

#2.

~~#3.~~ THE SURVIVOR

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Saturday Evening Post, Independence Square, Philadelphia, Penn.

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Collier's 250 Park Avenue New York

6/28/32.

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MIM.

The Atlantic Monthly 8 Arlington Street Boston

7/11/32.

7/22/32
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The Forum 441 Lexington Avenue, New York, N.Y.

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7/22/32
MIM. (*)

The Elks Magazine, 50 East 42nd St. NEW YORK.
(John T. Fanning, Editor)

8/16/32.

10/14/32

The Midland, 801 Monadnock Bldg Chicago

11/20/32
NOTE.

12/14/32
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Prairie Schooner - Station "A", Lincoln, Neb.

12/27/32
NOTE.

1/4/33.
NOTE.

Clay. (no - not sent)
NOTE.

1/23/33.

Frontier, Co. Mr. Merriman, State St. Missoula, Mont.

2/15/33.

2/23/33
MIM.

Pagan

2/25/33.

3/27/33.
MIM.

Story

5/8/33. WROTE INQUIRY.

3/29/33.

5/22/33.
-NOTE.

The Windsor Quarterly

6/13/33.

6/19/33
MIM.

Outlander.

9/25/33
NOTE.

10/3/33
NOTE.

Dubuque Dial (Rejected & returned 2/18/35!!)

12/20/34.
NOTE.

accepted
1/12/35.
NOTE.

Literary America

2/18/35.
NOTE.

3/3/35
NOTE.

Esquire

Oct. 22, 1935.

OCT. 30, 35.
MIM +

STORY

JAN. 22, 1936.

FEB. 6, 1936. NOTE

STORY

OCT. 2, 1936.

OCT. 16, 1936. MIM.

Hinterland

Oct. 15, 1936.

Jan. 13, 1937.

#3.

Survivors

Midweest	Jan. 13, 1937	Feb. 24, 1937. Letter.
Story	Aug. 4, 1937.	Sep. 20, 1937. Letter.
Catamocit Box 183 Mont, Vermont	Nov. 22, 1937.	Dec. 13, 1937. Letter.
(2) Hunderland	Jan. 26, 1939.	Mar. 17, 1939.

Pipe
an

June 12, 1937.

The Survivor.

Original MS.

I was just after ^{stirin} ~~having stirred~~ the mash in the two barrels ^{behind} ~~at~~ the cookin' range, there ^{and} I was scrapin' a beaver hide.

We set there ^{and} Black Maria, ^{and} I both ^{of us} a little drunk. ^{It was} ~~we were~~ ^{Saturday} the third night of the blizzard, and the wind was whistlin' and ^{howlin'} ~~scrapin'~~ round our cabin fit to blow us away.

~~in one place this place I built with my own hands -~~
They ^{was} even enough draft A bless my rheumatism - to be skvayn' the flame of the lamp ^{I woulda} set tween us there. Set a fellow thinkin' ^{like see} serious, to ^{return there} that ~~lady~~ cat, lappin' up that mash, her shadow dancin' ^{the logs of} around ~~my~~ the far wall. Them ears and whiskers.

by the frickin' of the mice
was nigh
its place

Our clock ^{been} stopped, long about ^{on another Saturday night} a month ago, ^{when he out drunk me.} but I ^{figgured} ~~figgured~~ ^{but} ~~figgured~~ its place ^{was nigh} out, midnight ^{by the frickin' of the mice} when Black Maria's tongue began lollin'. ^{I was} I ~~know~~ know ^{it} time to put her in the box behind the heatin' stove. ^{one what} They ^{eat} ~~eat~~ ^{can} stand her likker.

I set down again ^{rubber} and ~~seared~~ ^{seared} off my boots. My eyes is gettin' ^{most} as bad as my rheumatism, but I read ~~and~~ ^a bit from the Bible. ^{Par.} A fellers got to be a little Godful ^{up} in these woods, ^{just us} here ~~all~~ alone, or the ~~fast~~ ^{last spring} devill'll get him sure. Look ~~it~~ ^{that} old Peter Moore. They found him, hangin' from the rafters ^{of his} ~~of his~~ ^{shaft} cabin, ^{of his} down at the forks of the Big Dead and Mulligan Creeb. Pete never read the Bible. ^A Course Pete couldn't read anyway, but he could a kept it handy like.

now I look back on it I figger
I ~~guess~~ I must a gotten skind a dozen, there with
my socks steamin' ~~and~~ ^{an'} half listenin' to the blizzard
Sudden like ^{out there} I heard a thud ~~and~~ ^{crunchin'} ~~at the door~~
at the door. Then ~~it~~ ^{was} all ~~quiet~~ ^{still} - nothin but the
wind laughin' out there ~~amongst~~ the trees.

~~So~~ I goes over to the door and opens it slow like,
and the drifted snow ^{drift there} ~~comes~~ came tumbling in on the floor.
~~The~~ Just before the wind blew out the lamp I ~~set~~ ^{sells} a
feller lyin' there. I drug him in and laid him on my
bunk ~~and~~ ^{then!} lit the lamp and shoveled the snow into an empty
barrel.

Pore feller almost done. Froze stiffer in a preacher's
collar. His feet ~~was~~ ⁱⁿ wool and had bust his boots. Both
hands was bleedin' and raw. His face and ears had gone
way fat and blue - like old salt pork. ^{But} Then there
eyes of his kept peerin' out at me ^{without a winks} ~~like a couple a coals~~
~~from the stove.~~

I put a couple a pine knots in the heater
and ~~had~~ soon mixed a couple a stiff toddy - one for
him and one for me.

^{toddy} I pried his swoll lips apart and poured down the ~~right~~ ^{crack along his} I could hear it, list his gullet and gut like ~~pouring~~ ^{pouring} water on a froze window.

Heft ~~was~~ ^{was} too far gone for much help, ~~the~~ ^{the} My corn liker musta helped him ^{a mile} ~~some~~ ^{though} ~~cause~~ ^{swoll} his lips began to move and he starts blowin' bubbles like a baby. I miles two more stiff toddy's and ^{I went back and set at the table sippin' mine} ~~give him another one~~ ^{one more} ~~his gonna get to~~ ^{and I got to watch him we might both as well be drunk.} ~~die there he might as be drunk and if I got to watch him I might as well be drunk too.~~ ^{Them there eyes was borin' into me again.} I was sort a surprised to hear him talk.

"Father" he say.

He's turned his swoll head toward me. ^{Them eyes of his is borin' into me again.}

"What is it son?", I says, soft-like.

~~He~~ ^{He} was gobblin' ^{the} ~~his~~ ^{swoll} lips somethin' awful. Guess the gov' ~~was~~ ^{was} sort a hard.

"Come over by me, Father," he say. "Bring the book."

^{Froze or no froze, he'd spotted the Bible settin' there on the table} I fetches ~~it~~ ^{a couple more toddy's and the Bible and} sets down side ^{him at} the ~~bed~~ ^{bed} bunk there.

He reaches out one of those froze hands of his. ^{Them} ~~Them~~ ^{clippin's} ~~clippin's~~ ^{front and blood} ~~now~~ ^{now} from the heat. "Bible," he say.

He put his ^{right} ~~left~~ ^{hand} ~~hand~~ ^{what} ~~was~~ ^{bleedin'} ~~hand~~ on the Bible for a little bit. ~~was~~



gazin' at me quiet'.
They lay there blinkin' for quite a piece. Then he started to talk.

"Father, do you believe in ^{the virtue of} self preservation?" he says sudden like.

This feller ^{must a been pretty well eddicated, I figgers I tellin' him} sprung out for they high-toned words. ^{then thinkin' how} ~~then thinkin' how~~ ^{in my day} I allowed as how I did.

He lay

He tried to smile and ~~it~~ ^{it} was pretty bad. There's frost water runnin' ~~down his~~ ^{eyes and} from his ears and eyes and down his nose and outa his ^{swoll} mouth. Outside the wind ~~as howling and whistlin'~~. The storm ~~was~~ gettin' worse if that it could. He closed his eyes. (Stet)

Then ~~he~~ ^{he} ~~closed his eyes and~~ ^{he} ~~begun to talk~~ ^{he} low and quiet like - lyin' ~~there~~ with his eyes shet, like a little child confessin' somethin'.

"It seems years since I've been so warm and comfortable. You'll probably think I'm crazy. I nodded. I didn't think it was funny or that he was crazy."
"Father," ^{he said,} "I ~~am~~ ^{am} the ~~survivor~~ ^{survivor} - the only one left. They all back there, 'slow' like he pointed south. "All down there in the mine, snug ~~and warm~~" - and warm."

Louise's father and I ~~started~~ ^{his} went down in ~~the~~ ^{before} mine that day to see if ~~it~~ ^{it} couldn't be worked a little longer ^{without being} abandoned. ^{we had to walk down on the ladder. The ropes had buckled and warped the timbers so that the skip couldn't descend.} The men were complainin' that the seepage from Lake Louise was beginnin' to run into the ~~drift~~ ^{mine} particularly in the north drifts.

His eyes ^{like yimped a} ~~flashed~~ a little, lyin' there. "Louise is ^{was} my wife," he said.

I set there blinkin' and holdin' the Bible.

When we got to the bottom, ~~we~~ I could see it was pretty bad. Water dripping all around. Her father and I started for the north drift, walking along the tram car tracks, ^{that} they were half buried in water and mud. Every now and then we'd come to a dent in the drift, ~~and~~ mules stalls. Their big ears looked pretty funny in ~~by~~ the ^{bobbing} ~~dancing~~ light of our carbide lamps. Just think, ^{the same} mules in a mine

^{since I was a boy - so snug - so warm -}
^{I guess being another quip of the valley}
When we reached the men they were standing all in a huddle, ^{leaning on their picks and shovels,} muttering among themselves.

Her father ^{greeted them.} said hello. They didn't answer. The water was literally pouring down from overhead.

Then a little Italian pointed up. I ^{still} ^{have} ^{now} never forget ^{standing} him there looking up, ~~and~~ showing the whites of his eyes. 'No lak, Boss, ^{he said.} too much wet. No lak, We were right under Lake Louise - her lake. I ^{remember that I} shivered, though ~~the~~ heat from the mine and the bodies of the men was oppressive.

Her father gave ~~them~~ men a verbal lashing - their last. ^{The feller stopped for a minute. I guess he had many of the instincts of a bully.} He told them they were lucky to have a job in such times without grumbling 'belly-aching' about working conditions. 'Afraid of a little water. You fellows are whiners, not miners.'

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" The mining crew ^{were} ~~were~~ up in the north drift - Fifty men in all. ^{Her} Father and I walked along the tram car track, ^{they} ~~they~~ ^{working} ~~working~~ down there that bear ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{for} ~~for~~ ^{years} ~~years~~ - ^{and} ~~and~~ ^{there} ~~there~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^a ~~a ^{lot} ~~lot of water dripping down in streams from flickering, ~~and~~ ~~joined~~ ~~them~~ overhead.~~~~

When ~~they~~ we joined the men they were all leaning on their picks and shovels, mumbling among themselves. Her father says hello and they didn't answer. It's all quiet save for ~~the~~ our breathing and the water and mud running down into the drift from Lake Louise. "Pretty rotten place to work," I thought.

Her father gave the men a talk. Told them that they were lucky to have a job in these hard times without grumbling about working conditions. Afraid of a little water. Mines now-a-days getting to be a bunch of whiners.

"If you don't like to work in the Louise, men, just go up and get your time. There's plenty more waiting to take your place."

With that we turned and walked back to the shaft. I wasn't relishing the long climb up the ladder. As I walked back behind her father, ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{flame} ~~flame~~ of my carbide lamp dancing on his broad back, I thought of how much chance those poor men had of quitting - with their families starving now on the reduced wages.

~~The want of~~ Their loyalty to their families sealed their doom.

We were almost ^{to} at the foot of the ladder, ^{suddenly} when we heard a
terrific roar from ^{the drift} ^{from the north} ^{we had just come from there} ^{when I heard}
^{with the shrieks of the men} ^{the drift} ^{from where we came} ^{mangled}
^{the men} ^{like a cyclone} ^{blew our lights}
^{and knocked down} ^{our father}
^{God man}, "shouted his father, "the bottoms fallen out of
Lake Louise." Race for it.

Both of us stumbled to the
~~packed up his father and raced him to the~~
foot of the ladder, ^{what a hellish} ^{behind us} ^{growing louder} ^{ever instant}
^{and started} ^{back} ^{up}. God what ^{fast} ^{slipping}
back there. ^{we could hear the roar of the mud and water rushing down the drift to us.}

This fellow rest a little. "Lordy me," I thought. "men caught like rats in a hole."

He started again.

"His father ^{started to} climb ~~up~~ that ladder like a mad ape.

The slime and ooze from the lake ^{bottom} was creeping ^{up} the
~~bottom of the shaft~~ ^{the} ^{at the top} ^{filling all the lower levels} ^{below} ^{and sucking}
like hot lava ^{just} below ^{me}. I climbed like fury and soon ran into
her father's heels. The noise was terrible. ^{I felt that} The old man was
^{trying} ^{playing out}. I tried to pass him ^{there on the ladder} and he kicked at me.
I ^{climbed up} got alongside him and shouted ^{to} for him to grab onto my
belt. He did and we made some progress, ^{but that hellish stuff}
kept gaining on us. ^{He lost his grip} ^{and} ^{but caught my}
~~his leg~~. The mud and water was up to him ^{then} over his shoes
his knees. I tried to pull him out

The pore feller was gettin' awful worked up. His eyes opened and was blazin' like coals. ~~He began to shout.~~
His voice was just a sobbin' like

"Then that hellish stuff began to gann on us. Suddenly he lost his grip on my belt and caught ~~at my shoe leg~~ -
I looked down. For the first time from the shaft opening I could see that
~~at the angle ankle - ankle.~~ The mud and water was up to ~~his shoes~~ ^{then to} his knees.

That pore feller began to ^(talks facts) chatter through those

blubberin' lips of his.
I looked down. The dim light from the shaft opening above showed me the ridiculously dignified head of a dead mule.

"The mud and water caught up to him. Then over his shoes and knees.

I tried to pull him out, I tell you. Then without a word he relaxed his grip ~~and was gone~~. I looked down. The damned stuff was around his neck. He was grinning at me. Grinning I tell you. Then he went.

The pore feller fell back on the bunk breathin' like a porpoise.
I lifted him ~~and gave him another slug of toddy.~~ He come to again
talkin' ~~shoutin' husky, robbin' like~~

"I tell you he slipped. He's ~~hand~~ lost his grip," the
fellow barked. He was yellin'. "He was an old man. He wouldn't
have lived ~~long~~ anyway."

"Yes, he slipped," I said quiet like.

His eyes were burnin' into mine. He ~~begun to~~ shriek.

"He slipped, I tell you. Say somethin', damn you. Tell you he slipped."

I said, "yes son, he slipped," quiet like.

Then the fellow ~~was~~ gettin' weaker. His voice ~~was~~ ^{got kinda like a hoarse like a} almost a whisperin' ^{like a hoarse}

When I got to the top of the shaft. I looked down and there he
was - just going under. Grinning at me, I tell you. Grinning."

When I climbed out of the shaft I was blinded for a minute.

There was no one around. I could see a bunch group of ~~surface~~ workmen
standing at the edge of what was once Lake Louise. I fled into the woods and

headed north. I been running for years -- years, I tell you. That ~~damn stuff~~
I've been going north where it's cold but that damn mud won't freeze. ~~It's~~
always at my heels. ~~and when~~ I look down there he's grinning at me.

The feller was pretty all in, and I ~~could see his time was near.~~ ^{figgered he wouldn't last long so}

I propped him up on a pillow,

I got up and turned down the lamp and sat by the stove an' lit my pipe.

I was standin' ^{was} sittin' there by the stove with Ann lyin' there starin' at me. ^{with these eyes} All of a sudden I ~~hear~~ ^{I see him sturin' at the stove} and I see the cut - Black Maria - ^{come out of her box} all bristlin' and ^{hump backed,} spatterin', walkin' reelin', ~~trump~~ hump-backed toward the bunk where he layed there.



Then he ^{you} braced himself on ~~the door~~ ^{the bunk} and ~~come~~ ^{came} out of the ~~frank~~ ^{frank} ~~stom~~ ^{stom} ~~stomped~~ ^{stomped} ~~along~~ ^{along} on those clubbed feet of his to the door and ^{with} wrapped one of ^{them} ~~those~~ ^{arms} ~~around~~ ^{around} the door. ^{He stood there dozen a second and then dumped himself} "Here there, son," I say, ^{trump} trying to hurry out of the chair. ^{He moaned somethin' awful}

He turned ^{get back to the bunk} those ^{terrible eyes on my} ~~eyes~~ ^{to a lie - a damnable lie,} "he shouted." He was sobbin' and slobberin'. "I kicked ^{him. I kicked} his hand away. He'd have gotten me, I tell you. I kicked his hand. He stood there his swell lips beefy and burstin' ^{choked open} like a lynched nigger's."

He ~~had~~ ^{had} the door open. The wind and snow ^{howlin'} came in ~~on~~ ⁱⁿ.

He turned ^{beefy} and faced me, ~~beaten~~ ^{beaten}, and wild lookin' and laughin' ^{lookin' at} --- it was pretty awful. ^{of his face} ~~from that~~ ^{of his face} The oil lamp was gutted by the wind of his. Then ^{I starts for him and} he turned ^{and ran} and ^{and} stumbled into the storm, before I could get ^{to him:} ~~to him:~~ ^{could} ~~before I could~~ ^{before I could} ~~say my rheumatism would hobbled to the door.~~

~~Out there to~~ ^{As} I ^{stood with the door and} could hear a ^{kind a} laughin' ^{put there} 'ompin' up with
the 'sawlin' of the wind.

Somethin' rubbed ^{again} my leg and I ^{reached} ~~looked~~ down and there's ^{Black Maria} ^{purrrin'} ~~rollin' out her tongue~~ ^{as peaceful like.}
I closed the door ^{and} ~~blew out the lamp~~ ^{and shovelled the snow in a empty barrel.} ^{I kept this}

no findin' the ~~body of that~~ one till spring. ^{and I figgered} ^{an old} ^{small} ^{old} fellow
has ^{got} to mind his strength, with a batch to run off in the
morning.

ECC

2326 words *gtd. at 1 scent a word.*
8 page MS

Submitted by:
John D. Voelker,
1033 Ontario Street,
Oak Park, Illinois.

THE SURVIVOR

We set there, ✓ I an' Black Maria, ✓ both a us a little drunk. I was scrapin' a beaver pelt, just after stirrin' the mash in the two barrels behind the stove there. T'was Saturday, ✓ the third night a the blizzard. The wind was whistlin' an' howlin' 'round our place fit to blow us away.

They was even enough draft to be swayin' the yaller flame a the kerosene lamp 'tween us there. Least'ways I don't think it was the corn we was drinkin' that got me thinkin' serious like to see that cat settin' there lappin' up that mash, her shadow bobbin' up an' down the logs a the far wall. Them ears an' whiskers.

Our clock'd been stopped goin' on three weeks, ✓ one day when I was out on the trap line. I figgered by the friskin' a the mice it was nigh ~~unto~~ midnight when Black Maria's tongue begun lollin'. I knowed then t'was time to put her in the box behind the stove. They's one cat what can stand her likker.

I set down again an' eased off my rubber boots an' lit my pipe. My eyes is gettin' most as bad as my rheumatism, but I set there an' read a bit out a the Bible.

A feller's got to be a little Godful up in these here North woods or the Devil'll get him sure. Look it old Peter Moore. They found him last spring hangin' from the rafters a his cabin. Down at the forks a the Mulligan an' the Big Dead. Pete never read out a the Bible. A course I reckon an' old trap-stealin' rum hound like Pete could'nt a

read anyway, but he could a kept it handy like.

I figger I must a got kind a dozin', ✓ settin' there with my socks steamin', half listenin' to the blizzard howlin' outside. Sudden like they was a crunchin' in the snow out there. I heard a thud what set the traps a-jinglin' on the door. Then t'was still, ✓ nothin' but the wind laughin' out there 'mongst the trees.

I takes the rifle off a the wall an' goes over to the door. I opens it slow like. The snow drift there come tumblin' in on the floor. Just 'fore the wind blows the lamp out I sees a feller lyin' there. I drug him in an' laid him on my bunk. I lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a empty barrel there. I was goin' to use that barrel next day for runnin' off the mash in.

Pore feller was 'most done, † Travellin' out there without no snow shoes, no pack an' no mitts. Looked sort a young too, an' froze stiffer'n a bear trap. His feet'd swoll an' bust his boots. Both hands was bleedin' an' raw. Through his whiskers I could see his face an' ears was gone sort a blue, ✓ like old salt pork. But them eyes a his kept peerin' out at me without a wink.

I put a couple a pine knots in the stove an' mixed a couple a stiff toddys, ✓ one for me an' one for him.

They was some trouble pryin' them swoll lips a his apart. I could hear the likker crack along his gullet like pourin' water on a froze window.

He was too far gone for much savin'. Guess the corn likker must a helped him a mite though. His swoll lips begun to move an' he starts blowin' bubbles like a baby do. I mixes two more stiff ^{Toddys} ~~mickys~~ an' give him one more. I goes back an' set at the table sippin' mine. I figgered if he's got to go on my bunk there an' I got to watch him, we might as both well be drunk. ~~I set there~~

I set there quite a spell, ✓ smokin' an' drinkin' an' watchin' him there. He was breathin' pretty heavy. The wind was howlin' worse.

Then he says a word.

"Father."

He'd turned his swoll head toward me. Them glistenin' eyes a his was gazin' at me again, lookin' sort a like a buck what you shot down an' ain't killed.

"What is it son?" I says Soft like.

He was gobblin' his lips somethin' awful.

"Father, come by me," he says. "Bring - bring the Book."

Froze or no froze, he'd spotted the Bible settin' there on the table. I fetched a couple a more drinks an' the Bible an' sets down 'side him at the bunk there.

He reaches out one a them froze¹⁰⁰ hands a his. They was drippin' frost an' blood now from the heat.

"The Bible," he says.

He puts out his hand. I took an' laid it on the Book for a little bit.

He laid there gazin' at me for a time.

"Father, do you believe in the instinct of self - preservation?"

Seemed to me he was tryin' to smile.

I figgered this feller must a been pretty well eddicated, springin' such big words. "Instinct of self - preservation."

I tells him that considerin' the amount a whiskey an' moonshine I'd drunk in my day, I allowed as how I did.

200 - He tried to smile again. It was pretty bad. They's water runnin' from his eyes an' big ears an' down his nose an' out a his swoll mouth. Outside the storm was gettin' worse, if that it could. He close his eyes.

Then he begun to talk, low an' quiet like, lyin' there with his eyes shet, there. Like a little babe what's tellin' somethin' to his mother.

"Father," he says, "it seems years since I've been so comfortable - and so warm. You'll probably think I'm crazy but it seems I'm a ^{child} baby again - and that you are my - my mother."

I nods. I did'nt think he was crazy.

"I am the only one left. All the others are back there." Slow like he points south. "All down there in the mine; snug and warm."

"Louise's father ^{her old man -} and I went down in his ^{rotten old} mine that morning to see if it could'nt be worked a little longer before being abandoned. The men were complaining that the seepage from the swampy Lake Louise was running with dangerous freedom into the mine, particularly in the north drift."

His eyes lit up a little, lyin' there.

"Louise is ~~was~~ - my wife," he says.

I set there blinkin' an' holdin' the Bible.

"We got to the bottom of the shaft. We had to climb down on the ladder. The water had sprung and swollen the timbers in the shaft ^{so that} the skip could'nt run."

He was talkin' like to hisself - like a feller who was just recollectin' somethin'.

"Both of us started up the tram car tracks to the north drift. The tracks were almost buried in water and mud, though the pumps were working constantly."

"Every now and then we'd splash past a dent in the drift. Mules stalls. Their big ears looked weird in the bobbing light of our carbide lamps. Some of those mules had been there since I was a boy, so snug - so warm."

I give him another big gulp a the toddy.

"When we reached the miners they were standing

together in a huddle, muttering among themselves. Some were leaning on their picks and shovels. None made a pretense of working."

"Her ^{old man} father greeted them. They did not speak. The water was literally pouring from overhead."

"Then a little Italian pointed up. I see him standing there, looking up. I see the whites of his eyes. 'No lak, boss. No lak wat'.' We were right under Lake Louise - her lake. I recall that I shivered, though the heat from the mine and from the bodies of the men was oppressive."

"Her father stood there in the flickering light and gave the men a ^{verbal} verbal lashing."

The pore feller stopped a minute, like he was reflectin'.

"I guess he had the instincts of a bully, ^{and he was a tight old bastard.} He told them they were lucky to have jobs in such times without 'belly - aching' about working conditions."

" ' Afraid of a little water and mud,' he said. ' You fellows are whiners, not miners. If you don't like to work in the Louise just get to hell up and get your time. There're plenty more waiting to take your place.' "

"We turned and walked back to the shaft. I was'nt relishing the long climb up the ladder. As I waded along behind her father, the flame of my lamp dancing on his broad back, I thought of how much chance those poor men had of quitting - with their families starving then on the reduced wages."

"We were almost to the foot of the ladder. Suddenly I heard a terrific roar from the north drift. We had just come from there. I heard the shrieks of the men. A cyclone of wind rushed down the drift upon us, blowing out our lamps. A mule, whinnying wildly, raced past us."

" ' God man,' shouted her father. ' Its happened. The bottom's fallen out of Lake Louise. Run for it. ' "

"Both of us stumbled to the foot of the ladder.

There was a terrible roar from the rush of mud and water behind us. The shrieks of the men had ceased."

T'was plain the feller was gettin' excited. He tried to set up. I give him another drink.

"Her ^{old man} father started up the ladder like a mad ape. The mud and ooze from the lake bottom was pressing up the shaft after us. I could hear it belching and sucking - like hot lava - just below us. I almost lost my grip on the ladder thinking of the mangling and foul slipping among the men back there."

"I felt that her father was tiring. I climbed alongside him and shouted to him to grab onto my belt. After that we made some progress. Youth - youth - - "

The pore feller was gettin' awful worked up. His eyes opened wide an' was blazin' like coals. Then his voice got sort a sobbin' like.

^{old man} "That hellish stuff began to gain on us. Suddenly her father lost his grip on my belt. His two hands caught my ankle."

He begun talkin' fast, chatterin' through those swoll lips a his.

"I looked down. There was a dim light from the top of the shaft. I could see the head and limp ears of a dead mule swirling around; swirling and spinning."

"The mud and water caught up to her father - over his boots, over his knees."

"I tried to pull him out, I tell you. Then ^{the old bastard} without a sound he relaxed his grip. The damned stuff was around his neck. He was grinning at me. Grinning, I tell you. Then he went."

The pore feller's voice was husky an' sobbin'.

"I tell you he slipped. He lost his grip."

Then his voice got sort a wheedlin' like.

and mean and tight.

"He was an old man, ^N He would'nt have lived long, anyway."

Sudden like he set up in the bunk, his eyes burnin' into mine, accusin' like. He begun to shriek.

"He slipped. Say something, damn you. He slipped. He lost his grip, I tell you."

"Yes son, he slipped," I says quiet like.

Then he laid back, pore feller, gettin' weaker.

Guess the likker'ed begun to wear off. He begun to whisper, insistin' like, *like a ^{tramp} whore from out an open window.*

"I climbed out of the shaft into the sunlight. I was blinded for a moment - and sick and old. There was no one around. The few surface workmen were gathered in a horrified cluster about the yawning crater of what was once the Lake Louise. "

"I fled into the woods and headed North. Seems like I've been running for years - North, always North. But that damn mud won't freeze, I tell you. It's always at my heels. Then I look down, ^{her old man} and there he is ^N grinning at me."

The feller was pretty all in. I figgered he would'nt last long. I propped him up on a pillow. Then I set down by the stove an' lit my pipe. I could hear the wind whistlin' down the chimney.

He was lyin' there starin' wild at me when I sees his eyes, ~~startin' like~~ ^{stare eyed} starin' ^N at the stove. Then I sees the cat, ^N Black Maria, ^N come out a her box, all ^{spittin'} bristlin' an' humpbacked, reelin' to the bunk where he laid there.

See II. → The feller begun to work his lips, ^{then he} ~~an~~ ^N commenced to moan. ~~Then~~ ^N he braced hissself on those drippin' hands a his an' come out a the bunk.

He stood there pantin' a second. Then he stomped drunk like on those froze club feet a his toward the door. He wrapped one a his froze hands ' round the chains a the traps hangin' from the door.

Gad, man, it was a sight.

"Here there son," I says, comfortin' like. "Your hand will be slippin' too, soon enough. Get back to the bunk."

He turned them terrible eyes on me.

"It's a lie - a damnable lie," he shouted.

He was sobbin' an' slobberin' somethin' awful.

"I kicked him. I kicked his hand away. He'd have dragged me down, I tell you. I kicked his hand. He was old. I was - I am - young. Youth. Youth."

He stood there, his swoll lips beefy an' burstin' - like a ~~feller what's been lynched~~ ^{lynched nigger}. Then he turned an' ~~wrenched~~ ^{pruned} open the door. The wind an' snow came howlin' in.

He faced me, puffy an' wild lookin', an' laughed. It was pretty awful, lookin' at that face a his. I starts for him. He turned an' run stumblin' into the storm. The lamp was gutted by the wind 'fore I could get to him.

I stood in the door there. I could hear a laughin' out there mixin' with the howlin' a the wind.

Somethin' rubbed agin' my leg. I reaches down an' they's Black Maria purrin' peaceful like. I close the door an' lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a barrel there. I figgered there'd be no findin' that one 'till spring. An' a old feller has got to mind his strength, with a batch to run off in the mornin'.

"Instinct of self-preservation." That's a right good one.

The feller begun to work his lips an' commenced to moan. Then he braced hisself on those drippin' hands a his an' come out a the bunk.

He stood there pantin' a second. Then he stomped drunk like on those froze club feet a his toward the door. He wrapped one a his froze hands 'round the chains a the traps hangin' from the door.

"Here there son," I says, comfortin' like. "Your hand will be slippin' too, soon enough. Get back to the bunk."

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He was sobbin' an' slobberin' somethin' awful.

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He stood there, his swoll lips beefy an' burstin' - like a feller what's been lynched. Then he turned an' wrenched open the door. The wind an' snow came howlin' in.

He faced me, puffy an' wild lookin', an' laughed. It was pretty awful, lookin' at that face a his. I starts for him. He turned an' run stumblin' into the storm. The lamp was gutted by the wind 'fore I could get to him.

Written by:
John D. Voelker
1033 Ontario Street
Oak Park, Illinois.

THE SURVIVOR

by
Robert Traver

We set there, - I an' Black Maria, - both a us a little drunk. I was scrapin' a beaver pelt, just after stirrin' the mash in the two barrels behind the stove there. T'was Saturday, the third night a the blizzard. The wind was whistlin' an' howlin' 'round our place fit to blow us away.

They was even enough draft to be swayin' the yaller flame a the kerosene lamp 'tween us there. Least'ways I don't think it was the corn we was drinkin' that got me thinkin' serious-like to see that cat settin' there lappin' up that mash, her shadow bobbin' up an' down the legs a the far wall. Them ears an' whiskers!

Our clock'd been stopped goin' on three weeks, - one day when I was out on the trap line. ^{But} I figgered by the friskin' a the mice it was nigh onto midnight when Black Maria's tongue begun lollin'. I knowed then t'was time to put her in the box behind the stove. They's one cat what can stand her likker.

I set down again an' eased off my ~~rubber~~ boots an' lit my pipe. My eyes is gettin' most as bad as my rheumatism, but I set there an' read a bit out a the Bible.

A feller's got to be a little Godful up in these here North woods or the Devil'll get him sure. Look it old Peter Moore. They found him last Spring hangin' from the rafters a his cabin. Down at the forks a the Mulligan an' the Big Dead. Pete never read out a the Bible. A course I reckon an' old trap-stealin' rum-hound like Pete could'nt a read anyway, but he could a kept it handy-like.

I figger I must a got kind a dozin'— settin' there with my socks steamin', half listenin' to the blizzard howlin' outside. Sudden-like they was a crunchin' in the snow out there. I heard a thud what set the traps a-jinglin' on the door. Then t'was still — nothin' but the wind laughin' out there 'mongst the trees.

I takes the rifle off a the wall an' goes over to the door. I opens it slow-like. The snow drift there come tumblin' in on the floor. Just 'fore the wind blows the lamp out I sees a feller lyin' there. I drug

him in an' laid him on my bunk. I lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a empty barrel there. I was goin' to use that barrel next day for runnin' off the mash in.

Pore feller was 'most done. Travellin' out there without no snow-shoes, no pack an' no mitts. Looked sort a young, too, an' froze stiffer'n a bear trap. His feet'd swoll an' bust his boots. Both hands was bleedin' an' raw. Through his whiskers I could see his face an' ears was gone sort a blue—like old salt pork. But them eyes a his kept peerin' out at me without a wink.

I put a couple a pine knots in the stove an' mixed a couple a stiff toddys—one for me an' one for him.

They was ~~some~~ trouble pryin' them swoll lips a his apart. I could hear the likker crack along his gullet like pourin' water on a froze window.

He was too far gone for much savin'. Guess the corn ~~likker~~ must a helped him a mite though. His swoll lips begun to move an' he starts blowin' bubbles like a baby do. I mixes two more stiff toddys an' give him one more. I goes back an' set at the table sippin' mine. I figgered if he's got to go on my bunk there an' I got to watch him, we might as both well be drunk.

I set there quite a spell - smokin' an' drinkin' an' watchin' him there. He was breathin' pretty heavy. The wind was howlin' worse.

Then he says a word.

"Father."

He'd turned his swoll head toward me. Them glistenin' eyes a his was gazin' at me again, lookin' sort a like a buck what you shot down an' ain't killed.

"What is it, son?" I says soft-like.

He was gobblin' his lips somethin' awful.

"Father, come by me," he says. "Bring — bring the book."

Froze or no froze, he'd spotted the Bible settin' there on the table. I fetched a couple a more drinks an' the Bible an' sets down 'side him at the bunk there,

He reaches out one a them froze hands a his. They was drippin' frost now from the heat.

"The Bible," he says.

He puts out his hand. I took an' laid it on the Book for a little bit.

He laid there gazin' at me for a ^{spell.} time.

"Father, do you believe in the instinct of self-preservation?"

Seemed to me ^{like} he was tryin' to smile.

I figgered this feller must a been pretty well eddicated, springin' such big words. "Instinct of self-preservation." H'm.

I tells him that considerin' the amount a

whiskey an' moonshine I'd drunk in my day, I allowed
as how I did.

He tried to smile again. It was pretty bad. ^{to watch}
They's water runnin' from his eyes an' big ears an'
down his nose an' out a his swoll mouth. Outside the
storm was gettin' worse, if that it could. He close
his eyes.

Then he begun to talk — low an' quiet like —
lyin' ^{there} with his eyes shet, ^{there}. Like a little babe
what's tellin' somethin' to his ^{parents} mother.

"Father," he says, "it seems years since I've
been so comfortable — and so warm. You'll probably
think I'm crazy, but it seems I'm a ^{child once} baby again, ~~and~~
~~that you are my — my mother.~~"

I nods. I didn't think he was crazy, ^{I said}.

"I am the only one left. All the others are
back there." Slow-like he points south. "All down
there in the mine, snug ^{all so} and warm."

^{"Yes, son," I said, "they be all nice and warm."}
"Louise's father and I went down in his mine
that morning to see if it could'nt be worked a little
longer before being abandoned. The men were complaining
that the seepage from the swampy Lake Louise was ^{literally} running
~~with dangerous freedom~~ into the mine — particularly in
the north drift."

His eyes lit up a little, lyin' there.

"Louise is - my wife," he says.

I set there blinkin' an' holdin' the Bible.

"We got to the bottom of the shaft. We had to climb down on the ladder ^{way} The water had spr~~ung~~ and swollen the timbers in the shaft, ^{so that} The skip could'nt run."

He was talkin' like to hisself— like a feller who was just recollectin' somethin'.

"Both of us started up the tram car tracks to the north drift. The tracks were almost buried in water and mud, although the pumps were working constantly."

"Every now and then we'd splash past a dent in the drift. Mules stalls. Their big ears looked weird in the bobbing light of our carbide lamps. Some of those mules had been there since I was a boy, ~~so snug~~ ~~so warm.~~"

He commence coughin' an'
I give him another big gulp a the toddy.

"When we reached the miners they were standing together in a huddle, muttering among themselves. Some were leaning on their picks and shovels. None made a pretense of working."

"Her father greeted them. They did not speak. The water was literally p^ouring from overhead."

"Then a little Italian pointed up. I see ^{now} him standing there, looking up. I see the whites of his eyes. 'No lak, boss. No lak wat'.' We were ^{directly} right under Lake Louise - her lake. I recall that I shivered, though the heat from the mine and from the bodies of the men was oppressive."

"Her father stood there in the flickering light and gave the men a ^{vicious} verbal lashing."

The pore feller stopped a minute, like he was reflectin'.

"I guess he had ^{all} the instincts of a bully. He told them they were lucky to have jobs in such times without belly-aching about working conditions."

" ' Afraid of a little water and mud,' he said. 'You ^{yellow-bellies} fellows are whiners, not miners. If you don't like to work in the Louise just get to hell up and get your time. There're plenty more waiting to take your place.' "

^{The miners turned to their work in sullen terror.}
We turned and walked back to the shaft. I wasn't relishing the long climb up the ladder. As I waded along behind her father, the flame of my lamp dancing on his broad back, I thought of how ^{little} much chance those poor ^{devils} men had of quitting, - with their families ^{already} starving ~~them~~ on the reduced wages."

"We were almost to the foot of the ladder. Suddenly I heard a terrific roar from the north drift. We had just come from there. I heard the ^{hollow} shrieks of the

all but the little Italian - he stood there with his feet resting on his heels.

men. A cyclone of wind rushed down the drift upon us, blowing out our lamps. A mule, whinnying wildly, raced past us."

" 'God man!' shouted her father. 'Its happened. The bottoms fallen out of Lake Louise. Run for it!' "

"Both of us stumbled to the foot of the ladder. There was a ^{awful} terrible roar from the rush of mud and water behind us. The shrieks of the men had ceased."

^{threw a drink an'} It was plain the feller was gettin' ^{awful} excited. He tried to set up. I give him another drink ^{and held him down.} ^{He kept babblin' and talkin' me holdin' him there.} "Her father started up the ladder like a mad ape. The mud and ooze ^{and water} from the lake bottom was pressing up the shaft after us. I could hear it belching and sucking, like hot lava, just below us. I almost lost my grip on the ladder thinking of the mangling and foul slipping among the men back there."

"I felt that her father was tiring. I climbed alongside him and shouted ^{for} to him to grab onto my belt. After that we made some progress. Youth - youth "!"

The pore feller ^{was} ~~was~~ gettin' awful worked up. ^{was} His eyes ~~open~~ wide an' ~~was~~ blazin' like coals. Then his voice got sort a sobbin' like.

"That hellish stuff began to gain on us. Suddenly her father lost his grip on my belt. ~~His~~ His two hands caught my ankle."

He begun talkin' fast, chatterin' through those swoll lips a his.

"I looked down. There was a dim light from the top of the shaft. I could see the head and limp ears of a mule swirling around - swirling and spinning."

"The mud and water caught up to her father - over his boots, over his knees."

"I tried to pull him out, I tell you. Then - without a sound - he relaxed his grip. The damned stuff was around his neck. He was grinning at me. Grinning, I tell you. Then he went."

The pore feller's voice was husky an' sobbin'.

"I tell you he slipped. He lost his grip."

Then his voice got sort a wheedlin'-like.

"He was an old man. He would'nt have lived long, anyway."

'Sudden-like he set up in the bunk, his eyes burnin' into mine, accusin' like. He begun to shriek.

"He slipped. Say something, damn you. He slipped! He lost his grip, I tell you."

"Yes, son, he slipped," I says quiet-like.

Then he laid back, pore feller, gettin' weaker. Guess the likker'ed begun to wear off. He begun to whisper, insistin'-like, like a 'hore from out a ^{open} window.

"I climbed out of the shaft into the sunlight. I was blinded for a moment, — and sick and old. There was no one around. The few surface workmen were gathered in a horrified cluster about the yawning crater of what was once the Lake Louise."

"I fled into the woods and headed North. Seems like I've been running for years. North, always North. But that damn mud won't freeze, I tell you. It's always at my heels. Then I look down — and there he is — grinning at me."

The feller was pretty ^{much} all in. I figgered he would'nt last long. I propped him up on ^{the} a pillow, an' then I set down by the stove an' lit my pipe ^{to wait.} I ~~could~~ hear ^{was still} the wind whistlin' ^{and songhin'} down the chimney, ^{worse'n ever.}

He was lyin' there starin' ~~wild~~ ^{wild} at me when I sees his eyes, startled like, starin' ^{wild} at the stove. Then I sees the cat — Black Maria — come out a her box, all bristlin' an' humpbacked, reelin' to the bunk where he laid there.

The feller begun to moan an' work his lips.
~~He~~ ^{They} braced hisself on those drippin' hands a his an'
come out a the bunk.

He stood there pantin' ^{an' swagin'.} a bit. Then he stomp -
ed drunk-like on those froze club feet a his to the
door. He wrapped one a his ~~froze~~ hands 'round the
chains a the traps hangin' from the door.

"Here there son," I says, comfortin' like.
"Your hand will ^{you'll} be slippin' too, soon enough. Best
you ease back to your bunk."

He was hangin' ^{there} bulgy-eyed ~~there~~ by one hand,
like a feller slippin' from a cross. His swoll lips
was beefy an' burstin', like a lynched niggers'.

Then I heard the cat, Black Maria. She was
back there in the shadows, hiss'n' an' spittin'.

"It's a lie - a God damned lie!"

He shouted that there from the door, his eyes
holdin' me off. ~~He was wailin' now, like the bastard.~~

"I kicked him. I kicked the old bastard's
hand away. He'd have dragged me down with him, I say."
He was old. I was - I am - young. ^{He was wailin' now, like a bastard.} "Youth! Youth!"

It seems like we stood there, him an' me, like
^{they} ~~there~~ was no clocks, no nothin' ^{just} me an' him.

^{Then} He commenced laughin', hangin' there, ~~an'~~
^{sudden-like} when he swang 'round an' pawed open the door, ^{and} The
wind an' snow came tumblin' in. 'Fore I could move
he was stumblin' into the storm. ^{The fact is} The lamp was gutted
by the wind 'fore I could move, ~~as a matter a fact.~~

^{want an'} I stood in the door there, ^{dark in} ^{in the dark} I could hear a ^{the sleet whippin' my face, an'} wailin' an' laughin' out there mixin' with the howlin' a the wind.
^{I was just goin' out there after him when} Somethin' rubbed agin' my leg. I reaches down an' they's Black Maria purrin' peaceful-like an' ^{'round my leg.} curlin' ^{So} I close the door an' lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a barrel there. ^{upon reflectin'} I figgered there'd be no findin' that one 'till Spring. An' a old feller has got to mind his strength, with a batch to run off in the mornin'.

^{omit ✓} "Instinct of self-preservation." That's a right good one.

See Ch 15
Book should not contain anything
as fictional as this. 72

THE SURVIVOR

We sat there, I an' Black Maria, both a us a little drunk. I was scrapin' a beaver pelt, just after stirrin' the mash in the two barrels behind the stove there. 'Twas Saturday, the third night a the blizzard. The wind was whistlin' an' howlin' 'round our place fit to blow us away.

They was even enough draft to be swayin' fitful-like the yaller flame a the kerosene lamp 'tween us there. Least'ways I don't think it was the corn we was drinkin' that got me thinkin' serious-like to see that cat settin' there lappin' up that mash, her shadow bobbin' up an' down the logs a the far wall. Them ears an' whiskers!

Our clock'd been stopped goin' on three weeks -- one day when I was out on the trap line. But I figgered by the friskin' a the mice it was nigh onto midnight when Black Maria's tongue begun lollin'. I knowed then 'twas time to put her in the box behind the stove. They's one cat what can stand her likker.

I set down again an' eased off my boots an' lit my pipe. My eyes is gettin' most as bad as my rheumatism, but I set there an' read a bit out a the Bible.

A feller's got to be a little Godful up in these here North woods or the Devil'll get him sure. Look it old Peter Moore. They found him last Spring hangin' from the rafters a his cabin. Down at the forks a the Mulligan an' the Big Dead. Pete never read out a the Bible. A course I reckon an' old trap-stealin' rum hound like Pete couldn't a read anyway, but he could a kept it handy-like.

I figger I must a got kind a dozin' -- settin' there with my socks steamin', half listenin' to the blizzard howlin' outside. Sudden-like they was a crunchin' in the snow out there. I heard a thud what set the traps

a-jinglin' on the door. Then 'twas still -- nothin' but the wind laughin' out there 'mongst the trees.

I takes the rifle off a the wall an' goes over to the door. I opens it slow-like. The snow drift there come tumblin' in on the floor. Just 'fore the wind blows the lamp out I sees a feller lyin' there. I drug him in an' laid him on my bunk. I lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a empty barrel there. I was goin' to use that barrel next day for runnin' off the mash in.

Pore feller was 'most done. Travellin' out there without no snow-shoes, no pack an' no mitts. Looked sort a young, too, an' froze stiffer'n a bear trap. His feet'd swoll an' bust his boots. Both hands was bleedin' an' raw. Through his whiskers I could see his face an' ears was gone sort a blue -- like old salt pork. But them eyes a his kept peerin' out at me 'thout a wink.

I put a couple a pine knots in the stove an' mixed a couple a stiff toddys -- one for me an' one for him.

They was trouble pryin' them swoll lips a his apart. I could hear the likker crack along his gullet like pourin' water on a froze window.

He was too far gone for much savin'. Guess the corn must a helped him a mite though. His swoll lips begun to move an' he starts blowin' bubbles like a baby do. I mixes two more stiff toddys an' give him one more. I goes back an' set at the table sippin' mine. I figgered if he's got to go on my bunk there an' I got to sit an' watch him, both of us might as well be drunk.

I set there quite a spell -- smokin' an' drinkin' an' watchin' him there. He was breathin' pretty heavy. The wind was howlin' worse. Then he says a word.

"Father."

He'd turned his swoll head toward me. Them glistenin' eyes a his was gazin' at me again, kinda pleadin', lookin' sort a like a buck what you shot down an' ain't killed.

"What is it, son?" I says soft-like.

He was a-gobblin' his lips somethin' awful.

"Father, come by me," he says. "Bring -- bring the book."

Froze or no froze, he'd spotted the Bible settin' there on the table. I fetched a couple a more drinks an' the Bible an' sets down 'side him at the bunk there.

He reaches out one a them froze hands a his. They was drippin' frost now from the heat.

"The -- the Bible," he says.

He puts out his hand. I took an' laid it on the Book for a little bit. He laid there gazin' at me for a spell. Very slow-like he began to talk.

"Father, do you believe in the instinct of self-preservation?"

Seemed to me like he was tryin' to smile.

I figgered this feller must a been pretty well eddicated, springin' such big words. "Instinct of self-preservation." H'm.

I tells him that considerin' the amount a whiskey an' moonshine I'd drunk in my day, I allowed as how I did.

He tried to smile again. It was pretty bad to sit an' watch. They's water runnin' from his eyes an' big ears an' down his nose an' out a his swoll mouth. Outside the storm was gettin' worse, if that it could. He close his eyes.

Then he begun to talk -- low an' quiet-like -- lyin' there with his eyes shet. Like a little babe what's tellin' somethin' to his ma.

"Father," he says, "it seems years since I've been so comfortable -- and so warm. You'll probably think I'm crazy, but it seems I'm a child once again."

I nods. I didn't think he was crazy.

"I am the only one left. All the others are back there." Slow-like he points south. "All down there in the mine, snug -- and all so warm."

"Yes, son," I said, "they be all nice and warm."

"Louise's father and I went down in his mine that morning to see if it couldn't be worked a little longer before being abandoned. The men were complaining that the seepage from the swampy Lake Louise was running into the mine -- particularly in the north drift."

His eyes lit up a little, lyin' there.

"Louise is -- my wife," he says.

I set there blinkin' an' holdin' the Bible.

"We got to the bottom of the shaft. We had to climb down on the ladder-way. The water had sprung and swollen the timbers in the shaft so that the skip couldn't run."

He was talkin' like to hisself -- like a feller who was just recollectin' somethin'.

"Both of us started up the tram car tracks to the north drift. The tracks were almost buried in the water and mud, although the pumps were working constantly."

"Every now and then we'd splash past a dent in the drift. Mules' stalls. Their big ears looked weird in the bobbing light of our carbide lamps. Some of those mules had been there since I was a boy."

He commence coughin' an' splutterin' an' I give him another big gulp a the toddy.

"When we reached the miners they were standing together in a huddle, muttering among themselves. Some were leaning on their picks and shovels. None made a pretense of working."

"Her father greeted them. They did not speak. The water was literally pouring from overhead."

"Then a little Italian pointed up. I see him now standing there, looking up. I see the whites of his eyes. 'No lak, boss. No lak all da wat'.' We were directly under Lake Louise -- her lake. I recall that I shivered, though the heat from the mine and from the bodies of the men was oppressive.

"Her father stood there in the flickering light and gave the men a vicious verbal lashing."

The pore feller stopped a minute, like he was reflectin'.

"I guess he had all the instincts of a bully. He told them that they were lucky to have jobs in such times without belly-aching about working conditions.

"'Afraid of a little water and mud,' he said. 'You yellow-bellies are whiners, not miners. If you don't like to work in the Louise just get to hell up and get your time. There're plenty more waiting to take your place.'

"The miners turned to their work in sullen terror. All but the little Italian -- he stood there with his foot resting defiantly on his shovel. We turned and walked back to the shaft. I wasn't relishing the long climb up the ladder. As I waded along behind her father, the flame of my lamp dancing on his broad back, I thought of how little chance those poor devils had of quitting -- with their families already starving on the reduced wages."

"We were almost to the foot of the ladder. Suddenly I heard a terrific roar from the north drift. We had just come from there. I heard the hollow shrieks of the men. A cyclone of wind rushed down the drift upon us, blowing out our lamps. A mule, whinnying wildly, raced past us.

"'God man!' shouted her father. 'It's happened. The bottom's fallen out of Lake Louise. Run for it!'

"Both of us stumbled to the foot of the ladder. There was an awful roar from the rush of mud and water behind us. The shrieks of the men had ceased."

'Twas plain the feller was gettin' terrible excited. He threshed aroun' an' tried to set up. I give him another drink an' held him down. He kept on babblin' an' talkin', me a-holdin' him there.

"Her father started up the ladder like a mad ape. The mud and ooze and water from the lake bottom was pressing up the shaft after us. I could hear it belching and sucking, like hot lava, just below us. I almost lost my grip on the ladder thinking of the mangling and foul slipping among the men back there.

"I felt that her father was tiring. I climbed alongside him and shouted for him to grab onto my belt. After that we made some progress. Youth -- youth,...."

The pore feller's eyes was open wide an' blazin' like hot coals. Then his voice got sort a sobbin'-like.

"That hellish stuff began to gain on us. Suddenly her father lost his grip on my belt -- his two hands caught my angle."

He begun talkin' fast, chatterin' through those swoll lips a his.

"I looked down. There was a dim light from the top of the shaft. I could see the head and limp ears of a mule swirling around -- swirling and spinning."

"The mud and water caught up to her father -- over his boots, over his knees."

"I tried to pull him out, I tell you. Then -- without a sound -- he relaxed his grip. The damned stuff was around his neck. He was grinning at me. Grinning, I tell you! Then he went."

The pore feller's voice was husky an' sobbin'.

"I tell you he slipped. He lost his grip."

Then his voice got sort a wheedlin'-like.

"He was an old man. He wouldn't have lived long, anyway."

Sudden-like he set up in the bunk, his eyes burnin' into mine, accusin'-like. He begun to shriek.

"He slipped. Say something, damn you. He slipped! He lost his grip, I tell you."

"Yes, son, he slipped," I says quiet-like.

Then he laid back, pore feller, gettin' weaker. Guess the likker'd begun to wear off. He begun to whisper, insistin'-like, like a 'hore from out a open window.

"I climbed out of the shaft into the sunlight. I was blinded for a moment -- and sick and old. There was no one around. The few surface workmen were gathered in a horrified cluster about the yawning crater of what was once the Lake Louise."

"I fled into the woods and headed North. Seems like I've been running for years. North, always North. But that damn mud won't freeze, I tell you. It's always at my heels. Then I look down -- and there he is -- grinning at me."

The feller was pretty well all in. I figgered he wouldn't last long. I propped him up on the pillow, an' then I set down by the stove an' lit my pipe to wait. The wind was whistlin' an' soughin' down the chimney worse'n ever.

He was lyin' there starin' at me when I sees his eyes, startled like, starin' wild at the stove. Then I sees the cat -- Black Maria -- come out a her box, all bristlin' an' humpbacked, reelin' to the bunk where he laid there. She was drunker' 'an a fiddler's bitch.

The pore feller begun to moan an' work his lips. Then he braced himself on those drippin' hands a his an' come out a the bunk.

He stood there swayin' an' pantin'. Then he stomped drunk-like on those froze club feet a his to the door. He wrapped one a his hands 'round the chains a the traps hangin' from the door.

"Here there son," I says, comfortin' like. "You'll be slippin' too, soon enough. Best you ease back to your bunk."

He was hangin' there bulgy-eyed by one hand, like a feller slippin' from off the cross. His swoll lips was beefy an' burstin', like a lynched nigger's.

Then I heard the cat, Black Maria. She was back there in the shadows, hiss'n' an' spittin'.

"It's a lie -- a God damned lie!"

He shouted that there from the door, his eyes a-holdin' me off.

"I kicked him. I kicked the old bastard's hand away. He'd have dragged me down with him, I say. He was old. I was -- I am -- young. Youth! Youth....."

It seems like we stood there, him an' me, like they was no clocks, no nothin' -- just me and him.

Then he commenced laughin', hangin' there, when sudden-like he swang 'round an' pawed open the door. The wind an' snow come tumblin' in. 'Fore I could move he was stumblin' into the storm. The lamp was gutted by the wind 'fore I could move.

I went an' stood in the door in the dark, there, the sleet a-whippin' my face, an' I could hear a wailin' an' laughin' out there mixin' with the howlin' a the wind.

I was just goin' out there after him when somethin' rubbed agin' my leg. I reaches down an' they's Black Maria purrin' peaceful-like an' curlin' 'round my leg. So I close the door an' lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a barrel there. Upon reflectin' I figgered there'd be no findin' that one till Spring. An' a old feller has got to mind his strength, with a batch to run off in the mornin'.

Instink a self-preservation. That's a right good one.....

THE SURVIVOR

We sat there, I an' Black Maria, both a us a little drunk. I was scrapin' a beaver pelt, just after stirrin' the mash in the two barrels behind the stove there. 'Twas Saturday, the third night a the blizzard. The wind was whistlin' an' howlin' 'round our place fit to blow us away.

They was even enough draft to be swayin' fitful-like the yaller flame a the kerosene lamp 'tween us there. Least'ways I don't think it was the corn we was drinkin' that got me thinkin' serious-like to see that cat settin' there lappin' up that mash, her shadow bobbin' up an' down the logs a the far wall. Them ears an' whiskers!

Our clock'd been stopped goin' on three weeks -- one day when I was out on the trap line. But I figgered by the friskin' a the mice it was nigh onto midnight when Black Maria's tongue begun lollin'. I knowed then 'twas time to put her in the box behind the stove. They's one cat what can stand her likker.

I set down again an' eased off my boots an' lit my pipe. My eyes is gettin' most as bad as my rheumatism, but I set there an' read a bit out a the Bible.

A feller's got to be a little Godful up in these here North woods or the Devil'll get him sure. Look it old Peter Moore. They found him last Spring hangin' from the rafters a his cabin. Down at the forks a the Mulligan an' the Big Dead. Pete never read out a the Bible. A course I reckon an' old trap-stealin' rum hound like Pete couldn't a read anyway, but he could a kept it handy-like.

I figger I must a got kind a dozin' -- settin' there with my socks steamin', half listenin' to the blizzard howlin' outside. Sudden-like they was a crunchin' in the snow out there. I heard a thud what set the traps

a-jinglin' on the door. Then 'twas still -- nothin' but the wind laughin' out there 'mongst the trees.

I takes the rifle off a the wall an' goes over to the door. I opens it slow-like. The snow drift there come tumblin' in on the floor. Just 'fore the wind blows the lamp out I sees a feller lyin' there. I drug him in an' laid him on my bunk. I lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a empty barrel there. I was goin' to use that barrel next day for runnin' off the mash in.

Pore feller was 'most done. Travellin' out there without no snow-shoes, no pack an' no mitts. Looked sort a young, too, an' froze stiffer'n a bear trap. His feet'd swoll an' bust his boots. Both hands was bleedin' an' raw. Through his whiskers I could see his face an' ears was gone sort a blue -- like old salt pork. But them eyes a his kept peerin' out at me 'thout a wink.

I put a couple a pine knots in the stove an' mixed a couple a stiff toddys -- one for me an' one for him.

They was trouble pryin' them swoll lips a his apart. I could hear the likker crack along his gullet like pourin' water on a froze window.

He was too far gone for much savin'. Guess the corn must a helped him a mite though. His swoll lips begun to move an' he starts blowin' bubbles like a baby do. I mixes two more stiff toddys an' give him one more. I goes back an' set at the table sippin' mine. I figgered if he's got to go on my bunk there an' I got to sit an' watch him, both of us might as well be drunk.

I set there quite a spell -- smokin' an' drinkin' an' watchin' him there. He was breathin' pretty heavy. The wind was howlin' worse. Then he says a word.

"Father."

He'd turned his swoll head toward me. Them glistenin' eyes a his was gazin' at me again, kinda pleadin', lookin' sort a like a buck what you shot down an' ain't killed.

"What is it, son?" I says soft-like.

He was a-gobblin' his lips somethin' awful.

"Father, come by me," he says. "Bring -- bring the book."

Froze or no froze, he'd spotted the Bible settin' there on the table. I fetched a couple a more drinks an' the Bible an' sets down 'side him at the bunk there.

He reaches out one a them froze hands a his. They was drippin' frost now from the heat.

"The -- the Bible," he says.

He puts out his hand. I took an' laid it on the Book for a little bit. He laid there gazin' at me for a spell. Very slow-like he began to talk.

"Father, do you believe in the instinct of self-preservation?"

Seemed to me like he was tryin' to smile.

I figgered this feller must a been pretty well eddicated, springin' such big words. "Instinct of self-preservation." H'm.

I tells him that considerin' the amount a whiskey an' moonshine I'd drunk in my day, I allowed as how I did.

He tried to smile again. It was pretty bad to sit an' watch. They's water runnin' from his eyes an' big ears an' down his nose an' out a his swoll mouth. Outside the storm was gettin' worse, if that it could. He close his eyes.

Then he begun to talk -- low an' quiet-like -- lyin' there with his eyes shet. Like a little babe what's tellin' somethin' to his ma.

"Father," he says, "it seems years since I've been so comfortable -- and so warm. You'll probably think I'm crazy, but it seems I'm a child once again."

I nods. I didn't think he was crazy.

"I am the only one left. All the others are back there." Slow-like he points south. "All down there in the mine, snug -- and all so warm."

"Yes, son," I said, "they be all nice and warm."

"Louise's father and I went down in his mine that morning to see if it couldn't be worked a little longer before being abandoned. The men were complaining that the seepage from the swampy Lake Louise was running into the mine -- particularly in the north drift."

His eyes lit up a little, lyin' there.

"Louise is -- my wife," he says.

I set there blinkin' an' holdin' the Bible.

"We got to the bottom of the shaft. We had to climb down on the ladder-way. The water had sprung and swollen the timbers in the shaft so that the skip couldn't run."

He was talkin' like to hisself -- like a feller who was just recollectin' somethin'.

"Both of us started up the tram car tracks to the north drift. The tracks were almost buried in the water and mud, although the pumps were working constantly."

"Every now and then we'd splash past a dent in the drift. Mules' stalls. Their big ears looked weird in the bobbing light of our carbide lamps. Some of those mules had been there since I was a boy."

He commence coughin' an' splutterin' an' I give him another big gulp a the toddy.

"When we reached the miners they were standing together in a huddle, muttering among themselves. Some were leaning on their picks and shovels. None made a pretense of working.

"Her father greeted them. They did not speak. The water was literally pouring from overhead.

"Then a little Italian pointed up. I see him now standing there, looking up. I see the whites of his eyes. 'No lak, boss. No lak all da wat'.' We were directly under Lake Louise -- her lake. I recall that I shivered, though the heat from the mine and from the bodies of the men was oppressive.

"Her father stood there in the flickering light and gave the men a vicious verbal lashing."

The pore feller stopped a minute, like he was reflectin'.

"I guess he had all the instincts of a bully. He told them that they were lucky to have jobs in such times without belly-aching about working conditions.

"'Afraid of a little water and mud,' he said. 'You yellow-bellies are whiners, not miners. If you don't like to work in the Louise just get to hell up and get your time. There're plenty more waiting to take your place.'

"The miners turned to their work in sullen terror. All but the little Italian -- he stood there with his foot resting defiantly on his shovel. We turned and walked back to the shaft. I wasn't relishing the long climb up the ladder. As I waded along behind her father, the flame of my lamp dancing on his broad back, I thought of how little chance those poor devils had of quitting -- with their families already starving on the reduced wages.

"We were almost to the foot of the ladder. Suddenly I heard a terrific roar from the north drift. We had just come from there. I heard the hollow shrieks of the men. A cyclone of wind rushed down the drift upon us, blowing out our lamps. A mule, whinnying wildly, raced past us.

"'God man!' shouted her father. 'It's happened. The bottom's fallen out of Lake Louise. Run for it!'

"Both of us stumbled to the foot of the ladder. There was an awful roar from the rush of mud and water behind us. The shrieks of the men had ceased."

'Twas plain the feller was gettin' terrible excited. He threshed aroun' an' tried to set up. I give him another drink an' held him down. He kept on babblin' an' talkin', me a-holdin' him there.

"Her father started up the ladder like a mad ape. The mud and ooze and water from the lake bottom was pressing up the shaft after us. I could hear it belching and sucking, like hot lava, just below us. I almost lost my grip on the ladder thinking of the mangling and foul slipping among the men back there.

"I felt that her father was tiring. I climbed alongside him and shouted for him to grab onto my belt. After that we made some progress. Youth -- youth...."

The pore feller's eyes was open wide an' blazin' like hot coals. Then his voice got sort a sobbin'-like.

"That hellish stuff began to gain on us. Suddenly her father lost his grip on my belt -- his two hands caught my angle."

He begun talkin' fast, chatterin' through those swoll lips a his.

"I looked down. There was a dim light from the top of the shaft. I could see the head and limp ears of a mule swirling around -- swirling and spinning.

"The mud and water caught up to her father -- over his boots, over his knees.

"I tried to pull him out, I tell you. Then -- without a sound -- he relaxed his grip. The damned stuff was around his neck. He was grinning at me. Grinning, I tell you! Then he went."

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[Ca. 1936]

Written by:
John D. Voelker
Ishpeming, Michigan.

THE SURVIVOR
by
Robert Traver

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They was even enough draft to be swayin' ^{fitful-like} the yaller flame a the kerosene lamp 'tween us there. Least'ways I don't think it was the corn we was drinkin' that got me thinkin' serious-like to see that cat settin' there lappin' up that mash, her shadow bobbin' up an' down the logs a the far wall. Them ears an' whiskers!

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A feller's got to be a little Godful up in these here North woods or the Devil'll get him sure. Look it old Peter Moore. They found him last Spring hangin' from the rafters a his cabin. Down at the forks a the Mulligan an' the Big Dead. Pete never read out a the Bible. A course I reckon an' old trap-stealin' rum hound like Pete couldn't a read anyway, but he could a kept it handy-like.

I figger I must a got kind a dozin' -- settin' there with my socks steamin', half listenin' to the blizzard howlin' outside. Sudden-like they was a crunchin' in the snow out there. I heard a thud what set the traps a-jinglin' on the door. Then t'was still -- nothin' but the wind laughin' out there 'mongst the trees.

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I set there quite a spell -- smokin' an' drinkin' an' watchin' him there. He was breathin' pretty heavy. The wind was howlin' worse. Then he says a word.

"Father."

He'd turned his swoll head toward me. Them glistenin' eyes a his was gazin' at me again, ^{kinda pleadin'} lookin' sort a like a buck what you shot down an' ain't killed.

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He reaches out one a them froze hands a his. They was drippin' frost now from the heat.

^{"The"} "The Bible," he says.

He puts out his hand. I took an' laid it on the Book for a little bit. He laid there gazin' at me for a spell. ^{Very slow. Like he began to talk}

"Father, do you believe in the instinct of self-preservation?"

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"Father," he says, "it seems years since I've been so comfortable -- and so warm. You'll probably think I'm crazy, but it seems I'm a child once again."

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"I am the only one left. All the others are back there." Slow-like he points south. "All down there in the mine, snug -- and all so warm."

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The feller was pretty ^{well} much all in. I figgered he wouldn't last long. I propped him up on the pillow, an' then I set down by the stove an' lit my pipe to wait. The wind was whistlin' an' soughin' down the chimney worse'n ever.

He was lyin' there starin' ~~wild~~ ^{wild} at me when I sees his eyes, startled like, starin' ^{wild} at the stove. Then I sees the cat -- Black Maria -- come out a her box, all bristlin' an' humpbacked, reelin' to the bunk where he laid there. *She was drunker 'an a fiddler's bit.*

The ^{pore} feller begun to moan an' work his lips. Then he braced hissself on those drippin' hands a his an' come out a the bunk.

He stood there swayin' an' pantin'. Then he stomped drunk-like on those froze club feet a his to the door. He wrapped one a his hands 'round the chains a the traps hangin' from the door.

"Here there son," I says, comfortin' like. "You'll be slippin' too, soon enough. Best you ease back to your bunk."

He was hangin' there bulgy-eyed by one hand, like a feller slippin' from ^{off the} a cross. His swoll lips was beefy an' burst-in', like a lynched nigger's.

Then I heard the cat, Black Maria. She was back there in the shadows, hiss'n' an' spittin'.

"It's a lie -- a God damned lie!"

He shouted that there from the door, his eyes ^{a-} holdin' me off.

"I kicked him. I kicked the old bastard's hand away. He'd have dragged me down with him, I say. He was old. I was -- I am -- young. Youth! Youth...."

It seems like we stood there, him an' me, like they was no clocks, no nothin' -- just me and him.

Then he commenced laughin', hangin' there, when sudden-like he swang 'round an' pawed open the door. The wind an' snow come tumblin' in. 'Fore I could move he was stumblin' into the storm. The lamp was gutted by the wind 'fore I could move.

I went an' stood in the door in the dark, there, the sleet ^{a-}whippin' my face, an' I could hear a wailin' an' laughin' out there mixin' with the howlin' a the wind.

I was just goin' out there after him when somethin' rubbed agin' my leg. I reaches down an' they's Black Maria purrin' peaceful-like an' curlin' 'round my leg. So I close the door an' lit the lamp an' shovelled the snow in a barrel there. Upon reflectin' I figgered there'd be no findin' that one 'till Spring. An' a old feller has got to mind his strength, with a batch to run off in the mornin'.

Instinct a self-preservation. That's a right good one....