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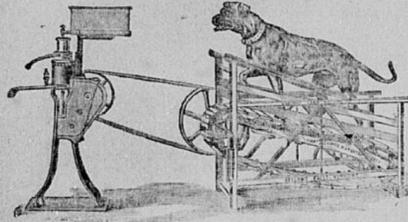
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[CONTINUED.]

"Do not heed her, young man, they said, 'unless you are weary of life. Do not heed her, she is crazy. The mountain is haunted; it is the place of ghosts. Look at the Stone Witch, who sits upon it! Evil spirits live in the forest and no man has walked there for many years. Her son was foolish—he went to walk in the forest, saying that he cared nothing for ghosts, and the Amatongo, the ghost folk, killed him. That was many years ago, and none have dared to seek his bones. Ever she sits here and asks of the passers by that they should bring them, offering the great club for a reward, but they dare not."

"They lie," said the old woman. "There are no ghosts there. The ghosts live only in their cowardly hearts. There are but wolves. I know that the bones of my son lie in the cave, for I have seen them in a dream; but, alas, my old limbs are too weak to carry me up the mountain path and all these are cowards. There is no man among them since the Zulus slew my husband, covering him with wounds."

"Now I listened, saying no word, but when all had done I asked to see the club which should be given to him who dared to face the Amatongo, the spirits who lived in the forest upon the Ghost mountain. Then the old woman rose and creeping on her hands went into the hut. Presently she returned again, dragging the great club after her."

"Look on it, stranger! Look on it. Was there ever such a club?" and Galazi held it up before the eyes of Umslopogaa.

"I looked at it," went on Galazi, "and I tell you, stranger, a great desire came into my heart to possess it."

"How is this club named?" I asked of the old woman.

"He is named Watcher of the Foras, she answered, 'and he has not watched in vain. Five men have held that club in war and a hundred and seventy and three have given up their lives beneath its strokes. He who held it last slew twenty before he was slain himself; for this fortune goes with the club, that he who owns it shall die holding it, but in a great fashion. There is but one other weapon to match with it in Zululand and that is the great ax of Jikiza, the chief of the People of the Ax, who dwells in the kraal yonder—the ancient horn hatted Imbubuzi, the Groommaker that brings victory. Were ax Groommaker and club Watcher of the Foras side by side there are no thirty men in Zululand who might stand before them. I have said. Choose,' and she watched me cunningly through her horny eyes. At length she rose. 'Lal! la!' she said, 'the Watcher is not for this one. This one is but a child. I must seek me a man; I must seek me a man!'"

"Not so fast, old wife," I said; 'will you lend me this club to hold in my hand while I go to find the bones of your son and to snatch them from the people of the ghosts?'"

"Boy, your eyes are honest," she said, still peering at me. "Take the Watcher, go seek the bones. If you die, let the club be lost with you; if you fail, bring him back to me; but if you win the bones, then he is yours, and he shall bring you glory, and you shall die a great death at last, holding him aloft among the dead."

"So on the morrow at dawn I took the club Watcher in my hand and a little dancing shield and made ready to start."

"Now, stranger, if you have strength come to the mouth of the cave and look out for the moon is bright."

So Umslopogaa rose and crept through the narrow mouth of the cave. There, above him, a great gray peak, shaped like a seated woman, towered high into the air, her chin resting upon her breast, the place where the cave was being, as it were, on the lap of the woman. Below this place the rock ran down sharply and was clothed with little bushes. Lower down yet was a forest, great and dense, that stretched to the lip of a cliff and at the foot of the cliff, beyond the waters of the river, lay the wide plains of Zululand.

"Yonder, stranger," said Galazi, pointing, "yonder is the kraal where the aged woman dwelt. There is the cliff rising from the plain up which I must climb, there is the forest where dwell the Amatongo, the people of the ghosts; there, on the hither side of the forest, runs the path to the cave, and here is the cave itself. See this stone lying at the mouth of the cave; it turns thus, shutting up the mouth of the cave—it turns gently though it is so large a child may move it, for it rests upon a sharp point of rock."

"Only this, the stone may not be pushed too far; for, look! if it came to here," and he pointed to a mark in the mouth of the cave, "then that man must be strong who can draw it back again, though I have done it myself, who am not a man full grown. But if it pass beyond this mark, then, see, it will roll down the neck of the cave like a pebble down the neck of a gourd, and I think that two men, one striving from within and one dragging from without, scarcely could avail to push it clear. Look now, I close the stone, as is my custom of a night, thus—and he grasped the rock and swung it around upon its pivot, on which it turned as a door turns. "Thus I leave it, and though, except those to whom the secret is known, none would guess that a cave was here, yet with a push of the hand it may be rolled back. But enough of the stone."

"I started from the kraal of the old woman, and the people of the kraal followed me to the brink of the river. It was in flood and few had dared to cross it."

"I bound the shield upon my shoulders with a string, and the bag that I had brought I made fast about my middle, and I held the great club in my teeth by the thong. Then I plunged into the river and swam. Twice, stranger, the current bore me under and those on the bank shouted that I was lost, but yet I rose again, and in the end won the farther shore, and I walked on till I came to the foot of the cliff. That cliff is hard to climb, yet I found a way up it and by midday I came to the forest. Here, on the edge of the forest, I rested awhile and ate a little food that I had brought with me in the bag. Then I rose and plunged into the forest. I wended on, often losing my path. But from time to time between the tops of the trees I saw the figure of the gray stone woman who sits on the top of the Ghost mountain, and shaped my course toward her knees."

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"Still I went on, and at length the trees grew fewer, the ground sloped upward and the light poured down from the heavens again. But, stranger, you are weary and the night wears on. Sleep now, and tomorrow I will end the tale. Say, first, how are you named?"

"I am named Umslopogaa, son of Mopo," he answered, "and my tale shall be told when yours is done. Let us sleep."

Now when Galazi heard this name he started and was troubled, but said nothing. So they laid them down to sleep and Galazi wrapped Umslopogaa with the skins of bucks.

But Galazi the Wolf was so hardy that he lay down on the bare rock and had no covering. So they slept, and without the door of the cave the wolves howled, scenting the blood of men.

CHAPTER XI.

GALAZI BECOMES KING OF THE WOLVES.

On the morrow Umslopogaa awoke, and all that day rested in the cave, while Galazi went out to hunt. In the evening Galazi returned, bearing a buck upon his shoulders, and they skinned the buck and ate of it as they sat by the fire. And when the sun was down Galazi took up his tale:

"Now, Umslopogaa, son of Mopo, hear! I had passed the forest, and had come, as it were, to the legs of the old Stone Witch. Here the sun shone merrily, and though it grew toward the evening I was afraid no more. So I climbed up the steep rock till I came to the knees of the Stone Witch, which are the space before the cave. I lifted my head over the brink of the rock and looked, and my blood ran cold and my heart turned to water, for there, before the cave, rolled wolves many and great. Some slept and growled in their sleep; some gnawed at the skulls of dead game; some sat up like dogs, and their tongues hung from their grinning jaws. I looked, I saw, and beyond I discovered the mouth of the cave, where the bones of the boy should be."

"But I had no wish to come there, who was afraid of the wolves, for now I knew that these were the ghosts who live upon the mountain. So I bethought me that I would fly, and turned to go. And even as I turned the great club Watcher of the Foras swung around and smote me on the back. Now, whether this was by chance or whether the Watcher would shame him who bore it I do not know. I swung up the Watcher, and crying aloud the war cry of the Hala-kazi I sprang over the brink of the rock and rushed upon the wolves. They, too, sprang up and stood howling, with bristling hides and fiery eyes. Yet when they saw it was a man that rushed upon them they fled this way and that, leaping with great bounds from the place of rock, which is the knees of the Stone Witch, so that presently I stood alone in front of the cave. Now I walked to the mouth of the cave proudly and looked in through the opening. As it chanced the sinking sun shone at this hour full into the cave, so that I could see the end."

"Look now! There is a hole in the wall of the cave, where the firelight falls below the shadow of the roof, twice the height of a man from the floor. It is a narrow hole and a high, and a man might sit in it, his legs hanging toward the floor of the cave. And there a man sat—or that which had been a man—and the black skin had withered on his bones, holding them together and making him awful to see. His hands were open beside him; he leaned upon them, and in the right hand was a piece of hide from his moocha. It was half eaten. His eyes were also bound around with a band of leather, as though to hide something from their gaze; one foot was gone, one hung over the edge of the niche toward the floor, and beneath it, on the floor, lay the blade of a broken spear."

"Now come hither; place your hand upon the wall of the cave, just here; it is smooth—smooth as the stones on which women grind their corn. 'What made it so smooth?' you ask. I will tell you."

"When I peered through the door of the cave I saw this: On the floor of the cave lay a she wolf, very great and fierce. Near to her was another wolf—ne was a dog—on his feet. As I watched he drew back near to the mouth of the cave; then of a sudden he ran forward and bounded high into the air toward the withered foot of that which hung

from the cleft of the rock. His paws struck upon the rock here where it is smooth, and there for a second he seemed to cling, while his great jaws closed with a clash but a spear's breadth beneath the dead man's foot. Then he fell back and drew slowly down the cave. Again he ran and leaped, again the great jaws closed, again he fell down, howling. Then the she wolf arose, and they sprang together, striving to pull him down who sat above. But it was all in vain; they could never come nearer than within a spear's breadth of the dead man's foot. And now you know why the rock is smooth and shines. Night upon night they had leaped thus against the wall of the cave, but never might their clashing jaws close upon his foot. One foot they had indeed, but the other they might not come by."

"Now as I watched, filled with fear and wonder, the she wolf, her tongue lolling from her jaws, made so mighty a bound that she almost reached the hanging foot, and yet not quite. She fell back, and then I saw that the leap was not for that time, for she had oversprung herself, and lay there howling the black blood flowing from her mouth. The wolf saw also; he drew near, sniffed at her, then, knowing that she was hurt, seized her by the throat and worried her. The she wolf grew faint, for the white fangs of her mate were buried in her throat. Then I saw that now was the time to smite him, lest when he had killed her he should kill me also. So I lifted the Watcher and sprang into the cave, having it in my mind to slay the wolf before he lifted up his head. But he heard my footsteps, or perhaps my shadow fell upon him. Loosing his grip he looked up; then, making no sound, he sprang straight at my throat. I smote him with all my strength. The blow met him in midair and struck him to the earth. But before I could smite again, once more he sprang at me. I leaped aside and smote downward, and the blow broke his right leg, so that he could spring no more. Yet he ran at me on three feet, and seized me with his teeth, biting through that leather bag which was wound about my middle, into the flesh behind. Then I yelled with pain, and lifting the Watcher endways, drove it down with so great a stroke that the skull of the wolf was shattered and he fell dead, dragging me down with him. Presently I sat up, and forcing the Watcher between his jaws levered them open, freeing my flesh from the grip of his teeth. Presently I glanced up and saw that the she wolf had found her feet again, and stood as though unhurt; yet she did not look at me or on her dead mate, but at him only who sat above. I crept softly behind her; then, lifting my Watcher, I dashed him down with all my strength. The blow broke her neck, so that she rolled over dead."

"Now I rested awhile, then went to the mouth of the cave and looked out. The sun was sinking; the depth of forest was black, but the light still shone on the face of the stone woman on the mountain. Here, then, I must bide this night, for I dared not wend toward the plains alone with the wolves and the ghosts. And if I dared not go alone, how much less should I dare to go bearing with me him who sat in the cleft of the rock! Nay, here I must abide, and feeling that I must do something lest I should go mad, I drew to me the carcass of the great dog wolf which I had killed, and taking my knife of iron I began to skin it by the light of the moon. For an hour or more I skinned, singing to myself as I worked, and striving to forget him who sat in the cleft above and the howlings which ran about the mountains."

"Now the skin was off. I cast it behind me, and seizing the carcass dragged it to the edge of the rock and left it. Presently the howling drew near again, again I saw the gray shapes creep up one by one."

"Did I sleep or did I wake? Nay, I do not know. But I know this, that of a sudden I seemed to look up and see. I saw a light—perchance, it was the light of the moon shining upon him that sat aloft at the end of the cave. I looked, or seemed to look, and then I thought that the hanging jaw moved, and from it came a voice that was harsh and hollow."

"'Hail, Galazi, child of Siguyana!' said the voice. 'Galazi the Wolf! Say, what dost thou here in the Ghost mountain, where the Stone Witch sits?'"

"Then I answered, or seemed to answer:

"'Hail, Dead One, who sittest like a vulture on a rock! I do this on the Ghost mountain—I come to seek thy bones and bear them to thy mother for burial.'"

"'Many and many a year have I sat aloft, Galazi,' answered the voice, 'watching the ghost wolves leap and leap to drag me down, till the rock grew smooth beneath the wearing of their feet. So I sat seven days and nights, being yet alive, the hungry wolves below and hunger gnawing at my heart. So I have sat many and many a year, being dead in the heart of the old Stone Witch. Yet my mother was young and fair when I trod the haunted forest and climbed the knees of stone. How seems she now, Galazi?'"

"'She is white and aged and very wrinkled,' I answered. 'They call her mad, yet at her bidding I came to seek thee, Dead One, bearing the Watcher that was thy father's and shall be mine.'"

"'It shall be thine, Galazi,' said the voice, 'for thou alone has dared the ghosts to give me sleep and burial. Harken, thine also shall be the wisdom of the old witch who sits aloft—thine and one other's. These are not wolves that thou hast seen; they are ghosts of men who lived in ages gone and who must now live till they be slain of men. And knowest thou how they lived, Galazi, and what was the food they ate? When the light comes again, Galazi, climb to the breasts of the Stone Witch and look in the cleft which is between her breasts. There shalt thou see how these men lived. And now this doom is on them: They must wander, gaunt and

hungry, in the shape of wolves haunting that Ghost mountain where once they fed till they are led forth to die at the hands of men. Because of their devouring hunger have they leaped from year to year striving to reach my bones, and he whom thou hast slain was the king of them, and she at his side was the queen. Now, Galazi the Wolf, this is the wisdom that I give thee. Thou shalt be king of the ghost wolves, thou and another whom a lion shall bring thee. Gird the black skin upon thy shoulders and the wolves shall follow thee—all the three hundred and sixty and three of them that are left, and let him who shall be brought to thee gird on the skin of gray. Where ye twain lead them, there shall they raven, bringing you victory till all are slain. But know this, that there only may they raven where in life they ravened, seeking for their food. Yet that was an ill gift thou tookest from my mother—the gift of the Watcher—for though without the Watcher thou hadst never slain the king of the ghost wolves, yet bearing the Watcher thou shalt thyself be slain. Now on the morrow carry me back to my mother so that I may sleep where the ghost wolves leap no more. I have spoken, Galazi."

"Now the Dead One's voice seemed to grow ever fainter and more hollow as he spoke, till at the last I could scarcely hear his words, yet I answered him, asking this of him:

"'Who is it, then, that the lion shall bring to me to rule with me over the ghost wolves, and how is he named?'"

"Then the Dead One spoke once more very faintly, yet in the silence of the place I heard his words:

"'He is named Umslopogaa the Slaughterer, son of Chaka, Lion of the Zulu.'"

Now when Umslopogaa heard these words he started up from his place by the fire.

"I am named Umslopogaa," he said, "but the Slaughterer I am not named, and I am the son of Mopo and not the son of Chaka, Lion of the Zulu. You have dreamed a dream, Galazi, or, if it was not a dream, then the Dead One lied to you."

"Perchance this was so, Umslopogaa," answered Galazi the Wolf. "Perhaps I dreamed, or perhaps the Dead One lied. Nevertheless, if he lied in this matter, in other matters he did not lie, as you shall hear."

"After I had heard these words, or had dreamed that I heard them, I slept indeed, and when I woke I remembered the dream that I had dreamed. So I rose, and leaving the cave found a place where I might climb up to the breasts and head of the Stone Witch. I climbed, and as I drew near the likeness to the face of a woman faded away and I saw nothing before me but rugged heaps of piled up rock. Now I was on the breast of the mountain and wandered to and fro awhile between great heaps of stone. At length I found a crack in the stone, and near this crack stood great stones blackened by fire and beneath them broken pots and a knife of flint. I looked down into the crack—it was very deep and green with moss and tall ferns grew about in it. There was nothing else. I had dreamed a lying dream. I turned to go, then found another mind and climbed down into the cleft, pushing aside the ferns. Beneath the ferns was moss. I scraped it away with the Watcher. Presently the iron of the club struck on something that was yellow and round like a stone, and from the yellow thing came a hollow sound. I lifted it. It was the skull of a child."

"I dug deeper and scraped away more moss. Beneath the moss was nothing but bones of men—old bones that had lain there many years; the little ones had rotted, the large ones remained—some were yellow, some black and others yet white. They were not broken as are those that hyenas and wolves have worried, yet on some of them I could see the marks of teeth. Then I went back to the cave."

"Now I skinned the she wolf also. When I had done the sun was up and I knew that it was time to go. But I must not go alone—he who sat aloft in the cleft of the cave must go with me. I feared greatly to touch him—this Dead One who had spoken to me in a dream—yet I must do it. So I brought stones and piled them up until I could reach him. Then I lifted him down, for he was very light, for he was but skin and bones. When he was down I bound the hides of the wolves around me. I placed him on my shoulders, and holding him by that foot which was left on him I set out for the kraal. Down the slope I went till I drew near to the heart of the forest. Then I heard a wolf howl on my right and from the left came answering howls, and these again were answered by others in front of and behind me."

"Now I could see forms of gray and black slinking near my path, sniffing at the air as they went, and now I came to a little open place, and behold! all the wolves in the world were gathered together there. On every side were the brutes, great and hungry. I stood still till they formed a deep circle around me. Presently one sprang, but not at me. He sprang at that which sat upon my shoulders. I moved aside and he missed his aim. Then I remembered the words of my dream, if dream it were, how that the Dead One had given me wisdom that I should be king of the ghost wolves—I and another whom the lion should bear to me. Was it not so? If it was not so how came it that the wolves did not devour me? For a moment I stood thinking, then I lifted up my voice and howled like a wolf, and lo! all the wolves howled in answer. I called to them. They ran to me as though to devour me. But they did not; they licked my legs with their red tongues and pressed themselves against me as does a cat. One, indeed, snatched at him who sat on my shoulder, but I struck him with the Watcher and he slunk back. Moreover, the others bit him so that he yelled. Now I knew that I was king of the ghost wolves, so I walked on, and with me came all the great pack. I walked on and they trotted beside me till at length I came to