living things and in the moaning of the winds as they blew through the swaying trees, the spirit of loneliness assured them of safety. The grass on the open spaces grew high as if

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no living thing had ever touched it, and swaying with the trees, it subtly testified to the authenticity of that assurance. In Queen's mind, however, the shack and the fences and the barking of dogs were as yet too distinct to allow her to feel entirely secure; and she continued the flight, fear urging her to go on till the last trace of man had faded from the air and a wall of solitude and wilderness had covered it. But they came one day to a very steep slope. Tall trees rose from the foot of the slope and beyond their tops Queen saw the reflecting waters of the Saskatchewan pouring along rapidly from west to east.

The river was very wide and the darker waters beneath the brighter surface indicated a perilous depth. The fear of the trap that had been vague in Queen's mind now became distinct as she gazed at the obscure distance from which the river came and at the shadowy spaces into which it rushed. Her faith in the north had given her a decade of precarious freedom and had taken her two hundred miles from her birthplace. The sight of those impassable volumes of water staggered that faith. She grew nervous and restless and

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when the herd had drunk the treacherous water, she led them away to the west.

A half day's journey brought them to where the Vermillion River tearing along between high banks comes pouring down from the south and the west and breaks into the Saskatchewan, with a threatening roar. Again Queen felt that she had come to another wall of the trap and turning, led the herd back toward the east. A few days of grazing and moving east along the Saskatchewan brought them to a barbed wire fence that ran down the banks to the very edge of the river. Ever as she had followed the slightly winding river, she had searched in vain for a ford. The doors of the north, too, had closed to them, and their freedom now depended upon a battle of wits, the wits of the herd in the limited wilds against the wits of man in his protecting civilisation.

They returned to the middle of the unsettled belt and there Queen spent a happy week of freedom, disturbed only by the promptings of the canker within her which derived its sustenance from the frequent appearance of men on horseback.

Seeding time arrived and the homesteaders

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who lived south of the railroad tracks went forth to hunt for the horses they had released the preceding fall. The homesteaders who lived on the outskirts of these wilds, in the hope of capturing some of the unclaimed horses, joined them. But with a cunning that exasperated the hunters, Queen went from one hiding place to another, detecting every approach so long before the horsemen appeared that in the first full week of searching she was seen only on two occasions.

The homesteaders became desperate. The snows were fast disappearing and the land was in best condition for their work. They appealed to the Canadian Government and half a dozen members of the Royal Northwest Mounted Police came out to reinforce them in the war to the knife that was declared upon Queen and her followers.

Several times a day Queen would run down the banks of the Saskatchewan. At the river she would take a few sips of water as if she had come to drink and then she would stand and look longingly across the roaring deeps to the wilds beyond, suppressing the constantly rising impulse to plunge into the rapid waters and beat her way to the freedom of the

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north, which seemed, after half a lifetime of benefaction, to have abandoned her. Then one day the impulse came with overwhelming suddenness and she struck out madly for the other shore. But when she felt the bottom drop away from under her feet, she became frightened. The remnants of the huge snow drifts that were still melting kept the river swollen to twice its volume. The current lifted her and carried her several rods downstream, fortunately for her, hitting a bar and depositing her there.

Puffing and snorting and registering the promise that she would never try it again, Queen finally clambered back upon the shore where she shook the water from her body. Some of the horses who had watched the whole performance with anxiety, came trotting toward her. Queen joined them dejectedly, grateful to be out of the treacherous water, but remembering that she was being hunted and realising now that there was no chance of getting across the river and that her only hope lay in her delicate legs and the cunning that many years of resistance to man had developed.

A few days passed by in which all hostilities

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on the part of the homesteaders and the Mounted Police seemed to have ceased. Queen began to feel that the war had been abandoned; but she was surprised one very early morning by a formidable group of horsemen, less than a quarter of a mile to the east from where the herd was grazing, who were coming at full speed. A strong wind had been blowing from the west and had carried the scent and sound of them away. A lull in the wind apprised her of the enemy's approach.

They had been moving along the edge of a patch of dense woodland, the wall of which stretched from the Saskatchewan to a point a little more than a mile south of the river. There was no opening between the trees and the brush. The only chance for escape lay in a wild dash south and in reaching the end of the wooded wall before the horsemen could reach it. That chance they took.

The horsemen divided into groups. One group sped away southwest at an angle, while another, going straight west, spread out on a long line to prevent the herd from going back to the river.

It was a close race. Every animal, pursu-

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ing or pursued, groaned in the terrible exertion of it. The younger and the stronger of the herd led the race, with Queen's magnificent head in front. Behind the group of fastest runners came the mothers with their colts, and the old work-worn horses brought up the rear. Though spurs dug unmercifully into wet, throbbing sides, staining them with small red spots, the forepart of the herd, unencumbered by riders, won the end of the wall and broke away to the west in safety. Not until the wall point was almost out of sight did they stop to look back and when Queen finally felt it safe to do so and swung round a knoll, she saw no sign of her pursuers; but the far greater portion of the herd was gone with them.

About a mile southwest of where they were, they knew of a slough. It was down in a deep hollow and though they would rather have remained on the hills where they could more easily spy any one coming after them, they were very thirsty and trotted away for water. At the rim of the hollow some of them stopped to look about before going down, others broke down on a run.

Queen drank very little. She was worried and very nervous. While most of the horses

walked into the pond, looking for deeper and clearer water, she took a few hasty sips of the warm, muddy stuff on the edge and then ran up the slope to take another look. There seemed to be nothing untoward on the plains, but to make sure she remained there a while and grazed.

She had not been grazing more than a few minutes when she was startled by a frantic splashing in the pond. She looked down in time to see White-black whose forelegs had sunk into a mud-hole, attempt to turn round. Half a dozen of the others began to struggle just as frantically. Some of them managed to reach hard ground, but White-black and two others seemed to sink deeper the harder they struggled.

At first all this violent effort to get out made her think that some awful danger had suddenly arisen in the centre of the pond, but the light grey mud on the flanks of those who did get out, apprised her of the fact that they had struck an alkali mud-hole. She had had her experience with alkali mud-holes before. They had been in the habit of drinking at the other end of the slough and had come to this end now only because the other end was some-

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what nearer to the territory from which they had just escaped.

She hurried down to the side of White-black and as he resumed his struggling, she called to him anxiously. Finally the three of them ceased struggling for a while and set up a helpless neighing to which those on the shore responded just as helplessly.

There was little danger of drowning for the water was very shallow, but the fear of being caught, the fear of the pursued creature still warm in their throbbing hearts, kept them struggling and their struggles tired them out and drove them down deeper into the mud. Queen was perplexed. It seemed as if everything were combining for their destruction, that even the mud joined man in his effort to torture them. She called to the helpless creatures ceaselessly, running up and down the slope in a frenzy of fear.

Suddenly while she was down at the edge of the pond, urging White-black to exert himself and White-black was groaning for want of strength, the wind shifted and brought from the northwest a message of danger. The horses who were free ran up the slope to the southeast. Queen, who was this time behind

the others, suddenly stopped half way up the slope and turning back called frantically to White-black. Her life long association with White-black had endeared him more strongly to her than the other two and it seemed hard for her to leave him in distress.

She ran back to the edge of the water, stamping her foot and calling with all her strength; but White-black only weakened himself. One of the two other horses, in a violent last effort, pulled himself half way out, and dropped back, but White-black ceased trying.

The hoof beats of the free horses faded away in the distance and their rhythmic patter was followed by those of the enemy's horses. A man's head appeared at the rim of the hollow and with a last call to White-black, Queen shot up the slope and away to the southwest. The men had seen the other horses first and had veered to go after them, when they discovered Queen. Trying to head her off, one man started down the slope and as he did so he discovered White-black and his two companions struggling in the mud.

As Queen fled she heard the one man whistling to the others. She could not hear

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anyone behind her but she did not stop to find out whether she was being followed or not. In the distant west she saw the shadowy blue of a clump of trees and she made for that with every bit of strength left in her. When she reached the trees she first shot under cover, then investigating to make sure that no dangerous animal was hidden there, or that no men were coming from any other direction, she pushed her way out to a thicket of buffalo berries, and stopped to scan the plains she had covered.

Not a living thing stirred on the monotonous level of the prairies. Only heat waves danced above the narrow, blue strips of woodland shadows. Within a few minutes she was convinced that no one was coming after her and then despite her fear and restlessness, and her anxiety to get back to the other horses that had escaped, she sank down to the ground, snorting and panting like a dog. But within half an hour she was off again in pursuit of the remnant of the herd.

All through the afternoon she hunted them, stopping often to graze and to drink, now trotting, now loping, going fast when something on the horizon made her think that she

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had found them or walking slowly when she realised that she had been mistaken; calling often, sometimes with all her strength as if she hoped they would hear her and sometimes calling softly and hopelessly only because she felt an urge to express the feeling that had taken complete possession of her.

Toward evening when the light began fading and the shadows grew long, she trotted cautiously to the pond where she had left White-black in the mud. The desire to find him grew stronger as the evening progressed toward night and Queen went at full speed.

The unruffled surface of the pond was brightly reflecting the last rays of daylight when she turned over the rim of the hollow and stopped there to make sure that the men were gone. Even those thoughtless men who hated her—they were not many—if they had been able to see her as she slowly came walking over the rim a step at a time, would have admired that beautiful head in the evening silhouette with its touch of magnificence and the cunning that had kept her out of their greedy reach.

A few ducks were moving about in the glitter. Immediately upon seeing her they rose

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into the air and flew away. Queen trotted down to the muddy edge where White-black had been trapped. The mud that was not covered with water was stippled with countless hoof prints. Here and there on the stippled surface she saw impressions of the whole side of a horse and she knew that the horses had fallen many times after coming out of the mud hole. Some of these impressions still bore the scent of White-black and Queen excitedly read the story of his struggle with his captors. For some time she walked round the slough, stopping now and then to sniff or to break the heavy silence by long and nervous whinnies, then realising the futility of her going round the slough and feeling suddenly a sense of confinement in the hollow, she went up the slope and on the rim began to feed.

The ducks came back. They flew directly over her to see just what she was. Assured that she was neither man nor coyote, they swept down to the water's surface, touching it gracefully with a melodious splash. Queen lifted her head a trifle above the grass and stared at them thoughtfully. The sight of the little black objects sailing about in the bright

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reflection of the sky and the occasional murmur that came from them out of the stillness, gladdened her. She felt somewhat less alone.

It was a hard night for Queen. She needed rest very badly but she was much too apprehensive and too lonely to rest well. When the ducks late in the night flew away, the hollow became unbearable to her and she wandered off over the plains searching and calling and tiring herself out.

During the day she rested some, then from one end of the wilds to the other she rambled, searching for her companions and finding only fences and lifeless shacks which stood on the level distances, stony sentinels forever barring her way with threat of captivity. Along the east side of her desolated domains she followed fence after fence for days without coming upon a trace of the herd. With eyes alert for the first sign of man, she stuck to the east, because she knew that her captured followers had all been taken in that direction.

She came to where the fence broke into two parts leaving an open roadway between. She entered the roadway cautiously and walked farther and farther, scanning the distances as she went. But when she had gone half a mile,

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the feeling of having fences on both sides and so near to her, began to worry her and she turned and raced back for the wilds.

When she saw, however, that the avenue had not closed upon her, she walked in again. She went about a mile this time and spied a group of horses in one of these wiry enclosures. She started away in great haste, but soon stopped still. There was a man's shack only a quarter of a mile away from where the horses were and she was afraid to go. She called to them emotionally but besides raising their heads to look her way, they made no attempt to come to her, and when she called again a dog came out of the shack and started in her direction barking ferociously.

On her way out of the avenue through which she had come, she noticed half a mile from the furthest point she had reached, that the wires turned leaving her another open avenue through which she could approach the group of horses on the other side of the fence and very much farther from the shack. Very cautiously and very nervously she followed that avenue, stopping very often to make sure that she hadn't already been trapped, and when she reached the other side of the fence,

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some of the horses who had been watching her, came forward to meet her. Here the fence ended completely and when she saw the plains stretch from there unfenced, she lost a good deal of her fear and trotted in their direction, calling eagerly as she ran.

Queen was so excited when a dozen noses reached over the wires to greet her that she cut herself several times on the barbs without knowing that she had cut herself. Having greeted her, however, the confined horses went on grazing; while Queen capered about on the outside, calling again and again and reaching over the wires recklessly, to the consternation of the strangers who would just raise their heads a moment, look at her curiously and go on about their business.

White-black was not there and those whom she recognised were all horses that had but the fall before attached themselves to her herd. But she was happy to see them and to be with them and grazed with a better appetite than she had had for a long time. She grazed just outside of the fence, moving along as they moved within.

She spent the night there outside of the fence and though the group of horses kept

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walking away considerably they were yet near enough to dispel the gloom and the loneliness that had been hanging over her world since the herd had been taken from her. It was the pleasantest night she had had for some time. Queen intended to remain there outside that fence; but she was discovered next morning by a man who came for some of the horses and his dog went after her. At first for fear of the man, she ran as fast as she could go, the dog at her heels; but when she got to where she was no longer afraid of the man, she turned upon the dog, striking at him with a lifted foot. She did not hit him but he did not wait for her second attempt. He fled surprised and badly frightened, yelping for help.

She experienced a good deal of satisfaction over his cowardly departure; but she was afraid of the man who seemed to be coming in her direction and who was calling loudly to the dog; and so she ran away. The experience of the night was like a clue to her in her search for her companions. From there she went to other fences. Fences were hateful things but they were also hopeful affairs and she expected to find her friends in one of them. Thus she penetrated farther and farther into

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man's dominion. Over the endless, deviating roadways, between the endless lines of fence posts and the treacherous barbed wire, always alert, she went, confident that she could find her way out in case of danger. When she would come upon a group of horses in some fence she would follow them on the outside, grazing as they grazed and lying down when they were near her.

She did not find those of her companions whom she was most anxious to find, and those that she did come upon, though they always replied to her, did not always come to her when she called. Queen began to feel vaguely and painfully that her influence was gone, that her regency was over. Like the dethroned leader that she was, she accepted the censure that was due her for having failed, with almost evident humility.

Her loneliness became harder to bear. She wearied of the life of interminable limitations and the fence posts on all sides of her began to hurt her as if the roadways had steadily grown narrower and the barbs had penetrated her skin.

So she started back toward the west, toward the wilds she loved, hoping that there

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she might find the rest of the herd where the herd by the natural right of things belonged. When she was back again upon the unsettled wilds she was happier for a while; but as she went from one familiar spot to another—the pond where White-black had been trapped, the various patches and strips of woodland where they used to hide or spend their nights, and the river—the loneliness grew heavier in her heart and Queen began to lose interest in life. Grass and water there was plenty, but the taste could no longer derive complete satisfaction from grass and water. After every mouthful she cropped she would lift her head and look so wistfully over the spaces that she would forget to chew the grass between her teeth. She would start off and gallop away over the prairie as if she had suddenly thought of some place where she was sure she would find her companions and just as suddenly she would stop and continue to graze.

Her loneliness became unendurable. It seemed to have peopled the solitudes with invisible creatures bent upon harming her. She was afraid to rest, afraid even to graze or drink. Once more she took to the labyrinthine avenues between fence posts, penetrating with

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impassioned eagerness the very heart of the homesteading district, seeing many homesteaders' shacks and fighting many dogs, becoming reckless as she became accustomed to them. Often as these remote farmers plowed their fields, they would hear her call, sometimes finding her only a few rods behind them; and their horses fettered as they were in their harness would turn their heads and reply to her. When a farmer set his dog upon her she would fight him; but when the farmer himself started for her, she would lope away and he would not see her again for many days.

She came upon a small group of horses in an enclosed pasture, one day, among whom she spied the brown stallion and a little bay mare who had nestled close to her many a cold winter night. This pasture was farther in the area of wire fences than Queen had ever gone before. As soon as she called, the group started in her direction. She was so overwhelmed by the familiar scents of those she knew that she could not control herself. First she ran along the fence a while, then she deliberately trotted away from the fence. Going off for a few rods and coming back at

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full speed she leaped over the wires. Though she was slightly cut on one of her hind legs, she landed safely in the midst of the group.

They were as happy to see her as she was to see them and the expression of their excitement and joy attracted the attention of the farmer and his dog in the shack a quarter of a mile away. She was sniffing noses with a grey horse whom she had mistaken in the distance for White-black, when she caught sound of the barking of the farmer's dog, and turned to see him coming toward her.

He was a big, ferocious-looking, wolf-like dog, much bigger than the average coyote and many times as savage. At his approach, the other horses started away but Queen, who was not ready to part from her companions again so soon, stopped to fight him. He remained a short distance away from her, barking angrily, turning his head backward now and then as if he waited for reinforcement, his eyes glaring at her threateningly. The other horses had turned about and stopped to watch the battle, and Queen, feeling encouraged by their watching, waited for him to come nearer.

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But suddenly, taking her eyes off the beast for just a moment, she saw two men lead two saddle ponies into the barbed wire enclosure and she made a dash for the fence, hoping to jump over it before they arrived. Just as soon as she started off the dog rushed at her with a bark and a snarl. In terror of him, she turned to strike at him with her hoof, but as soon as she turned the dog sprang out of reach. When she turned once more for the fence the dog seized her tail. She struck him with a hind leg. He let go his hold of the tail and dug his fangs into her leg.

Had there been no men coming, she might have fought it out with him. As it was they were already racing toward her and in desperation, Queen loped after the rest of the horses who were now stampeding away to the other end of the pasture. When she reached her companions she plunged into their midst as if she expected them to protect her.

The men first drove the entire group to the corner nearest to the shack and there setting the dog upon her they separated her from the other horses. They continued to urge the dog to go at her and his ferocious teeth and the nerve wracking noise he was making so con-

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fused her that she stopped to fight him almost disregarding the two men, whose ropes, as she faced the dog, sailed over and dropped upon her head.

The ropes so alarmed her that she paid no more attention to the dog. She reared in an effort to pull her head from the loops but this only tightened their hateful grip. While she was uselessly struggling the men slipped from their saddles and fastened the ends of their ropes to a fence post on each side of the corner. Then slowly they pulled the ropes in, forcing her back. Despite the pain it gave her, Queen tugged and pulled and reared. The men then got some more ropes from a boy who came with them from the shack and with these new ropes they first caught a front leg and after a long struggle caught a hind one, then pulling on the ropes they threw her to the ground.

She fell with a sickening thud. A spell of dizziness came upon her and she half shut her eyes as consciousness began slipping from her. But fear and assailing odours brought her to her senses. She made a violent effort to continue the struggle, but a man leaped for her head and seized her nose bone with both his

hands. With a quick twist he turned her nose upward and she lay absolutely helpless. She snorted and groaned but she could not rise. She felt the bony fingers of the man gripping her nose bone and felt the other man winding ropes about her legs.

What they wanted with her she could not know. She thought of the coyote as she had seen him sitting over and feasting upon her colt. Her skin quivered all over her body and she tried once more to throw off the appalling weights that kept her down; but her attempts only proved to her how hopelessly she was in their power, how easy it was for them to do just what they liked with her. She expected them at any moment to begin tearing the flesh from her body.

The smell of man was nauseating, their voices were terrifying and it seemed as if she just could not endure the pain that the man's fingers gave her as they dug round her nose bone; yet worse than all this was the smoke and the smell of fire that suddenly filled the atmosphere, bringing terrors out of her darkened past to help in her torture.

Suddenly she felt a pain that was worse than any pain she had ever experienced in her

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life before. They were pressing some terrible instrument into her shoulder, an instrument that penetrated the skin like the teeth of a dog but a thousand times more painfully. All her hatred, all her fear combined, and with a strength that the greedy men admired she began to struggle again. As she struggled, the man gripped tighter on her nose bone and the pain of his digging fingers took her mind off the burning pain in her shoulder.

When she least expected it, the man sprang away from her head, leaving it free. She made an attempt at once to get back upon her feet, but her legs were still tied and she fell back again to the ground. She raised her head and glared fearfully at her tormentors. In the far distance she caught a glimpse of the other horses, grazing indifferently. The two men stood a few feet away, looking down upon her and talking to each other.

The smell of her burnt flesh in the welter of nauseating odours, the pain in her shoulder growing momentarily worse, the lack of excitement on the part of the men, the cool deliberateness with which they seemed to have gone about her torture, together with the fear of what they were yet to do, bewildered

Queen; and out of this bewilderment emerged a feeling that was worse than fear or pain, a feeling that was an ally of both, the feeling of submission. But Queen's submission was not a servile one. Rather was it like the retreat of the general who hopes for a more propitious moment in which to strike again and strike with all his rallied force.

The man who was, without any further doubt, stronger than she was might burn her flesh; he might tie her legs so that she could not get up; he might force his sharp fingers about her nose bone and torturously twist her head so that she would be helpless; but he could not control or limit her hate. And hate boiled in her blood and burned like a fever in her body, restraining itself only as the tiger restrains his desire before he springs upon his prey.

CHAPTER XI

ROPE, IRON AND FIRE

QUEEN was branded! A large letter *B* had been burned through the hair and almost through the skin on her right shoulder. The red hot metal had broken through the skin in several spots on the curves and from these spots oozed drops of blood. The air constantly passing over the wound kept the pain of it at its original intensity.

The ropes gave way. The two men stepped away quickly. Queen thought for a moment that she was free. The ropes were still hanging from her neck but they were hanging loosely. She sprang to her feet. A hasty look around made her think, foolishly, that she could now get away. She leaped forward eagerly and at once realised her mistake. The ropes became taut. A front leg was drawn back to one of the hind legs and she went down on one side with a shock that seemed to have disturbed every organ in her body.

She remained lying down but raised her head. With large round eyes, radiating fear

and hate, she looked from one to the other of her little captors as if she were seeking some vulnerable point for attack; but they were standing calmly and their calmness bespoke their power. Nearby the fire that had heated the irons was still smouldering, poisoning the air with its pungent significance.

For a few moments Queen remained comparatively still. Their obvious power over her crushed and confused her. From her shoulder came the painful reminder of her captivity; and somehow, this gnawing pain, more than the ropes that gripped her neck and feet, brought her the overwhelming conviction that she was as much their property as the body of her first beloved colt had been the property of the coyote that had sat and feasted over it.

That the rest of her flesh would be torn from her body as she felt a piece had already been torn from her shoulder, there was no doubt in her mind. But Queen had fought many battles and though the pain of the brand was inescapable and unforgettable, though that moment she was well-nigh hopeless, she still watched for her chance to get away.

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When she got up again she was afraid to move a foot. One of the men pulled on the rope that gripped her neck. Queen expected to be hurt again. She braced herself against the earth with all four legs, and pulled back. A severe lash on the haunch sent her limping to the side. The man behind followed her while the man in front ran off a few paces ahead, and pulled again. Several repetitions of this performance brought her to the open gateway of the fence. Near the gateway was the house and beyond the house was the barn. Experience had taught her to keep away from men's shacks and the smell of the barn where she had once seen White-black, and her colt had been imprisoned, came back faintly and called upon her to resist. There were the men about her. There was the boy and at his heels, barking ferociously, was the dog. But in spite of them she made another attempt to get away and once more earned a violent throw to the ground.

The fall this time stunned her. She stretched out her head and lay motionless a moment, breathing very heavily and groaning as if she were dying. The man behind her struck her with his rope. Her skin quivered

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and another groan forced its way out between her clenched teeth. Her consciousness came back slowly. She heard the barking of the dog and the voices of the men and above their voices the shriller voice of the boy. She was sick at her heart and stomach. She felt as if she didn't care what they did any more. But a very severe blow with the end of the rope striking a tender spot on her flanks brought her to her senses. She felt as if a wave of cold water had swept over her. She managed to get to her feet. As she stood, bewildered, not knowing what to do, and feeling the terrible necessity of doing something, her whole body shook with an uncontrollable tremour.

The injustice of all this torture aroused an insane resentment; and, casting a glance over the silent prairies that stretched away to the hazy horizon, within her grasp, yet cruelly denied her, she leaped toward the open with all her waning strength, so suddenly and so unexpectedly that the man behind her, clinging to the rope, was thrown to the ground and the man in front barely escaped her front legs.

The cries of men and boy and dog broke
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fearfully upon her ears and the ferocious dog leaped at her throat. He fell back without having touched her but she lifted a hoof to strike him and thus pulling on the rope that tied that foot to a hind leg she threw herself to the ground. She fell outside of the gateway and within a dozen yards of the barn door which stood gapingly open and black, ready to swallow her.

The man behind her beat her with his rope and kicked her unmercifully; but even if she could have risen she would not have done so; and they finally decided to let her rest a while.

The beating commenced all over again and she was forced to her feet. With another swing of the rope she started off nervously before it struck her. The man in front ran on each time she went forward and in that way they got her to the barn door. But she was afraid to enter. The boy had brought the man behind her a whip and when that came down upon her back raising a welt, she involuntarily rushed into the barn to escape it.

Thus they got her into a stall and tied her securely. One man got into the manger and against all her fearful protestations managed to force a halter upon her head. With

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double ropes tied to the ring of the halter they tied two rope ends to each side of the manger, then removed the ropes with which they had first tied her; and she almost killed one of the men in the process. Finally, they left her alone.

It was so dark and damp and dirty in the barn. The foul smells were revolting. When her eyes became accustomed to the gloom she made out a horse, chewing contentedly a short distance away, and the sight of him relieved her immeasurably. She called to him but he went on chewing and ignored her call. Queen was hurt. She looked at him sadly, then half closed her eyes. But in a few minutes she called to him again and more forcibly. This time the old glutton replied to her but with little enthusiasm, rather with annoyance, for he didn't like it a bit that she made him take time from his chewing to reply to her.

The ropes did not allow her to see him very well, but she watched him a moment out of the corner of her eye and felt as she watched him that somehow he was in league with man, the usurper of her liberty. She hated him and looked no more in his direction. Over

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her came full force the horror of her bondage and the fearful realisation that her every effort to escape it would prove futile. Yet her thoughts contradicted each other and where some images came out of her memory and experience and supported her fear, others came just as strongly and allayed it. She remembered, for instance, White-black tied in his stall in the sod barn where her colt had been imprisoned and then she saw him coming over the plains tied to the old sorrel work-horse. So she saw him in many happier moods on the open plains long after that. Together with the endless stream of sensations of pain, from the wound on her shoulder and from other wounds on her body, came visions of familiar nooks on the prairies and in the woods. Like ghosts these visions came through the smelling darkness and haunted her.

At times these visions drove her frantic and she would pull and tug and tear and kick till her energy was spent and after every momentary storm there was some new wound to torment her. There was a deep gash on her upper lip that bothered her almost as much as the burn on her shoulder, for blood kept trickling from it into her nose and mouth and

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the taste and the smell of blood were as tormenting as the pain.

The man came back. She heard him coming and her eyes began to blaze again and her sides throbbed for fear. He walked around to the front of the manger and approaching her head, extended a hand carefully. She pulled her head back as far as the ropes would allow her and snorted with fright. He said something to her angrily and she listened in terror to the sound of his voice. He made another attempt to touch her with his hand, but this time she threateningly bared her teeth. He withdrew his hand quickly and lifting the long end of one of her ropes he struck her with it. It hit the sore on her upper lip and Queen pulling on the ropes with all her might, cried out for pain.

Then the second man appeared and the boy and the dog came behind him. Queen expected a new battle, but they only brought her hay and water. They stood near the manger watching her and talking. They took handfuls of hay and touched her lips with it but she only shook her head violently and whinnied fearfully. So, too, she disdained the water they gave her. The man seemed to

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know that she wanted the water, however, and so he set the pail down into the manger. When they finally went out Queen looked after them anxiously.

Night came down. The man came back again and offered her some oats in his hands; but even if she had desired to eat the oats, the smell of his hands would have destroyed that desire. Seeing that she had touched neither hay nor water he threw the oats into the hay and walked away. Suddenly as she looked sideways, she saw the man lead the horse out of the barn. It was too dark to see clearly but she could feel that the horse was going out and she could hear the tread of his heavy feet. Forgetting all her previous emotions, Queen shamelessly begged him to return and the terror in her voice seemed to break up the shadows that filled the barn into monstrous creatures which she felt were surrounding her. She called again and again till the fear of the sound of her own voice finally hushed her. She hoped that the horse would return and waited and listened for his coming, but he did not return. Faint queer sounds of scratching came from above and behind her. Chickens roosting somewhere in the darkness tortured

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her with their sleepy peeping. And a bat flying around the barn, buzzing every few moments near her head, kept her nerves on edge. But when the dog came into the barn, Queen went mad. She had fought coyotes and dogs but she had never been helplessly tied before. She pulled at her ropes and kicked with her legs till she shattered one of the crate-like sides of her stall and tore the top board of her manger loose at one end.

The frightened dog ran out of the barn and barked so loud he brought the man from the house. Queen heard him coming and when she saw rays of light break through the cracks in the walls, she almost jumped over the manger. He opened the door and a flood of light poured into the barn and when he began to talk to her she calmed down a bit.

He retied her and fixed the broken board of the manger. She seemed to fear him less now than before and as he talked she listened, her eyes fixed as if fascinated on the lantern he had hung up not far from her head. Suddenly the dog reappeared. Queen jumped involuntarily. The man kicked the dog and the dog ran out of the barn crying for pain. It was then that the first slight sense of grate-

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fulness came over Queen; but it left her with the man's going out and gave way to the puzzle of his strange light, which for some time obscured everything else in her mind.

The night dragged horribly and when dawn came at last she was exhausted. She saw the barn door open and was relieved by the shower of daylight. Though the man came into the barn and seemed to have much to do there, he did not come near her. Chickens moved around her, some of them even jumping up on her manger to pick the grains of oats that she had refused, and Queen watched them with interest. For a while she was afraid of them, but their contented sing-songs as they ceaselessly searched for food bespoke their harmlessness.

The man had gone out and Queen was dozing from sheer exhaustion when the boy appeared. He came over to Queen's manger and seized the ropes, drawing her head toward him. She resisted as best she could and because she bared her teeth when he tried to touch her with his hand, opening her mouth as with the intention of biting him just as soon as the hand was near enough, he let go his hold on the rope and picking up a stick began

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to prod her with it. At first she just struggled to pull her head out of reach of the stick but when he persisted she became furious. Snorting and whinnying she kicked right and left against her stall and the boy, afraid that his father would come in, quietly sneaked out of the barn.

All day she stood stolidly without touching the hay, drinking a little of the ill-tasting water only when alone and when she could not resist the desire for it. When night came again Queen began feeling most uneasy about the shadows and the strange nocturnal sounds; yet she seemed more able to endure this night than the first. When the second dawn appeared she was partially resigned to her evil-smelling confinement; but the monotony of standing on her feet in one place, standing, standing, standing endlessly, like a new kind of pain was far more distracting than bodily pain.

The pain of the brand seemed to grow dull and then it bothered her only when the healing wound touched something. The other pains in the many places about her body also kept growing less tormenting; but these tortures of the first days of her captivity gave

way to the less perturbative, more gnawing anguish of imprisonment.

Calls of distant horses sometimes penetrated her prison and Queen would make the very walls surrounding her tremble with the agony of her aimless replies. So, too, wafts bearing familiar fragrance often strayed into the smelling atmosphere of the barn, re-kindling smouldering fires. The love of the plains, the desire to lope over them with the freedom she had retained so long would at those times seize upon her with maddening hold and she would kick and pull till she hurt herself or until she realised once more, each new time more forcefully than the last, that all her storming was as futile as it was hurtful.

So Queen began to learn. She learned to eat the dead hay even though the dirt often mixed with it was revolting. She learned to drink the water though the taste and the smell of it was nauseating. "You'll get over your fussiness," the man often said to her when he came into the barn. Fortunately Queen did not understand what he said and the resentment she would have experienced, had she understood, never interfered with her "getting

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over it." It was really better for Queen, as it is in similar circumstances sometimes better for us, to "get over it."

But her "getting over it" was always a matter of weights and measures. Every pain set itself against some other pain and the stronger pain conquered her aversions. When so weary standing that her legs ached in the joints, carrying the weight of her body, she lay down the first time. The smell of the floor was so loathsome that she got up again after a few minutes. She remained standing till the pain became more tormenting than the smell of the floor, and then lay down again, learning to endure the smell. And it proved to be a valuable lesson in so far as it divided the endlessly dragging hours in half. Instead of standing all day and all night shifting the weight of her body from foot to foot, she would stand one hour and lie down for one hour and thus broke the killing completeness of the excruciating monotony.

The hay was constantly replaced when she had eaten what was in her manger and the pail was always refilled with water when she had drained it. This in time seemed to assure her that they did not mean to destroy her or

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that destruction was not going to take place immediately. Her hatred for man did not lose its intensity but her experience relegated it to some more distant corner of her soul, moved it from where it had dominated the whole of her consciousness so that she could endure her bondage as she waited for the opportunity to escape it.

CHAPTER XII

THE STRENGTH OF THE WEAK

ONE day while Queen, for want of something better to do, was dozing over her empty manger from which she had eaten up every spire of hay, she heard the dog, outside, bark with unusual excitement. By the increasing rapidity with which his barks succeeded each other, she knew that something was coming. She soon heard the rumbling of a wagon and when that sound came very close and stopped it was followed by the clatter of many voices. She had allowed herself to worry about many sounds that had resulted in no harm to her and experience was teaching her not to worry. So she soon went back to her dozing, especially since the rapid patter of hoofs, as the horses drawing the wagon pulled into the yard, had quickened her memory of life with the herd.

In the midst of her dreaming she was suddenly disturbed by the entrance of two strange horses whose heavy feet beat the floor of the

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barn so hard that she felt every beat. The harness on these two huge horses was massy and bits of metal on it flashed with the reflection of the light of the doorway. They were led into the stall next to Queen and with absolute indifference to her they began to rummage in the manger and the oats boxes, calling greedily for food. Queen watched them with no little interest. She was afraid of the men who had come in with them but in spite of the men she could not resist the desire to touch noses with the horse nearest to her. She pushed her nose anxiously through an opening in the partition and the big horse touched it with his nose a moment, but immediately returned to his voracious search for oats. But the touch of the big nose had only intensified the burning desire in her heart for companionship, and she called more loudly and with greater appeal.

Suddenly she felt a slap upon her back and when she almost flounced into her manger in fright, she heard laughter behind her. The man who had slapped her then went round to the front of the manger and when Queen's eyes fell upon him she recognised him. It was he who had helped the man of the place cap-

ture and brand her. The smell of him was most repellent and she backed away as far as she could go; but he untied her ropes and pulling their ends together, around a steadying of the back wall of the manger, he pulled on them, dragging her forward till her knees struck the manger, and her head was over his shoulder as he stooped. He held on to the ropes keeping her head immovable; while her owner, coming from the other end of the barn with a bunch of straps, threw them upon her head.

She struggled desperately to pull her head away but the ropes were relentless. The evil-smelling hands of her owner moved all over her face and she was powerless even to show her resentment. His big thumb forced its way between her teeth and while her jaws were apart a piece of iron slipped in between her teeth; and before she could dislodge it, the straps were forced over her ears and fastened around her neck.

With teeth and tongue she struggled to eject the annoying iron from her mouth but try as she would she could not move it to the edge of her teeth. They then loosened the ropes and her owner seized them all with one

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hand. Taking the reins which hung from the bridle bit in the other hand, he jumped over the manger. Seeing him she sprang back nervously and he followed her. She started for the doorway and when she got out into the open, she was going a little too fast for him. With a vicious jerk on the reins he halted her. The iron in her mouth was bent in the centre and the least jerk on the reins forced the bend to strike the tender palate with the force of a hammer.

The full light of day to which she was no longer accustomed hurt her eyes and her limbs seemed stiff, the joints paining her with the exertion of her first activity in so long a time. A wagon stood not far off with its tongue extended before it. On the seat was a fur robe. It appeared to her like some sort of animal and she was afraid of it. Against its wheel leaned the boy. He was pounding the earth with a stick and was looking at her. Under the wagon sat the dog on his haunches. As soon as he saw her he raised his muzzle and barked at her.

She tried to back into the barn but the man who stood in its doorway struck her with a stone which he threw at her. She dashed for-

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ward and reared. Her owner pulled down on the reins and once more the bend in the centre of the rider's bit struck her tender palate. The pain terrified her. It seemed as if her enemies were able to strike her from within. She jumped involuntarily but she realised at once that every jump inflicted its own punishment. So she tried very hard to control herself, though her every nerve was on edge.

The man then walked forward and pulled on the ropes. She did not know what he wanted, so she braced herself against his pull. Again he jerked the reins and to avoid the force of his pull she moved hastily toward him. At once he moved off again and a few repetitions of this taught her to follow when led. Around and around the yard the man led her and with eyes aflame with fear, her skin quivering with nervousness, Queen hastily followed him, desiring to resist but anxiously afraid to do so.

She was beginning to think that that was all they wanted of her when the man in the doorway of the barn came forward with a heavy leather affair from which straps and things hung and dragged on the ground. She was standing quite still, breathing rapidly

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when this new apparition appeared. As the man swung it upon her she jumped to the side in fright. The man at the bridle immediately jerked the reins and with impatient force. Her palate by this time was sore and the pain was so excruciating Queen again lost her temper and for ten minutes both men were obliged to hang on the ropes and the reins as she reared and kicked and balked. But in her enraged kicking one of her hind legs struck one of the rear wheels of the wagon and the pain that shot through her whole body had a quieting effect upon her. While they had her up against the wagon from which the boy and the dog had fled, they placed the saddle upon her.

The saddle securely fixed, they led her off again, but walking was now difficult and painful. The cinch, the strap that keeps the saddle in place, was so tight that it was almost completely hidden by the skin which lopped over it from both sides. It cut her painfully every step she took. In two places on her back some hard parts of the saddle pressed against the backbone.

But all this, miserable as it made her, was as nothing compared with the horror that swept over her when the man suddenly seized

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the horn of the saddle and threw himself upon her back like a beast of prey. She sprang forward to get away from the farmyard; then on the open prairie she began in real earnest the attempt to throw him. He pulled on the reins till she felt the bend in the bit boring into her tongue. He dug his spurs into her sides. He lashed her savagely with the knotted ends of the ropes. But in her desire to rid herself of the frightful weight she seemed to have lost her sensitiveness to pain. She shook her body as a horse will shake water from him. She reared. She kicked backward. She shook the rear of her body while she braced her front legs against the earth. Then failing in all these attempts, she threw herself to the ground.

He jumped in time to avoid a broken leg. Thinking that she had conquered she struggled to her feet intending to fly, but to her consternation, she was no sooner on her feet than he jumped back upon the saddle. She was determined to get rid of him and was about to throw herself again when she received a blow upon one ear that almost stunned her. The man had leaned forward and struck her with his hand in which he held

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his hat; but she thought it was some ferocious bird come out of the air to assist him. She turned in the opposite direction and dashed away. When he wanted her to turn back he struck her on the other ear and this time when his wing-like hat reached her ear, he sent forth a most fiendish shriek.

Away she leaped over the plains as if some awful monster were at her heels. She seemed to get relief in the running. Her rider ceased pulling on the reins and ceased poking her sides with his spurs. He showed no displeasure in any way and Queen began to realise that that was what he wanted. When with his reins he pulled her head sideways she involuntarily turned in that direction and as soon as she turned he stopped pulling.

She was finally so worn out running, that she dropped back into a weary walk and as she looked up she was surprised to find herself but a few rods from the barn. Rebellion was futile. All her failures proved it to her, yet when the man near the barn-door came forward to take hold of her, she tossed her head wildly, gripped the bit between her teeth and reared. Then when he ran off to

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the side to get away from her hoofs, she fell back and rushed for the barn-door.

But while her rider drew her head back till her ears touched him, the man on the ground hurried over to the barn-door and seized her by the bridle, holding her till the man jumped from the saddle. She was glad to get back into her stall and allowed them to tie her without a protest. The saddle was removed from her wet back and sides and the bit was removed from her blood-stained mouth.

She was dizzy and her heart pounded at her sides. From her wet distended nostrils the breath came like the roar of the ocean. Two sores on her back itched almost unendurably. Both sides were pierced by the cruel spurs and blood-stained. An aching pain gnawed in her palate and she could not throw off the painful sensation of grating iron from her teeth. Her body throbbed as a steamer throbs with the pounding of its engines.

They threw hay into her manger but she only sprang back and looked at them with moist, glowing eyes. They stopped in front of her manger and talked. While they talked she held her terrified eyes upon them, watch-

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ing for what they might show evidence of wanting to do next. In the next stall, the two big horses, apparently unconcerned about the weight of harness still on their backs and indifferent to her troubles, stood with their greedy heads right over the hay in their manger and noisily and rapidly ground the hay in their mouths as if they were afraid that they would be taken out before they could devour all that lay before them. When the men walked into their stall and untying them started out with them, each one eagerly stretched his head backward to take a last large mouthful.

Queen looked after them as they went and experienced a sense of relief at their departure, worried only by the fear that they would be coming back again. When a few minutes passed and the doorway remained unobstructed, she turned her head back again and sank into a doze which was constantly disturbed. What troubled Queen most was the shattered condition of her nerves. The slightest sound sent her into paroxysms of fear, making her heart beat with a sense of impending calamity and sending chills and waves of heat, by turn, over her body. The voices she

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heard coming from the yard oppressed her with a constant threatening suggestion of the men's return.

Then, some time later, she became aware of the fact that the noises were withdrawing. She heard the wagon rumbling away and even the barking of the dog grew fainter in the distance. A sweet silence, as refreshing as the cold water she longed for, fell upon the little farmyard; and the feeling of being alone was like an opiate.

But she was suddenly alarmed by the sensation as of some one present and turning hastily about, discovered a woman in the doorway of the barn. Queen was badly frightened. This creature was different from man but it was only a different sort of man. She gazed at the apparition which was talking in a voice that was softer than that of the men. The woman was carrying a pail full of water and came with it to the front of the manger. When she lifted it to set it down into the manger, Queen sprang back, frightened.

"Drink, Dora, you poor little wild thing," said the woman, backing away a bit and looking at her commiseratingly, "you're taking it so hard, you poor little Dora."

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Despite her fears, Queen's ears went up straight and the glow of fear in her eyes dulled slightly. The woman went on talking to her in the same low tones, so different from the harsh, staccato sounds of the men and the boy. When the woman went out of the barn Queen turned her head and looked after her till she had disappeared. Then she turned to the pail of water and sticking her burning lips into the cool liquid she drank without a stop until there wasn't a drop of water left.

The woman came back again driving a cow. Behind her, pushing its little muzzle into her hand, came a little calf. The cow walked into the stall next to Queen and there, like the horses, she rummaged about for food. For some reason known only to the cow, she did not like the hay that the horses had left, but cast her cowy eyes upon the hay that was heaped much higher in Queen's manger. She thrust her peculiar wide muzzle between two beams into Queen's manger and with her long tongue gathered some of the hay and pulled it into her own stall where she chewed it with apparent great relish. Queen took a mouthful and chewed it as if the cow had reminded her of what she ought to do.

"Some more water, Dora?" said the woman coming around to the front again, and as Queen jumped back frightened, she went on, "Don't be afraid of me, Dora. I won't hurt you."

She took the empty pail and went out with it, coming back a few minutes later with the pail refilled and setting it once more into the manger. She talked to her a few minutes, then went away. Queen saw her sit down beside the cow and soon heard the peculiar sound of milk streams beating against the walls of a tin pail. She watched her and listened for a while but since the cow who was most concerned in the matter seemed not the least worried, she turned to her water.

When the woman was through milking, she drove out the cow and fed the calf and then sending it out too, she came back to Queen. She stood leaning forward against the manger and talked to her for a long time. There was something about that voice that made Queen think of ducks paddling on the surface of a pond at night, or the songs with which they sang themselves to sleep. It was a sound as of birds on branches of trees overhead pushing into each other and expressing the desire

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for warmth or the comfort of having it. The words followed each other slowly and softly and there was neither threat nor authority in them. Queen studied the strange face with the light playing upon it. She was still slightly uncertain about the eyes that she was afraid of and that strangely fascinated her. She was afraid to look into them, yet there was something in them that was in a way overcoming her. Was it the wetness about those eyes that in some way, perhaps never to be known, affected Queen? Was it the sympathy that the suffering have for the suffering that Queen recognised and that made her blindly place her hope in this new and mysteriously different human being?

When the woman went out Queen felt as she had felt on many a winter night in the wilds when some warm body next to her suddenly got up and left one side of her disagreeably cold. For the rest of the afternoon she kept turning her head toward the doorway and pricking her ears with more hope than expectation, and throughout the long disappointing hours the voice of the woman poured through her mind like a stream, like a long persistent melody, and its even flow

was rhythmically measured by the one word that she remembered most clearly. "Dora!" What it meant she did not know, but she felt in a vague way, when she heard it, that it applied to her.

Next morning her owner put the saddle on her again, and though she was very nervous and afraid and would have fled at the first real opportunity, the lesson went by without much of the pain and agony of the first lesson. She began to understand what every pull of the reins meant and even the differences she heard in the man's voice helped her to avoid trouble, as for instance, when by the sound of his voice she knew that he was impatient with her going too slowly and she sprang forward into a more rapid gait before the man felt it necessary to apply the spurs.

In the afternoon the woman came into the barn to give her water and to talk to her. When she patted her forehead, Queen did not resist and in time began to crave the touch of that hand, as she craved the sound of that voice.

Day after day she had her little run over the fields and as her fear of the farmer lessened slightly, she began to enjoy the exercise.

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It broke the crushing monotony of standing in the barn and gave her a chance to look at the plains she loved. So too it gave her a chance to see the other horses, none of whom were kept in the barn any longer. She found that the group in the corral had been very greatly reduced and the mysterious reduction worried her. The brown stallion was gone and with him all the horses she had known, except the little bay mare, who did not seem to be on friendly terms with the other two horses in the corral. She was always off by herself and at the call of Queen would come rushing to the wire fence and beg her to join her.

One day the boy jumped upon her back. The man stood by and watched. The boy annoyed her by the way he sat and by the way he held the reins and she could hear the man angrily instructing him. She could feel him changing his ways and realised that the man was taking her part, somehow; but when they got away off on the fields, he tormented her. He kept digging his spurs into her sides even while she was running her best and he pulled steadily on the reins, hurting her palate and her lips and making it difficult for her to see

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the stone or holes in her path. But much as she hated and feared this boy, he was as yet afraid to mistreat her. What he really was capable of doing to torment her, she was yet to learn.

The old touch of melancholy just barely perceptible on Queen's beautiful head deepened rapidly as submission took possession of her soul. She learned her lessons hastily and learned them well for fear of the pain that inevitably followed mistakes; yet somewhere in the very heart of that submission crouched an indestructible hope that sometime, somehow, she would break the chains of her bondage and go galloping back to her wilds.

CHAPTER XIII

LABOUR WITHOUT LOVE OR WAGE

UST when Dora was resigning herself to the irksome but unavoidable duty of carrying them about in the saddle; just when she had learned in this state of her bondage to get from the plains she would cover, carrying them, that finer sustenance which the soul requires; just when she had learned to get all the happiness that it is possible to get in a condition of physical encumbrance and spiritual domination by an unshakable and hateful will, there came a change. The middle summer went by and the winds that blew golden waves over oceans of ripe grain ushered in the harvest season.

When heavy harness was placed upon her body, Queen showed her displeasure but curbed her impulses. The collar and the hames choked and oppressed her and the blinders on her bridle tormented and frightened her. But for something they did which they did not do for her sake at all, Queen would have fought as hard as she had fought

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when the saddle was first placed upon her. They had led her out and tied her to a wagon wheel between two of three horses and she found herself next to the little bay mare. A few moments of sniffing noses and Queen would have endured almost anything rather than be taken away from her old friend again. She had been harnessed first and Queen was willing to tolerate anything she tolerated so long as she could be there with her; and the farmer wondered at the constant whinnying that went on between the two. All the while, the big horse on the other side of Queen and the big horse on the other side of the bay mare stood with their heads at the same level, motionless, like the mere machines that they were, awaiting orders to move.

They were hitched to a binder and ordered to move and Queen's nerves tingled with the strangeness of the situation. Every move she made resulted in some disagreeable pull and the feeling of being trapped, of being held in on every side was fast arousing her resentment and the slumbering desire to rebel. But not only did the weight of the thing they were dragging subdue that desire, but the horses on both sides of her seemed to beat into her

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soul, with the beating of their hoofs, the utter hopelessness of showing resentment or attempting to rebel.

When they reached the wheat fields, the thing grew many times heavier, many times harder to pull and the deafening noise it made was distracting to Queen. But the morning was delightful; the creatures of her own kind beside her gave her the feeling of having companionship; and though her muscles found pulling most arduous, they were still fresh from a night's rest. When the morning wore along toward noon her strength was well nigh exhausted and the struggle to keep from going under, stimulated by the whip, suffused her soul with agony. The day was hot and her sides dripped with perspiration. The new harness rubbed her skin in a thousand places and made her very bones ache. The dust of the fields and the particles of broken straw filled the air she breathed and settled down in her nose and eyes.

When her aching muscles began to wear out and the pain she felt frightened her, she tried to lag a bit but the watchful eye of her owner soon discovered her lagging and there was a threatening cry of "Dora!" and the long whip

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came down upon her haunches without mercy.

Noon came at last. Queen limped on her way back home, moving along as if the other horses were carrying her, seeing nothing before her, feeling only her agony of soul and body. Painful sores, under rubbing leather and iron, smarted with the touch of perspiration, and the hard collar choked her unmercifully. The weight of the harness seemed to be pressing her to the ground.

Her water she drank at once in great draughts, but her food she did not touch for some time and though she stood next to the little bay mare all through the noon-hour she did not turn to her once. Her misery was overwhelming and in its salty waves she was alone.

Though she had not eaten a full meal, she went back to work just the same and a thousand times the whip came down upon her back adding pain as a stimulant, as if she had not experienced pain enough. When at last the seemingly endless day came to its close and the harness was removed, leaving red bloody sores with rims of black dirt exposed, Queen lay down at the feet of the little bay mare and with her eyes closed, lay as if in a stupor for

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half the night before she rose to feed her hunger.

Yet when the first few unspeakably torturous days went by, she seemed to have become more able to endure the torment. The stolidity about the old sorrel work-horse and other work-horses in Queen's experience, which she had so often wondered at in her limited way, now came down like a sort of mask upon Queen's head and put a strange dullness into her eyes.

But with the end of the harvest period came the autumn plowing. Had that been her first experience she would hardly have lived through it. It was not only harder work to drag the plow, that so often struck the rocks in its path and fairly pulled them from their feet, but the dust rising in clouds from under them added to labour and pain the last ounce of endurable agony. Life to Queen, in its endless repetition of toil and pain and abysmal discomfort, relieved periodically by a few hours' rest, was not only without purpose but without excuse. Queen did not reason her way to such a conclusion, she just felt; and in this feeling there was not even the light of illusionary hope. The knowledge that a

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given labour will end at a certain time, gave the hope and the courage to her master which the strange ruling of life denied to Queen.

So Queen lived through the days which she could not know were ever to end, enduring labour without compensation, getting food and water that was not as good as that which the wilds had lavishly bestowed upon her. What it was to lead to, she did not know. She could not even ask. Death was but a nameless fear and the relief of death was beyond her understanding. The images of those she had known and loved in her happier past came back often in dozing moments, coming into her dreamy vision as imperceptibly as the evening comes into the day; and in going they left in her soul something that resembled hope. That was all that life offered her and it was as uncertain as were the whims of the creatures who dominated and overshadowed her existence; yet never did she reach a hilltop from which she caught a glimpse of the open prairie spaces but the hope that freedom would come to her expressed itself like a hazy light in the dark uncertainty that engulfed her.

CHAPTER XIV

ONLY JUSTICE HAD BEEN DONE

THE reaping season passed and threshing time arrived. The farmer was plowing his fields for the next year's seeding because he had finished reaping before most of the other farmers had finished. He worked himself as hard as he worked his "critters." That was his reputation among those who did not have anything more serious against him, but they were few. Every fall he, like most of the other homesteaders, left his farm and joined a threshing crew some twenty miles south, remaining with it until winter set in and until the wheat of the last farmer of their circuit had been threshed. Came the last hot spell of the year. Cold winds and rain and cloud of early autumn gave way to a short Indian summer, so warm that insects long too stiff to appear more than for a few hours during the warmest part of each day, came buzzing back to life as if it were springtime. Nose-flies began to bother

the horses and the dirty, old, wire-net nose-baskets were brought back into use.

The sunlit air sponged up the aroma that oozed from the wet earth, and breathing it filled Dora with old longing. Sensations of loping free over the unfenced earth, like spirits, danced enticingly before her yearning eyes. Birds flitting through the sweet air sang with the enthusiasm of spring and urged her to resist the forces of evil that fettered her. But the harness on her back was heavy. The traces that bound her to the plow and the lines that held her to the others who had forgotten what freedom is, were inexorable as the will of the man, whose whip was his only argument.

They had been dragging the unyielding plow for a few hours on the first of these delightful mornings, when, looking up as they turned at the end of a furrow, Dora saw in the distant south a horse and buggy, coming at a good pace. All the way down that furrow she saw the buggy steadily grow larger and clearer. Coming up on the next furrow she could see nothing and then as she turned once more she saw White-black coming. She stopped for just a second and the whip came

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down with a stinging lash. She sprang forward and pulled along with the rest; but her head was higher than it had been for some time and from her trembling lips came nervous whinnies which White-black did not hear. By the time the two moving objects met, there was a long, melodious and very welcome "whoa," and the four horses stopped facing the one horse in the buggy.

The three horses relaxed and stood with heads lowered, grateful for this bit of rest, but Dora was too excited to stand still. With head erect, ears pricked she called to her old mate with a call that shook the whole of her weary body. White-black raised his head at the first call, looked at the four horses, sniffed somewhat like a dog and then with all his strength, replied. Hardly had he finished when Dora, exerting herself to the limit of her strength, called again. White-black started forward as he replied this time but the impatient man in the buggy, flaring up with righteous wrath, cruelly jerked the lines. White-black raised his head in pain and moved back a step. He called again but he did not attempt to go to her any more. His head lowered like that of the horses beside Dora and

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an expression of utter helplessness came over his white face. Dora, too, dropped her head with the full realisation of the futility of trying in any way to overcome the hold man had upon them.

The ploughman left the buggy side where he had been standing, conversing with the visitor, and walked back toward his plow a few feet, then stopped, and continued the conversation.

"Then I can depend upon you?" said the man in the buggy.

"Oh, I'll unhook right away," replied the other, taking out his watch, "and I'll be there by supper time. I'll start just as soon as I feed the horses and get a bite myself."

"All right!" said the stranger, striking White-black a blow with the whip that sent him forward at a bound.

Dora called after him. From the distance, even as he was running away at top speed, White-black called back, helplessly. Dora tried hard to keep her eyes on the shrinking buggy and the two white ears that protruded above it, but her eyes were hemmed in by the blinders and she found it difficult. She was obliged to raise her head over the mane of the little bay mare. Forgetting for the

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moment the man at the plow, she rested her head upon the bay mare's neck and called and called again.

There was a sudden order to move on and Dora started off, expecting to pull with all her might upon the traces. She was most agreeably surprised to find that they had been unhooked and all the way to the house, stirred by emotions which she had no other way of expressing, she pulled ahead of the others, eager to get to the farmyard as if she expected to be released there so that she could go back to the world and the life for which she longed with old fervour again.

Dora was unharnessed and taken to her stall in the barn. The little bay mare was released in the corral, while the two big horses with their harness on were put into the stall next to Dora and all were fed. In an hour the farmer was ready to depart. He came into the barn and took the two horses out, and soon after, Dora heard the wagon rumbling away.

During the last few weeks, throughout the endless hours of wearing toil, Dora had yearned for the stall; but now as she stood there, fresh from the unexpected meeting with her lifelong companion, the enclosure of the

barn was as harassing as the slavery of harness, and without knowing why she did it, realising fully that White-black was far out of hearing, she called and called like a broken-hearted mother from whom her foal had been taken.

Her calling was suddenly answered by the loud voice of the boy, who dashed into the barn and began quickly to saddle her. He tightened the cinch, as he always did, till Dora protested, and then put into her mouth the rider's bit with its cruel bend. So, too, he put on the wire-net nose basket and fastened it so high that the wire-net pressed against her lips.

As soon as Dora got outdoors she looked for signs of White-black. When the boy jumped to the saddle she started away to the south, but with an angry pull of the reins he turned her to the west. In spite of the fact that she had been working to the limit of her strength, in spite of the pain in her muscles and limbs, she leaped away like a racer, and in spite of the fact that she was already going at her greatest speed, the idiotic boy, as was his habit, kept applying the spurs. On the trail along the wire fences she merely tossed

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her head with displeasure at every dig, but when they reached the end of the fences and he turned her diagonally across the trackless plains, the sight of the open, unobstructed prairie helped her to make her show of resentment plainer.

But the stupid boy not only failed to perceive that he might have been wrong, he resented what struck him as a challenge to his authority. He meant to show her that he was master. He jerked the reins back with all his might and dug the spurs into her sides.

"Go ahead!" he cried when she fled across the plains as if she had been frightened and were running away, "You can't go too fast to suit me!"

Before Dora, as she sped, loomed an exceedingly large badger hole, the freshly dug, yellow earth piled high to one side. She was used to badger holes and had long ago learned to cunningly avoid them, no matter how suddenly one appeared in her vision. But despite his tactics the boy was surprised by Dora's unusually nervous behaviour. He was not at all sure that she wasn't really trying to run away. In spite of his fear, he could not allow himself to dispense with his bully-

ing proclivities, and as she neared the hole he turned her head sideways and once more plied the spurs without reserve.

Where she would have, without any difficulty, avoided it on her own account, his turning her head drove her upon the mound of earth. Her leg slipped on the loose, newly-dug earth and went down the hole and as the boy attempted to leap from the saddle he was thrown forward six feet from her head, landing with a thud and a shriek.

He was not badly hurt, but he was so badly scared that he yelled like a frightened baby. When he got to his feet there was an expression of murderous intent on his face and he stretched his arms forward as he started for her as if he meant to beat the life out of her when he got hold of her. But he did not get hold of her. She had been frightened, too, and had stood looking at him, unable to decide what to do; but when she saw those hands, she reared high into the air in an effort to prevent his seizing the reins. This time he backed away afraid of the hoofs that rose threateningly before him. She turned with a gracefully defiant toss of her head and bounded away as fast as the dragging reins

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would allow her to go. She could hear his frantic threatening cries, but that voice had lost its power. Her chance had come at last!

By his futile cries she could tell how far she was leaving him behind her. She dared not stop to look back even when she heard his cries no more. The reins trailing on the ground impeded her flight and she felt as if he were but a short distance behind her and would soon reach her. In her mad race for freedom she kept stepping on the reins and every step tore her lips and battered her palate; but not for a moment did this actually halt her. She endured the pain like one who was aware of the fact that the goal was worth it, till all that was left of the reins dangled a few inches from her muzzle.

A mile farther west from the badger hole was a patch of woodland. When she reached it, Dora stopped for a second to look back; but she did not see the boy. A hill, in between, obstructed her view. She felt somewhat freer not seeing him; but still she went as fast as she could go working her way through the woods. The branches of the trees caught in her saddle and made going very fast impossible. Twigs hooked in the

ring of the bit outside of the basket and not only hurt her but frightened her because sometimes she had sensations of being seized by some man. But despite these pulls and digs and impediments, dodging the branches as best she could, she came in half an hour to a large open space. Two or three miles beyond that she saw another patch of woods and headed straight for that. She got through this bit of woodland without much trouble and reaching another open space she followed the wall of trees in its irregular curve to the north.

Still northward she fled, though the north had failed her. It was evening, when after a steady trot for twenty-five miles she came to the strip of forest that borders upon the Saskatchewan and there, coming upon a deer path which was familiar to her, she plunged into the shadows of the woods. She was too tired and still too weary of pursuit to think of food. Coming to a windfall where she had many a time successfully hidden in the days before her captivity, she lay down to rest.

She had been down but a short time when the prodding of the hard wooden stirrup

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upon which she was lying forced her up. She tried to lie down again, but again the stirrup forced her to get up. Again and again she tried it, but each time with the same result, and finally with the growing fever of a new and threatening fear, she gave up the attempt to rest and went instead for a drink of water at the river. When she reached the river's edge she stopped to stare across to the wilds beyond. There was a wish in her heart that she could find some way of getting across the moving water, but that wish was dulled by a vague realisation of the fact that now, without her old followers, getting across would not be wholly satisfactory.

A great sad stillness brooded over the river, hanging over the silvery reflections of the skyline like a dome of mist that rested upon the dreary shadows of the trees and banks on each side. Confinement and toil had sickened Dora's love of the wilds, though memory sought to exalt it as of old, and the beauty of the wilderness, without her companions, was only desolation. A nameless longing in her heart and a complexity of fears she had never experienced before seized upon her like a disease. It was as if she expected a fatal blow

from some hidden enemy that moved about her in every possible direction.

She bent down and drank at her feet. It was hard and disagreeable to drink with the wire net on her muzzle and the iron bit in her mouth. She lashed the fast flowing stream with her muzzle in the hope that somehow the nasty basket would be washed away by the water, but she gave up the attempt and drank as best she could. Suddenly she lifted her head and stared away into the dark spaces. In the far distance a small shadowy form swooped from the top of a tall poplar, like a bit of shadow breaking away from the body of the night, and disappeared in the whiteness of the sky, leaving behind the melancholy echo of its cry. She followed it with her eyes till it was no more visible, then suddenly turned and ran for the open.

It was not only the open prairie she sought, because the open prairie was the world she knew and loved best; but something else was driving her. A fear that seemed to have been born of shadow and water and the lonely cry of the loon. It was the sudden realisation that though she had escaped from the detestable slavery of man and toil and dirty barn, she

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had carried away from her bondage man's inescapable curse.

Her first act upon reaching the open was to search the shaded distances, then out of the depths of her embittered, fear-infested heart, she sent into the wilds she had longed for her earnest appeal for companionship; but only the mocking echo of her own voice came back from the motionless tree-walls on each side of her. She lowered her head to graze but raised it at once again. Now she knew what she had feared. Now she grasped something of the extent of man's curse. The wire net on her muzzle, like a trap, forbade her to eat until she returned humbly to man and submitted to his tyranny.

In a frenzy of fear and anger she loped about in a circle for the greater part of an hour, then she attempted to rub the cursed thing from her lips. But rubbing on the ground pushed back the levers of the rider's bit and hurt her with every move. She stopped to think a moment, gazing helplessly about. She lowered her head, pushing it along between her hoofs, and pulling it forward, trying to rub it off that way; but all that she did was to bend the strong wire of

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the basket, which after that pressed painfully into her nose. She tried rubbing her muzzle against the bark of a tree. A small twig point pierced the skin of her lip and as she hastily pulled her head back the lever of the bit caught in some way and she struggled for some time before she freed it. Then she gave up, running off into space as if she were trying to flee from some fearful thing she had just seen.

The cinch was still tight and though it did not bother her much when she was up on her feet, it seemed to grow tighter and cut into her skin when she tried to lie down; and if, for want of rest, she lay down anyway, the stirrups always fell in such a way as to press into some tender spot as she lay upon one of them. She would endure that for a few minutes and then she would get up again with a groan.

The poplar woods about the Saskatchewan are not continuous. Patches and strips covering spaces of from one to fifty acres cut up the rolling plains. By running round about these she could keep herself invisible to approaching enemies. Her old power to detect man's approach seemed to come back to her.

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Once that day she thought she detected some one coming, and hid in the trees without even making sure, then coming out on the other side and taking a roundabout run, left that section of the country. Yet as she hastily put distance between herself and this danger, she half realised that she might have to go back at last to the man from whom she had escaped, who she knew could save her from the iron grip on her muzzle. Two days later she saw some one coming on the eastern horizon. She was certain that it was the boy pursuing her and first going north to get under cover of a patch of woods, she fled west for many miles.

She came late in the afternoon to the pond in the wilderness where White-black had been trapped in the mud. She remembered clearly White-black's floundering in the mud and avoided that side of the pond. She walked leisurely around it, gazing over the silent water from whose brightness she missed the remembered sight of ducks. Many a time in her slavery she had had visions of this bit of water with its reflections smiling up to the heavens. It seemed hard for her to believe that she was really there. She had longed so often to be there; yet, now, she experienced

something like a feeling of disappointment. What it was or why, she did not know.

She was crossing a muddy spot when she slipped and fell on her side. She was not hurt but slightly stunned and remained lying down. As she lay there it occurred to her that the stirrup was not hurting her. She did not think of its sinking into the mud, but thenceforth when she wanted to lie down she came to that muddy spot. The pond came to her assistance in another way. She had gone in some distance to get a drink of clear water where the pond bottom was quite hard and as she drank, some of the lower rushes penetrated the basket through the meshes of the net. She lowered her muzzle carefully, keeping her jaws open; and when she felt some of the rushes in her mouth, she cropped them quickly, chewing them triumphantly as the water dripped from her muzzle.

The rushes grew tallest in the centre of the pond. She was afraid to go in very far, feeling constantly, as she would move inward, that this time she was going to stick there. It was not long before what rushes she could reach had all been cropped. She learned to get some grass by doing with the grass what

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she had done with the rushes, but though this was better food she could not get as much of the grass as she had gotten of the rushes. She managed in that way, however, to keep life burning in her bedraggled body.

The fear of being pursued and captured again left her as the days went by without a sign of man, but as this fear left came hunger. All day she struggled to obtain enough grass to keep her alive and when the stirrup resting on frozen mud kept her awake at night, she only thought of grass and how to get more and more of it. The sweetness of the wilds she had loved was gone, leaving them hollow and desolate and so cruelly unresponsive as to be almost mocking.

Day after day man's curse grew heavier to bear and the strangle-hold it had upon her life contracted with more telling effect. It was only a matter of a short time when its contracting hold would finally and mercifully put an end to her misery.

The short Indian summer passed away. The nights became cold and the frosts froze the mud into rock. When in lying down the stirrup pressed into some tender spot, she would endure the pain, then rise next morning

and go limping over the plains. A layer of thick ice which no longer melted by the middle of the day now covered the pond. What little frozen dew that she could get, with the little grass she could crop, only intensified her thirst and the desire for water drove her to desperation. She tried to break a hole in the ice but she did not have the necessary strength. The irresistible desire for water sent her out upon the slippery ice in the hope of finding a weaker spot. A dozen feet from the edge she slipped and fell with a crash, breaking through and falling into the icy water. She was obliged to rest a while before she could summon enough energy to get up. When she did get up she was aching from head to foot and on her leg was an open, bleeding wound. She drank, however, all she could hold, then she turned and looked helplessly to the shore, afraid to step over the broken ice, falling again when at last she ventured toward it, but finally getting back.

Her sides pained her terribly and her open wound smarted and itched. She tried to lick it but only hurt it with the wire net. She stood stolidly for a few moments, her addled brain trying to clarify the great confusion that

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came over it. What was she to do? What was going to become of her? Life was almost unendurable, and instincts of terrifying force guarded against the death that would have relieved her. Paroxysms of fear swept over her, filling the shadows of the desolation with beasts of prey who, leering and licking their chops, waited with terrifying patience for the weaker moment when they expected to pull her down.

Geese flew southward constantly and their ominous honking sang dirges to the death of all that life had been to her in its happier past. The skies grew grey and remained chronically grey and the atmosphere seemed filled up with a great cosmic sorrow, like the face of a child suppressing the impulse to cry. The winds reaching out from the frozen north wailed with maddening grief.

A taciturn old coyote began to worry her. He would sometimes pass her while she grazed or struggled in her attempts to graze, each time seemingly coming nearer. He filled her soul with terror. Sometimes he woke her at night with his demoniac howling and she would spring to her feet and shake and tremble with fear and cold, only to find that he was sitting on the rim of the hollow, look-

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ing down at her, his black, hateful form cut clearly against the dark grey sky. Then one morning, she awoke to find him less than a rod away, sitting on his haunches and watching her. He fled when she sprang weakly toward him with a fearful cry in which she tried desperately to be defiant; but she decided then to abandon the horror-infested basin.

The great weakness was upon her. The coyote had long recognised it and she knew it now. Whither she was to go or what she was to do, she did not know. Only she felt the need of going and she went, limping slowly and painfully, sick in body and soul, all her defiance of man crushed out of her. Thus the erstwhile Queen of the wilds lumbered painfully over the plains that seemed to no longer sustain her, going humbly back to man to dumbly beg for mercy, for even in that state of mind she felt that as man had placed his curse upon her only man could remove it.

It was a dreary, dull afternoon. The sun struggled to show itself and its weakest warmth was driven from her protruding

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bones by a cold, cutting gale. In her lumbering along over the plains that seemed strangely dim and uncertain she stopped every once in a while and stared like a decrepit old woman. She came at last to an open space between two patches of woodland and stopped to gaze wild-eyed upon a black shanty covered with tar-paper, and a sod barn.

The smells that came from that farmyard made it very hard for her to advance, but the intense feeling of her desperation conquered each wave of fear and step by step she made her way toward the house, stopping at last, a hundred feet away, unable to go any farther. There was no sign of life. Fear held her motionless yet hunger and thirst and weakness urged her to call for help. Her call sounded weak and hollow. She called again with greater exertion and in that call a note of conciliation was unmistakably audible.

Suddenly she saw the door of the shanty open and a woman came out. Had it been a man, all her unworded resolution would have gone to naught and Dora would have turned and fled; but a woman was a different experience. She turned nervously and walked off a short distance, but when the woman ad-

vanced toward her holding out a hand and calling with a most winning voice, she stopped and waited. When the woman came nearer Dora heard her own name. The recognition of that sound gave her so much hope and courage that she deliberately turned toward the woman who by that time was near enough to take hold of one of the pieces of strap that still hung from the bit-ring.

For a few minutes the woman patted her forehead lovingly and talked to her in a way that warmed poor Dora as if the woman had placed a blanket over her cold aching body. When the woman began leading her toward the house she followed willingly till the door opened and a little girl came out, then she stopped as if afraid; but when the woman urged she went on, keeping her eyes upon the little girl.

At the well, the little girl chopped a hole in the ice on the trough while the woman removed the basket, bridle, halter and what was left of the saddle and Dora lowered her head quickly into the water and drank as rapidly as she could.

"That dirty brute!" said the woman.

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"He never feeds his critters," piped in the little girl.

"He doesn't feed his wife," added the woman, not because she wanted to tell this to the little girl, but rather because she wanted to express the hatred of an old and bitter feud.

"Take these rotten things," said the woman, pointing to the bridle and the halter, while she seized the remains of the saddle. "Let's get them out of the way, and don't you ever open your mouth to tell any one, no matter who it is, that his mare was here. I don't want his rotten old saddle and bridle. He never keeps anything looking decent enough for any one to want any of his rotten things. Anyway it is a sin to send this poor mare back to him. It ain't up to me to catch his runaway critters for him and I just can't let the poor critter go off like this and die. When Dad gets back from threshin', he'll take these things and drop 'em on the road near his place where he will be sure to find them."

When Dora had drunk all she could, she turned immediately to some grass near by and began voraciously to pull at it. The woman had befriended her and she was not afraid of her. But to her surprise, when she came

back, the woman rushed at her with something in her hand which she waved threateningly at her, clearly ordering her away. Dora ran off as fast as she could go and when she got well out of the way, she turned to look back with a puzzled expression on her face. Both the woman and the little girl were calmly entering the shanty.

Without an attempt to get at the motive behind the woman's strange conduct, Dora went on grazing there, moving off and looking back when her mouth was too full to crop, eating so rapidly and so absorbedly that she had no time to think about the phenomenal change that had thus miraculously come over her. If she was not thinking gratefully, she did feel grateful and possibly some higher intellectual force than hers, in some way, realised for her that only justice had been done.

CHAPTER XV

THE TRAIL OF THE MOOSE

FOR several days after the woman had relieved her of the racking burden of straps and iron and wire-net, Dora was troubled by the conflict of recurrent impulses to go back to the farm yard and the fears that just as ardently urged her to get far out of the reach of man. Months of arduous toil followed by weeks of semi-starvation had robbed her of her strength and her courage; the barn had so enervated her that she found the cold, out doors, especially at night, very hard to endure; and her captivity had deprived her of her companions without whom life was not worth the struggle.

One snow flurry followed another. The last spot of exposed earth disappeared. The sun did not show itself for days and every hour seemed to deepen the drifts. Never had the world seemed so bleak and inhospitable to her.

She was so miserably cold one windy night that she decided at last to go back to the

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farmyard where she had been so magnanimously befriended. She got up toward the end of the long night and started away, lumbering along for many miles in the dark, driven by the image of the sheltering barn; and then she stopped suddenly as the other image, that of the woman driving her away, came into her mind. She stood still, unable to decide what to do and as she stood the reddish streak in the south east grew brighter and less red.

She became very cold, having stood so long, and started off again more for want of exercise than through any definite decision, and as she neared the top of a wild rose bush that protruded from a deep drift, a rabbit sprang out of its shadow and bounded away to the south. Dora stopped through momentary fright, and followed him with her eyes as he fled. She missed him when he was swallowed up in the great ocean of whiteness and searching for him suddenly discovered a group of horses on the ridge of a long hill, their dark bodies cut clearly against the end of the light streak in the sky.

Dora did not stop for her breakfast. Her eyes lighted up, her nostrils distended and her thin legs plowed through the snows as if their

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old strength had fully come back to them. There were many hills and valleys lost to the sight in the level whiteness and, crossing them over-anxiously, she was obliged to stop a few times to rest and to regain her breath, before at last she reached the horses, by that time down the side of the hill.

There were about a dozen of them spread out considerably. While yet some distance from them, she thought she recognised some of her old friends, but as she came nearer she was overwhelmed with doubt. They were pawing the snow very energetically and took little interest in her fervent greetings. One or two heads raised up a moment, then went back to the business of finding grass which the rest would not interrupt even for that short time. This reception was a great disappointment to Dora, but there were other disappointments in store for her.

The three horses to whom she was nearest, watched her approach with suspicion. They were, all three, hard working horses, who found the pawing of snow a laborious task. They thought she meant to eat from their find and drove her off with threats of angry whinnies and laying ears. One of them, a miser-

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able old nag, a red mare with two naked scars on her shoulders, jumped across the hole she had dug, ran after Dora and nipped her haunches several times, as poor Dora fled from her.

Dora stopped running about a hundred yards from there, looked back at the old nag and, seeing that she had returned to pawing, began to paw the snow where she was. When she got to the grass and had taken a mouthful, she raised her head and stared at the group, wondering what had happened to the beautiful world from which she had been abducted by man. She could not make out why that old nag had been so intent upon hurting her. Dora did not know of those differences in temperament which makes one creature mellow and sympathetic after an experience of great suffering and another sour and pugnacious.

Her reception was a sad disappointment to Dora, but even that companionship was better than none. So she clung to it with all her strength, content to move about on the outer edge of the group. When the herd had fed well and for exercise started across the snows, Dora always went with them, running with

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every ounce of energy in her body, striving through her old revived habit to get to the lead; but Dora soon realised that these were not the days of her supremacy. Strive as she would, she could not keep up with even the poorest plug and long before the others were ready to quit, she was obliged to drop out of the race, humiliated and unhappy, puffing and panting for breath.

Nevertheless, she took part in every race. Every time she made the same strenuous attempt to do the impossible. The youngsters of two and three years of age fairly laughed at her, reaching her while she struggled with might and main and leaving her behind with a few easy bounds. But it is a poor effort that accomplishes no result whatever, and though she could at no time outrun the younger horses, she daily managed to leave some older horse behind her.

One day she tried her old trick. Very early in the race she happened to be in the lead, having started the race. When the younger horses saw her leading a few of the old plugs, they started after her, soon, of course, overtaking her. Dora swerved to the side, in the hope that they would follow her, and found

herself alone. They not only refused to follow her but they did not even look back to see what had happened to her. Dora was so unhappy she started off again after them, but soon stopped, realising that she could not catch up to them and that she would soon be out of breath once more. She stood still a while and watched them enviously. Then she turned, intending to paw the snow for grass, when she saw another group of horses coming from the southeast.

Dora raised her head and looked with absorbed interest. The wind lifted her mane and fluttered it gracefully in the air. For a few moments, absorbed in the creatures that moved toward her in single file, she looked like Queen once more in all the glory of her regency. When they were a hundred yards away, Queen neighed with all her strength. At once the marching line stopped and all heads went up high in the air. Then from the rear of the line a white horse broke from the path he had been following and with a call of recognition started hastily toward her. It was White-black and, with a strength born of the very sight of him, Queen loped to meet him.

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Four of the other horses recognized her, too, and the air vibrated with the music of that happy reunion. Noses touched noses and happy whinnies greeted happy whinnies. With the five of them had come a young mother, a sorrel mare with a fuzzy little colt who had been born in the spring. When the others had gone to meet Queen she remained in her tracks, hesitating to get into any kind of an assembly where through joy or anger her colt might be hurt. He stood right behind her, his fuzzy little head against her haunch, his eyes filled with wonderment.

When Dora had greeted her old friends, she went to greet the mother and her colt, running her old muzzle, on which were still the marks of her struggle with the basket, down the fuzzy little fellow's forehead, murmuring tremulously. The proud young mother looked on almost eagerly and commented softly and good-naturedly.

. But when the big group returned there was dissention at once. The ugly red mare seemed to think that there was entirely too much fuss made over Queen, and turned upon her with open mouth. White-black, right behind the old nag, nipped her severely. A

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quarrel followed which spread to the rest of the group and finally ended in a race which divided the two groups, Dora going off with her friends. All day the two groups dug the snow a goodly distance apart and in the evening came the worst storm of the season.

The storm approached quite suddenly, though all day there had been vague signs of its coming. A northern gale blew up, tearing the weaker branches from the trees and sending them sliding over the surface of the snow, tearing up the looser snow and blowing it into their eyes and ears and nostrils. Queen led her group to a fairly sheltered spot in among the trees near by and together they lay down.

The warmth of their bodies, one touching the other, was so comforting that the slightest move on the part of any one of them brought a low, patient protest from the rest. The night came rapidly. The wind grew more and more furious, howling and shrieking overhead, and the tall poplars groaned as they bent with its lashing. Gusts of wind, loaded with snow, which it raised on the open, struck the trees and the snow fell in powder upon them below, covering them as with a blanket.

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In the open the savage north wind went mad. It tore along at a terrific rate, taking everything that was loose with it, then, as if it had in its savage eagerness fallen over itself, there was a pause for a moment, after which, picking itself up again, it went on with even greater ferocity, shrieking as with some ineffable, primordial pain. It seized the fallen snow and whirled it around with the falling snow, scattered it high in the air, lifting it again when it had fallen and sending it like waves across the plains, gathering great showers of it and hurling them against the wall of the woods, sending these showers down upon the tree tops, tearing it all up again as soon as it had fallen into drifts below and once more hurling the restless dust into space—a display of insane, futile effort—a cosmic passion bereft of purpose.

But if this wild night could have been wilder and had raved with even more threat in its raving, it could not have diluted the contentment in Queen's heart. The touch and the subtler feeling of the presence of her companions did as much to keep her warm as the heat of their bodies, and, like a light, illumined the long trail of life behind her. She

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moved through the corridor of her past like a curious child, walking in its sleep and dreaming of a beautiful, incoherent fairyland. The light was silvery as that of the moon and in the shadows detached images which she only half recognised glistened like reflections on the snow. And when dawn ushered in a calm day, Queen rose with a feeling like that of having returned home from a long visit and shook the snow from her body.

Queen knew the country there as none other knew it. Leading the little group to the best feeding grounds, she took her place once more at the head, for at the head only could Queen be happy. In spite of the deep snows through which they were obliged to plow to get their food, Queen began to fill out rapidly and the greater part of her old strength came back to her. With the return of her strength came the old fear of man. Every move was accompanied by an investigation and in every sound of wind and tree she seemed to hear the sound of a voice.

There followed a long period of fair weather in which the snows hardened and shrank and then one day, as they were digging for grass, they were surprised by three men

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on horseback on a hill to the south and east, less than a quarter of a mile away. The horsemen had come upon them so suddenly that Queen, confounded, stood looking at them a few minutes, transfixed with fear. She recognised the man who had captured her on the big horse that had worked beside her in the plow. Next to him was the boy on the little bay mare and his cry of "There she is!" fully aroused Queen.

The little herd, however, had no difficulty in getting away from them, because they had no burdens on their backs and they were now more used to the deep snows on the open plains than the horses that were chasing them. The horsemen kept behind them for a long while and then disappeared. But Queen was too wise to end her flight there. She knew that even though the men gave up the chase that day they would appear again the next, or soon after that.

Out of the misery and discomfort of her captivity she had just emerged. She had found her companions and the life for which she had hungered all through those unhappy months. Hardly had she realised the full extent of her good fortune when man reap-

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peared to take it all away from her. But Queen was in no submissive mood. She had fought for her freedom and she would fight again. She would watch with such care that she would not again be caught at a disadvantage. She hardly gave herself time to eat. Her ears were constantly pricked high. Her eyes, afire with her emotions, never for a moment abandoned their vigilance. But her nervous dread of man soured the sweetness of the wilds and Queen moved over the snows with the old feeling of the trap beating in her heart, moved without resting and, out of habit, moved northward.

They came next day to the strip of woodland whose heroic poplars silently guard the Saskatchewan. There they stopped and there the full horror of the trap took possession of Queen. She was afraid of her own shadow and the slightest sound startled her. A partridge drumming in the woods sent her madly loping through space.

The winter evening came early. The distant sun lowered in the southwest with a sad, yellow glare; and in the north a gleaming, pearly streak foretold a brilliant display of northern lights. That streak interested Queen

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and she watched it as the darkness thickened, and as she watched it, looking up from time to time, it grew brighter. Faint shimmering colours appeared at the eastern end of the streak and slowly moved across it to the west, vanishing in the west and reappearing brighter in the east. Many times she had seen these lights, but only once, somewhere in her half-forgotten childhood, had she seen them so bright and so fascinating.

They were standing directly in front of a cleft in the shadowy wall of trees. The cleft led like a roadway to the banks and the river below. There they could see more of the lights, the portion that glowed in the lower part of the sky and danced about over the shadowy tops of the trees on the other shore.

It was during a moment when the lights were so compelling that all of them had stopped to look when there appeared in the cleft the giant body of a moose, his antlers like a magnificent oak cut clearly against the scintillating colours of the aurora borealis. His coming had been so swift, so sudden and so imperceptible that it took them some time to realise that a living thing stood within a few yards of them, looking at them. The herd

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hastily retreated a short distance; but as soon as they stopped to look back the enormous animal got frightened, turned and vanished down the banks.

Queen was very curious. She trotted carefully after him and the rest of the herd kept to her tracks. When Queen's head appeared where the plains turn over the banks, the moose looked up at her a moment and then like a rabbit shot straight across the river. Beyond the centre of the frozen river he stopped for a moment to look back once more, then leaped on and vanished in the woods beyond, leaving behind him, across the ice of the erstwhile invincible Saskatchewan the defiant shadow of his trail.

An overwhelming impulse flared up in Queen's soul. A great confusion of fear and hope seized upon her heart. So nervous that every muscle in her body trembled, she made her way down the banks and with infinite fear and caution she took the trail of the moose. She walked along slowly and very carefully and stopped often to take bites of the snow on the ice as if she were testing it and at the same time trying to quench the fires that were burning within her. The others hesitated a

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moment, but when they saw her nearly half way across, they faithfully followed her.

In the woods north of the river, they camped for the night. Next day they went on, penetrating the woods and following the trail of the moose till they came upon an open space a mile beyond the river. There they remained for the rest of the winter, feeding upon grass the like of which they had only at rare times come upon.

Succeeding snowfalls covered their tracks and when spring came, melting the snows and filling the desolate hollows with quivering, rippling ponds, loading the lonely air with the whir of duck wings and the happier honking of geese, the roar of the swollen Saskatchewan had placed the final seal upon their emancipation.

And here the story of Queen Dora must end, for in that new world beyond the trail of the moose her struggle against the usurpation of man was over. It was long after her generation that man ventured into that desolate region where she found perfect happiness, as perfect a happiness as may come to living things. Grass and water, leisure and activity, companionship and security, these were all

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Queen asked of life, and these were as free in those unfenced wilds as the air and as limitless in their abundance. No enemies, no contention, preferences without hatred, joyous play and eternal good will, she looked toward each coming moment with no fear; while the glowing sensations of fading yesterdays only sweetened the music of her existence.

THE END

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