



**NOVEMBER JOE:  
WOODSMAN DETECTIVE**  
*The CASE OF MISS  
VIRGINIA PLANX*  
By **HESKETH PRICHARD**  
ILLUSTRATIONS by **PERCY E. COWEN**



MY FRIEND, NOVEMBER JOE, and I had been following a moose since daybreak, moving without speech. We had not caught even a glimpse of the animal; all that I had seen were the huge ungainly tracks sunk deep in swampy ground, or dug into the hillsides. Suddenly, from somewhere ahead there broke out the sound of two shots, followed shortly after by two more.

"That's mean luck," said November. "It'll scare our moose, sure. Pity! He's got a fine set o' horns, more'n fifty-six inches in the spread."

"How can you tell that? You have n't seen him?" Joe's handsome gray eyes took on the look I now knew well.

"I'm certain sure they spread not less than fifty-six and not more'n sixty. . . . My! Look out! Them shots has put him back. He's coming to us!"

There was a crashing in the undergrowth, sounding ever nearer, and soon a magnificent bull moose came charging into sight.

"He's your moose!" said Joe, as my shot rang out. "You hit him fair behind the shoulder. No need to shoot again."

The great brute weighing over 1,200 lbs. was stumbling forward in his death-rush; all at once he collapsed, and silence reigned once again in the forest. We ran up. He was quite dead. I turned to Joe.

"Now we'll be able to measure his horns," I said, a little maliciously; for to tell the truth I thought Joe had been trying to get a rise out of me when he pretended to be able to tell within four inches the measurements of the antlers of a moose that he had not seen.

"Let's have that fine steel measuring tape you carry," said Joe.

I produced it, and he stretched it across the horns. "Fifty-eight inches," said he.

I looked at my hunter, and he smiled again in his quiet way.

"It ain't nothing but simple," he continued. "I see the scrape of his horns over and over again where he passed between the spruces. You can always tell the size of horns that way."

I laughed. "Confound you, Joe! You always . . ." But here I was checked. *Bang, bang!* went the rifle in the distance, and again *bang, bang!* After an interval, the shots were repeated.

"Two shots going on at steady intervals," said Joe. "That's a call for help. There they go again. We'd best follow them up."

We traveled for half an hour, guided by the sounds; then, Joe stopped.

"Here's his trail. A heavy man not used to the woods."

"I can see he's heavy by the deep prints," said I; "But why do you say he's not used to the woods? He's wearing moccasins, is n't he?"

"Sure he is." November Joe pointed to the tracks. "But he's walking on his heels, and on the sides of his feet. A man don't do that unless his feet is bruised and sore."

We hurried on, and were soon aware of a man standing among the trees. As we came in sight, we saw him raise his rifle and fire twice straight upward to the sky.

"It's Planx!" said Joe in surprise.

"What? The millionaire you went into the woods with, to locate some timber last year?"

"The identical man."

As we approached, Joe hailed him. He started, and then began to move as quickly as he could toward us. Planx was a thick-shouldered, stout man, his big body set back upon his hips; his big chin was thrust forward in a way that accentuated the arrogance of his bulging lips and eyes.

"Can you guide me to the house of November . . . Ho! It's you, Joe!"

"Yes, Mr. Planx."

"That is lucky, for I need your help. I need it as no man has ever needed it before."

"Huh! How's that?"

"My daughter was foully murdered yesterday." The words made me gasp, and not me only.

"Miss Virginy!" cried Joe. "You can't mean that. Nobody would be brute enough to kill Miss Virginy!"

Planx made no reply; but he stared at Joe in a somber and convincing silence.

"When did it happen?"

"Some time before five o'clock yesterday evening. But I'll put you wise as we walk. I'm stopping at Wilshere's camp, four miles along. Ed told me you lived round here, and I set out to find you."

As we walked, Planx gave us the following facts: It appeared that he had been spending the last two weeks in a log hut that had been lent him by a friend, Mr. Wilshere. His household consisted of one servant—his daughter's nurse, a middle-aged woman whom they had brought with them from New York—two guides, and a man cook. On the previous day, after lunch, Miss Virginia had taken her rod, as she had often done before, and had gone off to the river to fish.

"What hour was it that she left?" asked November.

"Half-past-one. About three o'clock one of the guides, who was cutting wood near the river, saw her. She had put down her rod and was reading a book. At five I went down to join her. She was not there. Her rod lay broken, and there were signs of a struggle and the tracks of two men. I shouted for Ed, the old guide. He came running down, and we took up the trail. It led us straight over to Moosesbank Lake. The ruffians had put her in our own canoe and had gone out on the lake."

Planx paused, and presently continued bitterly:

until they got on to some rocky ground. It was too dark then to do more, so we returned. Ed (he's the best tracker of my two guides) got away at dawn to see if he could n't puzzle out the trail."

"We've only three hours daylight left," said Joe. "Let's travel."

Which we did, the huge Planx, for all his unwieldy build, keeping up wonderfully well. "We'll make straight for the river," he said.

In about an hour we reached it. A man was standing on the bank.

"Any luck, Ed?" shouted Planx.

"Could n't find another sign among them rocks."

Planx turned to Joe. "Five thousand dollars if you lay hands on them," he said. "You, Ed, go back to the house and see if there's any news."

Joe was already at work. By the river, the traces were so plain that any one could read them. The slender feet of the victim and the larger footprints of the two men. The fishing rod, snapped off toward the top of the middle joint, had been left where it had fallen. It seemed as if the girl had tried to defend herself with it.

When he examined this spot, Joe made one or two casts up and down the bank, hovering here and there while Planx stood on the top of the slope and gloomily watched him. Now and then, the millionaire asked a question.

"She started fishing about an acre down stream, got her line hung up twice and the second time lost her fly. She had a fish on after that, but never landed it," said Joe in reply.

"How do you know all that?" growled Planx.

"First time, her tracks show where she disengaged her hook from a tree; next time, I see the hook sticking in a branch. As to the fish, it's plain enough. First she runs upstream, then down, then up again, then back in a bit of a circle . . . must have been a heavy fish that made her move about like that. Now, let's get to the lake."

November literally nosed his way along. The moccasin tracks of the two men showed here and there on the softer parts of the ground.

"Looks as if they was toting something," said Joe. "They must 'a' carried her. Stop! They set her down here for a spell." His eyes snapped as he spoke.



Virginia Planx looked Joe frankly in the eyes

"We went round the lake and found on the far side the spot where they had beached the canoe. Leading up into the woods from that point, we again struck the trail of the two men; but my daughter was no longer with them."

"Are you sure of that?" said Joe, sharply.

"As certain as you'll be yourself later on. From the river to the lake the tracks showed they were carrying her. When they left the canoe they were going light. They must have drowned her in the lake, it's clear enough. Presently, I saw something floating on the water; it was her hat. We trailed the two villains

Another moment brought us over the rise and in sight of Moosesbank Lake. I halted involuntarily. The lake lay black and still upon the knees of a great mountain. Forests climbed to the margin and looked down into its depths on the one side; on the other, the water lapped in slow pulsations on a beach of stones, that stretched beneath bare and towering cliffs. Sunshine yet blazed upon the tree-tops; but the lake was already sunk in shadow. The place seemed created for the scene of a tragedy.

November had pushed on to the spot where footprints and other signs showed where the men had en-

(Continued on Page 12)