



# Blind Man's Buff with a Bear!

A True Story  
By PERCY LONGHURST

OUT West one meets with some queer characters seated around the camp fire at night; supper finished, and pipes alight, one hears some strange yarns. Some of them may be true. As I wasn't a tender-foot when I listened to the following yarn, I feel quite satisfied it was a genuine experience. The fellow who told the yarn was a trapper, and the adventure happened to a pal of his, with whom and two other fellows he had gone into the North-West Territory on a fur-getting trip.

It was winter, of course, as that is the season for trapping, and a big snowstorm had covered the ground for a couple of feet, making mishaps easy, since a man couldn't be sure what was underneath where he set his feet.

Which explains how one of the trappers came to fall into a deep hole. A fallen tree had covered the mouth of it; the snow had covered the branches, and these, thoroughly rotten, let the trapper through.

The hole was deep enough for the man to be half stunned, and when he had recovered himself and moved his limbs about, he was feeling mighty thankful that no

bones had been broken. How far he was down and how big the hole, he hadn't the slightest notion, for he was lying in inky darkness, but small troubles were quickly forgotten when, from somewhere quite close at hand he heard a sound that left him in no doubt that it was a bear's lair he had tumbled into, and the bear was at home. He knew he was in a tight place.

Worse was to come. A few seconds later, as he stood listening and trying to peer through the gloom, he heard a faint whine, and then something cold and wet touched his hand and something else scratched at a leg. A cub! That meant it was a she-bear he was shut up with; and when a she-bear has cubs with her she is liable to be short-tempered.



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The trapper wished himself outside. His rifle had dropped from his hand as he tumbled in, and his only other weapon was a hunting knife, a poor weapon for tackling an annoyed bear when in a confined space. Putting up one hand, he felt around the wall of the hole, to discover no crack or knob, nothing to give him hand or foothold.

He could not get out, and the cubs—there were two—having found him, concluded he might make a useful playmate. But their notions of play were rough, and when their claws scratched him, though anxious not to attract the attention of the sleepy mother, he was irritated into giving Baby Bruin a cuff. The little bear squealed, and Mother, somewhere a few yards away, growled as though asking what was the matter, but was too lazy to get up to find out.

It was sometime during the forenoon that the trapper met with his disagreeable accident, and the day passed mighty slowly, though the cubs at intervals came to him to resume their game.

So the hours dragged until night came, as the man was able to learn by the little patch of obscured light overhead slowly disappearing. Mother and cubs slept. But do you think the trapper slept? You're right; he didn't. Fear kept him awake.

But when morning came again, and with it the hope that his partners, alarmed by his absence, might succeed in locating him, he found it impossible to remain in his cramped position. Very carefully he crept here and there, and once he thought his last hour had come. He stepped on a cub; the cub squealed lustily, and its mother was provoked into getting up and making more serious investigation. He heard her move, though unable to see her, and he made up his mind for a fight. It couldn't be put off longer. Suddenly she bumped into him, to swing round quickly with an angry growl. And at the same moment the trapper struck with

his long knife, ripping a long gash in her side.

Then the fight was under weigh.

How long the awful battle lasted no one can know—the trapper himself said it might be half an hour, though it seemed to him like days. The clamour was deafening. The cubs squealed, their mother growled savagely, the man, hardly knowing what he was doing, shouted as he slashed with his great knife. That he could not last much longer he knew; he felt breath and strength failing him.

Suddenly he heard his name shouted, and he knew what had happened. His three partners had tracked him to the hole; they could hear the savage sounds below; he could just make out their heads bending over the edge.

His hoarse cry soon acquainted them with the truth, and at once they began slashing away with their axes to widen the mouth of the hole.

Then two rifles cracked, and immediately after two more bullets struck the bear. Then the prisoner fainted.

One of his partners dropped into the hole—a dozen feet deep it was—secured the cubs, and roughly patched up his chum's wounds. Ropes were lowered, and he was hoisted out, to be carried back to the camp without delay. Here examination proved his injuries so serious that their expedition ended at once. Packing their belongings, and the wounded man on their sledges, they made all haste back to the nearest settlement, where a doctor was to be found. A man's life was worth more than a winter's taking of fur pelts.



All the time his rescuers were widening the hole, the man in the bear pit was dodging, and striking, and slashing—and being struck.