

**Zane Grey**



*Roping Lions  
in the Grand  
Canyon*

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# **Roping Lions in the Grand Canyon**



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# CHAPTER I

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THE Grand Canyon of Arizona is over two hundred miles long, thirteen wide, and a mile and a half deep; a titanic gorge in which mountains, tablelands, chasms and cliffs lie half veiled in purple haze. It is wild and sublime, a thing of wonder, of mystery; beyond all else a place to grip the heart of a man, to unleash his daring spirit.

On April 20th, 1908, after days on the hot desert, my weary party and pack train reached the summit of Powell's Plateau, the most isolated, inaccessible and remarkable mesa of any size in all the canyon country. Cut off from the mainland it appeared insurmountable; standing aloof from the towers and escarpments, rugged and bold in outline, its forest covering like a strip of black velvet, its giant granite walls gold in the sun, it seemed apart from the world, haunting with its beauty, isolation and wild promise.

The members of my party harmoniously fitted the scene. Buffalo Jones, burly-shouldered, bronze-faced, and grim, proved in his appearance what a lifetime on the plains could make of a man. Emmett was a Mormon, a massively built grey-bearded son of the desert; he had lived his life on it; he had conquered it and in his falcon eyes shone all its fire and freedom. Ranger Jim Owens had the wiry, supple body and careless, tidy garb of the cowboy, and the watchful gaze, quiet face and locked lips of the frontiersman. The fourth member was a Navajo Indian, a copper-skinned, raven-haired, beady-eyed desert savage.

I had told Emmett to hire some one who could put the horses on grass in the evening and then find them the next morning. In northern Arizona this required more than genius. Emmett secured the best trailer of the desert Navajos. Jones hated an Indian; and Jim, who carried an ounce of lead somewhere in his person, associated this painful addition to his weight with an unfriendly Apache, and swore all Indians should be dead. So between the two, Emmett and I had trouble in keeping our Navajo from illustrating the plainsman idea of a really good Indian—a dead one.

While we were pitching camp among magnificent pine trees, and above a hollow where a heavy bank of snow still lay, a sodden pounding in the turf attracted our attention.

"Hold the horses!" yelled Emmett.

As we all made a dive among our snorting and plunging horses the sound seemed to be coming right into camp. In a moment I saw a string of wild horses thundering by. A noble black stallion led them, and as he ran with beautiful stride he curved his fine head backward to look at us, and whistled his wild challenge.

Later a herd of large white-tailed deer trooped up the hollow. The Navajo grew much excited and wanted me to shoot, and when Emmett told him we had not come out to kill, he looked dumbfounded. Even the Indian felt it a strange departure from the usual mode of hunting to travel and climb hundreds of miles over hot desert and rock-ribbed canyons, to camp at last in a spot so wild that deer were tame as cattle, and then not kill.

Nothing could have pleased me better, incident to the settling into permanent camp. The wild horses and tame

deer added the all-satisfying touch to the background of forest, flowers and mighty pines and sunlit patches of grass, the white tents and red blankets, the sleeping hounds and blazing fire-logs all making a picture like that of a hunter's dream.

"Come, saddle up," called the never restful Jones. "Leave the Indian in camp with the hounds, and we'll get the lay of the land." All afternoon we spent riding the plateau. What a wonderful place! We were completely bewildered with its physical properties, and surprised at the abundance of wild horses and mustangs, deer, coyotes, foxes, grouse and other birds, and overjoyed to find innumerable lion trails. When we returned to camp I drew a rough map, which Jones laid flat on the ground as he called us around him.

"Now, boys, let's get our heads together."

In shape the plateau resembled the ace of clubs. The center and side wings were high and well wooded with heavy pines; the middle wing was longest, sloped west, had no pine, but a dense growth of cedar. Numerous ridges and canyons cut up this central wing. Middle Canyon, the longest and deepest, bisected the plateau, headed near camp, and ran parallel with two smaller ones, which we named Right and Left Canyons. These three were lion runways and hundreds of deer carcasses lined the thickets. North Hollow was the only depression, as well as runway, on the northwest rim. West Point formed the extreme western cape of the plateau. To the left of West Point was a deep cut-in of the rim wall, called the Bay. The three important canyons opened into it. From the Bay, the south rim was

regular and impassable all the way round to the narrow Saddle, which connected it to the mainland.

"Now then," said Jones, when we assured him that we were pretty well informed as to the important features, "you can readily see our advantage. The plateau is about nine or ten miles long, and six wide at its widest. We can't get lost, at least for long. We know where lions can go over the rim and we'll head them off, make short cut chases, something new in lion hunting. We are positive the lions can not get over the second wall, except where we came up, at the Saddle. In regard to lion signs, I'm doubtful of the evidence of my own eyes. This is virgin ground. No white man or Indian has ever hunted lions here. We have stumbled on a lion home, the breeding place of hundreds of lions that infest the north rim of the canyon."

The old plainsman struck a big fist into the palm of his hand, a rare action with him. Jim lifted his broad hat and ran his fingers through his white hair. In Emmett's clear desert-eagle eyes shown a furtive, anxious look, which yet could not overshadow the smouldering fire.

"If only we don't kill the horses!" he said.

More than anything else that remark from such a man thrilled me with its subtle suggestion. He loved those beautiful horses. What wild rides he saw in his mind's eye! In cold calculation we perceived the wonderful possibilities never before experienced by hunters, and as the wild spell clutched us my last bar of restraint let down.

During supper we talked incessantly, and afterward around the camp-fire. Twilight fell with the dark shadows

sweeping under the silent pines; the night wind rose and began its moan.

"Shore there's some scent on the wind," said Jim, lighting his pipe with a red ember. "See how uneasy Don is."

The hound raised his fine, dark head and repeatedly sniffed the air, then walked to and fro as if on guard for his pack. Moze ground his teeth on a bone and growled at one of the pups. Sounder was sleepy, but he watched Don with suspicious eyes. The other hounds, mature and somber, lay stretched before the fire.

"Tie them up, Jim," said Jones, "and let's turn in."

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# CHAPTER II

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WHEN I awakened next morning the sound of Emmett's axe rang out sharply. Little streaks of light from the camp-fire played between the flaps of the tent. I saw old Moze get up and stretch himself. A jangle of cow-bells from the forest told me we would not have to wait for the horses that morning.

"The Injun's all right," Jones remarked to Emmett.

"All rustle for breakfast," called Jim.

We ate in the semi-darkness with the gray shadow ever brightening. Dawn broke as we saddled our horses. The pups were limber, and ran to and fro on their chains, scenting the air; the older hounds stood quietly waiting.

"Come Navvy—come chase cougie," said Emmett.

"Dam! No!" replied the Indian.

"Let him keep camp," suggested Jim.

"All right; but he'll eat us out," Emmett declared.

"Climb up you fellows," said Jones, impatiently. "Have I got everything —rope, chains, collars, wire, nippers? Yes, all right. Hyar, you lazy dogs—out of this!"

We rode abreast down the ridge. The demeanor of the hounds contrasted sharply with what it had been at the start of the hunt the year before. Then they had been eager, uncertain, violent; they did not know what was in the air; now they filed after Don in an orderly trot.

We struck out of the pines at half past five. Floating mist hid the lower end of the plateau. The morning had a cool touch but there was no frost. Crossing Middle Canyon about

half way down we jogged on. Cedar trees began to show bright green against the soft gray sage. We were nearing the dark line of the cedar forest when Jim, who led, held up his hand in a warning check. We closed in around him.

"Watch Don," he said.

The hound stood stiff, head well up, nose working, and the hair on his back bristling. All the other hounds whined and kept close to him.

"Don scents a lion," whispered Jim. "I've never known him to do that unless there was the scent of a lion on the wind."

"Hunt 'em up Don, old boy," called Jones.

The pack commenced to work back and forth along the ridge. We neared a hollow when Don barked eagerly. Sounder answered and likewise Jude. Moze's short angry "bow-wow" showed the old gladiator to be in line.

"Ranger's gone," cried Jim. "He was farthest ahead. I'll bet he's struck it. We'll know in a minute, for we're close."

The hounds were tearing through the sage, working harder and harder, calling and answering one another, all the time getting down into the hollow.

Don suddenly let out a string of yelps. I saw him, running head up, pass into the cedars like a yellow dart. Sounder howled his deep, full bay, and led the rest of the pack up the slope in angry clamor.

"They're off!" yelled Jim, and so were we.

In less than a minute we had lost one another. Crashings among the dry cedars, thud of hoofs and yells kept me going in one direction. The fiery burst of the hounds had surprised me. I remembered that Jim had said Emmett and his

charger might keep the pack in sight, but that none of the rest of us could.

It did not take me long to realize what my mustang was made of. His name was Foxie, which suited him well. He carried me at a fast pace on the trail of some one; and he seemed to know that by keeping in this trail part of the work of breaking through the brush was already done for him. Nevertheless, the sharp dead branches, more numerous in a cedar forest than elsewhere, struck and stung us as we passed. We climbed a ridge, and found the cedars thinning out into open patches. Then we faced a bare slope of sage and I saw Emmett below on his big horse.

Foxie bolted down this slope, hurdling the bunches of sage, and showing the speed of which Emmett had boasted. The open ground, with its brush, rock and gullies, was easy going for the little mustang. I heard nothing save the wind singing in my ears. Emmett's trail, plain in the yellow ground showed me the way. On entering the cedars again I pulled Foxie in and stopped twice to yell "waa-hoo!" I heard the baying of the hounds, but no answer to my signal. Then I attended to the stern business of catching up. For what seemed a long time, I threaded the maze of cedar, galloped the open sage flats, always on Emmett's track.

A signal cry, sharp to the right, turned me. I answered, and with the exchange of signal cries found my way into an open glade where Jones and Jim awaited me.

"Here's one," said Jim. "Emmett must be with the hounds. Listen."

With the labored breathing of the horses filling our ears we could hear no other sound. Dismounting, I went aside

and turned my ear to the breeze.

"I hear Don," I cried instantly.

"Which way?" both men asked.

"West."

"Strange," said Jones. "The hound wouldn't split, would he, Jim?"

"Don leave that hot trail? Shore he wouldn't," replied Jim. "But his runnin' do seem queer this morning."

"The breeze is freshening," I said. "There! Now listen! Don, and Sounder, too."

The baying came closer and closer. Our horses threw up long ears. It was hard to sit still and wait. At a quick cry from Jim we saw Don cross the lower end of the flat.

No need to spur our mounts! The lifting of bridles served, and away we raced. Foxie passed the others in short order. Don had long disappeared, but with blended bays, Jude, Moze, and Sounder broke out of the cedars hot on the trail. They, too, were out of sight in a moment.

The crash of breaking brush and thunder of hoofs from where the hounds had come out of the forest, attracted and even frightened me. I saw the green of a low cedar tree shake, and split, to let out a huge, gaunt horse with a big man doubled over his saddle. The onslaught of Emmett and his desert charger stirred a fear in me that checked admiration.

"Hounds running wild," he yelled, and the dark shadows of the cedars claimed him again.

A hundred yards within the forest we came again upon Emmett, dismounted, searching the ground. Moze and Sounder were with him, apparently at fault. Suddenly Moze

left the little glade and venting his sullen, quick bark, disappeared under the trees. Sounder sat on his haunches and yelped.

"Now what the hell is wrong?" growled Jones tumbling off his saddle.

"Shore something is," said Jim, also dismounting.

"Here's a lion track," interposed Emmett.

"Ha! and here's another," cried Jones, in great satisfaction. "That's the trail we were on, and here's another crossing it at right angles. Both are fresh: one isn't fifteen minutes old. Don and Jude have split one way and Moze another. By George! that's great of Sounder to hang fire!"

"Put him on the fresh trail," said Jim, vaulting into his saddle.

Jones complied, with the result that we saw Sounder start off on the trail Moze had taken. All of us got in some pretty hard riding, and managed to stay within earshot of Sounder. We crossed a canyon, and presently reached another which, from its depth, must have been Middle Canyon. Sounder did not climb the opposite slope, so we followed the rim. From a bare ridge we distinguished the line of pines above us, and decided that our location was in about the center of the plateau.

Very little time elapsed before we heard Moze. Sounder had caught up with him. We came to a halt where the canyon widened and was not so deep, with cliffs and cedars opposite us, and an easy slope leading down. Sounder bayed incessantly; Moze emitted harsh, eager howls, and both hounds, in plain sight, began working in circles.

"The lion has gone up somewhere," cried Jim. "Look sharp!"

Repeatedly Moze worked to the edge of a low wall of stone and looked over; then he barked and ran back to the slope, only to return. When I saw him slide down a steep place, make for the bottom of the stone wall, and jump into the low branches of a cedar I knew where to look. Then I descried the lion a round yellow ball, cunningly curled up in a mass of dark branches. He had leaped into the tree from the wall.

"There he is! Treed! Treed!" I yelled. "Moze has found him."

"Down boys, down into the canyon," shouted Jones, in sharp voice. "Make a racket, we don't want him to jump."

How he and Jim and Emmet rolled and cracked the stone! For a moment I could not get off my horse; I was chained to my saddle by a strange vacillation that could have been no other thing than fear.

"Are you afraid?" called Jones from below.

"Yes, but I am coming," I replied, and dismounted to plunge down the hill. It may have been shame or anger that dominated me then; whatever it was I made directly for the cedar, and did not halt until I was under the snarling lion.

"Not too close!" warned Jones. "He might jump. It's a Tom, a two-year-old, and full of fight."

It did not matter to me then whether he jumped or not. I knew I had to be cured of my dread, and the sooner it was done the better.

Old Moze had already climbed a third of the distance up to the lion.

"Hyar Moze! Out of there, you rascal coon chaser!" Jones yelled as he threw stones and sticks at the hound. Moze, however, replied with his snarly bark and climbed on steadily.

"I've got to pull him out. Watch close boys and tell me if the lion starts down."

When Jones climbed the first few branches of the tree, Tom let out an ominous growl.

"Make ready to jump. Shore he's comin'," called Jim.

The lion, snarling viciously, started to descend. It was a ticklish moment for all of us, particularly Jones. Warily he backed down.

"Boys, maybe he's bluffing," said Jones, "Try him out. Grab sticks and run at the tree and yell, as if you were going to kill him."

Not improbably the demonstration we executed under the tree would have frightened even an African lion. Tom hesitated, showed his white fangs, returned to his first perch, and from there climbed as far as he could. The forked branch on which he stood swayed alarmingly.

"Here, punch Moze out," said Jim handing up a long pole.

The old hound hung like a leech to the tree, making it difficult to dislodge him. At length he fell heavily, and venting his thick battle cry, attempted to climb again.

Jim seized him, made him fast to the rope with which Sounder had already been tied.

"Say Emett, I've no chance here," called Jones. "You try to throw at him from the rock."

Emett ran up the rock, coiled his lasso and cast the noose. It sailed perfectly in between the branches and