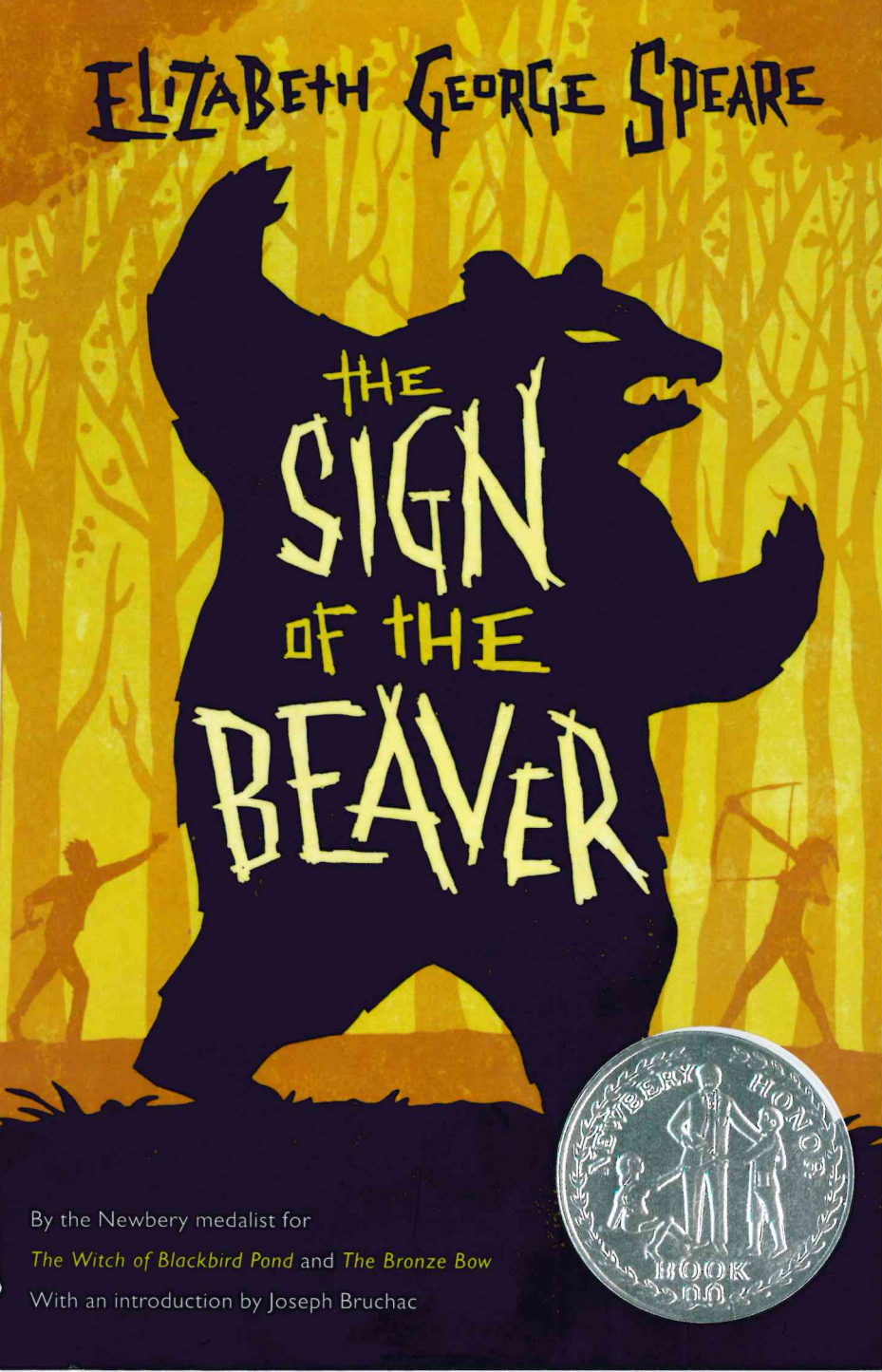
ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE

THE SIGN OF THE BEAVER



By the Newbery medalist for
The Witch of Blackbird Pond and *The Bronze Bow*
With an introduction by Joseph Bruchac

THE SIGN OF THE BEAVER

ELIZABETH GEORGE SPEARE

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To William and Michael

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INTRODUCTION

Twenty-eight years have passed since Elizabeth George Speare's *The Sign of the Beaver,* set in the wilds of Maine in 1768, first appeared. Its presence in countless school libraries and its popularity among young readers are due not just to the author's reputation as a two-time Newbery Award winner, but also to its vivid storytelling.

In some ways its plot is familiar—a young individual, left in the wilderness on his (or her) own, manages not only to survive but to thrive. Like such novels as *Hatchet, Island of the Blue Dolphins,* and *My Side of the Mountain,* it's an empowering story with which most young people can identify.

It falls within the "white hero adopted by Indians" genre—exemplified by countless books such as James Fenimore Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans,* and popular movies such as *Dances with Wolves*—in which a white American is taken in, befriended, and guided by wise Native Americans. Sure enough, in Speare's novel, thirteen-year-old Matt soon finds his own native guides; they are the wise Indian elder Saknis and his reticent

grandson, Attean, who rescue Matt after he has been stung by a swarm of bees.

In the midst of this tale of adventure Speare brings in the best-known narrative of survival in English, Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*. Aside from his father's Bible, *Robinson Crusoe* is the only book Matt possesses, and he decides to use it as a means of teaching Attean how to read in exchange for his hunting food for Matt.

However, Attean is no Man Friday. Attean's angry response to one scene in Defoe's tale—when Friday places the white man's foot on his own head—graphically demonstrates Attean's independence and pride. "Never kneel down to white man!" Attean says. Matt begins to see Attean as at least his equal, and so does the reader—just as Speare intended. *The Sign of the Beaver* is not merely an adventure story, or a celebration of American Indian wisdom. It's also an anticolonial narrative—*Robinson Crusoe* turned on its head.

The one villain in the piece is Ben, a self-aggrandizing white man who steals Matt's gun and leaves him with no easy means of getting food. Attean's grandmother dislikes white people, and with good reason. Attean's mother was killed by a white scalp hunter. His father never returned after going to seek revenge. Matt proves himself worthy of respect when he begins to behave more like an Indian and less like such white men as Ben and the unnamed bounty hunter who killed Attean's mother. That

the Commonwealth of Massachusetts paid bounties on Indian scalps is one of the grim truths of the American wars between England and France, which ended in 1759. It's admirable that this shameful fact of American history is pointed out in this novel.

It's also important to recognize some of the criticism the book has received, especially from American Indian readers.

First, there are the "Indian" words. Throughout the story, words from the Wabanaki language are employed to add an air of authenticity to the native characters. Most of the Wabanaki words are accurately used. *Nda* means "no." *Seba* means "tomorrow." However, the way certain words are used indicates that they were drawn from a dictionary, not from knowing the language in context. *Quabit* (or *makwabid*) is a name for "beaver," but it means "red one who sits," not "red tail." *Aremus* is a word for "dog," but it is not a dismissive word. It harkens back to the ancient tale in which the dog is honored for its loyalty to humans by being given the name of *aremus,* which means "the one who walks with us." Among Wabanakis, dogs are viewed as family members and carefully named, not just called "dog."

The "Indian" word that's the biggest problem here is *squaw. Squaw* does derive from *sqa,* an Algonquin feminine word ending, but it has entered the English language with as much baggage as the "n-word," which comes from the Latin word for "black." It's deeply insulting to refer to any American Indian woman as a squaw. In 1768, when this

story takes place, a young Wabanaki man might refer to the work of women as different from his own—but no less worthy. And he might be more likely to use the word *behanem,* meaning "woman" or "wife," than *squaw.* In 1983, when *The Sign of the Beaver* was published, it was widely known by everyone connected in any way with American Indians just how problematic the word *squaw* is.

The English spoken by the Indian characters is sterotypical broken English, the sort of "Indian talk" found in books and films for more than two centuries. The rules of grammar do differ between English and Wabanaki, including the lack of such articles as "the" and "a." However, many native people in Maine during this period were very fluent in both spoken and written English (and French). Attean's name, in fact, comes from Etienne (Stephen in French). He already seems to know a lot of English, yet despite Matt's teaching, Attean's speech never improves. It's also doubtful that any Indian of that period would have referred to a reciprocal agreement between individuals as a "treaty." New England natives understood that treaties were made between nations. This use of the word seems to have come from the author's imagination.

Though wilderness survival is a major theme, as one whose family teaches American Indian traditional outdoor skills, I can state with absolute certainty that there are numerous errors relating to just that in this book. For example, shooting a bear "between the eyes" might work

with a bullet, but not an eighteenth-century arrow. For a hunter to leap on a wounded bear with a knife is foolish. Stabbing that same bear in its skull "just behind his first arrow" would not result in the knife "sinking deep."

Another troublesome part of the plot is the departure of Matt's Indian friends. They leave their homeland, never to return, because "many white men come soon." The real story of the native presence in Maine and throughout New England is quite different and much more complex. The thousands of native people who remained in Maine and their present-day descendants can vouch for that.

However, if one brings to the book a deeper understanding of the period and the native culture that Speare attempted to depict, *The Sign of the Beaver* has much to recommend it to twenty-first-century readers. The author clearly hoped that we might all learn from each other as did Matt and Attean. At its best, this book is a useful lesson meant to teach the importance of seeing other humans—no matter how different—as beings worthy of respect.

—Joseph Bruchac

CHAPTER 1

MATT STOOD AT THE EDGE OF THE CLEARING FOR some time after his father had gone out of sight among the trees. There was just a chance that his father might turn back, that perhaps he had forgotten something or had some last word of advice. This was one time Matt reckoned he wouldn't mind the advice, no matter how many times he had heard it before. But finally he had to admit that this was not going to happen. His father had really gone. He was alone, with miles of wilderness stretching on every side.

He turned and looked back at the log house. It was a fair house, he thought; his mother would have no cause to be ashamed of it. He had helped to build every inch of it. He had helped to cut down the spruce trees and haul the logs and square and notch them. He had stood at one end of every log and raised it, one on top of the other, fitting the notched ends together as snugly as though they had grown that way. He had climbed the roof to fasten down the cedar splints with long poles, and dragged up pine boughs to cover them. Behind the cabin were the mounds of corn he had helped to plant, the green blades already shooting up, and the pumpkin vines just showing between the stumps of trees.

If only it were not so quiet. He had been alone before. His father had often gone into the forest to hunt, for hours on end. Even when he was there, he was not much of a talker. Sometimes they had worked side by side through a whole morning without his speaking a single word. But this silence was different. It coiled around Matt and reached into his stomach to settle there in a hard knot.

He knew it was high time his father was starting back. This was part of the plan that the family had worked out together in the long winter of 1768, sitting by lamplight around the pine table back in Massachusetts. His father had spread out the surveyor's map and traced the boundaries of the land he had purchased in Maine territory. They would be the first settlers in a new township. In the spring, when the ice melted, Matt and his father would travel north. They would take passage on a ship to the settlement at the mouth of the Penobscot River. There they would find some man with a boat to take them up the river and then on up a smaller river that branched off from it, many days' distance from the settlement. Finally they would strike out on foot into the forest and claim their own plot of land. They would clear a patch of ground, build a cabin, and plant some corn. In the summer his father would go back to Massachusetts to fetch his mother and sister and the new baby, who would be born while they were gone. Matt would stay behind and guard the cabin and the corn patch.

It hadn't been quite so easy as it had sounded back in their house in Quincy. Matt had had to get used to going to sleep at night with every muscle in his body

aching. But the log house was finished. It had only one room. Before winter they would add a loft for him and his sister to sleep in. Inside there were shelves along one wall and a sturdy puncheon table with two stools. One of these days, his father promised, he would cut out a window and fasten oiled paper to let in the light. Someday the paper would be replaced with real glass. Against the wall was a chimney of smaller logs, daubed and lined with clay from the creek. This too was a temporary structure. Over and over his father had warned Matt that it wasn't as safe as a stone chimney and that he had to watch out for flying sparks. He needn't fear. After all the work of building this house, Matt wasn't going to let it burn down about his ears.

"Six weeks," his father had said that morning. "Maybe seven. Hard to reckon exactly. With your ma and sister we'll have slow going, specially with the new little one.

"You may lose track of the weeks," he had added. "Easy thing to do when you're alone. Might be well to make notches on a stick, seven notches to a stick. When you get to the seventh stick you can start looking for us."

A silly thing to do, Matt thought, as though he couldn't count the weeks for himself. But he wouldn't argue about it, not on the last morning.

Then his father reached up to a chink in the log wall and took down the battered tin box that held his watch and his compass and a few silver coins. He took out the big silver watch.

"Every time you cut a notch," he said, "remember to wind this up at the same time."

Matt took the watch in his hand as gently as if it were a bird's egg. "You aim to leave it, Pa?" he asked.

"It belonged to your grandpa. Would've belonged to you anyhow sooner or later. Might as well be now."

"You mean – it's mine?"

"Aye, it's yourn. Be kind of company, hearing it tick."

The lump in Matt's throat felt as big as the watch. This was the finest thing his father had ever possessed.

"I'll take care of it," he managed finally.

"Aye. I knowed you would. Mind you don't wind it up too tight."

Then, just before he left, his father had given him a second gift. Thinking of it, Matt walked back into the cabin and looked up at his father's rifle, hanging on two pegs over the door.

"I'll take your old blunderbuss with me," his father had said. "This one aims truer. But mind you, don't go banging away at everything that moves. Wait till you're dead sure. There's plenty of powder if you don't waste it."

It was the first sign he had given that he felt uneasy about leaving Matt here alone. Matt wished now that he could have said something to reassure his father, instead of standing there tongue-tied. But if he had the chance again, he knew he wouldn't do any better. They just weren't a family to put things into words.

He reached up and took down the rifle. It was lighter than his old matchlock, the one his father had carried away with him in exchange. This was a fine piece, the walnut stock as smooth and shining as his mother's silk

dress. It was a mite long, but it had a good balance. With this gun he wouldn't need to waste powder. So it wouldn't hurt to take one shot right now, just to try the feel of it.

He knew his father always kept that rifle as clean as a new-polished spoon. But because he enjoyed handling it, Matt poked about in the touchhole with the metal pick. From the powder horn he shook a little of the black powder into the pan. Then he took one lead bullet out of the pouch, wrapped it in a patch of cloth, and rammed it into the barrel. As he worked, he whistled loudly into the stillness. It made the knot in his stomach loosen a little.

As he stepped into the woods, a bluejay screeched a warning. So it was some time before he spotted anything to shoot at. Presently he saw a red squirrel hunched on a branch, with its tail curled up behind its ears. He lifted the rifle and sighted along the barrel, minding his father's advice and waiting till he was dead sure.

The clean feel of the shot delighted him. It didn't set him back on his heels like his old matchlock. Still, he hadn't quite got the knack of it. He caught the flick of a tail as the squirrel scampered to an upper branch.

I could do better with my own gun, he thought. This rifle of his father's was going to take some getting used to.

Ruefully he trudged back to the cabin. For his noon meal he sat munching a bit of the johnnycake his father had baked that morning. Already he was beginning to realize that time was going to move slowly. A whole afternoon to go before he could cut that first notch.

Seven sticks. That would be August. He would have a birthday before August. He supposed his father had forgotten that, with so many things on his mind. By the time his family got here, he would be thirteen years old.

CHAPTER 2

BY THE NEXT MORNING THE TIGHT PLACE IN HIS stomach was gone. By the morning after that Matt decided that it was mighty pleasant living alone. He enjoyed waking to a day stretched before him to fill as he pleased. He could set himself the necessary chores without having to listen to any advice about how they should be done. How could he have thought that the time would move slowly? As the days passed and he cut one notch after another on his stick, Matt discovered that there was never time enough for all that must be done between sunrise and sunset.

Although the cabin was finished, his father had left him the endless task of chinking the spaces between the logs with clay from the creek bank. At the edge of the clearing there were trees to fell to let in more sun on the growing corn, and underbrush that kept creeping closer over the cleared ground. All this provided plenty of wood to be chopped and stacked in the woodpile against the cabin wall.

To cook a meal for himself once or twice a day, he had to keep a fire going. Twice in the first few days he had waked and found the ashes cold. Back home in Quincy, if his mother's fire burned out she had sent

him or Sarah with her shovel to borrow a live coal from a neighbor. There was no neighbor here. He had to gather twigs and make a wad of shredded cedar bark, then strike his flint and blow on the tiny spark until it burst into flame. A man could get mighty hungry before he had coaxed that spark into a cooking fire.

The corn patch needed constant tending. In these hot, bright days, every drop of water that those green shoots demanded had to be lugged from the creek, a kettleful at a time, and there was no way to water the corn without encouraging the weeds as well. As fast as he pulled them, new ones sprang up. The crows drove him distracted, forever flapping about. A dozen times a day he would dash at them fiercely, shouting and waving his arms. They would just fly lazily off and wait on a nearby treetop till his back was turned. He dared not waste his precious powder on them. At night wild creatures nibbled the tops of the green shoots. Once he sat up all night with his rifle across his knees, batting at the mosquitoes. When morning came he stumbled into the cabin and slept away half the day. That was the second time he let the fire go out.

He seemed to be hungrier than ever before in his life. The barrel of flour was going down almost as fast as when two were dipping into it. He depended on his gun to keep his stomach filled. He was still proud of that gun, but no longer in awe of it. Carrying it over his shoulder, he set out confidently into the forest, venturing farther each day, certain of bringing home a duck or a rabbit for his dinner. For a change of diet

he could take his fish pole and follow the twisting course of the creek or walk the trail his father had blazed to a pond some distance away. In no time he could catch all the fish he could eat. Twice he had glimpsed a deer moving through the trees just out of range of his rifle. One of these days, he promised himself, he would bring one down.

It was a good life, with only a few small annoyances buzzing like mosquitoes inside his head. One of these was the thought of Indians. Not that he feared them. His father had been assured by the proprietors that his new settlement would be safe. Since the last treaty with the tribes, there had not been an attack reported anywhere in this part of Maine. Still, one could not entirely forget all those horrid tales. And he just didn't like the feeling he had sometimes that someone was watching him. He couldn't prove it. He could never see anything more than a quick shadow that might be a moving branch. But he couldn't shake off the feeling that someone was there.

One of those pieces of advice his father had been so fond of giving him had been about Indians. "They won't bother you," he said. "Most of 'em have left for Canada. The ones who stayed don't want to make any trouble. But Indians take great stock in politeness. Should you meet one, speak to him just the same as to the minister back home."

Matt had seen his father follow his own advice. Once, when they had tramped a long way from the cabin, they had seen in the distance a solitary dark-skinned figure. The two men had nodded to each other gravely,

and lifted a hand in salute, exactly as if they had been two deacons passing in the town square. But how could you be respectful to a shadow that would not show itself? It made Matt uneasy.

He had grown used to the stillness. In fact he knew now that the forest is rarely quiet. As he tramped through it he was accompanied by the chirruping of birds, the chatter of squirrels, and the whine and twang of thousands of bothersome insects. In the night he could recognize now the strange sounds that used to startle him. The grunt of a porcupine rummaging in the garden. The boom of the great horned owl. The scream of some small creature pounced upon in the forest. Or the long, quavering cry of the loon from the distant pond. The first time he had heard that loon call he had thought it was a wolf. Now he liked to hear it. Mournful as it was, it was the cry of another living creature. Matt would worm his shoulder into a comfortable spot in the hemlock boughs that made his mattress, pull the blanket over his head to shut out the mosquitoes, and fall asleep well satisfied with his world.

He would have liked, however, to have someone to talk to occasionally. He hadn't reckoned on missing that. For much of the day he was content to be alone, tramping through the woods or sitting on the bank of the creek dangling his fishline. He was like his father in that. But there were times when he had a thought he'd like to share with someone. With anybody. Even his sister, Sarah, though he'd never paid much mind to her at home.

So he was not so quick-witted as he should have been when unexpectedly someone arrived.

CHAPTER 3

HE WAS SITTING ON THE FLAT STONE THAT SERVED as a doorstep, waiting for his supper to cook. The late sun slanted in long yellow bars across the clearing. The forest beyond was already in shadow. Matt was feeling well pleased with his day. That morning he had shot a rabbit. He had skinned it carefully, stretching the fur against the cabin wall to dry. Chunks of the meat were boiling now in the kettle over the fire, and the good smell came through the door and made his mouth water.

In the dimness of the trees, a darker shadow moved. This time it didn't disappear but came steadily nearer. He could hear the crackle of twigs under heavy boots. Matt leaped to his feet.

"Pa!"

No answer. It wasn't his father, of course. It couldn't be. An Indian? Matt felt a curl of alarm against his backbone. He stood waiting, his muscles tensed.

The man who came tramping out from the trees was not an Indian. He was heavyset, the fat bulging under a ragged blue army coat. His face was almost invisible behind a tangle of reddish whiskers. Halfway across the clearing he stopped.

"Howdy!" he called cheerfully.

"Hello," Matt answered uncertainly. Was this someone who ought to be greeted like a deacon?

The stranger came closer, so that Matt could see the small blue eyes that glittered in the weather-hardened face. The man stood, deliberately taking his time, looking over the cabin and the cornfield.

"Nice place you got here."

Matt said nothing.

The man peered curiously over Matt's shoulder through the open door. He could easily see that the cabin was empty.

"You all alone here?"

Matt hesitated. "My father is away just now."

"Be back soon, will he?"

Matt was puzzled by his own unwillingness to answer. He ought to be glad to see anyone after all these days alone, but somehow he wasn't. He didn't quite know why he found himself lying.

"Anytime now," he said. "He went back to the river to get supplies. He might be back tonight. When I saw you coming I thought it was him."

"Guess I surprised you. Reckon you don't get much company way off here."

"No, we don't," Matt answered.

"Then your pappy wouldn't want you to turn away a visitor, would he?" the man asked. "Thought mebbe you'd ask me to stay for supper. I got a whiff of it half a mile off."

Matt remembered his manners. The man's easy grin was beginning to wipe away some of his doubts. "Of course," he said. "Come in – sir."

The man snorted. "Ben's the name," he said. "You may of heard of me in the river town."

"We didn't stay in the town very long," Matt answered. He hurried now to light a candle. The stranger stood inside the door, taking in every inch of the small room.

"Your pappy knows how to build a good, tight house," he said. "You reckon on staying here for good?"

"It's our land," Matt told him. In the candlelight the room looked snug and homey, something to be proud of showing off to a stranger. "My mother and sister will be coming soon."

"More folks comin' all the time," the man said. "Time was you could tramp for a month and never see a chimney. Now the towns is spreading out from the river every which way."

His eye fell on the rifle hanging over the door. He let out a slow, admiring whistle and walked over to run his hand along the stock. "Mighty fine piece," he said. "Worth a passel of beaver."

"My father wouldn't sell it," Matt said shortly. He was busying himself now to make this stranger welcome. He scooped out a good measure of flour, stirred in some water, patted the dough out on a clean ash board, and propped it up in front of the fire to bake. He laid out the two bowls on the table and the two pewter spoons. He poured molasses into the one pewter dish. Then he ladled the hot stew into the bowls.

The way that stew disappeared, the stranger couldn't have eaten a meal for a good while. Matt took a very small share for himself. He pulled back his hand and watched the man snatch the last bit of corn cake,

sopping up the last of the molasses with it. Finally Ben pushed back his stool and drew the back of his hand across his beard.

"That was mighty tasty, son. Mighty tasty. You wouldn't have a mite of tobacco now, would you?"

"I'm sorry," Matt said. "My father doesn't have any."

"Pity. Can't be helped, I suppose."

In the easy silence that followed, Matt decided to ask a question of his own. "Are you traveling to the river?"

Ben snorted again. "Not likely. I'm keeping as fur off from that river's I can, till things quiet down."

Matt waited.

"Tell the truth, I got away from that town just in time. Warn't nothin' they could prove, but they sure had it in for me. So I says, Ben, I says, you been plannin' on gettin' yourself some beaver pelts. Looks like now's the time to get moving. I aim to settle in with the redskins a bit, maybe move on north."

"You mean you're going to live with the Indians?"

"Could do worse. I can bed down 'bout anywheres."

It certainly looked as though, invited or not, Ben was planning on bedding down right here in the cabin. He had eased himself off the stool and sprawled out on the floor, his shoulders propped against the wall. He pulled a dirty corncob pipe from his pocket and stared down at it ruefully.

"Pity," he said again. "Meal like that needs 'baccy to settle it right." He put the pipe away and shifted his heavy bulk against the wall.

"When I was not much more'n your age," he drawled,

well-fed and ready to talk, "I'd spend the whole winter with the redskins. Hunt with 'em, trap. Easy to pick up their lingo. Still remember a deal of it. But this country ain't the same anymore. You got to go west, Ohio mebbe, to get any decent trapping."

"The Indians still hunt here, don't they?" Matt asked.

"The Indians has mostly cleared out of these parts," Ben told him. "What wasn't killed off in the war got took with the sickness. A deal of 'em moved on to Canada. What's left makes a mighty poor living, game gettin' so scarce."

"Where do they live?"

"Round about." Ben waved vaguely toward the forest. "They make small camps for a while and then move on. The Penobscots stick like burrs, won't give up. They still hunt and trap. No way to stop 'em. Never got it through their heads they don't still own this land. You never seen none of 'em?"

"My father did once. Do they speak English?"

"Enough to get what they want. They pick it up from the traders. What pelts they can scrape together they take into the towns. They can strike a sharp deal. You got to know how to handle 'em.

"Reason you ain't seen 'em," he went on, "they got enough sense to clear out of these parts when the bugs is bad. They move off, the whole lot, down to the coast to get their year's mess of clams. Should be movin' back 'bout now. They'll stay the summer and then go off for the big hunt come fall.

"Them hunts," he remembered. "Ain't nothin' like 'em nowadays. Bows and arrows was all they had. Still

use 'em some, if they can't lay hands on a gun. I got so's I was demmed near as good as any of 'em. Don't suppose I could hit a barn door now."

Ben's voice drawled on and on, thickened with food and drowsiness. He told of the big moose hunts of his days with the Indians. He had fought in the recent war against the French and he despised them for stirring up the Indians against the Maine settlements. He seemed to have singlehandedly shot down half the French army. Especially he hated the Jesuit priests who had egged the redskins on, and he had once been part of an expedition that broke into a chapel and smashed the popish idols. Once he had been taken captive by the fierce Iroquois, who were set on putting him to torture, but he had been too smart for them and escaped in the night. Listening, Matt couldn't make the man out. To hear him talk, he had been as big a hero as Jack the Giant Killer, but he didn't look the part. He had certainly fallen on hard times of late. No doubt about it, however, he could tell a good story.

The man's voice was trailing off, and he slumped lower and lower. Presently he was sprawled flat on the floor and snoring. It was clear enough that he could bed down anywhere. At least he hadn't taken over Matt's bed.

Matt moved about quietly, though he doubted anything could disturb his guest. He cleaned off the bowls with his twig brush. Then he banked the fire with ashes. Finally he settled down on his hemlock mattress.

But he couldn't sleep. He lay staring up at the log roof, even after the last flickers of firelight had died

away and the cabin was in darkness. He couldn't quiet his uneasy thoughts. Bragging about his adventures by the fire, Ben had seemed harmless, just a fat, tired old man grateful for a good meal. To be honest, Matt had enjoyed his company. Now he began to worry. How long was Ben going to stay? He was sure to find out soon that Matt was living alone. When he did, would he decide it was more comfortable here than in an Indian village? At the rate he had wolfed down that supper, the flour and molasses wouldn't hold out long. Would he expect Matt to go on providing meals and waiting on him?

And why had he left that town on the river in such a hurry? Was there really some charge against him? Was he dangerous – perhaps even a murderer? At the thought, Matt sat up on his pine bed. He'd be sensible to stay awake and on guard. He'd half a mind to fetch down his father's rifle and keep it near at hand. Then he felt ashamed. What would his father say about begrudging a stranger a meal and a night's rest? All the same, he was determined not to shut his eyes that night.

He kept them open for a long time, but suddenly he jerked out of a deep sleep and saw that daylight was streaming across the cabin floor. The cabin door was open, and the man was gone.

Perhaps he had only stepped outside. Matt stumbled to the door. No sign of the stranger. Relief flooded over him. All that worrying, and the man had never intended to stay. Perhaps he had actually believed the lie that his father was returning that day. Then once again, Matt felt ashamed. He must have made it only

too plain that Ben wasn't welcome. Would Pa say he had done wrong?

Still, it was too early to be sure. At any moment Ben might appear, hungry for breakfast. He had better stir up some fresh corn cake.

It was then that he noticed. His father's rifle was not hanging over the door. In a panic, he searched the cabin, his own bed, the corner shelves, under the table and the stools. He rushed back to the door and on to the edge of the forest. It was no use. No way of telling which way the man had taken or how long he had been on his way while Matt slept. Ben was gone, and so was the rifle.

He should have kept it in his hands, as his hunch had warned him. He could see now that the man had had his mind set on that gun from the moment he laid eyes on it. But even if Matt had had it in his hands, could he have held out against those burly arms? And to keep his gun, could he actually have shot a man—even a criminal?

It was only later, when his rage began to die down, that he felt a prickle of fear. Now he had no protection. And no way to get meat. Sick with anger, he sat staring at his row of notched sticks. It would be a month at least before his father returned. A month of nothing but fish! And what would his father say?

CHAPTER 4

IT WAS HARD TO BE DEPRIVED OF THE HUNTING. Now whenever he went into the forest, the squirrels and the rabbits frisked about boldly, knowing perfectly well he had no gun in his hands. Once, he was certain he could have had a good shot at a deer. Instead, he went fishing, and he knew he ought to be grateful that the creek and the pond could provide all the food he needed, even though fish didn't seem to stick to his ribs like a good meat stew. Here and there in a sunny spot he discovered a patch of blueberries. Gradually his spirits rose again. The July weather was perfect. The flies and mosquitoes were less bothersome. He began to count the days ahead instead of the ones he had notched. Two or three more sticks and his family would be here. The corn was growing taller. The little hard green pumpkins were rounding out. He could wait a little longer.

Perhaps he even became a mite careless.

He had been fishing all one morning. A good, clear day, the water still nippy on his ankles, the sun warm on his bare head. He had followed the creek a long way and had a lucky catch. He came whistling out of the woods, swinging four speckled trout. He quieted down

of a sudden when he heard a crackling in the underbrush close by. Then he stopped short at sight of the cabin. The door was swinging open at a crazy angle, one hinge broken. Across the doorsill some white stuff dribbled, like spilled flour.

With a shout, he dropped the fish and ran. It *was* flour! Tracked all over the cabin floor, the sack ripped open and dragged across the room. The cabin was a shambles, the stools overturned, the shelf swept bare, the precious molasses keg upside down on the floor and empty.

Ben must have come back! For a moment hot sparks of anger drove every sensible thought out of his head. Then he knew it couldn't have been Ben. Ben was too fond of food to waste it. Indians? No, it wasn't possible any human being would scatter food about like this. With a sinking heart he realized what had happened. He remembered the thrashing in the underbrush. It had to be a bear. Somehow he had neglected to bar the door securely.

Well, the damage was done, and the bear would be half a mile away by now. Helpless with fury at his own carelessness, he stood for some time in the middle of the cabin, unable to pull his wits together. Then he went down on his hands and knees and carefully began to scrape up the traces of flour. After a time he gave up. The best he had managed to salvage was two handfuls of gritty, unappetizing meal, even though he took the good pewter spoon and dug into the hollows of the dirt floor.

After a long time he felt hungry enough to remember the fish. Halfheartedly he cleaned them, and blew up

the fire and roasted them. He found a few grains of salt left in the tin to sprinkle on them. He would have to make the best of it. He wouldn't starve as long as he had a fishline. But tomorrow he would not even have salt.

CHAPTER 5

DAY AFTER DAY HE KEPT REMEMBERING THE BEE TREE. He and his father had discovered it weeks ago. High in a tree, at the swampy edge of the pond they had called Loon Pond, the bees were buzzing in and out of an old woodpecker hole. Matt had thought they were wild bees, but his father said no, there were no bees at all in America till the colonists brought them from England. This swarm must have escaped from one of the river towns. Bees were better left alone, Pa said.

He felt he could scarcely endure another meal of plain fish. He was hungry for a bit of something tasty. Knowing so well his fondness for molasses, his mother had persuaded them to carry that little keg all the way to Maine when his father would rather have gone without. She would have smiled to see him running his finger round and round the empty keg like a child and licking off the last drop the bear had missed. Now he couldn't stop thinking about that honey. It would be worth a sting or two just to have a taste of it. There couldn't be much danger in going up that tree and taking just a little – a cupful perhaps that the bees would never miss. One morning he made up his mind to try it, come what might.

It was an easy tree to climb, with branches as neatly placed as the rungs of a ladder. The bees did not seem to notice as he pulled himself higher and higher. Even when his head was on a level with the hole, they flew lazily in and out, not paying him any mind. The hole was small, not big enough for his hand and the spoon he had brought with him. Peering in, he could just glimpse, far inside, the golden mass of honeycomb. The bark all around the hole was rotted and crumbling. Cautiously he put his fingers on the edge and gave a slight tug. A good-sized piece of bark broke off into his hand.

With it came the bees. With a furious buzzing they came pouring from the broken hole. The humming grew to a roar, like a great wind. Matt felt a sharp pain on his neck, then another and another. The angry creatures swarmed along his hands and bare arms, in his hair, on his face.

How he got down out of that tree he never remembered. Water! If he could reach water he could escape them. Bellowing and waving his arms, he plunged toward the pond. The bees were all around him. He could not see through the whirling cloud of them. The boggy ground sucked at his feet. He pulled one foot clear out of his boot, went stumbling over sharp roots to the water's edge, and flung himself forward. His foot caught in a fallen branch and he wrenched it clear. Dazed with pain, he sank down into the icy shelter of the water.

He came up choking. Just above the water the angry bees circled. Twice more he ducked his head and held it down till his lungs were bursting. He tried to swim

out into the pond but his feet were tangled in dragging weeds. When he tried to jerk them free, a fierce pain ran up his leg and he went under again, thrashing his arms wildly.

Then something lifted him. His head came up from the water and he gulped air into his aching lungs. He felt strong arms around him. Half conscious, he dreamed that his father was carrying him, and he did not wonder how this could be. Presently he knew he was lying on dry ground. Though his eyelids were swollen almost shut, he could see two figures bending over him – unreal, half-naked figures with dark faces. Then, as his wits began to return to him, he saw that they were Indians, an old man and a boy. The man's hands were reaching for his throat, and in panic Matt tried to jerk away.

"Not move," a deep voice ordered. "Bee needles have poison. Must get out."

Matt was too weak to struggle. He could not even lift his head. Now that he was out of the cold water, his skin seemed to be on fire from head to toe, yet he could not stop shivering. He had to lie helpless while the man's hands moved over his face and neck and body. Gradually he realized that they were gentle hands, probing and rubbing at one tender spot after another. His panic began to die away.

He could still not think clearly. Things seemed to keep fading before he could quite grasp them. He could not protest when the man lifted him again and carried him like a baby. It did not seem to matter where they were taking him, but shortly he found himself lying on

his own bed in his own cabin. He was alone; the Indians had gone. He lay, too tired and sore to figure out how he came to be there, knowing only that the nightmare of whirling bees and choking water was past and that he was safe.

Some time passed. Then once again the Indian was bending over him, holding a wooden spoon against his lips. He swallowed in spite of himself, even when he found it was not food, but some bitter medicine. He was left alone again, and presently he slept.

CHAPTER 6

FINALLY MATT WOKE AND KNEW THAT HE WAS WELL. His body was no longer on fire. He could open his eyes, and he saw that sunlight glinted through the chinks in the roof. All his familiar things were around him – the shelves with the pewter dishes, his jacket hanging on a peg. He felt as though he had been on a long journey and had come home. He must have slept through half a day and a night.

When the cabin door opened and the Indian entered, Matt hastily pulled himself up. Now, with clear eyes, he saw that there was nothing in the least strange about this man. He was dressed not so differently from Matt's own father, in a coat of some rough brown cloth and leggings fringed down the side. His face was smooth-shaven, and so was his whole head, except for one long black topknot. When he saw that Matt was awake, his stern face was lighted by a wide smile.

"Good." It was half word, half grunt. "White boy very sick. Now well."

Matt remembered his father's advice. "Good morning," he said respectfully.

The Indian pointed a hand at his own chest. "Saknis, family of beaver," he said. He seemed to be waiting.

"I'm Matthew Hallowell," Matt answered.

"Good. White man leave you here?"

"Just for a while," Matt told him. "He has gone to get my mother." It did not occur to him to lie to this old man as he had to Ben. Moreover, he knew that there was something he had to say. He tried to find the right words.

"I'm grateful to you," he said finally. "It was a very lucky thing you happened to find me."

"We watch. White boy very foolish to climb bee tree."

So, he had been right, Matt thought, that eyes were watching him from the forest. He was sure that the Indian had not asked him where he lived. They had brought him straight home to this cabin. Even though he knew it was his good fortune they'd been watching him yesterday, he still felt somewhat resentful of their spying. Abruptly he swung his feet to the floor, and winced as a sharp pain ran up his leg.

The Indian noticed, and moving closer he took Matt's ankle between his hands and pressed gently with his fingers.

"Is it broken?" Matt asked.

"*Nda*. Not broke. Mend soon. Sleep now. Not need medicine more."

The Indian had put something on the table as he came in. When he had gone, Matt hobbled over to see what it was and found a wooden bowl of stew, thick and greasy, flavored with some strange plant, wonderfully filling and strengthening. With it there was a cake of corn bread, coarser than his own but delicious.

The next day the Indian brought the boy with him.

"*Nkweniss*. You call grandson," he announced. "Attean."

The two boys stared at each other. The Indian boy's black eyes held no expression whatever. Unlike the old man, he was naked except for a breechcloth held up by a string at his waist. It passed between his legs and hung down like a little apron back and front. His heavy black hair fell straight to his shoulders.

"Attean same winter as white boy, maybe?" the man asked. He held up ten fingers and then four more.

"I'm thirteen," Matt answered, holding up his own fingers. At least, he excused himself, that would be true in another week.

The Indian boy did not speak a word. Quite plainly he had been brought here against his will. He stared about the cabin and seemed to despise everything he saw. He made Matt feel like a fool, sitting with his leg propped up on a stool. Matt steadied himself on his good leg and stood up.

Now he noticed that Saknis was holding out to him a rough sort of crutch. Matt wished he did not have to try it right now, with both of them watching him, but he could see that the man expected it. He managed a few steps, furious at his own clumsiness. He had never imagined how pesky a crutch could be. Moreover, although there was not the slightest change in the boy's face, Matt was sure that Attean was laughing at him. There was a nasty little gleam in the boy's eyes.

The moment they were gone, he seized the crutch in earnest, and very soon he could swing himself along at a good, brisk pace. Now he was able to get about outside the cabin, to check the corn patch and bring in firewood.

The trouble was, he had only one boot. The woolen stocking his mother had knit for him was wearing thin. On the rough ground it wore through in no time.

This too the Indian noticed, when he came with his grandson next morning. "No boot," he said, pointing.

"I lost it," Matt answered. "It came off in the mud when I ran." Once again he felt ridiculous under the Indian boy's black stare.

Three days later Saknis brought him a pair of moccasins. They were handsome and new, of moosehide, dark and glistening with grease, tied with stout thongs that were long enough to wrap about his ankles.

"Beaver woman make," Saknis said. "Better white man's boots. White boy see."

Matt took off his one boot and slipped on the moccasins. Indeed they were better! In fact they were wonderful. Not stiff like new leather boots. Not knobby or pinching anywhere. Light as nothing at all when he lifted his feet. No wonder Indians did not make a sound when they walked in the forest.

Shame suddenly flooded over Matt. This man had perhaps saved his life, had come bringing food and a crutch, and now these beautiful moccasins. It wasn't enough just to say an awkward thank you. He needed to give something in return. Not money. There were a few silver coins in the tin box, but something made him very sure that he could not offer money to this proud old man. He looked about him in despair. There was almost nothing of his own in the cabin.

Then he spied the two books on the shelf, the only two his father had been able to carry into the wilderness.

One was the Bible. He dared not give away his father's Bible. The other book was his own, the only one he had ever possessed. *Robinson Crusoe.* He had read it a dozen times and the thought of parting with it was painful, but it was the only thing he had to give. He hobbled across the room and took it down from the shelf and held it out to the Indian.

Saknis stared at it.

"It's for you," Matt said. "It's a gift. Please take it."

Saknis reached out and took the book in his hand. He turned it over and over slowly, his face showing not a sign of pleasure. Then he opened it and stood peering at the page. With shame, Matt saw that he was holding it upside down.

He couldn't read. Of course he couldn't. Matt should have known that. He had made a terrible mistake and embarrassed the good man. He had heard once that the one thing an Indian could never forgive was a hurt to his pride. He felt his own face burning.

But Saknis did not look embarrassed. His dark stare went from the book to Matt's face.

"White boy know signs?" he asked.

Matt was puzzled.

"White boy read what white man write here?"

"Yes," Matt admitted. "I can read it."

For a long moment the Indian studied the book. Then, astonishingly, that rare white smile flashed.

"Good," he grunted. "Saknis make treaty."

"A treaty?" Matt was even more puzzled.

"*Nkweniss* hunt. Bring white boy bird and rabbit. White boy teach Attean white man's signs."

"You mean – I should teach him to read?"

"Good. White boy teach Attean what book say."

Doubtfully, Matt looked from the old man to the boy, who stood silently listening. His heart sank. The scorn in the boy's face had turned to black anger.

"*Nda!*" The furious word exploded, the first word Matt had ever heard him speak. Half under his breath he muttered a string of incomprehensible words.

His grandfather's stern face did not change. He was undisturbed by the boy's defiance.

"Attean learn," he said. "White man come more and more to Indian land. White man not make treaty with pipe. White man make signs on paper, signs Indian not know. Indian put mark on paper to show him friend of white man. Then white man take land. Tell Indian cannot hunt on land. Attean learn to read white man's signs. Attean not give away hunting grounds."

The boy glowered at his grandfather, but he did not dare to speak again. With a black scowl, he stalked out of the cabin.

"Good," said Saknis calmly. He handed the book back to Matt. "Attean come *seba* – tomorrow."

CHAPTER 7

BEFORE HE HAD HIS EYES OPEN NEXT MORNING, Matt knew that something was wrong with this day. When it came back to him he sat up with a groan. Attean! What had possessed him to give a book to an Indian? How could he possibly teach a savage to read?

He tried to think back to the time his mother had taught him his ABCs. He could plainly see that brown-covered primer she held in her hands. He had detested it. He had had to learn the short verses printed beside each letter.

> A In Adam's fall
> We sinned all.

That would hardly do. To be honest, he wasn't sure to this day just what it meant. He would feel mighty silly trying to explain it to a heathen. Then happily he recalled another book that had been sent to his sister, Sarah, from England, with a small picture to illustrate each letter. No nonsense about Adam. *A* was for *apple.* Sarah had been luckier than he.

But he had no way of making pictures, and there were no apples here in the forest. What could he find

for *A* that an Indian would understand? He looked about the cabin. *T* for *table*, though it was unlikely they'd ever get as far as *T*. How about *A* for *arm*? That was simple enough. *B?* His eye fell on the leg bone of the squirrel left from last night's meal. The stub of a candle would do for *C. D? Door* would be just the word for Attean. He certainly could walk out of one fast enough, and would again, no doubt, long before they got to *D.*

He doubted that Attean would come. Still, he had better be ready. He stirred the fire, ate a chunk of the cold Indian corn cake, and set about to prepare a schoolroom. He shoved the two stools together and laid *Robinson Crusoe* on the table. He did not have paper or ink. He found a ribbon of birchbark in a corner and tore off a strip and sharpened a stick to a point. Then he waited.

Attean came, swinging a dead rabbit by the ears. He slung it disdainfully on the table.

"Thank you," Matt said. "That's a big one. I won't need anything else for several days."

His politeness brought no response.

"Sit here," he ordered. He hesitated. "I never thought as how I'd have to teach anyone to read. But I have figured a way to start."

Silently the boy sat down, as straight and rigid as a cedar post. When Matt hunched himself onto the other stool, the boy's scowl deepened. Plainly he did not like having the white boy so close to him. Attean had no need to be finicky, Matt thought. He smelled none too sweet himself. The grease smeared on his body, even

on his hair, stunk up the whole cabin. It was supposed to keep off the mosquitoes, he'd heard, but he thought he'd rather have the pesky insects himself. He drew a letter on the birch bark.

"This is the first letter," he explained. "*A*. *A* for *arm*."

He repeated this several times, pointing to his own arm. Attean kept to his stubborn, scornful silence. Matt set his jaw. He could be stubborn too, he decided. He opened *Robinson Crusoe*.

"We'll pick out the *A*'s on this page," he said, trying to control his impatience. He pointed. "Now you show me one."

Attean stared straight ahead of him in silence. Then, to Matt's astonishment, he grudgingly laid a grubby finger on a letter *A*.

"Good," said Matt, copying the word Saknis used so often. "Find another."

Suddenly the boy broke his silence. "White man's book foolish," he scoffed. "Write *arm*, *arm*, *arm* all over paper."

Puzzled at first, Matt saw his own mistake. "Hundreds of other words begin with *A*," he explained. "Or have *A* in them. And there are twenty-five more letters."

Attean scowled. "How long?" he demanded.

"What do you mean?"

"How long Attean learn signs in book?"

"It will take some time," Matt said. "There are a lot of long words in this book."

"One moon?"

"One month? Of course not. It might take a year."

With one swift jerk of his arm, Attean knocked the

book from the table. Before Matt could speak, he was out of the cabin and gone.

"Reckon that's the end of the lessons," Matt said to himself. Cheerfully he began to skin the rabbit.

CHAPTER 8

BY THE NEXT MORNING HE WAS HALF SORRY THE BOY would not be coming again. He didn't know whether he was annoyed or relieved when Attean walked through the door without a sign of greeting and sat down at the table.

Matt decided to skip *B* for *bone*. In the night he had thought of a better way.

"This book isn't a treaty," he began. "It's a story. It's about a man who gets shipwrecked on a desert island. I'll read some of it out loud to show you."

He opened *Robinson Crusoe* at the first page and began to read.

> *I was born in the year 1632,*
> *in the city of York. . . .*

He stopped. He remembered suddenly how the first time he had tried to read this book he had found that first page so dull he had come close to giving up right there. He had better skip the beginning and get on with the story if he wanted to catch Attean's attention.

"I'll read the part about the storm at sea," he said.

He had read the book so many times that he knew exactly where to find the right page. Taking a deep

breath, as though he were struggling in the water himself, he chose the page where Robinson Crusoe was dashed from the lifeboat and swallowed up in the sea.

> *Nothing can describe the confusion of thought which I felt when I sunk into the water, for though I swam very well, yet I could not deliver myself from the waves so as to draw breath . . . for I saw the sea come after me as high as a great hill, and as furious as an enemy. . . .*

Matt looked up from the page. There was not a flicker of interest in the boy's face. Had he understood a single word? Discouraged, he laid down the book. What did a storm at sea mean to a savage who had lived all his life in the forest?

"Well," he said lamely, "it gets better as you go along."

Once more Attean took him by surprise. "White man get out of water?" he asked.

"Oh yes," Matt said, delighted. "Everyone else on the ship is drowned. He gets thrown up all alone on an island."

The Indian nodded. He seemed satisfied.

"Shall I read more of it?"

Attean nodded again. "Go now," he said. Come back *seba*."

The next morning there was no question of *B* for *bone*. Matt had the book open and waiting at the part he wanted to read.

"This is about the morning after the storm," he explained. "Robinson Crusoe looks out and sees that

part of the ship hasn't sunk yet. He swims out and manages to save some things and carry them to shore." He began to read.

Once again it was impossible to tell whether Attean understood. Presently Matt slowed down. It was discouraging, reading to a wooden post. But Attean spoke at once.

"White man not smart like Indian," he said scornfully. "Indian not need thing from ship. Indian make all thing he need."

Disappointed and cross, Matt put the book down. They might as well get on with the alphabet. He drew a *B* on the birchbark.

After Attean had gone, Matt kept thinking about Robinson Crusoe and all the useful things he had managed to salvage from that ship. He had found a carpenter's chest, for instance. Bags of nails. Two barrels of bullets. And a dozen hatchets – a dozen! Why, Matt and his father had come up here to Maine with one axe and an adz. They had cut down trees and built this whole cabin and the table and the stools without a single nail. Crusoe had found a hammock to sleep in instead of prickly hemlock boughs. He could see now how it must have sounded to Attean. Come to think of it, Robinson Crusoe had lived like a king on that desert island!

CHAPTER 9

A FEW MORNINGS LATER, AT THE END OF THE LESSON, Matt delayed Attean.

"How did you kill that rabbit?" he asked, pointing to the offering Attean had thrown on the table. "There's no bullet hole in it."

"Indian not use bullet for rabbit," Attean answered scornfully.

"Then how? There's no hole at all."

For a moment it seemed that Attean would not bother to answer. Then the Indian shrugged. "Attean show," he said. "Come."

Matt was dumfounded. It was the first sign the Indian had given of – well, of what exactly? He had not sounded friendly. But there was not time to puzzle this out right now. Attean was walking across the clearing, and he apparently expected Matt to follow. Pleased and curious, Matt hobbled after him, grateful that he no longer needed the crutch.

At the edge of the clearing the Indian stopped and searched the ground. Presently he stooped down under a black spruce tree, poked into the dirt, and jerked up a long, snakelike root. He drew from the leather pouch at his belt a curious sort of knife, the blade curved into

a hook. With one sure stroke, he split one end of the root, then peeled off the bark by pulling at it with his teeth. He separated the whole length into two strands, which he spliced together by rolling them against his bare thigh. Next he searched about in the bushes till he found two forked saplings about three feet apart. He trimmed the twigs from these, drawing his knife toward his chest as Matt had been taught not to do. Then he cut a stout branch, and rested it lightly across the forks of his saplings. From the threadlike root he made a noose and suspended it from the stick so that it hung just above the ground. He worked without speaking, and it seemed to Matt that all this took him no time at all.

"Rabbit run into trap," he said finally. "Pull stick into bush, so white boy can kill."

"Golly," said Matt, filled with admiration. "I hadn't thought of making a snare. I didn't know you could make one without string or wire."

"Make more," Attean ordered, pointing into the woods. "Not too close."

After Attean had gone, Matt managed to make two more snares. They were clumsy things, and he was not too proud of them. Splitting a slippery root, he discovered, was not so easy as it had looked. He spoiled a number of them before he mastered the trick of splicing them together. They did not slide as easily as the one Attean had made, but they seemed strong enough.

Next morning he showed his traps to Attean. He had hoped for some sign of approval, but all he got was

a grunt and a shrug. He knew that to Attean his work must look childish. However, on the third day one of his own snares had been upset, though the animal had got away. The day after that, to his joy, there was actually a partridge struggling to free itself in the bushes where the stick had caught. This time the grunt with which Attean rewarded him sounded very much like his grandfather's "Good." Silently the Indian watched as Matt reset the snare. Then they walked back to the cabin, Matt swinging his catch as nonchalantly as he had seen Attean do.

"You don't need to bring me any more food," he boasted. "I'll catch my own meat from now on."

Nevertheless, Attean continued to bring him some offering every morning. Not always fresh meat. He seemed to know exactly when Matt had finished the last scrap of rabbit or duck. Sometimes he brought a slab of corn cake, or a pouch full of nuts, once a small cake of maple sugar. Plainly he felt bound to keep the terms of his grandfather's treaty.

Matt stuck to his part of the bargain as well, though the lessons were an ordeal for them both. Matt knew well enough what a poor teacher he was. Sometimes it seemed that Attean was learning in spite of him. Once the Indian had resigned himself to mastering twenty-six letters, he took them in a gulp, scorning the childish *candle* and *door* and *table* that Matt had devised. Soon he was spelling out simple words. The real trouble was that Attean was contemptuous, that the whole matter of white man's words seemed to him nonsense. Impatiently they hurried through the lessons to get on with *Robinson*

Crusoe. Matt suspected that the only reason Attean agreed to come back day after day was that he wanted to hear more of that story.

Skipping over the pages that sounded like sermons, Matt chose the sections he liked best himself. Now he came to the rescue of the man Friday. Attean sat quietly, and Matt almost forgot him in his own enjoyment of his favorite scene.

There was the mysterious footprint on the sand, the canoes drawn up on the lonely beach, and the strange, wild-looking men with two captives. One of the captives they mercilessly slaughtered. The fire was set blazing for a cannibal feast.

Then the second captive made a desperate escape, running straight to where Crusoe stood watching. Two savages pursued him with horrid yells. Matt glanced up from the book and saw that Attean's eyes were gleaming. He hurried on. No need to skip here. Crusoe struck a mighty blow at the first cannibal, knocking him senseless. Then, seeing that the other was fitting an arrow into his bow, he shot and killed him. Matt read on:

> *The poor savage who fled, but had stopped, though he saw both his enemies had fallen . . . yet was so frightened with the noise and fire of my piece, that he stood stock-still, and neither came forward nor went backward. . . . I hallooed again to him, and made signs to him to come forward, which he easily understood, and came a*

little way, then stopped again. . . . he stood trembling as if he had been taken prisoner, and just been to be killed, as his two enemies were. I beckoned to him again to come to me, and gave him all signs of encouragement, that I could think of; and he came nearer and nearer, kneeling down every ten or twelve steps, in token of acknowledgment for saving his life. I smiled at him, and looked pleasantly, and beckoned to him to come still nearer. At length he came close to me, and then he kneeled down again, kissed the ground, and, taking my foot, set it upon his head. This, it seemed, was a token of swearing to be my slave forever. . . .

Attean sprang to his feet, a thundercloud wiping out all pleasure from his face.

"*Nda!*" he shouted. "Not so."

Matt stopped, bewildered.

"Him never do that!"

"Never do what?"

"Never kneel down to white man!"

"But Crusoe had saved his life."

"Not kneel down," Attean repeated fiercely. "Not be slave. Better die."

Matt opened his mouth to protest, but Attean gave him no chance. In three steps he was out of the cabin.

Now he'll never come back, Matt thought. He sat

slowly turning over the pages. He had never questioned that story. Like Robinson Crusoe, he had thought it natural and right that the wild man should be the white man's slave. Was there perhaps another possibility? The thought was new and troubling.