



# Under Frozen Stars

By George Marsh

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## FROM THE BEGINNING

From his fur post, Sunset House, in the Canadian north, Jim Stuart, trader in charge, with his headman, Omar, rescues a girl from an overturned canoe in the lake. She is Aurore LeBlond, daughter of Stuart's rival in the fur business, and proves to be a charming companion. In a spirit of fun, she and Jim arrange to exchange notes on a certain island. LeBlond, with Paradis, his half-breed lieutenant, arrives in search of the missing girl. Paradis displays enmity toward Jim, though LeBlond acknowledges his debt of gratitude. Going to the island to see if Aurore has left the promised note, Jim is ambushed by Paradis and forced to travel toward the LeBlond post. On the way he overthrusts the boat, leaving his half-drowned enemy on the beach. Jim discusses plans with his superior, Andrew Christie. Displeased at the trade showing made Christie allows Stuart, at his request, one year to "make good." He leaves the post feeling he has been unjustly treated. Paradis bribes an Indian to ambush Jim and Omar. The attempt fails, and Jim takes the Indian to LeBlond.

## CHAPTER IV—Continued

Paradis opened the door of the trade-room, his dark features picturing the strain under which he labored, but he evidenced no surprise at the presence of the men from Sunset House. He met the glittering eyes of the Ojibwa, Jim's amused smile, and the savage glance of Omar, who stood, arms folded, the fingers of his right hand touching the handle of his knife, with equal indifference.

"Good day, Monsieur Paradis," said Jim, "Pierre, here, has a little story to tell your employers." Turning to the excited Indian, Stuart continued: "Now tell these gentlemen just what you told us."

"What have I to do with these Indian?" demanded Paradis, assuming an air of surprise, as he stroked his small mustache. But Jim noted the unsteadiness of his hand.

"Keep quiet!" rasped the interested and perplexed MacLauren. "Let him tell his story."

Questioned by Jim when he faltered, his eyes shifting fearfully from the black face of LeBlond to the sneering Paradis, Pierre told, now in English, now in Ojibwa, how he had been refused supplies for the winter because of his old debt, and in despair was about to leave with his family when Paradis approached him with the scheme to ambush Stuart's canoe on its return up the Woman river from Lake Expance.

As Migwan accused Paradis of plotting the shooting of Omar and Jim, the sneer faded from the head man's face. With a snarl he flung at the Indian: "You lie! You dirt eater!"

"One minute, Paradis!" rasped Jim. "Let him finish!"

LeBlond was studying his assistant through narrowed eyes.

"Right here, I want to say," said Jim, "that it was only after a long grilling, when he feared for his life, that this man named you, Paradis."

"When you put eet een bees head, eh?" sneered the other, palpably uneasy under the searching scrutiny of Louis LeBlond.

"No, I didn't put it into his head—I didn't have to," drawled Jim, enjoying the baiting. "After giving you that swimming lesson, I just naturally thought you were the skunk behind this shooting."

Paradis denied having any part in the ambush. "Eet ees a lie—all lie!" he protested. "I refuse dis Pierre flour an' he mak' up de story."

"But why should he take it out on me and my man here unless he was paid to do it? He had nothing against us! He never saw us before," demanded Jim. "And how did he know we were at Lake Expance? You told him and you learned it from MacLauren."

"He went to rob you of your grub!" "Nonsense! He knew we weren't freighting supplies—our canoe was empty." Then Jim turned to grave-faced LeBlond and MacLauren who were exchanging whispers. "If I report this thing to Christie at Lake Expance, there'll be a police canoe here in September. You know what that means?"

LeBlond nodded. "We don't want the police in this, Mr. Stuart," he said quietly. "It's a bad mess, but you've only got this Indian's word against the word of Paradis. If you report this thing to the authorities, it will make no end of trouble. They'll have all of us down to the railroad and hold us there as witnesses."

"It certainly will be serious not only for Paradis but for the North-West Trading company," agreed Jim with a stiff smile, while wrinkles of amused satisfaction furrowed Omar's square face as he watched the apprehension

in the eyes of LeBlond. "But I don't intend to have Indians bribed to fire on me by your people," he went on. "If he'd hit one of us, it would have put you out of business and you'd stand trial to boot."

"You don't believe I had any knowledge of this?" protested LeBlond.

"No, of course not."

"What d'yuh want us to do, Stuart?" asked MacLauren. "We regret this thing deeply. But there's only this Indian's word against that of Paradis."

"Paradis had a motive for injuring me; this Indian had none. I'm satisfied the story is straight. Now if you'll get rid of Paradis—send him out of this country and keep him out, I won't report this shooting."

"That's a bargain," quickly agreed MacLauren.

The ash-gray face of Paradis worked convulsively as he heard his sentence of banishment. Then he found his voice. "You writer of love letters," he stormed. "You think you get her now Paul Paradis ees gone, eh? Ha! ha! You are de beeg fool—de beeg—"

From the side, unnoticed by his head man, the exasperated LeBlond struck Paradis full in the face with his open hand—then the trade-room door swung open wide and Aurore LeBlond stood in the doorway.

"Why, what's happening? What's the matter?" Eyes wide with surprise, the girl glanced from the dazed Paradis and the furious face of LeBlond to the men from Sunset House.

"Mr. Stuart!" she gasped, her dark skin deepening with color. "You—came here, and they didn't tell me. Father, what has happened?"

Black brows contracted, she glanced inquiringly from her father's annoyed look to the enchanted eyes of Stuart.

"This is no place for you; we are talking business," objected LeBlond.

As he watched her, Jim wondered if Paradis had kept secret their meeting at the split rock—if she had made a rendezvous in the stolen note, to have him fall her. Then slowly over her expressive face broke the girl's infectious smile.

"It may be none of my business, mon pere, but as Mr. Stuart happened not long ago, to have fished your daughter out of the lake, your wayward child as the female head of your house insists on welcoming Mr. Stuart to Bonne Chance." The room was hushed with tension as she walked to Jim, and gave him her hand.

"Welcome to our city, Mr. Stuart," she said, her dusky eyes alight with challenge. "Of course, after this momentous business, you'll have lunch with us." Then she dropped a low: "Paradis told me—about the split rock."

He saw the pulse beating in her throat, the color deepen under her olive skin, while her hand for an instant pressed his. And the touch of her sent his heart off at a gallop.

"Thank you, but we're starting at once," he answered, and, poignant as a knife thrust, came the realization that this amazing girl, to whose nearness every nerve in his body was alive, would soon be but a memory.

"But why?" she demanded. Her candid gaze sought the impatient look of her father. "Why do you stand there as if you had no manners? Have you lost your voice? I am asking Mr. Stuart to lunch with us before he goes."

With a resigned shrug of the shoulders LeBlond answered his indomitable daughter. "You do not understand—we are talking business—very important. Will you wait for us outside?"

She glanced doubtfully at Stuart and the men standing beside him. "Looks more like war than business,

to me," she flung lightly over her shoulder as she left the room.

"It's agreed, then," said LeBlond eagerly, "that you make no report to the authorities if Paradis goes?"

"Yes, if you ship Paradis to your Nipigon posts—out of this country."

"We'll shake hands on that, Mr. Stuart," said MacLauren, and the three men bound their compact. "Now will you take a meal with us before you start?"

"Yes," urged the relieved LeBlond, "my daughter expects you."

An hour with her, even in the presence of her father and his partner would have been unalloyed delight to the captivated Stuart, but the fierce protest in the stormy face of Omar and the responsibility for the safety of Pierre forced him to refuse.

Outside, in the clearing, Aurore was waiting. "You will allow us to make a small return of the hospitality you offered us? You will stay?"

"I'm sorry, I can't."

"You mean you don't care to?" She was walking alone with him now ahead of the others.

"Care to?" He looked boldly into her pleading eyes. "Don't you know that I want to see you—talk to you? Can't you feel it?"

She turned to the lake and he saw she slow pulse of color sweep to the raven hair that rippled from her temple as she asked: "Then I'm something more than an empty-headed, spoiled child to you, Mr. Jeem Stuart?"

Intoxicated by her nearness—he even caught the faint scent of the perfume she wore—Jim's voice thickened



"Mr. Stuart!" She Gasped, Her Dark Skin Deepening With Color. "You Came Here, and They Didn't Tell Me."

as he replied, almost inaudibly: "You're something more than a glorious creature who is going out of my life forever, Aurore LeBlond."

Her dusky eyes half closed as he watched her profile, with its quivering lips; but she did not turn her face. "You mean that?"

"I mean much more."

"Then why am I going out of your life? I stay here until September."

"I am going into the bush with Omar."

"When?"

"In two days."

"Then meet me at the white sand-beach on the large island," she said hurriedly, for voices sounded close behind them, "tomorrow morning as early as you can."

"I will be at the white sand-beach," he whispered, and his heart shook him with its pounding.

"We're sorry you won't allow us to return your hospitality, Mr. Stuart," said LeBlond as they stood on the beach where Omar and Pierre waited at the canoe.

"And we admire your sporting blood in not pushing this matter," added MacLauren. "Innocent or guilty, Paradis is going to pay for this mess."

"He's going to pay me if ever Omar, here, or I run into him again. You keep your agreement and I'll keep mine."

"Thanks, Mr. Stuart," returned MacLauren, fushing. "I'm glad we've got such a square rival on this lake."

With a wave of his hat to the white figure of Aurore who stood on the higher shore, Stuart stepped into the canoe, while two humiliated and exasperated fur men watched him until his canoe passed from sight behind the islands.

"First blood for Sunset House!" laughed Jim, elated with the outcome of the visit to LeBlond's—and glowing with the memory of Aurore's flaming face. Tomorrow he should see her alone. With her heart in her voice she had asked him to come—this mocking, headstrong girl who had feared to meet his eyes. There was no mistaking her flushed face, her voice, her look, as through a curtain of mist. He, also, had come to mean something to this amazing girl.

"Well, Omar, what d'you think? Will they keep their word and send our friend Paradis down to Nipigon?"

The paddle of the half-breed dipped methodically a number of times before he answered: "Why you hunt dat girl w'en we star' for Pipestone in tree day?"

Jim's brow "nice slowly broke into a smile. There was no deceiving the astute Omar. And his unflinching loyalty atoned for his meddling.

"I asked you if you thought they'd keep their word. Paradis is a valuable man; LeBlond will hate to lose him."

Thrice the long paddle of Omar broke the water while Jim waited for the sternman's answer. Then the slit-like eyes of the half-breed met those of his chief as he replied: "You cross de lak' again, Omar go wid you."

There was no luring of Omar from his fixed idea, so, with a laugh, Jim resumed his paddling.

An anxious Sarah and Marthe stood on the beach beside old Esau and the yelping Smoke and the dog team, when the canoe returned. In the eyes of the Indian women the journey across the lake had been in the nature of a war party, and they chattered with relief when they saw there had been no casualties.

"You cross de lak' een de mornin'?" demanded Omar.

Jim nodded.

"I follow een noder cano'. You tak' Smoke?"

"Yes, I planned to send Smoke into the bush to smell around. I won't be caught again."

Omar shook his black head. "You nevaire see her again. W'y you go?"

The head man stared in awed silence at the sudden pain in Jim's set face.

"That is why I am going; because I'll never see her again," said Stuart, in a low tone.

"Ah-hah, you lak' dat girl," replied the loyal Omar, softly. "Den I go tak' care of you."

The wide mirror of the great lake was still shot with reflected stars when the two canoes left Sunset House. At the knees of each paddler, as he pushed his boat out into the dusk, lay a rifle.

Before the sunrise two canoes were landed widely apart on the large island, drawn up, and hidden from sight in the "bush." Omar took his rifle and the binoculars and crossed the island to watch the post. If Paradis followed her canoe that morning, the half-breed promised himself, LeBlond would be relieved of his promise—unless he wanted to send a dead man to the Nipigon.

Jim had hours to wait until he could hope for the coming of Aurore LeBlond's canoe. So he dropped his clothes on the sand beach and cooled his impatience with a long swim. She was coming to meet him—this glorious dark creature who had so valiantly fought death over miles of wind-driven sea, only to laugh at it. In her pride, she had turned her flushed face and clouded eyes from him that he might not see; but he had seen. Miracle though it was, those hours at Sunset House with this girl of the cities had wrought their mutual spell. The humble fur-trader, Jim Stuart, had reached her—if not her heart, her senses. And she was coming to him here on this lonely island to say good-by.

Jim landed and leisurely put on his clothes. She had asked him to be at the sand-beach as early as he could reach it, but had named no hour. He looked at his watch. Seven o'clock! Too early yet! It would take her an hour to paddle from the post. Then he saw a canoe in the distance.

When the boat had approached to within a half-mile Jim knew, from the stroke, that the craft was paddled by women. It was she.

Presently the bow paddler waved her hand to the man who restlessly walked the shore. The canoe drifted nearer. For a space, he watched the blade of Aurore, driven by her round arms, flash in the sun; then shortly, her laugh reached him.

"Good morning! You are early, Monsieur Stuart," she called.

"I have been here for hours," he said, "waiting for the dawn, and now, she has come."

"Very pretty!" With a flash of white teeth she smiled into his eager face as he drew the boat in to the beach and gave her his hand, while the eyes of the Indian girl in the stern snapped with excitement at this secret tryst of LeBlond's daughter and the trader from across the lake.

Then, as she stepped to the sand, Jim's eyes, which had not left the radiant dark face, noted the tan linen knickers beneath the white blouse.

"Gibodiegwator!" he grinned. "You wore them in memory?"

Her dusky eyes lit with raillery. "Yes, in memory of our meeting—and because they wash."

They stood on the beach looking at each other like unaway children, as the Indian girl paddled the canoe discreetly up the shore.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)

### Dean of Battleships

H. M. S. Implacible is the oldest battleship afloat, and has a great history. Originally French, she was launched as long ago as 1789 under the name the Duguay Trouin, and after Trafalgar she was rounded up and taken as a prize to Plymouth. The Duguay Trouin would not surrender until 150 men and her captain were killed or wounded. Not for nothing, when the re-christening set in, was the name "Implacible" chosen.

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### New York Chamber of Commerce First Founded

The earliest American chamber of commerce was the New York Chamber of Commerce, founded in 1768, says Pathfinder Magazine. In the United States chambers of commerce are private and have no direct connections with the national, state or local government. The United States Chamber of Commerce is a super chamber of commerce, that is, it is a federation of local chambers of commerce, boards of trade, national trade associations and similar bodies. Its chief functions are to coordinate and express the views of its member bodies, supply trade information and generally to serve the commercial interests of the nation as the local units serve their communities. "The Nation's Business" is the official magazine published by the United States Chamber of Commerce. Although the national organization was formed in 1912 at a conference called in Washington by President Taft, it is in no sense a government organization.

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**Oriental Rugs**  
When oriental rugs were first imported into this country they were called "Turkish" simply because they had been purchased from Turkish merchants at Constantinople or Smyrna.

Soon, however, when it became known that these rugs were transported to market by caravans across the desert, a new interest was added and the rugs were known as Persian.

Today, too high a value may be placed on trade or district names. Makers of oriental rugs follow whatever styles may be in greatest demand at Tabriz, Tiflis or Constantinople.

### "Humanitarian" Dog

An unusual dog is owned by a farmer of Bajarg, Ayreshire, Scotland. He is a black and white collie. He was seen catching a rabbit; but evidently was sensitive as to the spilling of blood and refused to worry the rabbit to death. Instead of that, he hauled his captive to a burn, where he held its head under water till it was drowned. He has never, the farmer says, done other than drown his rabbits.

### Spot Without Rain

There is no need to go so far afield as Australia and South America to find a really dry place. In Lorca, on the Mediterranean coast of Spain, there has been no rain to speak of for the past seven years, and more than 20,000 people have left for wetter latitudes. Why it should be so dry in this particular district is a puzzle which the weather experts cannot solve.

### Good Enough

Artist—Shall I paint you in a frock coat, sir?  
Mr. Newrich—Oh, don't make any fuss—just wear your overalls.—Frankfurter Illustrierte.

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