



Far away there was a shuffle in the undergrowth; Magnus and his mate were trekking back into the untrodden wilderness . . .

CRACK!

The stillness of the big forest was broken by the sharp report of a rifle, and Magnus, a shaggy bear which was shuffling on through the deep glade, pulled himself up and sniffed uneasily. There was nothing to be seen except a faint cloud of blue smoke, floating away amidst the grey-green columnar trunks of the lofty pines. A dim reflection of the vapour was caught in a pool of water which looked blue, for it mirrored a vivid patch of sky. Ahead were to be seen patches of gleaming snow on some higher ground.

The bear looked back for Ursina, his faithful partner, and heard a scuffling, so judged she was all right. But he was puzzled, never having heard a sound like that before. Life—for a bear, anyway—had been safe enough in the far western wilds, though, to be sure, Magnus had heard

rumours of sportsmen who had come that way, armed with iron tubes, which sent forth flame and smoke.

But this was far too close to the cave where the two had made their home for a couple of seasons past—much too near to be pleasant. Magnus swung round and sniffed amidst the brown wrack of fern and rough grass. He tried to make himself believe that he had dreamt it as he lumbered into the little track he and Ursina had made to their cave.

Dream! It was not much of a dream, however! As Magnus arrived within sight of the black entrance to the den, the air was rent by a second report, and he caught sight of his companion just in front. The she bear had reached the open space in front of the cave when—crack!—that second shot rang out, and she spun round and dropped, with a whimpering cry.

Magnus gave a growl, and proceeded cautiously. All was still again, the sun catching the shiny seed-scales of the big fern fronds, and lighting up the magic mesh of the gossamer webs which lay across the moist undergrowth like fairy washing set out to dry. But luckily there was no tramp of heavy feet, no sign of a sportsman! Magnus trotted to the spot where his wife lay, and smelt round uneasily. The air was smoky, smelling of something he failed to recognise, for he had never set eyes on a man, except one evening at sunset long ago when he had seen an Indian on the big hills away north.

Ursina moved, and then, with a quick jerk, scrambled up on three legs, for one was hurt. With a swiftness marvellous in such bulky animals, the two bears dived into the thick undergrowth, and did not stop until they had put a safe distance between them and the suspicious scent. Ursina was the first to halt. A yelp escaped her, and she threw herself down again in the warm sun and licked the wound in her leg.

The two bears took counsel together. It was plain as paint that their comfortable sanctuary was no longer safe, and they reasoned that it was best to be going while the going was good.

After a further dose of Ursina's rough surgery, the two set off, intending to get farther into the wilds, where no ugly sounds disturbed the forest.

So the wanderers shuffled on, through mossy wildernesses where dazzling white snow patches shone. Magnus did the hunting now, while Ursina grumbled and limped in the rear. The little wild pig her mate brought in one evening did her good, however, though it was sure enough, with that shot in her leg, that she would go "dot-and-carry-one" to the end of the chapter.

The forest grew denser, and the travellers felt they had reached safety. Alas! there was no one to inform them of the danger of certain signs of peril in the shape of odd little curls of white wood, shavings which blew across an open space as at last, they reached a rift.

But, as good fortune would have it, they

found here another cave. It was something quite new—something which the bears took for a new kind of hollow tree which offered comfortable shelter—while just beyond was a look-out or, rather, a look downward. The ground dropped away suddenly, a sheer descent which was calculated to make anyone except a bear quite dizzy. In front of this "cave" lay a small heap of white ashes, from which a curl of smoke rose lazily; and Ursina, who was weary with the tramp, tripped in a hole as she gained this pile and went down sitting in the midst of the ashes.

She did not for the life of her understand why the special bit of earth there should be warm, but the sensation it afforded was grateful, and she did not get up, but lay and blinked happily at her companion. Undoubtedly this was the home for the two seekers after safety! True, the place was a bit strange, rather too fine for them, and different in a score of ways from what they had been accustomed to meet. All the same, it had advantages. It was snug enough inside this novel "cave," which was, in actual fact, the hastily made log cabin of a settler but recently come west, and who at the moment was padding it back with his dogs to the distant railhead for his stores.

How were the bears to know that they had jumped out of the frying-pan into the fire? There was nothing to rouse their suspicions, for the hardy settler, who had acquired rights over a belt of the forest land, had merely staked his claim, as it were, and his bed of ferns inside the crib was the only sign of his presence, apart from the four walls of the hut.

FOR several days there was peace in the new stronghold of Bruin and his mate, and Ursina hobbled about in the bright sunshine, or rested inside the fastness, while Magnus scouted for food, and to right excellent effect.

But the wonderful calm was broken at last by a bark of fury, and to his stupefaction Magnus, who had been making ready to sally forth on a raid, saw a little crowd of dogs come racing down the slope towards him.

They were smallish dogs, but fearless, and the bear faced them in a rage. Were these little animals going to attack him? Was it in their minds that they could turn him out—send Ursina limping off into the wilds, homeless once more? The thought of it, the insolence of the attack, made him quiver.

Then the dogs were on him! No hesitation on the part of the attackers! They dashed right at the bear, baying furiously, teeth bared, consumed with fury at the intrusion, eager to turn out the marauders before their master came up. The settler was far behind, and the distant barking floated to him on the still air.

Ursina surveyed the combat from a safe vantage point on top of the hut. Magnus did not need any aid from her against such puny antagonists. And yet the big bear, trained fighter as he was, felt that moment, in the heat of the conflict, as if he had met his match. For one dog seemed to be transformed into a couple in the lightning rush of the onslaught. Biting, scratching, harrying demons of vengeance—dogs who did not know when they were beaten, but who returned again and again with renewed bravery to the charge, while the big bear faced them, his face streaming with blood, and blind with anger.

The big bear fought with redoubled fury. He had been a grim fighter all his life, but he was getting weary of the onslaught. No sooner had he rolled one wiry antagonist down the slope than another came on, biting and worrying. His savage growls rose above the flurry of the conflict. Dimly he knew what it all meant—that he was to be driven out of his snugger, sent back in the wilds, he and his partner.

It was a pitiful thought, and should not be. Magnus staggered and gave way, and the momentary advantage the attackers gained spurred them on anew. But it was to be a fight to a finish. The bear shook his big frame and struck out. He never knew

Biting, snarling demons of vengeance attacked Magnus again and again!



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when he was beaten—and it was not the end yet, not by a long way.

Enemies all round him! Tearing at him, biting like furies!

Weight told all the same. A furious blow from a heavy paw sent one dog spinning; another went rolling down the incline. Not beaten yet, however! The attackers rallied, and the fight went on, when suddenly Magnus trembled, for from somewhere out of the depths of the forest came the thunderous roar which had frightened him

before, and which had sent him and his mate out into the wide world.

Ursina heard it, too, and was just as much alarmed, and the dogs barked frenziedly as they made ready, though badly hurt, to attack once more.

Crack! Crack! Crack!

Three shots in swift succession, and the blue smoke lay on the shining air, smelling acrid and suggesting death.

The bear gave a growl, and went heavily, swaying back towards the "cave," pausing once to show fight as his enemies came forward, but rather more warily. Then from out of the greenery appeared the figure of the settler, and in a hazy way Magnus linked him with the horrible sound.

He retired in disorder, realising that there was nothing else for it now but retreat, for he was up against a strange enemy, who could not be fought. Dogs! He could face them right enough, but that noise! No! So he and Ursina were to be turned out. Their rights to the cosy "cave" were questioned. It was abominable, unthinkable, but they had to go!

Ursina went first, hobbling into the forest, away from the right, straight for the safety of the wilds; and in her wake Magnus lumbered along, stopping again to say a growl to the yapping dogs, though these had had punishment enough; while their master came up at the double, his gun recharged now.

But he did not fire again, since that would have been plain waste of good ammunition. He had driven the intruders off, and that was enough. So as not to harm his dogs, he had only fired into the air, anyway!

The settler leaned his piece against the cabin, and stooped to pat the dogs which surrounded him.

Far away there was a shuffle-shuffle in the undergrowth. Magnus and his mate were footing it slowly back into the untrodden wilderness, to seek a new home where all was safe for them, where the swollen waterways laughed over the mossy rocks, and the sunshine flashed—the land of solitude, where the soft winds stirred the birches in the ravines.

THE GREYFRIARS SPORTING ALPHABET

By Bob Cherry

Of the Remove

A is for ANGLING, a sport far too slow.

B is for BOXING, O.K. and K.O.!

C is for CRICKET, a glorious game.

D is for DIVING—deep breaths are our aim.

E is for EATING—here Bunter's a "champ."

F is for FOOTER. Who cares if it's damp?

G is for GOLF. Prouty plays—for his sins!

H is for HOCKEY. Look out for your shins!

I is the IDOL who's good at all sport.

J is for JAPING—but mind you're not caught!

K's the KILL-JOY, who'd abolish the lot!

L is for LUDO. Isn't sport? Why not?

M is for MARBLES, propelled by the thumb.

N's NOUGHTS and CROSSES—in class with your chum!

O's the OBSTACLE RACE—Bunter's stuck tight!

P is for PING-PONG, which ends in a fight.

Q is the QUARTER MILE—see Wharton's stride!

R's ROWING, but Coker's gone o'er the side.

S is for SKATING—just fall after fall!

T is for TENNIS—Biff! Whizz! Thirty all!

U is the UMPIRE, who knows all the rules.

V is for VAULTING a long string of stools.

W's WRESTLING. Have you got ribs of tin?

X is the 'XERTION needed to win.

Y is for YACHTING. What could be choicer?

Z is the ZEST which thrills us with joy, sir.