

PART I
CHAPTER I
THE TRAIL OF THE MEAT

Dark spruce forest frowned on either side the frozen waterway. The trees had been stripped by a recent wind of their white covering of frost, and they seemed to lean towards each other, black and ominous, in the fading light. A vast silence reigned over the land. **The land itself was a desolation, lifeless, without movement, so lone and cold that the spirit of it was not even that of sadness**¹. There was a hint in it of laughter, but of a laughter more terrible than any sadness—a laughter that was mirthless as the smile of the sphinx, a laughter cold as the frost and partaking of the grimness of infallibility. **It was the masterful and incommunicable wisdom of eternity laughing at the futility of life and the effort of life**². It was the Wild, the savage, frozen-hearted Northland Wild.

But there was life, abroad in the land and defiant. Down the frozen waterway toiled a string of wolfish dogs. Their bristly fur was rimed with frost. Their

1.

¹ Сама земля была пустыней, безжизненной и неподвижной, такой одинокой и холодной, что от нее не исходило даже намека на скорбь.

наречие *even* обычно находится перед тем словом или конструкцией, которую оно определяет, используется для того, чтобы подчеркнуть необычное или несвойственное.

² То была властная и неопишуемая мудрость вечности, смеющаяся над тщетностью жизни и ее стараниями.

laugh at someone/ something — фразовый глагол, подчеркивающий насмешку, незначительность кого-либо/чего-либо. Путем добавления суффикса *-ing* к основе глагола образуется *present participle*. Подробнее о причастиях настоящего времени см. ГС 15

³ *На санях были и другие вещи*

Конструкция *there is/are* указывает на наличие или месторасположение объекта, подробнее см. ГС 55

⁴ *На санях, в ящике, лежал третий человек, чьи земные труды были закончены, человек, которого Дикая природа покорила и сломила — так, что он больше никогда не сдвинется, не продолжит борьбу.*

форма *Past Perfect Passive* глаголов *conquer* и *beat*, указывает на действие в страдательном залоге, которое случилось до другого события в прошлом, подробнее о страдательном залоге см. ГС 50

глагол *beat* является неправильным, у неправильных глаголов форму *past* необходимо учить наизусть

: breath froze in the air as it left their
 : mouths, spouting forth in spumes of
 : vapour that settled upon the hair of
 : their bodies and formed into crystals
 : of frost. Leather harness was on the
 : dogs, and leather traces attached them
 : to a sled which dragged along behind.
 : The sled was without runners. It was
 : made of stout birch-bark, and its full
 : surface rested on the snow. The front
 : end of the sled was turned up, like a
 : scroll, in order to force down and under
 : the bore of soft snow that surged like
 : a wave before it. On the sled, securely
 : lashed, was a long and narrow oblong
 : box. **There were other things on the sled³**—blankets, an axe, and a coffee-pot
 : and frying-pan; but prominent, occupying most of the space, was the long and
 : narrow oblong box.
 : In advance of the dogs, on wide snow-
 : shoes, toiled a man. At the rear of the
 : sled toiled a second man. **On the sled,**
 : **in the box, lay a third man whose toil**
 : **was over,—a man whom the Wild had**
 : **conquered and beaten down until he**
 : **would never move nor struggle again⁴.**
 : It is not the way of the Wild to like
 : movement. Life is an offence to it, for
 : life is movement; and the Wild aims
 : always to destroy movement. It freezes
 : the water to prevent it running to the
 : sea; it drives the sap out of the trees till
 : they are frozen to their mighty hearts;
 : and most ferociously and terribly of all
 : does the Wild harry and crush into

submission man—man who is the most
restless of life, ever in revolt against the
dictum that all movement must in the
end come to the cessation of movement.

But at front and rear, unawed and
indomitable, toiled the two men who
were not yet dead. Their bodies were
covered with fur and soft-tanned leather.
Eyelashes and cheeks and lips were so
coated with the crystals from their
frozen breath that their faces were not
discernible. **This gave them the seeming
of ghostly masques, undertakers in a
spectral world at the funeral of some
ghost**⁵. But under it all they were men,
penetrating the land of desolation and
mockery and silence, puny adventurers
bent on colossal adventure, pitting them-
selves against the might of a world as
remote and alien and pulseless as the
abysses of space.

They travelled on without speech, sav-
ing their breath for the work of their
bodies. On every side was the silence,
pressing upon them with a tangible
presence. It affected their minds as the
many atmospheres of deep water affect
the body of the diver. It crushed them
with the weight of unending vastness
and unalterable decree. It crushed them
into the remotest recesses of their own
minds, pressing out of them, like juices
from the grape, all the false ardours and
exaltations and undue self-values of the
human soul, until they perceived them-
selves finite and small, specks and motes,

⁵ *Это придавало им вид вид призрачных масок, гробовщиков из потустороннего мира на похоронах некого призрака.*

неопределенное местоимение *some* в данном случае используется с исчисляемым существительным в ед. ч. в значении «какой-то», подробнее см. ГС 5

: moving with weak cunning and little
: wisdom amidst the play and inter-play
: of the great blind elements and forces.

: An hour went by, and a second hour.
: The pale light of the short sunless day
: was beginning to fade, when a faint
: far cry arose on the still air. It soared
: upward with a swift rush, till it reached
: its topmost note, where it persisted, pal-
: pitant and tense, and then slowly died
: away. It might have been a lost soul
: wailing, had it not been invested with
: a certain sad fierceness and hungry ea-
: gerness. The front man turned his head
: until his eyes met the eyes of the man
: behind. And then, across the narrow
: oblong box, each nodded to the other.

: A second cry arose, piercing the si-
: lence with needle-like shrillness. Both
: men located the sound. It was to the
: rear, somewhere in the snow expanse
: they had just traversed. A third and
: answering cry arose, also to the rear
: and to the left of the second cry.

: “They’re after us, Bill,” said the man
: at the front.

: His voice sounded hoarse and unreal,
: and he had spoken with apparent effort.

: “Meat is scarce,” answered his com-
: rade. “I ain’t seen a rabbit sign for
: **days.**”⁶

: Thereafter they spoke no more, though
: their ears were keen for the hunting-cries
: that continued to rise behind them.

: At the fall of darkness they swung
: the dogs into a cluster of spruce trees

⁶ *Я не видел ни одного заячьего следа уже несколько дней.*

ain't — это сокращение от *am not, is not, are not, have not, has not*, которое редко упоминается в английском языке в виду неправильной конструкции, разговорное слово

on the edge of the waterway and made a camp. The coffin, at the side of the fire, served for seat and table. The wolf-dogs, clustered on the far side of the fire, snarled and bickered among themselves, but evinced no inclination to stray off into the darkness.

“Seems to me, Henry, they’re stayin’ remarkable close to camp,” Bill commented.

Henry, squatting over the fire and settling the pot of coffee with a piece of ice, nodded.⁷ Nor did he speak till he had taken his seat on the coffin and begun to eat.

“They know where their hides is safe,” he said. “They’d sooner eat grub than be grub. They’re pretty wise, them dogs.”

Bill shook his head. “Oh, I don’t know.”

His comrade looked at him curiously. “First time I ever heard you say anything about their not bein’ wise.”

“Henry,” said the other, munching with deliberation the beans he was eating, “did you happen to notice the way them dogs kicked up when I was a-feedin’ ’em?”

“They did cut up more’n usual,” Henry acknowledged.

“How many dogs ’ve we got, Henry?”

“Six.”

“Well, Henry... ” Bill stopped for a moment, in order that his words might gain greater significance. “As I was sayin’, Henry, we’ve got six dogs.

⁷ *Генри, присевший на корточки у огня и кладущий в кофейник кусок льда, кивнул.*

squatting — причастие, образованное от глагола *squat* + окончание *-ing*. В случае, если глагол оканчивается на одну согласную, перед которой стоит одна гласная, то конечная согласная удваивается, лишь в том случае, если ударение падает на последний слог.

settling — причастие, образованное от глагола *settle* + окончание *-ing*. В случае, если глагол оканчивается на немое *-e*, то перед окончанием *-ing* оно опускается

Подробнее о причастиях настоящего времени подробнее см. ГС 15

: I took six fish out of the bag. I gave
: one fish to each dog, an', Henry, I was
: one fish short."

: "You counted wrong."

: "We've got six dogs," the other re-
: iterated dispassionately. "I took out six
: fish. One Ear didn't get no fish. I came
: back to the bag afterward an' got 'm
: his fish."

: "We've only got six dogs," Henry said.

: "Henry," Bill went on. "I won't say
: they was all dogs, but there was seven
: of 'm that got fish."

: **Henry stopped eating to glance across
: the fire and count the dogs⁸.**

: "There's only six now," he said.

: "I saw the other one run off across
: the snow," Bill announced with cool
: positiveness. "I saw seven."

: Henry looked at him commiseratingly,
: and said, "I'll be almighty glad when
: this trip's over."

: "What d'ye mean by that?" Bill de-
: manded.

: "I mean that this load of ourn is
: gettin' on your nerves, an' that you're
: beginnin' to see things."

: "I thought of that," Bill answered
: gravely. "An' so, when I saw it run off
: across the snow, I looked in the snow an'
: saw its tracks. Then I counted the dogs
: an' there was still six of 'em. The tracks
: is there in the snow now. D'ye want to
: look at 'em? I'll show 'em to you."

: Henry did not reply, but munched on
: in silence, until, the meal finished, he

⁸ *Генри перестал есть, чтобы посмотреть через костер и пересчитать собак.*

to glance — инфинитив с частицей *to* употребляется для выражения цели, подробнее см. ГС 53

topped it with a final cup of coffee. He wiped his mouth with the back of his hand and said:

“Then you’re thinkin’ as it was—”

A long wailing cry, fiercely sad, from somewhere in the darkness, had interrupted him. He stopped to listen to it, then he finished his sentence with a wave of his hand toward the sound of the cry, “—one of them?”

Bill nodded. “I’d a blame sight sooner think that than anything else. You noticed yourself the row the dogs made.”

Cry after cry, and answering cries, were turning the silence into a bedlam. From every side the cries arose, and the dogs betrayed their fear by huddling together and so close to the fire that their hair was scorched by the heat. Bill threw on more wood, before lighting his pipe.

“I’m thinking you’re down in the mouth some,” Henry said.

“Henry... ” He sucked meditatively at his pipe for some time before he went on. “Henry, I was a-thinkin’ what a blame sight luckier he is than you an’ me’ll ever be.”

He indicated the third person by a downward thrust of the thumb to the box on which they sat.

“You an’ me, Henry, when we die, we’ll be lucky if we get enough stones over our carcasses to keep the dogs off of us.”

“But we ain’t got people an’ money an’ all the rest, like him,” Henry re-

⁹ *Думается мне, ты совсем впал в уныние*

Настоящее продолженное время образуется при помощи вспомогательного глагола *to be + present participle* основного глагола, подробнее см. ГС 38

be down in the mouth — идиома, означает впасть в уныние, расстроиться, хандрить

¹⁰ *Он мог бы дожить до глубокой старости, если бы оставался дома.*

Условное предложение, тип 3, может выражать сожаление или упрек. Подробнее об условных предложениях и их типах см. ГС 60

: joined. “Long-distance funerals is some-
: thin’ you an’ me can’t exactly afford.”

: “What gets me, Henry, is what a chap
: like this, that’s a lord or something in
: his own country, and that’s never had
: to bother about grub nor blankets; why
: he comes a-buttin’ round the Godforsaken
: ends of the earth—that’s what I can’t
: exactly see.”

: “**He might have lived to a ripe old age**
: **if he’d stayed at home,**¹⁰” Henry agreed.

: Bill opened his mouth to speak, but
: changed his mind. Instead, he pointed
: towards the wall of darkness that pressed
: about them from every side. There was
: no suggestion of form in the utter black-
: ness; only could be seen a pair of eyes
: gleaming like live coals. Henry indicated
: with his head a second pair, and a third.
: A circle of the gleaming eyes had drawn
: about their camp. Now and again a pair
: of eyes moved, or disappeared to appear
: again a moment later.

: The unrest of the dogs had been
: increasing, and they stampeded, in a
: surge of sudden fear, to the near side
: of the fire, cringing and crawling about
: the legs of the men. In the scramble
: one of the dogs had been overturned on
: the edge of the fire, and it had yelped
: with pain and fright as the smell of
: its singed coat possessed the air. The
: commotion caused the circle of eyes to
: shift restlessly for a moment and even
: to withdraw a bit, but it settled down
: again as the dogs became quiet.

“Henry, it’s a blame misfortune to be out of ammunition.”

Bill had finished his pipe and was helping his companion to spread the bed of fur and blanket upon the spruce boughs which he had laid over the snow before supper¹¹. Henry grunted, and began unlacing his moccasins.

“How many cartridges did you say you had left?” he asked.

“Three,” came the answer. “An’ I wisht ’twas three hundred. Then I’d show ’em what for, damn ’em!”

He shook his fist angrily at the gleaming eyes, and began securely to prop his moccasins before the fire.

“An’ I wisht this cold snap’d break,” he went on. “It’s ben fifty below for two weeks now. An’ I wisht I’d never started on this trip, Henry. I don’t like the looks of it. I don’t feel right, somehow. An’ while I’m wishin’, I wisht the trip was over an’ done with, an’ you an’ me a-sittin’ by the fire in Fort McGurry just about now an’ playing cribbage—that’s what I wisht.”

Henry grunted and crawled into bed. As he dozed off he was aroused by his comrade’s voice.

“Say, Henry, that other one that come in an’ got a fish—why didn’t the dogs pitch into it? That’s what’s botherin’ me.”

“You’re botherin’ too much, Bill,” came the sleepy response. “You was never like this before. You jes’ shut up now, an’ go to sleep, an’ you’ll be all hunkydory in

¹¹ *Билл докурил трубку и теперь помогал спутнику расстелить меховую подстилку и одеяло поверх еловых веток, которые он подготовил на снегу до ужина.*

had finished — past perfect, употребляется для описания законченного действия, которое совершилось до определённого момента в прошлом, подробнее см. ГС 42

was helping — прошедшее продолженное время образуется при помощи вспомогательного глагола *to be (was)* в прошедшем времени + *present participle* основного глагола (*help*), подробнее см. ГС 39

: the mornin'. Your stomach's sour, that's
: what's botherin' you."

: The men slept, breathing heavily, side
: by side, under the one covering. The
: fire died down, and the gleaming eyes
: drew closer the circle they had flung
: about the camp. The dogs clustered
: together in fear, now and again snarl-
: ing menacingly as a pair of eyes drew
: close. Once their uproar became so loud
: that Bill woke up. He got out of bed
: carefully, so as not to disturb the sleep
: of his comrade, and threw more wood
: on the fire. As it began to flame up,
: the circle of eyes drew farther back.
: He glanced casually at the huddling
: dogs. He rubbed his eyes and looked
: at them more sharply. Then he crawled
: back into the blankets.

: "Henry," he said. "Oh, Henry."

: Henry groaned as he passed from
: sleep to waking, and demanded, "What's
: wrong now?"

: "Nothin'," came the answer; "**only**
: **there's seven of 'em again**¹². I just
: counted."

: Henry acknowledged receipt of the
: information with a grunt that slid into
: a snore as he drifted back into sleep.

: In the morning it was Henry who
: awoke first and routed his companion
: out of bed. Daylight was yet three hours
: away, though it was already six o'clock;
: and in the darkness Henry went about
: preparing breakfast, while Bill rolled

¹² ...только тут их
снова семь.

конструкции *there*
is/are соответствует
есть, имеется, на-
ходится, подробнее
см. ГС 55

the blankets and made the sled ready
for lashing.

“Say, Henry,” he asked suddenly, “how
many dogs did you say we had?”

“Six.”

“Wrong,” Bill proclaimed triumphantly.

“Seven again?” Henry queried.

“No, five; one’s gone.”

“The hell!” Henry cried in wrath,
leaving the cooking to come and count
the dogs.

“You’re right, Bill,” he concluded.

“Fatty’s gone.”

“An’ he went like greased lightnin’
once he got started. Couldn’t ’ve seen
’m for smoke.”

“No chance at all,” Henry concluded.

“They jes’ swallowed ’m alive. I bet
he was yelpin’ as he went down their
throats, damn ’em!”

“He always was a fool dog,” said Bill.

“But no fool dog ought to be fool
enough to go off an’ commit suicide
that way.” He looked over the remainder
of the team with a speculative eye that
summed up instantly the salient traits of
each animal. “I bet none of the others
would do it.”

“Couldn’t drive ’em away from the fire
with a club,” Bill agreed. “I always did
think there was somethin’ wrong with
Fatty anyway.”

And this was **the epitaph of a dead
dog**¹³ on the Northland trail—less scant
than the epitaph of many another dog,
of many a man.

¹³ *эпитафия мертвой собаке*

с неодушевлёнными и абстрактными существительными употребляется предлог of для образования притяжательного падежа, подробнее см. ГС 4

определённый артикль *the* используется, если предмет упоминается во второй раз или уже известен, подробнее см. ГС 2

CHAPTER II
THE SHE-WOLF

Breakfast eaten and the slim camp-outfit lashed to the sled, the men turned their backs on the cheery fire and launched out into the darkness. At once began to rise the cries that were fiercely sad—cries that called through the darkness and cold to one another and answered back. Conversation ceased. **Daylight came at nine o'clock**¹. At mid-day the sky to the south warmed to rose-colour, and marked where the bulge of the earth intervened between the meridian sun and the northern world. But the rose-colour swiftly faded. The grey light of day that remained lasted until three o'clock, when it, too, faded, and the pall of the Arctic night descended upon the lone and silent land.

As darkness came on, the hunting-cries to right and left and rear drew closer—so close that more than once they sent surges of fear through the toiling dogs, throwing them into short-lived panics.

At the conclusion of one such panic, when he and Henry had got the dogs back in the traces, Bill said:

“I wisht they’d strike game somewheres, an’ go away an’ leave us alone.”

“They do get on the nerves horrible,” Henry sympathised.

They spoke no more until camp was made.

2

¹ *Дневной свет показался в девять часов.*

предлог *at* употребляется для указания времени, подробнее см. ГС 14

Henry was bending over and adding ice to the babbling pot of beans when he was startled by the sound of a blow, an exclamation from Bill, and a sharp snarling cry of pain from among the dogs. He straightened up in time to see a dim form disappearing across the snow into the shelter of the dark. Then he saw Bill, standing amid the dogs, half triumphant, half crestfallen, in one hand a stout club, in the other the tail and part of the body of a sun-cured salmon.

"It got half of it," he announced; "but I got a whack at it jes' the same. D'ye hear it squeal?"

"What'd it look like?" Henry asked.

"Couldn't see. But it had four legs an' a mouth an' hair an' looked like any dog."

"Must be a tame wolf, I reckon."²

"It's damned tame, whatever it is, comin' in here at feedin' time an' gettin' its whack of fish."

That night, when supper was finished and they sat on the oblong box and pulled at their pipes, the circle of gleaming eyes drew in even closer than before.

"I wisht they'd spring up a bunch of moose or something, an' go away an' leave us alone," Bill said.

Henry grunted with an intonation that was not all sympathy, and for a quarter of an hour they sat on in silence, Henry staring at the fire, and Bill at the circle of eyes that burned in the darkness just beyond the firelight.

² *Думаю, это, должно быть, ручной волк.*

модальный глагол *must* выражает предположение, подробнее см. ГС 25

³ Хотел бы я, чтобы мы прямо сейчас подкатили к Мак-Гэрри.

конструкция *I wish* выражает сожаление/желание, в более художественном варианте перевода можно перевести как "хорошо бы"

“I wisht we was pullin’ into McGurry right now³,” he began again.

“Shut up your wishin’ and your croakin’,” Henry burst out angrily. “Your stomach’s sour. That’s what’s ailin’ you. Swallow a spoonful of sody, an’ you’ll sweeten up wonderful an’ be more pleasant company.”

In the morning Henry was aroused by fervid blasphemy that proceeded from the mouth of Bill. Henry propped himself up on an elbow and looked to see his comrade standing among the dogs beside the replenished fire, his arms raised in objurgation, his face distorted with passion.

“Hello!” Henry called. “What’s up now?”

“Frog’s gone,” came the answer.

“No.”

“I tell you yes.”

Henry leaped out of the blankets and to the dogs. He counted them with care, and then joined his partner in cursing the power of the Wild that had robbed them of another dog.

“Frog was the strongest dog of the bunch,” Bill pronounced finally.

“An’ he was no fool dog neither,” Henry added.

And so was recorded the second epitaph in two days.

A gloomy breakfast was eaten, and the four remaining dogs were harnessed to the sled. The day was a repetition of the days that had gone before. The