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*Silver Rifle,
the Girl
Trailer*

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The White Tigers of Lake Superior



Published by Good Press, 2022

goodpress@okpublishing.info

EAN 4066338107527

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CHAPTER I. AHDEEK, THE HALF-BREED.

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In the center of a thickly-wooded dell, situated about three miles from the southern shore of Lake Superior, a half-breed youth, clad in the habiliments of a Chippewa Indian, *discussed* a frugal meal. The sun was sinking behind the wonderful Chapel Rocks, and his last beams, stretching through the festooned forests, fell upon and clothed the half-breed in golden light.

His features were clear-cut and regular, his body lithe but well-knit, and a tender expression beamed from the blackest of eyes. A long-barreled rifle rested on his foot, his mink-skin cap surmounted the stock, and on the index finger of his left hand there was a gold ring of singular workmanship, surmounted with a single brilliant.

He was so absorbed in the discussion of his repast, that he grew oblivious to his surroundings, until he put his hands into his pemmican bag, and discovered that his stock of that edible was exhausted.

“Pemmican all gone!” he ejaculated, with a smile. “Ahdeek go, too, now, he and Nahma not meet for three moons. Nahma promised to be in big cave when Ahdeek come back, and Ahdeek much to tell him.”

The youth slowly rose to his feet, picking up his rifle as he executed the movement.

“Sun nearly gone to sleep,” he murmured, glancing toward the west. “Soon he sink to the fishes of Gitche Gumees.”^[1]

A moment longer the half-breed lingered. Then he started toward the lake, but with a single stride he came to a halt, and the click, click of a well oiled rifle-lock followed the lifting of his rifle from a "trail."

A suspicious sound had arrested his steps, and, as he leaned forward, and with shaded eyes tried to penetrate the forest directly before him, the sharp report of a rifle changed the scene.

The half-breed recoiled with a quick ejaculation of surprise, and his own weapon dropped to the ground—the lock knocked out of time by the unseen enemy's bullet.

"Who shoot?" cried the youth, as he sprung to his trusty gun, and snatched it from the ground.

His exclamation was answered by terrific yells, and as he sprung erect with the crippled rifle clubbed, he found a dozen savages rushing upon him.

He did not speak, but faced the dusky demons with tomahawk in one hand, the rifle in the other. He saw at once that his enemies desired to take him alive, for they could have cleft his heart with a dozen balls while he walked leisurely beneath the tree vines.

"The Chippewas have caged the Tiger!" cried the leader of the Indians, a prepossessing young brave, who had won distinction and his eagle-feathers quite early in life. "They have trailed him long; they have watched for him in the caves of Gitche Gumee; they have followed him through the great wood. Now let him be a man, and surrender when he sees that he can not escape."

The chief spoke in the language of his nation, and a smile wreathed the lips of the noble quarry, who, a moment after

the chief had finished, threw rifle, knife and tomahawk on the ground in token of surrender.

Then he folded his half-naked arms, and surveyed the savages who sprung forward elated with long-sought triumph.

“The White Tiger is a true brave,” said the red leader, as he reached a spot within ten feet of the youth. “He knows when—”

“Ki-o-ee-chee!”

The yell pealed from the throat of the half-breed, and while yet it quivered his lips, he was among his dusky enemies, scattering them like chaff with the butt of his rifle!

The Chippewas recoiled before the impetuosity of the attack, for the youth seemed to have suddenly been transformed into a destroying fury, and quick, sharp exclamations of vengeance continually fell from his lips, while he plied the rifle with a dexterity which told that he was no novice in such warfare.

In a moment he had cleared for himself a path through the ranks of his foes, and once more, with his weapon at a trail, he was pushing toward the lake. But he ran at the top of his speed now, and eight mad red-men were on his trail.

Determined to take the daring half-breed alive, they put forth their entire strength in the pursuit.

Ahdeek ran, perhaps, as he never ran before, for the fellows on his trail were fresh, while before the attack his features and physique indicated fatigue.

However, he cleared fallen trees and clumps of briers with astonishing dexterity, and at length the swash of

Superior's waves against the pictured rocks, fell upon his ears.

"Ahdeek soon meet Nahma, if Kitchi-Manitou watches over him!" said the half-breed, between short breaths. "But he dead; he travel long from the little lake near where Pontiac makes war speeches to his braves, and he loaded with powder for Nahma and Ahdeek."

The pursuers seemed to notice their victim's exhaustion; once or twice he touched obstacles which, a few moments since, he could have cleared without difficulty, and, speaking encouragingly to each other, they sent up a chorus of yells which must have fallen laden with doom upon the heart of the hunted.

Nearer and nearer the pictured cliffs Ahdeek approached.

The sun had disappeared beneath the surface of Superior's restless waves, and the forest was growing dark.

Suddenly, with a grunt indicative of a surprise which smacked of the terrible, the hunted half-breed stopped in his tracks, and threw his rifle above his head, while he gripped the blade of his keen knife between his teeth.

The cause for this strange action was the presence of a new foe, and that foe indicated his position by a pair of fiery eyeballs, and low, hoarse growls of bloodthirsty vindictiveness.

Ahdeek might have avoided the danger by rushing on; but the suddenness with which he had discovered the panther—for an upward glance had revealed the wood-terror's whereabouts—had caused him to halt. It was a perilous moment, and all at once, with a trebly fierce growl,

the beast left the limb, and shot down upon Ahdeek like a descending bomb, as fierce and irresistible.

The half-breed recoiled a pace and struck. But his rifle, outreaching too far, fell upon the panther's haunches, and a second later he was borne backward, his unprotected shoulder between the pearly teeth of the brute.

He struggled bravely, but, weakened by the life-chase and deprived of his knife, he could do but little.

He heard the footsteps, almost drowned by yells, that approached from the east, and then, ceasing to struggle, his head fell back, and calmly he gazed at the brute whose weight seemed to crush his breast.

"Panther eat Ahdeek," he cried. "Don't let Chippewa burn him. They hunt him long—panther catch him, at last!"

With the utterance of the last word, the footsteps grew silent, and the following moment the death-yell of the panther mingled with the roar of the water that spent its fury against the foundation of Chapel Rock.

Ahdeek started at the shot, raised himself to his knees, and felt and looked for his weapons.

In a moment his eyes fell upon his rifle, and, with a yell of triumph, he sprung toward it.

He was determined to die rather than surrender to implacable foes, who had lately drank the blood of peaceful traders, "scooped up in the hollow of joined hands."

He turned, with clubbed rifle, despite the fearful pain which his wounded shoulder caused, and dared the vengeance of his foes with a shout of defiance.

The shout was greeted with one of like import, and a moment later, the Chippewas had closed around the brave

half-breed.

Ahdeek struck with his remaining strength; but the rifle was caught by a young Hercules, and wrenched from his grip.

“Now, what says the White Tiger?” cried a savage, triumphantly.

“He says that he slew the Black Eagle with his rifle,” was the reply. “Not far away lie four Chippewas, who have sung the war-song for the last time. Ahdeek struck them! Squaws, the young half-breed has not lived in vain!”

Irritated beyond endurance, the savages contracted their red ranks, and tomahawks shot upward for the carnival of death.

Ahdeek rose with an effort, and faced the savages with folded arms.

“Strike! Send Ahdeek after Black Eagle.”

“The White Tiger of Gitche Gumee dies here!” was the reply, and the spokesman of the party clutched the half-breed’s shoulder, as he raised his knife.

But a yell, the counterpart of which pealed from Ahdeek’s throat when attacked in the dell, startled every one, and the next moment a youthful figure dropped, like a thunderbolt, among the Chippewas.

“Devils!” he cried, hurling aside the Indian who held Ahdeek. “Demons, you’ve caught the wrong man, I say. I am the White Tiger of Lake Superior! I, not the half-breed, am the hunted depopulator of your accursed race!”

The savages recoiled aghast, as a dark cloak fell from the youth’s shoulders, and exposed his handsome figure.

Ahdeek, with a cry of "Nahma!" stepped to the Destroyer's side.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIGURE IN THE CHAPEL.

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The youth's voice broke the silence that followed his last word:

"The Chippewas face the White Tiger now!" he thundered, as his rifle struck his shoulder, and his eye swept the startled band before him. "He is not merciless. Bad Indians have lied about him; he does not live on blood. Now, back to your lodges toward the rising sun. I spare you now, but if ever you cross the White Tiger's trail again, Chippewas, you shall feel his teeth then. I spare you for this time, because you are young warriors. Why stand you here staring? Back to the trails that lead to the council-fires. Back! I say, before the White Tiger slays!"

With the last words the youth's cheek dropped nearer the rifle, and the muzzle almost touched the leader's forehead.

"Go!" he thundered again. "Hark! the Manitou is speaking; he is painting the waves of Gitche Gumee with his fire."

The dread of the White Tiger was manifest then, for, without a word in reply, the sub-chief turned on his heel, and strode deliberately into the forest.

"Warriors, follow your chief!" cried the Destroyer, and a moment later he and Ahdeek stood alone amid the prevailing darkness.

"They fear the White Tiger, Ahdeek," said the youth, with a smile, as he turned to the young half-breed. "Boy, had it not been for your wounded condition, eight Chippewas

would not have walked from this spot. But you could not assist, so I took advantage of the terror which I had inspired in their bosoms, and, see, they run from the White Tiger when he follows not."

"Nahma has broken his word," said the young half-breed, refusing to return the smile of mingled scorn and contempt that wreathed White Tiger's lips. "He said that he would never show himself to the red-man while Ahdeek stood among them. They should not see Nahma and Ahdeek with one eye."

"I know it, Ahdeek; but I could not avoid it to-night. Ahdeek was on the death-trail; Nahma was near, and his arm, his words, not forked like the trees, alone could snatch his brother from the jaws of death. Ahdeek will forgive, will he not?"

They were walking toward the lake now, and in the stillness of that festooned woods the half-breed put forth his hand.

"Ahdeek will forgive his pale brother," he said, in a low, cautious tone. "Nahma could not keep his oath, and save his Ahdeek."

"Then all is well, boy," replied the white youth. "The Chippewas now know that Ahdeek is not the White Tiger of Lake Superior, and that instead of hunting one destroyer, they must hunt, and be hunted by, two. But, boy, did you get the powder?"

"Ahdeek wears two big belts full," replied the half-breed.

"Good! we shall not want now. What are the Indians doing?"

“Bad work! bad work!” cried the half-breed. “Pontiac has struck one hard blow on the big waters.”

“That Ottawa fiend! How I wish he would show his painted face in these parts!” ejaculated the youth, and his fingers closed on his rifle with determined emphasis as he spoke. “But tell me about that strong blow, Ahdeek.”

Then the half-breed proceeded to give an account of the fall of the lake forts, and the investment of Detroit, all of which was news to the white youth.

“While the Ottawas and their allies struck the posts, the Chippewas struck the trappers hereabouts,” said the White Tiger. “Ahdeek, I can tell you of twenty-eight trappers who fell in their huts or at their traps the selfsame night.”

Ahdeek clutched the Destroyer’s arm.

“Trappers all dead?”

“All but several who escaped in boats.”

“Where Snowbeard?”

“Dead.”

The half-breed groaned.

“Where house?”

“Burned up!”

White teeth gritted audibly in the darkness.

“Now, Ahdeek,” said the youth, “now that Snowbeard is dead, tell me what he was to you. Why have you left the castle at midnight to seek the hut of that old man! Unravel the mystery while I unfasten the boat.”

The youth stooped over the rope that lashed a little boat to a sharp rock, and tugged at the knots.

“Ahdeek can not tell Nahma until he takes the trail to Snowbeard’s house.”

“Boy, I will keep the secret. Is Ahdeek afraid to trust his brother?”

“Afraid to trust the brother whose couch he has shared for many moons? No!” cried the half-breed. “But he can not tell now. Old Snowbeard was dear to Ahdeek, and the Chippewas shall feel more than ever now the wildcat’s claws and teeth.”

The youth did not reply, but continued to work at the boat in silence. Above him the harsh thunder rolled, and the stormy waves and rocky shore were vividly revealed by the glare of lightning.

At length, tired of tugging at knots which the spray had rendered openless, the boy, with an ejaculation of impatience, severed the rope, and the twain seated themselves in the boat.

“I’ll paddle, Ahdeek,” said the white youth. “Don’t worry your shoulder with any work till I get it fixed up, in the castle. Those devilish panthers can bite like all get out.”

“Panthers’ teeth sharp,” replied the half-breed, passing a hand lightly over the crunched shoulder; “but shoulder soon be well.”

“Providence willing,” smiled the youth, and a moment later he continued:

“Ahdeek, a ghost has visited Gitche Gumee during your absence.”

An exclamation of surprise followed this startling announcement, and by the lightning the Destroyer saw a pair of eyes staring into his.

“A spirit from the Manitou-land on the big sea water?”