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THE LIBERAL SHORT STORY

SNOW

By Charles McQuirk

There are cynics who say that if a pair of great lovers like Romeo and Juliet were locked in a room together for two weeks, neither would kill himself for love but both would be held for murder.

That probably is an overstatement, but fundamentally it is true. It would take them longer than two weeks to get sick of each other. Probably three.

Cy Jandreau and Mary, his wife, went through ten years of married life without ever suspecting this disagreeable fundamental flaw which is present in almost every human being. If you had told them about it they would have looked, first at you and then at each other thus sending the mutual message that you were quite a long way off your nut. Why? Because they had proven otherwise.

For ten years Cy and Mary loved each other as a husband and wife should. First, they were unhappy whenever they were out of each other's company. Then they found they liked each other. Finally, they knew every fault the other had. And they still liked each other. And that is the true test of marriage.

Cy was a woodsman, a product of the great open spaces. He was slim and wiry and hard. His eyes were gray, his mouth tight, and mostly closed. He was born on the Columbia River, not far from where it spews its waters into the Pacific. The legend was that he was 20 years old before he was thrown and had his first pair of shoes forced upon him. It wasn't true. The climate made shoes, heavy, warm shoes, necessary all his life. But Cy certainly was a creature of the woods, the streams and the wild places. He had never seen a town of more than 1,500 population in his life and he had no desire to do so.

In the summer Cy guided fishermen along the rivers. In the fall he took out hunting parties, steering them into places he had marked where the big game browsed. In the winter he ran a line of traps that was twenty miles square and when the season was at full height and snow blanketed the earth with a thickness of from ten to twenty-five feet, he holed up in his cabin alone. When the blizzards came he merely fastened the door, repaired and cleaned his guns, went over his fishing tackle and perused the mail order catalogue until the snow stopped falling. Then he would take down his snow shoes and visit his traps.

When he was 23, he found a Bible in the woods and in the Psalms and the New Testament he discovered things for which his spiritual being craved. The command to "Love one another" was unique in his experience. Dealing with nature in the raw, he saw very few instances of love. The big ones hunted and ate the little ones and nobody in the woods ever thought anything about it. Cy thought that if you got people to love one another you would have a pretty fine world and he promised himself that he would do all he could to further the idea.

He did not know that when he reached that decision he joined a vast army of idealists which have been taking an unmerciful beating for 1938 years. Being a practical man and no Mahatma Gandhi, he did not let his love run over into the animal kingdom. Animals were his living and when he hooked a fish or found a marten, a lynx, an otter, a mink, a fox or a bear cub in his trap, he knocked them on the head with the same impersonality that a good Christian country woman uses when she kills a couple of chickens for Sunday dinner.

Reading Paul, he became convinced of the efficacy of prayer. He moved God into partnership with him. He let him in on everything he wanted and asked Him to help him get it. It was surprising how profitable the partnership proved for Cy even though he never asked for much. A new gun, fishing tackle, to have a prize hound sent back when he was lost.

Mary was a more practical Christian than Cy, because she was a more practical person. Stout and strong and full-bosomed, she looked the world as it was straight between the eyes and asked nothing from it that she could not get by her own efforts. To her, God was a rather remote Being, a lot like her taciturn father had been in her very young childhood. He was to be revered because He was God, but He was not to be bothered with little personal requests, because they would be merely annoying to a Being who had to run this universe.

It was characteristic of both Cy

and Mary that each knew just how the other felt about their Maker and did not argue about it.

Mary never accompanied Cy into the woods in the winter. It never occurred to her to do so. Custom held that a trapper lived and did his work by himself in the season when the northern world was blanketed with snow. Cy would go in about the last of November. If the winter was mild, which happened rarely, she saw him maybe four or five times in a season. When it was normal she rarely saw him before late March when the ice started to crack up and the snow to melt under the daily augmented strength of the sun.

But when Cy and Mary had been married ten years, Mary found herself expecting a baby. It was to arrive some time around June and when the time approached for Cy to go into the woods for the winter Mary found herself unwilling to face those months alone.

"I don't know what I'm going to do this winter, Cy," she told him. "I don't like the idea of not seeing you till spring."

"But may you will," Cy comforted her. "The fur on the animals is pretty light. That generally means a mild winter."

"The chances are against any mild winters in this section," Mary argued, a trifle sharply. "And I hate to be alone."

"You afraid, Mary?"

"No, I ain't afraid. But I never faced a job like this before. I don't like to set about it all alone."

Cy didn't say anything. He knew that women often got funny notions when they were expecting a baby. The thing a man should do was to give a woman anything she wanted, if he could. But this was a big order. Men just didn't take their women into the woods to hole up for the winter. The life was too lonesome. And it was dangerous, too. You never could tell what might happen. Custom proved that by frowning on women following the trap lines with their men.

On the other hand, Mary wasn't exactly herself. The job she was doing made her notional. If she was alone, she probably would be unhappy. And Cy didn't want her unhappy. He mulled it over in his mind, reviewing all the pros and cons, but he didn't say anything until he had all his gear sorted and about packed. Then:

"Mary," he said, "if you want to come into the woods with me, I guess I can arrange it. I'd like to have you. But I guess you know that it ain't exactly the sort of life a woman would crave, specially when she is like you are."

"I want to be with you, Cy," Mary reiterated doggedly.

"Then you'll be with me," Cy settled the matter. "I thought you would, so I've gathered your gear together. I'll pack it tonight. We ought to light out about tomorrow."

So Mary went into the woods with Cy. She changed his one-room log cabin into a home two hours after she arrived there. Cy marvelled at the way a woman could do the work she was created to do. He ate better that he had ever eaten at that season of the year, in all his life.

The first snow fell and Cy's first catches promised a healthy and profitable season. Then snow began to fall intermittently but steady.

In mid-December the snow was at its height and Cy began to linger, perforce in the cabin while snow descended day after day and the winds howled blizzard howls.

In the third week, the snow let up enough for him to make a circuit of his traps. He found them loaded. Snow had fallen so deeply that the carnivora were glad to nibble at the raw meat in his traps—and die doing it. It took him three days to gather in the harvest, skin his catches, rebait his traps and come in. On the last trap he cut his finger setting it.

Neither Cy nor Mary ever suspected that they had proven the exception to the iron-clad natural law that two human beings cannot be holed up together for a long period without being brought to the verge of murder through boredom. Mary had missed him so during the last trip that she began to cry when she saw him coming toward the cabin, bent almost double under his load. She broke all the properties so far as to hug and kiss him when he came in and threw down the pelts.

Then she noticed his hand. It was red and swollen. She looked closer at it. "You got blood poison, Cy," she said. "I'm going to have to open it up."

"Go ahead," Cy agreed and watch-

Cober Re-union

The fourth Canadian reunion of the descendants of the late Nicholas Cober was held in Richmond Hill Park August 7th with an attendance of three hundred. Canadian cousins gathered from the counties of York and Waterloo and the districts of Niagara and Nottawasaga and other parts of Ontario. Guests were also present from the States of New York, Pennsylvania and Oklahoma. The morning was spent in a social way and registration, dinner being served at 12.30, after which a programme of interest was enjoyed by all presided over by the President, Mr. J. C. Fretz of Kitchener. The musical part of the programme, under the direction of Rev. Jesse Steckley of Gormley included the singing of old and well known hymns and quartette selections.

An address of welcome by Bishop Alvin Winger was replied to by Rev. Simon Cober of Kitchener.

The President, Mr. J. C. Fretz of Kitchener, spoke on the value of the family reunion and how to make a success of it. Mr. Fretz emphasized the noble and Godly heritage handed down to this generation by the early settlers who came to this part of the country from Pennsylvania, but felt that no generation could rest on the laurels of their forefathers, but each and every generation must resolve to live up to those standards which make for high and holy living and better citizenship.

Rev. Joseph Cober in a short address paid tribute to those who had passed away since the last reunion in Kitchener in 1936.

On behalf of the cousins in the United States and the visiting cousins, Mr. Wm. Cober of Belle Vernon, Pa., and Rev. La Rue Cober of Rochester, N.Y. brought greetings from across the line.

An invitation was read from the Cobers in the state of Iowa to attend their reunion to be held near Des Moines on September 4th.

A short address of the Canadian Cobers was reviewed by the oldest member present, Rev. P. Cober of Kitchener. His grandparents, the late Nicholas Cober and his wife, Eva Fisher, from whom all the Canadian Cobers are descendants was one of the first five families to settle on Yonge St. directly north of Thornhill in the year 1796 receiving from King George III of England a deed of the land, to which document the King's seal was attached.

The following officers were elected: Hon. Pres., Rev. P. Cober; Pres., J. C. Fretz, Kitchener; Vice-Pres., E. Swalm, Duntroon; Sec., V. L. Cober, Kitchener; Treas., Leslie Wilmer, Preston and Nelson Bechtel of Preston.

ed while she slit open the hand. That night it snowed. The next day it snowed. It was still snowing the day after and Cy's hand got as big as his head. Frequent lancements did no good. Cy took to his bunk and thought of his Partner. He began to pray to Him. He explained just how everything was. It was going to be a record breaking season along the trap line and Mary, here, was expecting a youngster. Would it be all right if He let Cy be cured so he could get together enough to support the youngster and Mary? He got delirious and he insisted that Mary should pray, too. (And Mary prayer to humor him. But she still believed that God helped people who did all they could to help themselves.)

In the morning Mary slipped into a pair of snow shoes and began a wondrous parade out in the open in front of the cabin. It took her hours—she walked and walked in a series of four great half circles with a greater circle in between the four. (She finished a little after noon. A long about 3 o'clock an airplane dived down out of the blue and taxied across the meadow. "What's the trouble?" the fur-clad pilot asked. "My man's got blood poison," Mary told him. "He's got to be taken to a hospital right away.")

"Let's get him," the pilot agreed. "And you'd better come along, too." So they packed Cy in and Mary and the pilot climbed in beside him and they flew away from here.

Cy just made it. They shot him full of serums and pulled him through. He went back to his traps the second week in January.

"You see, Mary," he said mildly. "God helped us because I asked Him. He always does."

"I know it, Cy," Mary agreed. She did not tell him that the circles and half circles she had trod out in the snow made a giant SOS that pulled the pilot out of the sky and kept Cy on earth to follow his traplines. Mary is not much of a one for explanations.

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CONTENTS OF HARDWARE STORE

- 1 Cook Stove with warming closet, new
- 1 Fireco Range with warming closet
- 1 Fada Cabinet Radio
- 2 King Cabinet Battery Radios
- 1 2-Burner Coal Oil Stove, new
- 1 3-Burner Coal Oil Stove, new, with back
- 1 Warming Closet, new, will fit any coal oil stove
- 1 Crown Huron Range with warming closet
- 1 Quebec Heater
- 1 Large Iron Heater
- 2 Coal Oil Heaters
- A Number of new pails, all sizes
- 1 Melotte Separator, capacity 600, demonstrator
- 1 Electric Washing Machine, Lister, new
- A Quantity Stove Pipes, elbows and furnace pipes
- A Quantity of Binder Gloves, Work Gloves
- 1 Lantern and a number of lantern glasses, short and long
- A Quantity of Sweat Pads
- A Quantity of Paint, Waxes and Polishes
- A Quantity Carriage Bolts, various sizes, stove bolts, wood screws
- A Quantity Shelf Hardware
- 1 Set Counter Scales, capacity 240 lbs.
- 1 Cash Register
- 1 Show Case
- 1 Iron Bag Truck
- A Number of Stable Brooms and House Brooms
- A Quantity of Nails
- 1 Office Desk
- 1 Filing Cabinet
- A Quantity Invoice Files
- A Quantity of all makes of Plough Shares
- A Quantity of Tinsmith Tools and Machinery
- A Quantity of new Eavetroughing and conductor pipe
- 1 Ford Truck, Model T
- 1 Extension Ladder, 36 feet, good
- 1 Extension Ladder, 24 feet, good
- 1 Cutter
- Some Corrugated Sheet Roofing
- 1 10-foot Step Ladder
- A Quantity of Charcoal
- A Quantity of foot wood
- 1 Tinsmith's delivery wagon
- 1 Hammock Hanger
- 2 Lawn Mowers
- 1 Power Washing Machine with wringer and tub stand
- 1 1900 Hand Washer
- 1 No. 18 Cockshutt Walking Plough
- 1 Broom Rack
- 2 Step Ladder Chairs
- 2 Office Chairs
- A Quantity of Glass
- A Quantity of Hockey Sticks

FURNITURE

- 1 Solid Oak 9-piece Dining Room Suite, good as new
- 1 Solid Oak Serving Wagon, new
- 1 Solid Oak Dining Room Table
- 8 Painted Kitchen Chairs
- 6 Birch Kitchen Chairs
- 1 Kitchen Cabinet
- 2 Kitchen Tables (one a drop leaf)
- 1 Electric Easy Washing Machine
- 1 Singer Drophead Sewing Machine
- 1 Happy Thought Range, equipped with 2 oil burners
- 1 Coal Oil 3-burner Range, nearly new
- 1 Wood Burning Range
- 1 Hall Seat with Mirror, Oak
- 2 Hall Mirrors
- 2 Matched Golden Oak Hall Tables
- 2 Matched Golden Oak Rocking Chairs
- 1 Fur Coat
- 1 Mahogany Hall Seat
- 5-piece Mahogany Living Room Suite
- 1 Taupe Chesterfield
- 1 Large Mahogany Living Room Table
- 1 Brown Leather Morris Chair
- 1 Dozen Rocking Chairs of various types
- About 25 small Tables, Oak, Mahogany and painted
- A Quantity of Curtains
- 1 Heintzman Piano, good as new
- 2 Settees, Mahogany
- 1 Cedar Chest, new
- 1 Kolster Cabinet Radio
- 2 Screens
- 2 Piano Stools
- 1 Hall Rug, size 4 1/2 ft. by 7 1/2 ft., good
- 1 Dining Room Rug, size 9 ft. by 10 ft., good
- 2 Matched Living Room Rugs, 7 ft. by 8 ft., good, (tones of Mulberry)
- About 1 dozen small Rugs
- 1 3-piece Maple Bedroom Suite, spring and mattress
- 2 Double Iron Beds, springs and mattresses
- 1 Single Iron Bed, spring and mattress
- 1 Velour Couch
- 1 Camp Bed
- 2 Solid Oak Dressers
- 2 Solid Oak Washstands
- 1 8-day Clock, good
- 1 Desk and Bookcase, combined
- A Quantity of Dishes
- A Quantity of Silverware
- 1/2 dozen Chintz covered Bedroom Boxes
- 1 Congoleum Rug, 8' x 14'
- Quantity of Electric Lamps
- Quantity of Oil Burning Lamps
- Quantity of Pictures
- Quantity of Books
- One Verandah Couch on stand
- Verandah Chairs, mats and blinds
- Number of Drapes, all sizes and materials
- Lace Curtains, etc.
- Also various articles too numerous to list

The above furniture is all in A-1 condition

The Hardware Store and Tinsmith Shop is solid brick, shingle roof, size 30 by 50 feet, one and a half story. Gas pumps now in front of store.

Dwelling is brick veneer, steel roof, two and a half story, 10 rooms and attic. Is in first class condition. Lot approximately 50 by 70 feet.

TERMS: Contents of dwelling and Hardware Store Cash. Property, 10 per cent on day of sale and balance in 30 days. Possession to purchaser September 1st.

Properties to be sold subject to reserve bid.

J. CARL SAIGEON, Auctioneer