

November Joe

The Detective of the Woods

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CHAPTER X.

The Hundred Thousand Dollar Robbery

WANT the whole affair kept official and secret," said Hobson. "November Joe nodded. He was seated on the extreme edge of a chair in the manager's private office, looking intently out of place in that trim velvet furnished room. "The truth is," continued Harris, "we haven't enough effect to bare our own names. Hobson insisted. "There are no such things as secret, no numbers of small deposits, especially in the rural districts, who would be scared out of their wits if they knew that in that forest Cecil Hobson, Attorney, had made off with a hundred thousand dollars. They'd never get it again. "A hundred thousand dollars in a wonderful lot of money," agreed Joe. "Our resource is one hundred thousand," replied Harris enthusiastically. "Have you ever seen Atterson?" "No." "I thought you might have. He always spends his vacations in the woods, fishing mostly. The last two years he has fished Red river. This is what happened. On Saturday I told him to go down to the strong room to fetch up a fresh batch of dollar and five dollar bills, as we were short. It happened that in the same safe there was a number of bearer securities. Atterson soon brought me the notes I had sent him for with the keys. That was about noon on Saturday. We closed at 3 o'clock. Yesterday, Monday, Atterson did not turn up. At first I thought nothing of it, but when he came to afternoon and his head appeared appeared, we saw many reasons for the absence. I began to smell a rat. I went down to the strong room and found that over \$100,000 in notes and bearer securities were missing. "I communicated at once with the police, and they started to make inquiries. The constable at Roberville related that a man answering to the description of Atterson was seen by a farmer walking along the Shenandoah road and heading north on Sunday morning early. "At this point a knock came at the door and a delivery brought in some papers. Harris scrutinized the writing on one of them. He got it open, and when the clerk was gone out he read aloud. "Dear Harris: I hereby resign my position and executive position in the Grand Banks of Canada. It is a disgraceful thing to say it is so for a man of spirit. You can take the week's wages that's owing to me to my bank and cash them for the next meeting of directors. Yours truly, C. J. ATTERSON. "What's the postmark?" asked Joe. "Linnbrook, Sunday, 1910, m." "It looks like Atterson's the thief," remarked Joe. "I'm inclined that way because Atterson had that letter passed by a son-of-a-bitch what's the word?" "Confederate?" "You've got it. He was seen here in town on Sunday at 10:30, and he couldn't have passed a letter in Linnbrook in that for the 9:30 a. m. on Sunday unless he'd gone there on 7 o'clock express on Saturday evening. You Atterson's the thief, all right. And if that really was he, he saw Shenandoah ways he'd had time to get thirty miles of bush between us and him, and he can go right on till he's on the Labrador. I doubt you'll see your \$100,000 again, Mr. Harris." "Huh?" coughed Mr. Harris. "My dicitives won't want to pay you \$2 a day for nothing." "Two dollars a day?" said Joe in his gentle voice. "I shouldn't 'b' thought the two hundred times a hundred thousand dollars could stand a strain like that." "I guessed. 'Look here, November, I think I'd like to make this bargain for you. I'll sell your services to Mr. Harris here for \$5 a day if you fail and 30 per cent of the sum you recover if you succeed. Well, Harris, is it on or off?" "Oh, on, I suppose, confound you!" said Harris. Twenty hours later Joe, a police trooper named Hobson and I were deep in the woods. We had hurriedly paused to interview the farmer at Roberville and then had passed on down the old deserted roads until at last we entered the forest, or, as it is locally called, the bush. "Where are you heading for?" Hobson had asked Joe. "Red river, because if it really was Atterson the farmer saw I guess he'd have gone up there. None of them trappers there now in July month, so he can steal a canoe easy. Besides, a man who fears pursuit always likes to get into a country he knows, and you heard Mr. Harris say how Atterson had fished Red river two vacations. Besides—here Joe stopped and pointed to the ground—"Thomas Atterson's tracks," he said. "Looks just like a black fox to a lynx peli they are his."

"But you've never seen him. What reason have you?" demanded Hobson. "When first we happened on them about four hours back, while you was lightin' your pipe," replied Joe, "they come out of the bush, and when we reached near Cartier's place they went back into the bush again. Then a mile beyond Cartier's out of the bush they come on to the road again. What can that circumventin' mean? Fellow who made the tracks don't want to be seen. No. 8 boots, city made, nails in 'em, rubber heels. Come on." "I will not attempt to describe our journey hour by hour nor tell how November led to the trail, following it over areas of hard ground and rock noting a scratch here and a broken twig there. The next morning November wakened us at daylight, and once more we listened for him. For some time we followed Atterson's footprints and then found that they left the road. We moved on quietly and saw that not fifty yards ahead of us a man was walking excitedly up and down. His head was sunk upon his chest in an attitude of the utmost despair. He waved his hands, and on the still air there came to us the sound of his no noted words muttering. We crept upon him. As we did so, Hobson leaped forward and snatching his handcuffs on the man's wrists, cried: "Good Atterson, I've got you!" "By the way, I'd like to hear exactly what I'm charged with," said Atterson. "Theft of \$100,000 from the Grand Banks. May as well hand them over and put me to no more trouble." Hobson plunged his hand into Atterson's pockets and searched him thoroughly, but found nothing. "They are not on him!" he cried. "Try his pack." From the pack November produced a square bottle of whiskey, some bread, salt, a slab of mutton—that was all. "Where have you hidden the stuff?" demanded Hobson. Stunned Atterson laughed. "So you think I robbed the bank?" he said. "Try my own down on them, and I'm glad they've been hit by some one, though I'm not the man. Anyway, I'll have you and them for wrongful arrest, with violence." November was fidgeting over the pack, which lay open on the ground, examining it and its contents with concentrated attention. Atterson had sunk down under a tree like a man wearied out. Hobson and Joe made a rapid examination of the vicinity. A few yards brought them to the end of Atterson's tracks. "Here's where he slept," said Hobson. "It's all pretty clear. He was dog tired and just collapsed. I guess that was just about it. It's an old camp place, this. But where has he carried the bank's property?" For upward of an hour Hobson searched every conceivable spot, but not so November, Joe, who, after a couple of quick casts down to the river, made a fire, put on the kettle and lit his pipe. "At length Hobson ceased his exertions and accepted a cup of tea Joe had brewed. "There's nothing gained that I know of, and the trail stops right where he slept. He never moved a foot beyond that nor went down to the river, 100 yards away. The chaps either carried their or handed them to an accomplice on the bank trail. I'm thinking he'll confess, all right, when I set him alone." He stood up as November turned to tie a string of tea over to Atterson. "No, you don't!" he cried. "Prison or Atterson neither visit nor delinks be between here and Quebec unless he confesses where he has the stuff hid." "He won't ever put you wise," said Joe definitely. "Why do you say that?" "Cause he can't. He don't know himself!" "Huh?" was all Hobson's answer as he turned on his heel. November Joe did not move as Hobson, his wrist strapped to Atterson's, disappeared down the trail by which we had come. "Well," I said, "what next?" "To take another look around," Joe led the way down to the river, which, though not more than fifty yards away, was hidden from us by the thick trees. It was a slow flowing river, and in the soft mud of the margin I saw, to my surprise, the quite recent tracks of a canoe having been beached. Beside the canoe there was also on the mud the faint mark of a paddle having lain at full length. Joe pointed to it. The paddle had evidently, I thought, fallen from the canoe, for the impression it had left on the soft surface was very slight. "How long ago was the canoe here?" "At first light—maybe between 2 and 4 o'clock," replied Joe. "Then I don't see how it helps you at all. Its coming can't have anything to do with the Atterson robbery, for the distance from here to the city is too far to throw a net, and the absence of tracks makes it clear that Atterson can't have landed the boat here, that's that!" "Looks that way," admitted Joe. "Then the canoe can be only a coincidence." November shook his head. "I wouldn't go quite so far as to say that, Mr. Quartz." Once again he rapidly went over the ground near the river, then returned to the spot where Atterson had slept, following a slightly different track to that by which we had come. Then taking the hatchet from his belt, he split a dead log or two for a fire and hung up the kettle once more. I guessed from this that he had seen at least some daylight in a matter that was still obscure and inexplicable to me. "I wonder if Atterson has confessed



"Good Atterson, I've got you!" Hobson yelled. "I said, mindin' to draw Joe. "He may confess about the robbery, but he can't tell any one where the bank property is, because he's been robbed in his turn." "Robbed?" I exclaimed. "No, Joe!" "And the robbery?" "That's the fact, sir, right enough, very handsome, has this hair, he'll give in 10 or 15 or 20 or 30 or 40 or 50 or 100 or 200 or 300 or 400 or 500 or 600 or 700 or 800 or 900 or 1000 or 1100 or 1200 or 1300 or 1400 or 1500 or 1600 or 1700 or 1800 or 1900 or 2000 or 2100 or 2200 or 2300 or 2400 or 2500 or 2600 or 2700 or 2800 or 2900 or 3000 or 3100 or 3200 or 3300 or 3400 or 3500 or 3600 or 3700 or 3800 or 3900 or 4000 or 4100 or 4200 or 4300 or 4400 or 4500 or 4600 or 4700 or 4800 or 4900 or 5000 or 5100 or 5200 or 5300 or 5400 or 5500 or 5600 or 5700 or 5800 or 5900 or 6000 or 6100 or 6200 or 6300 or 6400 or 6500 or 6600 or 6700 or 6800 or 6900 or 7000 or 7100 or 7200 or 7300 or 7400 or 7500 or 7600 or 7700 or 7800 or 7900 or 8000 or 8100 or 8200 or 8300 or 8400 or 8500 or 8600 or 8700 or 8800 or 8900 or 9000 or 9100 or 9200 or 9300 or 9400 or 9500 or 9600 or 9700 or 9800 or 9900 or 10000 or 10100 or 10200 or 10300 or 10400 or 10500 or 10600 or 10700 or 10800 or 10900 or 11000 or 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