

## ❧ CHAPTER 10 ❧

HE FELT WEAK WITH RELIEF WHEN NEXT MORNING Attean walked stiffly into the cabin and sat down at the table. Stumbling over himself, he set about the lesson. As soon as he could, he picked up *Robinson Crusoe*. In the night he had carefully thought out just what he was going to say, if Attean ever gave him another chance. Now he had to talk fast, because he could see that Attean was set against hearing any more of this book.

“Let me go on,” he pleaded. “It’s different from now on. Friday – that’s what Robinson Crusoe named him – doesn’t kneel anymore.”

“Not slave?”

“No,” Matt lied. “After that they get to be – well – companions. They share everything together.”

Ignoring the suspicion on Attean’s face, Matt began hurriedly to read. He was thankful that he knew the book so well that he was able to see when trouble might be coming. One of the first words Crusoe taught his man Friday was the word *master*. Luckily he caught that one in time. And it was true, Crusoe and his new companion did go about together, sharing their adventures. Only, Matt thought, it would have been better perhaps if Friday hadn’t been quite so thickheaded.

After all, there must have been a thing or two about that desert island that a native who had lived there all his life could have taught Robinson Crusoe.

When Matt closed the book, Attean nodded. Then, as so many times before, he took Matt by surprise.

“You like go fish?” he asked.

“I sure would,” Matt said gratefully.

Stopping to pick up his fish pole from beside the door, he ran to overtake the Indian boy, who strode ahead. He knew his grin was stretching from one ear to the other, but he couldn’t hide his feelings as Attean did.

They walked some distance, Matt managing to keep pace with the Indian’s swift stride, determined not to let Attean know that his ankle was aching. They seemed to be following no particular trail. Finally they came out on a part of the creek that Matt had not seen before. It was shallow here, studded with rocks and pebbles, so that the water, rippling over them, made little rapids or collected in quiet pools. Here Attean stopped, broke off a sapling, and instead of making a fish pole, drew his knife from his pouch and quickly shaved a sharp point, making a spear. Then he stepped gently into the stream. Matt stood watching.

Attean stood motionless, peering intently into a pool of clear water. All at once he stooped, darted his spear with one quick stroke, and came up with a glittering fish. He studied it for a moment. “Too small,” he decided. To Matt’s astonishment he spoke to the fish quite solemnly, a few incomprehensible words, then tossed it back into the stream. In a few moments he had speared another, which he judged large enough to keep.

“Do same,” he ordered now, coming back to the bank. He handed Matt the spear.

He would just look ridiculous, Matt knew before he started. He waded in and stood up to his knees, looking down into the sliding water. Presently a fish darted past. At least he thought it was a fish. It was hard to tell which was shadow and which might be a fish. At any rate, it was gone before he got his spear into the water. Presently he saw another, this one quite definitely a fish, calmly drifting in the pool. He jabbed at it hopelessly. He was sure his stick actually touched the slippery thing. He lunged at it, lost his footing, and went down with a splash that would scare off any fish for miles around. When he came up dripping, he saw Attean watching him with a horrid grin.

Suddenly he felt hot, in spite of the icy water. Why had Attean brought him out here, anyway? Had Attean just wanted to show off his own cleverness, and to make Matt look more clumsy than ever? Was this Attean’s answer, in case Matt had any idea in his head about being a Robinson Crusoe? For a moment Matt glared back at Attean with a scowl as black as any Indian’s. Then he wiped his nose with the back of his hand and sloshed back to the bank. He snatched up his own pole and line. He poked about under the wet leaves and found a good, juicy worm and fitted it to his hook.

“I’ll do it my own way,” he said. “I can catch plenty of fish with this, and that’s what matters.”

Attean sat on the bank and watched. To Matt’s satisfaction, in no time there was a tug on the line, a strong one. An impressive-looking fish rose to the

surface, thrashing fiercely. Matt gave a jerk, and the line came swinging out of the water so suddenly that he almost lost his footing again. It was empty.

"Fish broke line," Attean observed.

As if anyone couldn't see that! Furious at Attean, at the fish, and at himself, Matt examined the break, unable to face the Indian. He had lost more than a good fish. His hook had disappeared as well. The only hook he had.

Of course Attean noticed. Those black eyes never missed anything. "Make new hook," he suggested.

Without even getting to his feet, he reached out and broke a twig off a maple sapling. Out came the crooked knife again. In a few strokes he cut a piece as long as his little finger, carved a groove around the middle, and whittled both ends into sharp points. Now he stepped into the water and tied Matt's line expertly around the groove.

"Put on two worms," he said. "Cover up all hook."

He didn't offer to find the worms. Matt had lost all interest in fishing. He knew that somehow or other he would just provide more amusement for Attean. But he couldn't refuse.

He didn't have to wait long before another fish caught hold. This time he landed it neatly.

"Good," said Attean from the bank. "Big."

Matt was trying to get it off the line. "He swallowed the whole hook," he said.

"Better white man's hook," Attean said. "Turn around inside fish. Not get away."

Back on the bank Matt slit the fish and extracted the hook and his line. But the thin twig had broken in half.

“Easy make new hook,” Attean said. “Make many hooks.”

Of course. Looking down at the simple thing in his hand, Matt realized that he never again need worry about losing a hook. He could make a new one wherever he happened to be. It was another necessary thing that Attean had shown him, just as he had made the snare. He wasn't sure why Attean had bothered. But grudgingly he had to admit that Attean had proved to him once again that he didn't always have to depend on white man's tools.

All at once he was hungry. The sun was straight overhead, and it would be a long tramp back through the woods before he could cook his fish. Now he saw that Attean had the same thought.

The Indian was heaping up a small pile of pine needles and grass. He drew from his muskrat-skin pouch a piece of hard stone with bits of quartz embedded in it. Striking it with his knife, he soon had a spark, which he blew into a flame.

I could have done that myself, Matt thought. In fact he had done it many a time, but he had not realized that he could use a common stone as well as his flint.

“Get fish ready,” Attean ordered now, pointing to the two fish on the bank. Matt did not like his masterful tone, but he did as he was told. By the time he had the two fish split and gutted and washed in the creek, Attean had a fire blazing. Matt was curious to see how he would go about the cooking.

He watched as Attean cut two short branches, bending

them first to make sure they were green. He trimmed and sharpened them rapidly. Then he thrust a pointed end into each fish from head to tail. A small green stick was set crosswise inside the fish to hold the sides apart. He handed one stick to Matt. One on each side of the fire, the two boys squatted and held their sticks to the blaze. From time to time Attean fed the fire with dry twigs. When the flesh was crisp and brown, they ate, still silently.

Matt licked his fingers. His resentment had vanished along with his hunger. "Golly," he said, "that was the best fish I ever ate."

"Good," said Attean. Across the fire he looked at Matt, and his eyes gleamed. He was laughing again, but somehow not with scorn.

"What did you say to that fish you threw back?" Matt was still curious.

"I say to him not to tell other fish," Attean said seriously. "Not scare away."

"You actually think a fish could understand?"

Attean shrugged. "Fish know many thing," he replied.

Matt sat pondering this strange idea. "Well, it seemed to work," he said finally. "At least the other fish came along."

A wide grin spread slowly across Attean's face. It was the first time Matt had seen him smile.

## ❧ CHAPTER 11 ❧

ONE MORNING MATT LAID HIS STICKS IN A ROW. Seven sticks, each with seven notches. That meant that it was well into August. The silk tassels were glistening on the cornstalks. The hard green pumpkins nestling underneath the stalks were rounding out and taking on a coating of orange. It was time for his father to be coming. At any moment he might look out and see him walking into the clearing, bringing his mother and Sarah and the new baby. It was strange to think there was a member of the family he had never seen. Was it a boy or a girl? It would be a fine thing to have them sitting around the table again.

He hoped his mother would take over the reading lessons, which were going badly. Attean still came almost every day, though there was no longer any need for him to bring meat or fish. Matt couldn't make out why the Indian kept coming since he made it so plain he disliked the lessons. So often Attean made him feel uncomfortable and ridiculous. But he had to admit that on the days when Attean did not come the hours went by slowly.

Often Attean seemed in no hurry to leave when the morning's lesson was over. "Look see if catch rabbit," he might suggest, and together they would go out to

check the snares. Or they would tramp along the creek to a good spot for fishing. Attean seemed to have plenty of time on his hands. Sometimes he would just hang around and watch Matt do the chores. He would stand at the edge of the corn patch and look on while Matt pulled up weeds.

“Squaw work,” he commented once.

Matt flushed. “We think it’s a man’s work,” he retorted.

Attean said nothing. He did not offer to help. After a time he just wandered off without saying goodbye. It must be mighty pleasant, Matt thought to himself, to just hunt and fish all day long and not have any work to do. That wasn’t his father’s way, and it wouldn’t ever be his. The work was always waiting to be done, but if he got the corn patch cleared and the wood chopped today, he could go fishing with Attean tomorrow – if Attean invited him.

Sometimes Attean brought an old dog with him. It was about the sorriest-looking hound Matt had ever seen, with a coat of coarse brown hair, a mangy tail, and whitish patches on its face that gave it a clownish look. Its long pointed nose was misshapen with bumps and bristles. By the look of its ears, it had survived many battles. The instant it spied Matt, a ridge of hair went straight up on its back and it let out a mean growl. Attean cuffed it sharply, and after that it was quiet, but it watched the white stranger with wary eyes and kept its distance.

Matt tried not to show his own distrust. “What’s his name?” he asked politely.



Attean shrugged. "No name. *Aremus* – dog."

"If he doesn't have a name, how can he come when you call?"

"Him my dog. Him come."

As though he knew what Attean had said, the scruffy tail began to weave back and forth.

"*Piz wat*," Attean said. "Good for nothing. No good for hunt. No sense. Him fight anything – bear, moose." There was no mistaking the pride in Attean's voice.

"What's wrong with his nose?"

Attean grinned. "Him fight anything. Chase *kogw* – what white man call? Needles all over."

"Oh – a porcupine. Golly, that must have hurt."

"Pull out many needle. Some very deep, not come out. Dog not feel them now."

Maybe not, Matt thought, but he doubted those quills had improved the dog's disposition. He didn't fancy this dog of Attean's.

During the lesson the dog prowled about outside the cabin and finally thumped down on the path to bite and scratch at fleas. When Attean came out, the dog leaped up, prancing and yapping as though Attean had been gone for days. Matt thought a little better of him for that. It minded him how his father's dog had made a fuss every time his father came home. That old hound must have just about wagged its tail off when his father came back from Maine. The fact was, Matt was a little jealous of Attean. A dog would be mighty fine company here in the woods, no matter how scrawny it looked.

But not this one. No matter how often the dog came

with Attean, he never let Matt touch him. Nor did Matt like him any better. He was certainly no good at hunting. When the two boys walked through the woods the dog zigzagged ahead, sending squirrels racing up trees and jays chattering, and ruining any chance of a catch. Matt wondered why Attean wanted him along. Attean didn't pay him any mind except to shout at him and cuff him when he was too noisy. But for all his show of indifference, it was plain to Matt that Attean thought a sight of that dog.

Attean had not brought the dog with him the day that he led Matt a long distance into a part of the forest that Matt had never seen. Following after him, Matt began to feel uneasy. If Attean should take himself off suddenly, as he had a way of doing, Matt was not sure he could find his way back to the cabin. It occurred to him that Attean knew this, that perhaps Attean had brought him so far just to show him how helpless he really was, how all the words in a white man's book were of no use to him in the woods.

Yet he did not think this would happen. For some reason he could not explain to himself, he trusted Attean. He didn't really like him. When the Indian got that disdainful look in his eyes, Matt hated him. But somehow, as they had sat side by side, day after day, doing the lessons that neither of them wanted to do, something had changed. Perhaps it had been *Robinson Crusoe*, or the tramping through the woods together. They didn't like each other, but they were no longer enemies.

When they came upon a row of short tree stumps,

birch and aspen cut off close to the ground, Matt's heart gave a leap. Were there settlers nearby? Or Indians? There was no proper clearing. Then he noticed that whoever had cut the trees had left jagged points on each one. No axe would cut a tree in that way. He could see marks where the trees had been dragged along the ground.

In a few steps the boys came out on the bank of an unfamiliar creek. There Matt saw what had happened to those trees. They had been piled in a mound right over the water, from one bank to the other. Water trickled through them in tiny cascades. Behind the piled-up branches, a small pond stretched smooth and still.

"It's a beaver dam!" he exclaimed. "The first one I've ever seen."

"*Qwa bit*," said Attean. "Have red tail. There beaver wigwam." He pointed to a heap of branches at one side, some of them new with green leaves still clinging. Matt stepped closer to look. Instantly there was the crack of a rifle. A ring of water rippled the surface of the pond. Near its edge a black head appeared for just a flash and vanished again in a splutter of bubbles.

Attean laughed at the way Matt had started. "Beaver make big noise with tail," he explained.

"I thought someone had shot a gun," Matt said. "I wish I had my rifle now."

Attean scowled. "Not shoot," he warned. "Not white man, not Indian. Young beaver not ready."

He pointed to a tree nearby. "Sign of beaver," he said. "Belong to family."

Carved on the bark, Matt could make out the crude figure of an animal that could, with some imagination, be a beaver.

“Sign show beaver house belong to people of beaver,” Attean explained. “By and by, when young beaver all grown, people of beaver hunt here. No one hunt but people of beaver.”

“You mean, just from that mark on the tree, another hunter would not shoot here?”

“That our way,” Attean said gravely. “All Indian understand.”

Would a white man understand? Matt wondered. He thought of Ben with his stolen rifle. It wasn’t likely Ben would respect an Indian sign. But he must remember to warn his father.

When it seemed the beaver did not intend to show itself again, the two boys climbed back up the bank. At the row of stumps, Attean halted and signaled for Matt to go ahead.

“Show way to cabin,” he ordered.

All Matt’s suspicions came rushing back. Did Attean intend to sneak off behind his back and leave him to find his own way home?

“Is this some kind of trick?” he demanded hotly.

Attean looked stern. “Not trick,” he said. “Matt need learn.”

To Matt’s relief, he took the lead again. After a short distance he stopped and pointed to a broken stick leaning in the direction of the creek. A little farther on there was a small stone set against a larger one. Not far away a tuft of dried grass dangled from a branch of a small tree.

“Indian make sign,” Attean said. “Always make sign to tell way. Matt must same. Not get lost in forest.”

Now Matt remembered how Attean had paused every so often, sometimes to break off a branch that hung in their path, once to nudge aside a stone with the toe of his moccasin. He had done these things so quickly that Matt had paid no mind. He saw now that Attean had carefully been leaving markers.

“Of course,” he exclaimed. “But my father always made blazes on the trees with his knife.”

Attean nodded. “That white man’s way. Indian maybe not want to show where he go. Not want hunters to find beaver house.”

So these were secret signs. Nothing anyone following them would notice. It would take sharp eyes to find them, even if you knew they were there.

“Matt do same,” Attean repeated. “Always make sign to show way back.”

Matt was ashamed of his suspicions. Attean had only meant to help him. If only he didn’t have to be so superior about it.

He plodded along behind Attean, trying to spot the signs before Attean could point them out. All at once, as a thought struck him, he almost laughed out loud. He remembered Robinson Crusoe and his man Friday. He and Attean had sure enough turned that story right round about. Whenever they went a few steps from the cabin, it was the brown savage who strode ahead, leading the way, knowing just what to do and doing it quickly and skillfully. And Matt, a puny sort of Robinson Crusoe, tagged along behind,

grateful for the smallest sign that he could do anything right.

It wasn't that he wanted to be a master. And the idea of Attean's being anyone's slave was not to be thought of. He just wished he could make Attean think a little better of him. He wanted Attean to look at him without that gleam of amusement in his eyes. He wished that it were possible for him to win Attean's respect.

As though Attean sensed that Matt was disgruntled, he stopped, whipped out his knife, and neatly sliced off two shining gobs of dried sap from a nearby spruce. He grinned and held out one of them like a peace offering. "Chaw," he ordered. He popped the other piece into his mouth and began to chew with evident pleasure.

Gingerly, Matt copied him. The gob fell to pieces between his teeth, filling his mouth with a bitter juice. He wanted to spit it out in disgust, but Attean was plainly enjoying the stuff, so he stubbornly forced his jaws to keep moving. In a moment the bits came together in a rubbery gum, and the first bitterness gave way to a fresh piney taste. To his surprise, it was very good. The two boys tramped on, chewing companionably. Once more, Matt acknowledged to himself, Attean had taught him another secret of the forest.

## ❧ CHAPTER 12 ❧

I MUST HAVE A BOW, MATT DECIDED ONE MORNING. He was envious of the bow Attean often carried behind his shoulder, and of the blunt arrows he tucked into his belt. Only the day before, Matt had watched him swing it suddenly into position and bring down a flying duck. Attean had picked up the dead bird carefully and carried it away with him. No doubt the Indians would find some use for every scrap of bone and feather. Matt knew by now that Attean never shot anything just for the fun of it. With a bow and a little practice, Matt thought now, he might get a duck for himself. It would be a fine change from his usual fish.

He had no doubt he could shoot with a bow. In fact he had made them years ago back in Quincy. He and his friends had played at Indians, stalking each other through the woods and whooping out from behind trees. They had even practiced half-earnestly at shooting at a target. How could he have known that someday he would have need of such a skill?

He cut a straight branch, notched it at either end, and stretched tight a bit of string his father had left. Arrows he whittled out of slender twigs. But something was definitely wrong. His arrows wobbled off in odd

directions or flopped on the ground a few feet away. He was chagrined when next morning Attean came walking out of the woods and surprised him at his practice.

Attean looked at the bow. "Not good wood," he said at once. "I get better."

He was very exacting about the wood he chose. He searched along the edge of the clearing, testing saplings, bending slender branches, discarding one after another, till he found a dead branch of ash about the thickness of his three fingers. He cut a rod almost his own height and handed it to Matt.

"Take off bark," he directed, and squatted down to watch while Matt scraped the branch clean. Then, taking it in his hands again, he marked off several inches in the center where Matt's hand would grip the bow. "Cut off wood here," he said, running his hand from center to ends. "Make small like this." He held up one slim finger.

Matt set to work too hastily. "Slow," Attean warned him. "Knife take off wood too fast. Indian use stone."

Under the Indian's critical eye, Matt shaved down the branch, paring off the thinnest possible shavings. The slow work took all his patience. Twice he considered the task finished, but Attean, running his hand along the curve of the bow, was not satisfied till it was smooth as an animal bone.

"Need fat now," he said. "Bear fat best."

"Will this do?" Matt asked, bringing out a bowl of fish stew he had left cooling on the table. Carefully, with a bit of bark, Attean skimmed off the drops of oil



that had risen to the surface. He rubbed the oil from one end of the bow to the other till the bare wood glistened. Matt's frayed bit of string he cast aside. Instead he set about making a bowstring as he had made the snare, of long strands of spruce root. This took most of the morning as he patiently twisted the strands together, rolling them against his thigh to make them even and smooth.

Finally he tied one end to a notch in the bow and began slowly to bend the wood. The bow seemed to Matt to be as stiff as iron. It seemed impossible that it would bend, but slowly it yielded, till the string slipped over the notch at the other end. The bow was finished.

"It's a beauty," Matt told him, filled with admiration at their joint handiwork.

Attean gave a grunt of satisfaction. "Shoot pretty good," he said. "One day make better. Indian take long time, leave wood many days till ready."

Before he left, Attean cut off four slender shoots of birch wood. "Best for arrow," he explained, marking off with his hands a length of about two feet. He left Matt to do the whittling for himself.

Matt was delighted with the bow, but shooting it was another matter. It was not in the least like the flimsy thing he had first created. It took all his strength to draw back the string. When he released his arrow, it flew with astonishing power off somewhere into the underbrush, anywhere but where he had aimed it. As fast as he could make new arrows he lost them. But he was determined. He pegged a target of birchbark against a tree and shot at it grimly, his arrows coming

closer and closer with every day's practice. The heel of his hand was blistered from the stinging snap of the string. Attean did not offer him any further advice, but when the root string began to fray, he brought with him one day a fine bowstring of twisted animal sinew, which would last for a long time. Using the new string, Matt could frequently nick the edge of his target. Soon, he promised himself, the squirrels would have more respect than to frisk about so boldly over his head.

## ❧ CHAPTER 13 ❧

WHEREVER HE WENT NOW, MATT WATCHED FOR Indian signs. Sometimes he could not be sure whether a branch had broken in the wind or whether an animal had scratched a queer-shaped mark on a tree trunk. Once or twice he was certain he had discovered the sign of the beaver. It was a game he played with himself. That it was not a game to Attean he was still to learn. They were following a narrow trail one morning, this time to the east, when Attean halted abruptly.

“Hsst!” he warned.

Off in the brush Matt heard a low, rasping breathing and a frantic scratching in the leaves. The noise stopped the moment they stood still. Moving warily, the boys came upon a fox crouched low on the ground. It did not run, but lay snarling at them, and as he came nearer, Matt saw that its foreleg was caught fast. With a long stick Attean pushed aside the leaves and Matt caught the glint of metal.

“White man’s trap,” said Attean.

“How do you know?” Matt demanded.

“Indians not use iron trap. Iron trap bad.”

“You mean a white man set this trap?” Matt thought of Ben.

“No. Some white man pay for bad Indian to hunt for him. White man not know how to hide trap so good.” Attean showed Matt how cleverly the trap had been hidden, the leaves and earth mounded up like an animal burrow with two half-eaten fish heads concealed inside.

The fox watched them, its teeth bared. The angry eyes made Matt uncomfortable. “We’re in luck to find it first,” he said, to cover his uneasiness.

Attean shook his head. “Not beaver hunting ground,” he said. “Turtle clan hunt here.” He pointed to a nearby tree. On the bark Matt could just make out a crude scar that had a shape somewhat like a turtle. He was indignant.

“We found it,” he said. “You mean you’re just going to leave it here because of a mark on a tree?”

“Beaver people not take animal on turtle land,” Attean repeated.

“We can’t just let it suffer,” Matt protested. “Suppose no one comes here for days?”

“Then fox get away.”

“How can he get away?”

“Bite off foot.”

Indeed, Matt could see now that the creature had already gnawed its own flesh down to the bone.

“Leg mend soon,” Attean added, noting Matt’s troubled face. “Fox have three leg beside.”

“I don’t like it,” Matt insisted. He wondered why he minded so much. He had long ago got used to clubbing the small animals caught in his own snares. There was something about this fox that was different. Those

defiant eyes showed no trace of fear. He was struck by the bravery that could inflict such pain on itself to gain freedom. Reluctantly he followed Attean back to the trail, leaving the miserable animal behind.

"It's a cruel way to trap an animal," he muttered. "Worse than our snares."

"*Ebe*," Attean agreed. "My grandfather not allow beaver people to buy iron trap. Some Indian hunt like white man now. One time many moose and beaver. Plenty for all Indians and for white man too. But white man not hunt to eat, only for skin. Him pay Indian to get skin. So Indian use white man's trap."

Matt could not find an answer. Tramping beside Attean he was confused and angry as well. He couldn't understand the Indian code that left an animal to suffer just because of a mark on a tree. And he was fed up with Attean's scorn for white men. It was ridiculous to think that he and Attean could ever really be friends. Sometimes he wished he could never see Attean again.

Even at the same moment, he realized that this was really not true. Even though Attean annoyed him, Matt was constantly goaded to keep trying to win this strange boy's respect. He would lie awake in the night, staring up at the chinks of starlight in the cabin roof, and make up stories in which he himself, not Attean, was the hero. Sometimes he imagined how Attean would be in some terrible danger, and he, Matt, would be brave and calm and come swiftly to the rescue. He would kill a bear unaided, or a panther, or fend off a rattlesnake about to strike. Or he would learn about an enemy band

of Indians sneaking through the forest to attack the place where Attean was sleeping, and he would run through the woods and give the alarm in time.

In the morning he laughed at himself for this childish daydreaming. There was little chance he would ever be a hero, and little chance too that Attean would ever need his help. Matt knew that the Indian boy came day after day only because his grandfather sent him. For some reason the old man had taken pity on this helpless white boy, and at the same time he had shrewdly grasped at the chance for his grandson to learn to read. If he suspected that Attean had become the teacher instead, he would doubtless put a stop to the visits altogether.

Matt knew he ought to feel grateful for Attean's teaching. Every day Attean taught him some new thing – a plant like an onion that he could drop into his cooking pot to make his stew more tasty – a weed with a small orange flower and a milky juice in its stem that took away the sting of insect bites or poison ivy – a plant with brownish flowers and roots bearing a string of nutlike bulbs that thickened his stew and made it more nourishing. He had pointed out plants that Matt must never eat, no matter how hungry he might be. He had even shown Matt how to improvise a rain cape in a sudden rain by quickly punching a hole through the center of a wide strip of birchbark and making a cone of bark for his head.

The only thing that Matt could teach him, Attean was set against learning. For Attean the white man's signs on paper were *piz wat* – good for nothing.

Nevertheless, Matt noticed that in spite of himself

Attean had learned something from the white boy. He was speaking the English tongue with greater ease. Perhaps he was not aware himself how differently he spoke. He picked up new words readily. Sometimes he used them with that odd humor that Matt was beginning to recognize. Matt knew that Attean was mocking when some of his own favorite expressions came solemnly out of the Indian's mouth.

"Reckon so," Attean would say. "Rain come soon, by golly." Sometimes he even took a fancy to a word out of *Robinson Crusoe*. He especially liked the sound of *verily*.

In return, Matt liked to try out Indian words. They were not hard to understand but impossible to get his tongue around. He didn't think he could ever quite get them right, but he could see that though it amused Attean when he tried, it also pleased him.

"*Cha kwa* – this morning," Matt might say, "I chased a *kogw* out of the corn patch." He wouldn't add that he had wasted an arrow and watched the porcupine waddle off unharmed.

Perhaps, after all, those lessons hadn't been entirely wasted.

## ❧ CHAPTER 14 ❧

ROBINSON CRUSOE HAD COME TO AN END. MATT HAD skipped more than half of it, choosing only the pages where there was plenty of action. Now he was sorry it had not lasted longer. Attean also seemed disappointed.

“Too bad,” he commented, copying one of Matt’s frequent remarks. “I tell story to brothers. Every night I tell more story. They like.”

Delighted, Matt tried to picture the Indians sitting around the campfire at night listening to Attean tell the story of Robinson Crusoe. He would give a good deal to hear Attean’s version of it. Now suddenly he had an inspiration.

“If they want more stories, I have lots of them,” he exclaimed.

He took his father’s Bible from the shelf. Why hadn’t he thought of this before? Why, there was Samson! David and Goliath! Joseph and his coat of many colors!

“They’re even better than *Robinson Crusoe*,” he promised.

It really was true. The ancient Bible stories were filled with adventure. And they were told straight out in simple language that didn’t need skipping.



He began with the story of Noah. How God warned Noah that a great flood was coming. How Noah built the ark and took inside his family and two of every kind of animal. How they all lived in the ark safely while it rained for forty days and forty nights. How Noah sent a dove out three times, and when it came back the third time with a twig of olive in its beak, Noah knew that the flood was over. Here Matt looked up to see a grin on Attean's face.

"Beaver people tell story like that," he said. "Very old story. You want me tell?"

Matt waited curiously.

"Very long time," Attean began, scowling as he tried to translate from his own tongue, "before animal, was great rain. Water come over all the land. One Indian go to very high hill, climb very high tree. Rain many days. Water come up to feet of Indian, but no more. Gluskabe bring three ducks to Indian. One day he let one duck go. It fly away and not come back. Other day he let other duck go. It not come back. Then last duck come back with mud in mouth. Indian know water go down. When water all gone, he come down from tree. He make grass. Make bird and animal. Make man and beaver. Man and beaver make all other Indians.

"Golly," said Matt. "It's almost like the Bible story. Where did the Indians get it?"

Attean shrugged. "Very old story. Indians take long time to tell. I not know white man's words."

"You told it fine. But who was this Glu – whatever you called him?"

“Gluskabe. Mighty hunter. Come from north. Very strong. He make wind blow. Make thunder. He make all animal. Make Indian.”

Matt was puzzled. He had heard that the Indians worshipped the Great Spirit. This Gluskabe did not sound like a Great Spirit. He sounded more like one of the heroes in the old folk tales his mother had told him when he was a child. He decided it would be impolite to ask more. He wondered if the Indians had many stories like that. And how could it be that here in the forest they had learned about the flood?

## ❧ CHAPTER 15 ❧

ON THE DAY OF THEIR GREATEST ADVENTURE, Attean had come without his dog. So there was no warning.

Matt was in fine spirits that day, because he had managed by a magnificent stroke of luck to hit a rabbit with his bow and arrow. It was the first time this had happened, and it was more the rabbit's doing than his own. The silly creature had just sat there and let him take careful aim. All the same, he was pleased with himself, and even more pleased that Attean had been there to see it.

When the boys decided to visit the beaver dam again, Matt was unwilling to leave the rabbit behind in case some thieving animal should discover it. He was walking behind Attean, swinging the rabbit carelessly by the ears as Attean always did, when the Indian suddenly halted, his whole body tensed. Matt could see nothing unusual, and he had opened his mouth to speak, when Attean silenced him with a jerk of his hand. Then he heard a sound in the underbrush ahead. Not a rustle like a grouse or a snake. Not a trapped animal. This was a stirring of something moving slowly and heavily.

He felt a cold prickle in his stomach. He stood beside Attean, his own muscles tight, scarcely breathing.

A low bush bent sideways. Through the leaves a brown head thrust itself. Bigger than that of a dog, and shaggier. It was a small bear cub. Matt could see the little eyes peering at them curiously, the brown nose wrinkling at the strange smell of human boy. The little animal looked so comical that Matt almost laughed out loud.

“Hsst!” Attean warned under his breath.

There was a crashing of bush and a low, snarling growl. An immense paw reached through the thicket and tumbled the cub over and out of sight. In its place loomed a huge brown shape. Bursting through the leaves was a head three times as big as the cub’s. No curiosity in those small eyes, only an angry reddish gleam.

Somehow Matt had the sense not to run. He stood frozen on the path. A bear could overtake a running man in a few bounds. And this one was only two bounds away. The bear’s head moved slowly from side to side. Its heavy body brushed aside the branches as though they were cobwebs. It swayed, shifting its weight from one foot to the other. Slowly it rose on its hind legs. Matt could see the wicked curving claws.

Matt would never know why he acted as he did. He could not remember thinking at all, only staring with numb horror at the creature about to charge. Somehow he did move. He swung the dead rabbit by its ears and hurled it straight at the bear’s head. The tiny body struck the bear squarely on its nose. With a jerk of her

head the bear shook it off as though it were a buzzing mosquito. The rabbit flopped useless to the ground. The bear did not even bother to look down at it. She had been distracted for only an instant, but in that instant something flashed through the air. There was a sharp twang and the dull thud of a blow. Just between the eyes of the bear, the shaft of Attean's arrow quivered. As the waving forepaws began to lower, a second arrow struck just below the bear's shoulder.

The great head shuddered and sank toward the ground. With a wild yell, Attean sprang forward and thrust his knife deep, just behind his first arrow. Still scarcely aware that he moved at all, Matt leaped after him. Jerking his own knife from his belt, he sank it into brown fur. His blow had been misplaced, but it was not needed. The bear's sides were heaving. The boys stood watching, and in a few moments it lay still.

Matt stared down at the creature in horror. The fearsome yellow teeth were still bared in a snarl. Saliva and blood dribbled down from the open jaws. The little eyes that had glittered so savagely were filmed over. The long, sharp claws hung powerless, clotted with pawed-up earth.

Now that there was nothing to fear, Matt felt his knees shaking. He hoped that Attean would not notice, and he managed a wide grin to hide his trembling. But Attean did not grin back. He stood over the bear, and he began to speak, slowly and solemnly, in his own tongue. He spoke for some time.

"What were you saying?" Matt demanded when the speaking was over.

"I tell bear I do not want to kill," Attean answered. "Indian not kill she-bear with cub. I tell bear we did not come here to hunt."

"But it might have killed us both!"

"Maybe. I ask bear to forgive that I must kill."

"Well, I'm mighty thankful you did," Matt said stoutly. He was about to say that he had never been so scared in his life, but he thought better of it.

Attean looked at him, and his solemnness suddenly dissolved in a grin. "You move quick," he said. "Like Indian."

Matt felt his cheeks turn red. "You killed him," he said honestly. Yet he knew that he had had a part. He had given Attean just that instant in which to notch his arrow.

Attean nudged the bear with his toe. "Small," he said. "Just some fat. Good for eat."

Small! That monstrous creature! It certainly was too big for two boys to carry. It appeared that Attean had no intention of trying.

"Belong squaw now," he said. "I go tell."

"You mean a squaw is going to carry that heavy thing?"

"Cut up meat, then carry. Squaw work," Attean answered. It was plain that he had done the man's work and was finished with it.

"The cub," Matt remembered now. It was nowhere in sight.

Attean shook his head. "Let cub go," he said. "When *sigwan* come again, him plenty big to eat.

"Take rabbit," Attean reminded him.

Matt looked with distaste at the rabbit, almost covered by the bear's heavy paw, the fur matted and bloody. He would rather not have touched it, but obediently he pulled it out. It was his dinner, after all. And he knew that in Attean's world everything that was killed must be used. The Indians did not kill for sport.

When Attean had disappeared into the forest, Matt still stood looking down at the first bear he had ever seen. He felt resentful. Attean had killed the bear, of course. It was his by right. But Matt would have liked just a small share of that meat, or even one of those big claws to show his father. Then he remembered the Indian boy's tribute. He had moved fast, like an Indian. That would have to be share enough.

## ❧ CHAPTER 16 ❧

IN THE LATE AFTERNOON MATT SAT IN THE CABIN doorway. He couldn't think of any work to do. He felt restless, the excitement still jumping about inside him. He needed to talk to someone. He wanted to tell his father about the bear. Thinking of his father, he felt that snake of worry crawling about behind every other thought. That worry was becoming more frequent every day. What could have kept his father so long?

Suppose some accident had befallen him? The meeting with the bear had shaken Matt's trust in the forest. Now it seemed to close him in on every side, dark and threatening. Suppose his father had met with a bear? Suppose he had never got back to Quincy? How would his mother know where to find this place, or even where to send anyone to look for him? Matt hugged his arms around his chest. But the cold was inside. It would not go away.

Something moved at the edge of the woods. Matt leaped to his feet. A stranger came walking into the clearing. With an ugly chill against his backbone, Matt stared at the hideously painted face. Then he recognized Attean, a very different Attean from the boy who had walked with him in the forest that morning.



The Indian boy had washed his body, and it shone with fresh grease. He had combed his tangled black locks. Down his cheeks on either side and on his forehead ran broad streaks of blue and white paint. On a cord around his neck dangled a row of new bear's claws.

In case Attean had noticed his first alarm, Matt greeted him boldly. "What's the war paint for?" he demanded.

"Not war paint," Attean answered. "Squaws make feast with bear. My grandfather say you come."

Matt hesitated, unable to believe his ears. It took him a moment to realize that this was actually an invitation.

"Thanks," he stammered. "I'd sure like some of that bear meat. Wait till I get my jacket."

"Shut door," Attean reminded him. "Maybe another bear come." Attean was in a good humor. He had made one of his unexpected jokes.

"Long way," Attean said, after a time. Matt was certain they must have been walking fast for more than an hour. He remembered that Attean had already walked all this way to fetch him and he kept silent. It was so dark now that he could barely see to put one foot before the other, but he realized that they were on a well-beaten trail. Just as the last light was glinting above the treetops, they reached a river bank. Drawn up at its edge was a small birch canoe. Attean motioned him to step into it. Then he gave a push and leaped nimbly into the stern. His paddle moved soundlessly. Grateful to sit still, Matt was entranced by the speed, the silence, the gliding shadows on the silver river. He was regretful when in a very few strokes they reached the other side.

Now Matt could see a glimmer of light deep in the woods. Attean led him toward it, and presently their way was barred by a solid wall of upright posts. A stockade. For the first time a quiver of uneasiness made Matt falter. But stronger than any doubt, curiosity drove him on. Not for one moment would he have turned back. Eagerly he followed Attean through a gateway into an open space filled with smoke and moving shadows and wavering patches of light cast by birchbark torches.

All around him in a circle rose the dim shapes of cabins and cone-shaped wigwams. In the center of the circle a long, narrow fire was burning between walls of logs. Suspended on timbers hung three iron pots, sending up rosy curls of steam in the smoky air. The fragrance of boiling meat and pungent herbs made Matt's stomach crawl.

Then he was aware of the Indians. They sat silently on either side of the fire, their painted faces ghastly in the flickering light. They were clad in an odd medley of garments, some in Englishmen's coats and jackets, others with bright blankets draping their shoulders. A few had feathers standing straight up from headbands. Everywhere there was the gleam of metal on arms and chests. Women in bright cloth skirts and odd pointed caps moved about without a sound, adding wood to the fire or stirring the contents of the kettles. Light glinted on their silver armbands and necklaces. Clearly the Indians had put on their finest array for this feast. came over Matt with a rush of shame how very shabby he must look in their eyes. Even if Attean had warned

him, what could he have done? He had no other clothes to wear. Probably Attean had known that and so had said nothing.

No one seemed to notice him. Yet he was conscious of the unblinking stare of the row facing him. The others did not turn their heads. They seemed to be waiting. In the silence, Matt's heart beat so loudly they all surely must have heard it.

After a long pause, one man rose slowly and came toward him. It was Saknis, his paint-streaked face barely recognizable. He wore a long red coat decorated by a handsome beaded collar and metal armbands. A crown of feathers rose from the beaded band around his forehead. He stood very tall, and there was pride in his stern features. Why, Matt thought, he looked like a king!

"*Kweb*," Saknis said with dignity. "White boy welcome."

In a sudden terrifying yell the rows of Indians echoed this greeting. "*Ta ho*," they shouted. "*Ta ho. Ye bye bye.*"

"*Kweb*," Matt stammered in return, then more boldly, "*Kweb.*"

The Indians seemed satisfied. Smiles flashed in their dark faces. There was rough laughter, and then, seeming to forget him, they began to jabber to each other. From nowhere, children suddenly crowded around him, giggling, daring each other to touch him. Matt's heart slowed its pounding. There was nothing to fear in this place, but after the weeks of stillness in his cabin the noise was confusing. He was grateful when Attean came to his rescue and led him to a seat at the end of a log. An old woman approached and held out to him

a gourd cup. It contained a sweetish drink, acid and flavored with maple sugar, good on his dry tongue.

Saknis raised his arm, and instantly the clamor was silenced. There was no doubt Attean's grandfather was the leader here. An Indian brought him a long pipe and Saknis put it to his lips and slowly blew out a long wreath of smoke. The rows of Indians waited respectfully for him to speak. Instead the old man turned to his grandson and held out the pipe.

Attean stepped into the center of the clearing. In the firelight he stood straight and slender, his bare arms and legs gleaming. Matt had never seen him like this. Proudly he took the pipe, set it briefly to his own lips, and handed it back to his grandfather. Then he began to speak.

Matt did not need to understand the words. He soon realized that Attean was recounting the morning's adventure. Watching his gestures, Matt felt himself living again the walk through the woods, the meeting with the small cub, the fearsome mother about to charge. As Attean spoke, the Indians urged the boy on with grunts and shouts of approval and pleasure. Attean tensed his body. He uttered a sharp cry, pointed at Matt, and made a flinging sweep of his arm, hurling an imaginary rabbit. The seated figures broke into loud cries, shouting "*He*," grinning and pointing at Matt, swinging their own arms in imitation. Matt's cheeks were hot. He knew they were making fun of him. But boisterous as it was, the sound was friendly. Now they turned back to Attean and followed his story with growing excitement.

Attean certainly made a very good story of it. His telling took a lot longer than the actual event. Plainly they all enjoyed it, and in listening they were all taking part in it. Attean was a skillful storyteller. Matt could understand now just how he must have delighted them with his acting out of *Robinson Crusoe*.

When the narrative was over, the Indians sprang to their feet. They formed a long line. Then began a sound that sent a tingle, half dread and half pleasure, down Matt's spine. A lone Indian had leaped to the head of the line, beating a rattle against his palm in an odd, stirring rhythm. He strutted and pranced in ridiculous contortions, for all the world like a clown in a village fair. The line of figures followed after him, aping him and stamping their feet in response.

Attean was at his side again. "Dance now," he said. "Then feast."

The rhythm of the rattle quickened. The line of figures wove round the fire, faster and faster. Women joined now, at the end of the line, linking their arms, swaying. Finally the children, even small children, were dancing, stamping their small naked feet.

"Dance," Attean commanded. He seized Matt's arm and pulled him into the moving line. The men near him cheered him on, laughing at Matt's stumbling attempts. Once he caught his breath, Matt found it simple to follow the step. His confidence swelled as the rhythm throbbed through his body, loosening his tight muscles. He was suddenly filled with excitement and happiness. His own heels pounded against the hard ground. He was one of them.

He came back to earth with a stitch in his side. His legs threatened to give way under him. The dancing seemed to have no end. Determined that Attean should not see him weakening, he moved faster and stamped harder. Finally, when he felt he could not make the circle one more time, the dance ended.

The feasting began. A squaw brought him a wooden bowl filled with thick, hot stew and a curiously carved wooden spoon. The first steaming mouthful burned his tongue, but he was too hungry to wait. He thought nothing had ever tasted so good, dark and greasy and spicy. So this was bear meat!

Presently he noticed that Attean sat beside him, eating nothing.

"You're not eating," he said, with a sudden doubt. "Have you given me your share?"

"This my bear," the boy answered. "I kill. Not eat. Maybe not get any more bear." He didn't sound as if he minded in the least, as if, in fact, he was proud of not eating.

When Matt's bowl was empty, the squaw refilled it. By the time he finished, sleepiness began to drag at his eyelids. He could scarcely hold them open. Attean seemed in no hurry to leave. The Indians were enjoying themselves, refilling their bowls, shouting at each other, laughing and slapping their legs at what seemed to be uproarious jokes. This was noisier than any celebration Matt had ever seen in Quincy, even on Muster Day. Why had he ever had the idea that the Indians were a dull lot?

At last, however, they fell silent, and Matt saw that one of them was beginning another story. It promised to be a long one. Between the sentences the speaker drew on his pipe, and the smoke curled from his nose and mouth as he spoke. Matt's head drooped and came up with a painful jerk. He had almost fallen asleep sitting up. Attean laughed and motioned him to his feet. At the thought of tramping all the way back to the cabin, Matt groaned. It must be close to midnight.

Then he saw that Attean did not mean to go back. He led Matt toward one of the wigwams and pulled back the flap of deerskin that hung across the door. Inside, a small fire burned, and by its faint light Matt saw a low platform covered with matting and fur. Attean made a silent motion, and Matt, too sleepy to question, gratefully let his tired body sink down on the soft skins. Attean stirred up the fire and left him alone. Once, long after, Matt roused to hear the rattle and the pounding of feet. The Indians were dancing again, and he was thankful to stay right where he was.

## ❧ CHAPTER 17 ❧

WHEN MATT WOKE, THE WIGWAM WAS DIM, BUT the cracks of brightness around the doorflap showed that it was daylight. By the sounds, the village was up and about. He could hear men's voices, the shouts of children, and the shrill yelping of dogs. Behind these sounds there beat a dull thumping rhythm. Could the Indians still be dancing?

He lay looking about him, at the smoke-streaked walls of woven matting, at the clutter of objects hanging here and there – shapeless garments, cooking pots, odd-shaped bags of animal skin, bundles of dried grasses and herbs. Under the platform where he had slept was an untidy pile of baskets and rolled-up mats. From the heap of ashes in the center of the dirt floor a wisp of smoke curled upward toward the small hole in the roof. Much of it could not escape and drifted back to hang in thin clouds just above his head. Matt's throat felt tight with it, and he sat up, coughing. Then he moved to the doorway, pushed back the flap, and stepped outside.

As though they had been waiting, children came scuffling about him, their bright eyes curious. Most of them were naked as little frogs.



"*Kweh*," he said uncertainly, sending them into a chorus of giggles. Matt was relieved to see Attean approaching.

"You sleep long time," Attean greeted him. "Too much bear, reckon."

Matt smiled shamefacedly. He still found it hard to take Attean's sober teasing.

Over the heads of the children he looked about the village. Last night, in the darkness and firelight, it had appeared mysterious and awesome. Now, under the strong sunlight, he saw that it was shabby and cluttered. There were a few bark cabins; for the most part the wigwams were ramshackle and flimsy. On every side, from racks of untrimmed branches, hung rows of drying fish. Scattered heaps of clamshells and animal bones littered the ground. The Indians themselves had discarded the splendor of the night before. Some of them, like Attean, wore only a breechcloth; others, faded cloth trousers and ragged blankets. The women had replaced their bright finery with skirts and vests of dingy blue cotton.

Now he could see what was making that rhythmic thumping. Two women were pounding corn in a huge mortar made from a tree trunk, their arms alternately rising and falling. Others nearby were grinding in smaller mortars of hollowed stones. They sat close together, jabbering like bluejays, but their chatter did not for an instant interfere with the steady rhythm of their bare arms. In front of another wigwam, two women were weaving baskets of rushes. As Matt and

Attean passed them, they looked up with shy smiles. All the women, Matt noticed, were hard at work. A few very old men sat smoking in front of the wigwams, and a group of boys squatted in a circle playing at some sort of game.

"Where are the men?" he asked.

"Gone," Attean said. "Before sun up. My grandfather lead hunt for deer."

He had brought a hunk of corn bread for each of them, and munching it they walked through the village back to the canoe. Matt kept hanging back, looking all about him at the village. He wanted to stay longer. There were a hundred questions he longed to ask. But Attean seemed impatient; his genial mood of the night before had vanished. Without wasting a motion, he pushed the canoe into the water. A taggle of children had followed them and now stood on the bank, laughing and waving as they moved out into the river.

Matt tried to find a reason for Attean's silence. "If it hadn't been for me," he asked, "would you have gone on the deer hunt with the men?"

Attean did not like the question. "Not take me," he admitted finally. "I not have gun."

"You're a good shot with a bow and arrow."

Attean scowled. "That old way," he said. "Good for children. Indian hunt now with white man's gun. Someday my grandfather buy me gun. Need many beaver skins. Beaver not so many now."

"I know guns cost a lot," Matt said. "I'll have to wait a good while for another one myself." Attean had long since heard the story of Ben's visit.

"White man can buy with money," Attean said. "Indian not have money. One time plenty wampum. Now wampum no good to pay for gun."

There was bitterness in Attean's voice. Matt understood now why Attean had defended the beaver dam so fiercely. Was it true that beaver were getting scarce? Matt thought of the village they had just left, how very poor it seemed, how few possessions the Indians could boast. For the first time Matt glimpsed how it might be for them, watching their old hunting grounds taken over by white settlers and by white traders demanding more skins than the woods could provide. As they set off through the forest he tried to think of a way to lift Attean's gloom.

"That was a mighty fine feast," he said. "And I was glad to see where you live. I'd like to go there again someday."

Attean's scowl only deepened. "My grandmother not want you come to feast," he said finally. "My grandfather say you must. She say you not sleep in her house."

"Oh," said Matt lamely, his own pleasure suddenly dimmed. So many things were suddenly clear to him: why he had been left alone to sleep in the empty wigwam; why Attean had hurried him away so abruptly this morning. Attean had been caught in a family argument and was annoyed about it.

"My grandmother hate all white men," Attean said.

When Matt could find nothing to answer, Attean went on. "White man kill my mother. She go out with two squaw to find bark for make basket. White man come through woods and shoot with gun. My mother

do them no harm. We no longer at war with white men. Just same they kill for get scalp. White men get money for Indian scalp. Even scalp of children."

Matt's indignant protest never got past his throat. He remembered that it was true, or had been a long time ago. He had heard that during the war the Massachusetts governor had offered a bounty for Indian scalps. Attean must have been a very small child.

"My father go out on war trail," Attean said. "He go to find white man who killed my mother. He not come back."

Matt was speechless. He had never dreamed that anything like this lay behind Attean's carefree life. He had never wondered about Attean's parents at all, only accepted without question that the boy followed his grandfather and obeyed him.

"No wonder she hates us," he said at last. "Terrible things always happen when there's a war — on both sides. You've got to admit, Attean, that there was a reason. The Indians did the same thing to white settlers. The white women were afraid to go outside their cabins."

"Why white men make cabins on Indian hunting grounds?"

Matt had no answer to that. It was no use, he thought. The war with the French was over. The Indians and the English had made peace. But the hatred — would that ever be over? For all he and Attean walked through the woods together, there was a wall between them that Attean would never forget. In sudden panic he thought of his own mother. Was it right for his father to bring her to this place?

“Does your grandfather hate us too?” he asked.

Attean did not answer at first. Finally he said, “My grandfather say Indian must learn to live with white man.”

It was not the answer Matt had hoped for. But Saknis had said he must come to the feast. In spite of the grandmother, Saknis had made him welcome.

“When my father comes,” he said, “I want him to know your grandfather. I think they would like each other.”

Attean did not answer, and they walked on in silence. Discomforted, Matt turned his attention to the trail they were following. Presently he recognized the unmistakable carving of a little animal cut into the bark of a tree. But when he turned to Attean to boast of his recognition, he was silenced by the darkness in Attean’s eyes. Instead, without speaking, he studied the signs they passed. He marked fallen trees pointing along the path, small piles of stones, and, wherever the trail seemed to vanish, he discovered on a tree the sign of the beaver. When they came out at last on a trail he knew well, he marked carefully the spot where the two trails met. Why, he thought in sudden excitement, I could actually find my way to that village. I’m sure I could. But he did not share his thought with Attean. He knew that unless Attean took him there he could never go to that village again. Saknis had only invited him to the feast out of kindness, or perhaps out of fairness for his small share in killing the bear. Would he ever be given another chance?