

JULY

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ATTACKED BY WOLVES

"I opened the door and the dog came out, sniffing the air and shaking himself as if to shake off the fear of his former encounter, and ran barking to the barn. Uriah opened the door for him, and as soon as I saw him, I cried again, 'Run for the house!' Oh, how white he was!

"'I can't,' he said, 'the sheep.'

"Ah," said grandmother, moving her head proudly, "as frightened as he was, he never once thought of disobeying father's orders to see the cattle shut in.

"Troll, understanding the word 'sheep' as a command to go drive them in, for he was accustomed to drive the sheep and cattle as a part of his duty, soon had them all in but the cosset. Uriah fastened them in. He and the dog came out

of the yard, and in a moment more the plank door was shut to and fastened.

"I thought they had forgotten the lamb, and cried out, 'Oh, poor Dicky's in the brook!' In my anxiety for our pet I forgot everything else and ran down the path to watch them get him out of the brook. As they were coming up the path, another howl broke on the air. The horrid sound seemed actually to surround us, it was so near, and with precipitate haste we fled to the house.

"One glance up into the woods back of the house showed us more wolves slinking among the trees. Uriah did not let go his hold on Dicky's wool, and we all hurried pell-mell into the house, Baby Huldah and I, the dog, Uriah and the lamb.

"As soon as the door was shut and buttoned, I burst out crying and laughing together, saying 'Hush!' to baby, and I don't know to this day whether she was crying or not. The fright made me cry, and the sense of security made me laugh, I suppose.

"Uriah walked about the room, breathing hard;

the dog walked after him, while Dicky stood trembling in the middle of the floor with the water dripping off his wool. He shook so hard that his hoofs made a clatter on the floor. When we noticed that, we laughed. Then I saw how near Uriah was to crying, for a big sob came up in his throat.

"At last we became calm enough to begin to speculate what the calling of the pack meant.

For the wolf is a miserable coward. If one is alone and he starts up some game, he commences howling for help, and every wolf that hears will give an answering howl. So it goes on until enough wolves have assembled to worry down whatever animal they are chasing. I believe there is no death so horrible to think of as being torn to pieces by wolves, and no suffering can equal it but the cruel death-chase. When we were somewhat composed, I don't know which thought of it first, Uriah or I, for we both spoke in a breath, 'Father and mother!' and we stared into each other's white faces.

"Oh!" said grandmother, and she bowed her pale, sweet face for a moment on her trembling hands. "In all the years that have passed, I cannot forget the agony of those few hours. The cruel howl went on, sometimes loud, and apparently near, sometimes not so distinct, as though the pack were receding. And in our imaginations, made vivid by the horrible dread, we could watch the chase. In the doublings and turnings to save themselves, we always saw father and mother as they rode away in the morning on the old horse, and the horse—noble fellow—doing his best to get free of the blood-thirsty pack with their wide-open mouths.

"At times we cried, and called loudly for help, but we had always to come back to the horrible

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listening.

"For a long time it seemed as though the house was surrounded by wolves. We heard them come to the very door, made bold by their hunger. Every sound from the outside was an agony. At every renewed sound old Troll would circle round us with smothered growls, as we stood clinging together, occasionally lapping our hands and lapping the tears off of our faces when we cried, as if he knew he was the only protection we had.

"We heard slumping, stealthy footsteps several times on the banked-up snow outside the cabin, but we never thought of the windows. Old Troll, however, was more alert; his quick ear detected the approach of an animal to the window. A crash came at the frail window frame. With a growl and bound he landed in the chair that Uriah had left by the window, and before we could realize what had happened, he had grappled with the intruder at the light.

"How grand he looked, stretched up to his full length, all his black shaggy hair standing out as if he were filling himself with courage! What an enemy he looked! Troll had seized the wolf under the jaw, and as long as he could hold on he had all the advantage. The struggle was frightful, the wolf pulling to get away, and Troll pulling to get nearer his foe. Sometimes he would drag him in so far that we could see his staring yellow blood-shot eyes and lolling tongue.

"The hoarse growls and yells of rage and pain filled the cabin with a fearful din, and our screams cut through the sound like a knife. Troll did not let go his hold till the flesh actually tore through his teeth, and, as a final horror, the blood from the torn throat of the wolf spurted across the floor. The wolf was gone, but the blood still trickled down from the window-cut. Nothing was afterward seen of the wolf but the blood-marks. He was probably eaten by the pack. Troll looked out the window with a savage growl or two, as a warning to his enemy, and then jumped down, still growling, and lapping his bloody chops, as if he were trying to bite off his anger, since he could no longer get at his foe.

"We huddled down, trembling with fatigue and fright, in the farthest corner from the window.

while old Troll kept faithful watch. Baby Huldah cried herself to sleep in my lap, and thus we sat till the howling stopped. Uriah and I talked in hushed tones, yet neither of us dared speak what was most in our thoughts, that we had no father or mother! For we well imagined we knew what it meant when the wolves were still. They had finished their horrid work of death!

"We sat there an hour or more with our grief pressing us hard down. We did not think what we should do to-morrow, or what we should ever do; for in our short lives, father and mother had been all in all to us.

"I was so tired that I dozed off for a moment, I think, for I jumped up quickly when Troll gave a loud bark and ran to the door. He commenced frisking and scratching, unmistakable signs of joy, but some moments passed before we could see what it meant, for the frights of the day gave us but little chance to judge of the nature of sounds. Baby Huldah was screaming loudly from being so suddenly awakened. When she stopped to catch her breath, we heard outside,—

"'Uriah, open the door.'

"With breathless haste we rushed to the door, and there, sure enough, were father and mother. When they gathered us, poor frightened little things, in their arms, I think I must have fainted. When I came to, I was on father's lap, and he was saying to mother, 'Poor little things, it must have been horrible!'

"Mother was crying with her face on Baby Huldah's hair, as she stood hugging her up tight in her arms, while Uriah was clinging to her dress.

"It seems that father and mother heard nothing of the gathering of the wolves, until they started for home, when some of the settlers on the branch nearest here, who had not been to church, told them of it. When they were told the direction of the sound, they were very much alarmed. They hurried the old horse up the hill as fast as they could; and, poor mother—I don't think she ever spoke of that ride without crying.

"Now, the strangest part of the story is that after that day there were never seen for years an-