

BARÉE

Son of Kazan

By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD

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WNU Service

THE STORY

CHAPTER I.—Part wolf, part dog—when two months old Barée has his first meeting with an enemy, Papayuchisew (brown owl). Fighting hard, the antagonists are suddenly plunged into a swollen creek.

CHAPTER II.—Badly buffeted, and half drowned, Barée is finally flung on the bank, but the water has destroyed his sense of direction and he is lost, lonely and hungry. For many days his life is one of fear and distress. He finally wanders into the trapping grounds of a half-breed, Pierrot Du Quenne, and his daughter, Nepeese the Willow. Taking Barée for a wolf, Nepeese shoots and wounds him, but he escapes.

CHAPTER III.—The wolf blood in Barée becomes uppermost. He rapidly learns Nature's secrets, though he finds no comrades and is desperately lonely.

CHAPTER IV.—Following Wakayoo, the black bear, Barée subsists royally on the caches of fish the big fellow leaves. He comes again into Pierrot's trapping domain. Pierrot shoots Wakayoo. Nepeese, insisting Barée is dog, not wolf, tries to capture him. Barée is strongly drawn to the girl but cannot entirely overcome his dread of man.

CHAPTER V.—Barée makes friends with a colony of beavers, losing much of his sense of loneliness.

CHAPTER VI.—Bush McTaggart, factor at Lac Bain, Hudson's Bay company's post, man of evil life, has long coveted Nepeese, even to the extent of offering marriage, but makes no progress with his suit. On his way to Pierrot and Nepeese McTaggart takes Barée in a trap, and in a struggle is bitten. With the dog he comes to Pierrot's cabin.

CHAPTER VII.—Nepeese claims Barée as hers, bathing the wounds inflicted by McTaggart after the dog had bitten him. Then, promising to give him a definite answer to his love-making, Nepeese lures McTaggart to the edge of a deep pool and humiliates him by plunging him into the water, at the same time lashing him with a spear, and addressing her. Blood poisoning developing from Barée's bite, McTaggart and Pierrot hasten to Lac Bain to secure medical treatment.

CHAPTER VIII.—Nepeese has spent three winters at a mission, where she has learned to read and sew. On her seventeenth birthday she fashions a costume which properly sets forth her really great beauty.

CHAPTER IX.—Barée hears the Call of the Wild, and his wolf blood responds. He leaves Nepeese to find a mate and hunt with the pack. Disappointed in the escape of a caribou they had been chasing in the expectation of a feast, the wolves turn on Barée. He escapes, though badly hurt, and with the Wild Call definitely extinguished.

CHAPTER X.—Barée returns to Nepeese, who nurses him back to life. A fellow trapper, DeBar, visits Pierrot. He has a message from McTaggart ordering Pierrot to go to Lac Bain at once on business. Pierrot is suspicious, but goes. In his absence, McTaggart visits the cabin and is in the twinkling of an eye in all the splendor of her new costume.

CHAPTER XI.—McTaggart tells Nepeese he has come to take her for his wife, and attempts to seize her. Barée springs at him. The Factor shoots the dog and thinks him dead. While McTaggart struggles with Nepeese Pierrot returns. Maddened at the sight, the factor attacks McTaggart. In the fight the Factor shoots and kills Pierrot. Nepeese makes her escape, with McTaggart in pursuit. On the verge of capture she turns to a pool, to what seems certain death.

CHAPTER XII.—Believing Nepeese dead, and stricken with deadly fear, even something like remorse, McTaggart buries Pierrot, burns the cabin, and goes back to Lac Bain. Barée vainly seeks Nepeese, finally giving up the search and taking the trail. He realizes Pierrot is dead but cannot understand Nepeese's absence. McTaggart arranges to go on a trapping expedition.

CHAPTER XIII.—In his wanderings Barée comes on McTaggart's trail. Associating the Factor with Nepeese's loss, he becomes almost human in his craving for revenge. With cunning learned from his association with Pierrot and Nepeese, he robs McTaggart's traps and spoils the fur of animals caught.

CHAPTER XIV.—After days of wanton destruction, Barée is taken in a specially prepared trap. The Factor finds him. Gloating over the plight of his prisoner, he is accosted by a stranger. Since he killed Pierrot, McTaggart has lived in constant fear of discovery. He at first thinks the stranger to be one of the dreaded police, but is reassured. McTaggart announces his determination to allow Barée to die slowly of starvation, no mercy being shown to a "trap robber" and outlaw. The two men leave together, but the stranger returns to Barée. In a whimsical mood he tells the dog he is Jim Carvel, also an outlaw.

CHAPTER XV.—Carvel releases Barée, the man and dog taking the trail together. Carvel has killed the murderer of his father, and the police are in pursuit. Carvel comes on a cabin in which is a dead man and a stock of furs. He takes up the dead man's trap-line for the winter, and in the spring heads south, the direction in which he feels Barée has sought to draw him.

CHAPTER XVI.—Barée practically leading, the two travelers reach the site of Pierrot's cabin, where Carvel realizes the dog is "home." Barée continues his search for Nepeese in all the places they had frequented—and finally finds her, almost the old Nepeese.

CHAPTER XVII.—Nepeese tells Carvel of McTaggart's villainy. The young man declares he will go to Lac Bain and kill the Factor. Nepeese relates the details of her rescue from the water by a friendly Indian, and insists it is her right to kill McTaggart. She has sent a message announcing her return and inviting him to come to her. She expresses his next day, but he comes that night. Asleep, Nepeese is unaware of her danger until the man has seized her. Her screams bring Barée to her rescue—and death to McTaggart. Barée wipes out the score. Countless ripens quickly under such circumstances, and Carvel arranges to rebuild Pierrot's cabin and with Nepeese as his

He felt the force of the bullet before he heard the report of the gun. It lifted him off his feet, and then sent him rolling over and over as if he had been struck a hideous blow with a club. For a flash he did not feel pain. Then it ran through him like a knife of fire, and with that pain the dog in him rose above the wolf, and he let out a wild outcry of puppyish "sapping" as he rolled and twisted on the ground.

Pierrot and Nepeese had stepped from behind the balsams, the Willow's beautiful eyes shining with pride at the accuracy of her shot. Instantly she caught her breath. Her brown fingers clutched at the barrel of her rifle. The chuckle of satisfaction died on Pierrot's lips as Barée's cries of pain filled the forest.

"Uchi Moosis!" gasped Nepeese, in her Cree.

Pierrot caught the rifle from her.

"Diable! A dog—a puppy!" he cried.

He started on a run for Barée. But in their amazement they had lost a few seconds and Barée's dazed senses were returning. He saw them clearly as they came across the open—a new kind of monster of the forests! With a final wall he darted back into the deep shadows of the trees. He had shivered at sight of the bear and the moose, but for the first time he now sensed the real meaning of danger. And it was close after him. He could hear the crashing of the two-legged beasts in pursuit; strange cries were almost at his heels—and then suddenly he plunged without warning into a hole.

It was a shock to have the earth go out from under his feet like that; but Barée did not yelp. The wolf was dominant in him again. It urged him to remain where he was, making no move, no sound—scarcely breathing. The voices were over him; the strange feet almost stumbled in the hole where he lay. Looking out of his dark hiding place, he could see one of his enemies. It was Nepeese, the Willow. She was standing so that a last glow of the day fell upon her face. Barée did not take his eyes from her. Above his pain there rose in him a strange and thrilling fascination. The girl put her two hands to her mouth, and in a voice that was soft and plaintive and amazingly comforting to his terrified little heart, cried:

"Uchimoo—Uchimoo—Uchimoo!"

And then he heard another voice; and this voice, too, was far less terrible than many sounds he had listened to in the forests.

"We cannot find him, Nepeese," the voice was saying. "He has crawled off to die. It is too bad. Come."

Where Barée had stood in the edge of the open Pierrot paused and pointed to a birch sapling that had been cut clean off by the Willow's bullet. Nepeese understood. The sapling, no larger than her thumb, had turned her shot a trifle and had saved Barée from instant death.

She turned again, and called:

"Uchimoo—Uchimoo—Uchimoo!"

Her eyes were no longer filled with the thrill of slaughter.

"He will die."

"Ayetun—yes, he will die."

But Barée had no idea of dying. He was too tough a youngster to be shocked to death by a bullet passing through the soft flesh of his fore leg. That was what had happened. His leg was torn to the bone, but the bone itself was untouched. He waited until the moon had risen before he crawled out of his hole.

His leg had grown stiff then; it had stopped bleeding, but his whole body was racked by a terrible pain. Instinctively he felt that by traveling away from the hole he would get away from danger. This was the best thing that could have happened to him, for a little later a porcupine came wandering along, chattering to itself in its foolish, good-humored way, and fell with a fat tail into the hole. Had Barée remained, he would have been so full of quills that he must surely have died.

The exercise of travel was good for Barée. It gave his wound no opportunity to "set," as Pierrot would have said, for in reality his hurt was more painful than serious. For the first hundred yards he hobbled along on three legs, and after that he found that he could use his fourth by limping it a great deal. He followed the creek for a half mile. Whenever a bit of brush touched his wound, he would snap at it viciously, and instead of whimpering when he felt one of the sharp twinges shooting through him an angry little growl gathered in his throat, and his teeth clicked. Now that he was out of the hole, the effect of the Willow's shot was stirring every drop of wolf-blood in his body. In him there was a growing animosity—a feeling of rage not against any one thing in particular, but against all things. It was not the feeling with which he had fought Papayuchisew the young owl. On this night the dog in him had disappeared. An accumulation of misfortunes had descended upon him, and out of these misfortunes—and his present hurt—the wolf had risen savage and vengeful.

This was the first night Barée had traveled. He was, for the time, not afraid of anything that might creep up on him out of the darkness. The blackest shadows had lost their thrill. It was the first big fight between the two natures that were born in him—the wolf and the dog—and the dog was vanquished. Now and then he stopped to lick his wound, and as he licked it he growled, as though for the hurt itself he held a personal antagonism. If Pierrot could have seen and heard, he would have understood very quickly, and he would have said: "Let him die. The club will never get that devil out of him."

His humor Barée came, an hour

into the heavy timber of the creeks, bottom into the more open spaces of a small plain that ran along the foot of a ridge. It was in this plain that Oohoomisew hunted. Oohoomisew was a huge snow-owl. He was the patriarch among all the owls of Pierrot's trapping domain. He was so old that he was almost blind, and therefore he never hunted as other owls hunted. He did not hide himself in the black cover of spruce and balsam tops, or float softly through the night, ready in an instant to swoop down upon his prey. His eyesight was so poor that from a spruce top he could not have seen a rabbit at all, and he might have mistaken a fox for a mouse.

So old Oohoomisew, learning wisdom from experience, hunted from ambush. He would squat on the ground, and for hours at a time he would remain there without making a sound and scarcely moving a feather, waiting with the patience of Job for something to eat to come his way. Now and then he had made mistakes. Twice he had mistaken a lynx for a rabbit, and in the second attack he had lost a foot, so that when he slumbered aloft during the day he hung to his perch with one claw. Crippled, nearly blind, and so old that he had long ago lost the tufts of feathers over his ears, he was still a giant in strength, and when he was angry one could hear the snap of his beak twenty yards away.

For three nights he had been unlucky, and tonight he had been particularly unfortunate. Two rabbits had come his way, and he had lunged at each of them from his cover. The first he had missed entirely; the second had left with him a mouthful of fur—and that was all. He was raven-



He Was Gritting His Bill in His Bad Temper When He Heard Barée Approaching.

ously hungry, and he was gritting his bill in his bad temper when he heard Barée approaching.

Even if Barée could have seen under the dark bush ahead, and had discovered Oohoomisew ready to dart from his ambush, it is not likely that he would have gone very far aside. His own fighting blood was up. He, too, was ready for war.

Very indistinctly Oohoomisew saw him at last, coming across the little open which he was watching. He squatted down. His feathers ruffled up until he was like a ball of fire. Ten feet away, Barée stopped for a moment and licked his wound. Oohoomisew waited cautiously. Again Barée advanced, passing within six feet of the bush. With a swift hop and a sudden thunder of his powerful wings the great owl was upon him.

This time Barée let out no cry of pain or of fright. The wolf is kipchima, as the Indians say. No hunter ever heard a trapped wolf whine for mercy at the sting of a bullet or the beat of a club. He dies with his fangs bared. Tonight it was a wolf-whelp that Oohoomisew was attacking, and not a dog-pup. The owl's first rush keeled Barée over, and for a moment he was smothered under the huge, outspread wings, while Oohoomisew—plunging him down—hopped for a claw hold with his one good foot, and struck fiercely with his beak.

One blow of that beak anywhere about the head would have settled for a rabbit, but at the first thrust Oohoomisew discovered that it was not a rabbit he was holding under his wings. A blood-curdling snarl answered the blow, and Oohoomisew remembered the lynx, his lost foot, and his narrow escape with his life. The old owl might have beaten a retreat, but Barée was no longer the puppyish Barée of that hour in which he had fought young Papayuchisew. Experience and hardship had aged and strengthened him; his jaws had passed quickly from the bone-licking to the bone-cracking age—and before Oohoomisew could get away, if he was thinking of flight at all, Barée's fangs closed with a vicious snap on his one good leg.

In the stillness of night there rose a still greater thunder of wings, and for a few moments Barée closed his eyes to keep from being blinded by Oohoomisew's furious blows. But he hung on grimly, and as his teeth met through the flesh of the old night plume's leg, his angry snarl carried defiance to Oohoomisew's ears. Three good fortune had given him this chance to fight, and Barée knew that if he was to live, he must depend on his ability to hold it. The old owl had no other claw to stick into him, and it was impossible—caught as he was

for him to tear at Barée with his beak. So he continued to beat that thunder of blows with his four-foot wings.

The wings made a great tumult about Barée, but they did not hurt him. He buried his fangs deeper. His snarl rose more fiercely as he got the taste of Oohoomisew's blood, and through him there surged more hotly the desire to kill this monster of the night, as though in the death of this creature he had the opportunity of avenging himself for all the hurts and hardships that had befallen him since he lost his mother.

Oohoomisew had never felt a great fear until now. The lynx had snapped at him but once—and was gone, leaving him crippled. But the lynx had not snarled in that wolfish way, and it had not hung on. A thousand and one nights Oohoomisew had listened to the wolf-howl. Instinct had told him what it meant. He had seen the packs pass swiftly through the night, and always when they passed he had kept in the deepest shadows. To him, as for all other wild things, the wolf-howl stood for death. But until now, with Barée's fangs buried in his leg, he had never sensed fully the wolf-fear. It had taken it years to enter into his slow, stupid head—but now that it was there, it possessed him as no other thing had ever possessed him in all his life.

Suddenly Oohoomisew ceased his beating and launched himself upward. Like huge fans his powerful wings churned the air, and Barée felt himself lifted suddenly from the earth. Still he held on—and in a moment both bird and beast fell back with a thud.

Oohoomisew tried again. This time he was more successful, and he rose fully six feet into the air with Barée. They fell again. A third time the old outlaw fought to wing himself free of Barée's grip; and then, exhausted, he lay with his giant wings outspread, hissing and cracking his bill.

Under those wings Barée's mind worked with the swift instincts of the killer. Suddenly he changed his hold, burying his fangs into the under part of Oohoomisew's body. They sank into three inches of feathers. Swift as Barée had been, Oohoomisew was equally swift to take advantage of his opportunity. In an instant he had swooped upward. There was a jerk, a rending of feathers from flesh—and Barée was alone on the field of battle.

Barée had not killed, but he had conquered. His first great day—or night—had come. The world was filled with a new promise for him, as vast as the night itself. And after a moment he sat back on his haunches, sniffing the air for his beaten enemy; and then, as if defying the feathered monster to come back and fight to the end, he pointed his sharp little muzzle to the stars and sent forth his first babyish wolf-howl into the night.

Chapter III

Barée's fight with Oohoomisew was good medicine for him. It not only gave him great confidence in himself, but it also cleared the fever of ugliness from his blood. He no longer snapped and snarled at things as he went on through the night.

His wound was much less painful the next day, and by nightfall he scarcely had noticed it at all. Since his almost tragic end at the hands of Nepeese, he had been traveling in a general northeasterly direction, following instinctively the run of the waterways; but his progress had been slow, and when darkness came again he was not more than eight or ten miles from the hole into which he had fallen after the Willow had shot him.

All sounds now held a meaning for Barée. Swiftly he was coming into his knowledge of the wilderness. His eyes gleamed; his blood thrilled. For many minutes at a time he scarcely moved. But of all the sounds that came to him, the wolf-cry thrilled him most. Again and again he listened to it. At times it was far away, so far that it was like a whisper, dying away almost before it reached him; and then again it would come to him full-throated, hot with the breath of the chase, calling him to the red thrill of the hunt, to the wild orgy of torn flesh and running blood—calling, calling, calling. That was it, calling him to his own kin, to the bone of his bone and the flesh of his flesh—to the wild, fierce hunting packs of his mother's tribe! It was Gray Wolf's voice seeking him in the night—Gray Wolf's blood inviting him to the Brotherhood of the Pack.

Barée trembled as he listened. In his throat he whined softly. He edged to the sheer face of a rock. He wanted to go; nature was urging him to go. But the call of the wild was struggling against odds; for in him was the dog, with its generations of subdued and sleeping instincts—and all that night the dog in him kept Barée to the top of his rock.

Next morning Barée found many crawfish along the creek, and he feasted on their succulent flesh until he felt that he would never be hungry again. Nothing had tasted quite so good since he had eaten the partridge of which he had robbed Sekoosew the ermine.

In the middle of the afternoon Barée came into a part of the forest that was very quiet and very peaceful. The creek had deepened. In places its banks swept up until they formed small ponds. Twice he made considerable detours to get around these ponds. He traveled very quietly, listening and watching. Not since the ill-fated day he had left the old windfall had he felt quite so much at home as now. It seemed to him that at last he was treading country which he knew, and where he would find friends. Perhaps

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