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**THE OTHER WOMAN**  
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By JAMES OLIVER CURWOOD



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TOM CRAIG looked like a worn-out business man when he came up into the North country, though he was not much past thirty. There were little lines and a tense look about his mouth, and a wistful sickness in his clear grey eyes—eyes that were almost too clear.

He seemed to have no business, and neither did he appear to be on a holiday for his health. Wherever he went people looked a bit more closely at him than at ordinary men, for there was a certain fighting shyness about him, an aloofness, a nervous desire to be by himself that was not natural, and which, with the strange and almost beautiful clearness of his eyes, attracted attention.

Some guessed instinctively that he was grappling with something which was not disease, for he bore none of the signs of physical blight; others wondered; many talked. But Tom Craig confided in no one. The few words he exchanged with those about him were no more than the strictest courtesy demanded.

He watched people closely, especially women, and there are a few who noticed that a strange smile, which might have been of irony or contempt, crept subtly about his lips when he was looking at the other sex. The clerk in the "King Edward" at North Bay observed this most closely, and made his guess.

Craig remained at North Bay for a month, and then went on to Sudbury. He visited the nickel and silver mines and looked over a few claims, but with no idea of investing. A dozen times he dropped off at wilderness stations along the line of the Canadian Pacific between Sudbury and Port Arthur, and wherever he stopped people soon came to ask themselves why he had stopped.

For six months he drifted slowly westward, lying over for nine hours at Blind Indian River, that he might

pass through Winnipeg in the night. Early in the autumn he got off at Regina, walked directly to the office of the Commissioner of the Royal North-West Mounted Police, and showed that most important person in the province a letter which gained for him an audience that lasted for more than an hour.

When the two came from the Commissioner's private office the Big Man shook hands with him, spoke a few low words, and Craig was a "rookie" in the force. He spent three weeks in barracks learning to ride and shoot, and was then detailed to a patrol that was on the look out for cattle-rustlers in the prairie country. He straightened up. The tired and worn expression left his face. He rode hard, and his muscles toughened. But the look of age, the look of a strange sickness, still haunted far back in the depths of his eyes.

Late in the winter he was transferred, with a corporal, to a new post that had been established at the headwaters of the Grey Beaver, two hundred miles straight north of civilization, in the Reindeer Lake country, west of Hudson's Bay. There was a little cabin freshly built, and in this he and Corporal Scottie McTabb lived alone, patrolling the wild country north, west, and east of them for a hundred miles or more.

When the first days of spring came, Scottie McTabb knew this much about him: His name was Thomas Craig. He had been in the service nine months. He was an American, and before he came into the North he had been a doctor. Scottie learned this when he was down with a fever. There is small joy in living alone with a man as uncommunicative as a clan, two hundred miles from the last outpost, and the monotony of it began to wear on Scottie.

But one day there came a change, which was dynamic in its suddenness.

Craig set out on a two-days' trip north-west. It was a different man who returned. There was lustre in his eyes. His cheeks were filled with a new flush; his voice was different; his step was different; the grip of his hand was different when he greeted Scottie McTabb. The little Scotch corporal waited, conjecturing at this new spirit, and it was while he was frying bacon for supper that the thing came out.

"Scottie," said Craig, puffing hard at his pipe, "I hit the outlet of Silver Fox Creek coming back. It's not more than ten miles from here, is it?"

"About that," said Scottie. "There's a Frenchman—a trapper—lives there. His name is Croisset, and he's married to an Englishwoman. He's a half-breed. Know anything about 'em?"

"No." Craig rose to his feet and paced back and forth across the cabin.

"They've got a girl," he said, at last, and there was a certain curious tremble in his voice. "She ran in while I was there, with her arms full of red *lakneesh*. I didn't notice anything much except her eyes and hair. I've dreamed of such eyes, but I've never seen them before. She's about eighteen, I guess—a wild-flower of the forests, with her hair in a great long braid—"

He stopped, and laughed a little confusedly.

"She struck me as being very pretty," he finished.

Scottie straightened and looked at Craig.

"She's more than that, ain't she, Craig?" he asked, laughing. "Come to think of it, I believe I do know something about them. There was a Breed lived down on the Beaver two years ago, with an English wife, and they used to talk about his girl at the post. A ravishing beauty, that's what she was. Her name was Marie."

"Yes," said Craig, quietly, "her name is Marie."

Scottie almost allowed the bacon to burn in his astonishment.

"You don't say!" he gasped. Then he laughed, and winked broadly at his companion. "I'm glad they've moved up near us, Tom. That little girl will

do you good. That's what you need to make you sociable—a woman."

He was about to turn, when the look that shot into Craig's face held him.

"She's only a girl—a little girl," he said; and there was that haunting repressiveness in his voice and manner again that irritated Scottie McTabb. He put down his bacon and stood over Craig, his blue eyes firing up with sudden determination.

"See here, Craig," he demanded, gently, "you've got to come over with me! You're putting me on the blink; do you understand? If you're a murderer, out with it, and I'll help you. You ain't agreeable, and it's because there's something on your mind. I'm not curious. I don't give a cuss for other people's secrets. But why not let me in on this? Company's good for one, you know. It might help. Let me in. What's up?"

His hand dropped on Craig's shoulder, and a yearning crept into Craig's eyes. Scottie was the first to come at him in that way. There was comradeship in the little Scotchman's eyes.

Craig's face flushed as he answered.

"I believe it . . . would help," he said, slowly. "Anyway, it will help to excuse me for being so beastly out of sorts. You see Scottie—old man—it's one of those things a man thinks he ought to keep to himself. It's just the oldest—and the newest—story on earth: a woman, the other man—the crash. The plot is nearly always the same, with only a few variations. Sometimes there's a scandal, a murder, or a suicide. The fourth variation is when a man doesn't make a fool of himself. I didn't. Understand?"

"Yes."

Scottie's hand tightened on the other's shoulder.

"Let's hear about it."

"It's brief," said Craig, "because there's nothing new. I was a doctor, with a fair practice, and my fortune to make. And she—she was just what you called the little girl over there—a beauty. We were happy, almost like a couple of kids, until we moved to a bigger city. And then—mebbe you can understand it, Scottie—she was so beautiful that she began to attract attention, and she came to like it. Auto-

in-biles, fine clothes, dreams I couldn't materialise, a few parties, and then the other man, and his bunch of money. When I found it out I wiped the slate clean, perhaps a little too quickly. That was two years ago. Six months after I left she had her divorce, and they were married. They were in Europe the last I heard."

"Any children?" asked Scottie.

"No."

The little corporal drew Craig to his feet and pulled him out through the door into the day that was fading into night. The smells of spring were in the air. The fat poplar buds were bursting. From the top of their ridge they could look down upon miles and miles of the quiet wilderness. For a moment Scottie pointed, without speaking.

"See what you've come to, Tom," he said, at last. "I was worse than you when I came up here, for I was dying of bad lungs. Look! Ain't it glorious? You've got that, and she—why, she's gone to hell," he said.

"For just an instant Craig's hands clenched. But there was the touch of a brother in Scottie's hand as he said:

"Let's go in and finish the bacon."

Later Craig went out alone, and smoked. The confession that he had made to Scottie, the revelation of heartache that he had sworn to keep to himself, had already helped him, as the little corporal had predicted. But he knew that after a little he would regret having made that confession, for Scottie would see less and less of manhood in him now if he did not straighten up, like a tree that has been bent and twisted by storm, and face life anew.

What if he should tell Scottie that in his bitterest hours he could not bring himself to see the woman as she was, but always as she had been once upon a time in a fairyland of long ago? Scottie would call him a fool.

He saw her again to-night, as he had seen her a thousand times in his wanderings, back in the little village where paradise had opened its gates to him. He saw again the glorious flush in her cheeks, but it was the flush of their happy frolic in the orchard back of their little home, where the sunbeams and the white petals of the



"'Tom, Tom,' she moaned, 'I've been searching for you, hunting for you, for months and months.'"

apple blossoms danced in the lustrous gold of her hair. He saw the laughter and the triumphs in her eyes, but they were of love and purity. He could not tell Scottie these things. They were of his own madness, and no man would understand.

A week later he was near the outlet of Silver Fox Creek, and something turned him in the direction of Pierre Croisset's cabin. It was early in the afternoon, and the sun was warm, and the air was filled with the pleasant

perfume of earth and shrub and tree bursting into life. He had come within a quarter of a mile of Pierre's home when a sound stopped him. It was the low growling of a dog, very near to him; and then, as he listened, there came a girlish peal of laughter, so clear and sweet that he smiled in sheer sympathy with it.

He drew quietly nearer to the sound, and suddenly he found the sunlit glow of the Silver Fox at his feet. The girl's laugh rippled up to him again,

and he peered down through a break in the balsam. Marie Croisset was so close that he could have tossed a pebble upon her bare head. In the centre of the stream was a rock, upon which she had lured a huge, tawny-haired sledge-dog. From her canoe the girl was teasing him.

Craig chuckled softly as he looked down upon their play. The girl's beauty stirred him strangely. It was half a child's beauty, half a woman's. Her slender body seemed a part of the canoe; her movements were like music as she balanced herself after each reckless feint toward the rock or swift dip of her cedar paddle. Her round brown arms were bare to the elbow, and suddenly she plunged one of them deep into the water and sent a cascade of spray over her comrade on the rock.

Craig caught the cry on his lips. For a moment she lost her balance. The canoe tipped; she gave a shrill little cry, and then, after another moment of suspense, in which Craig was ready to jump, the frail craft straightened. The girl's heavy braid had slipped over her shoulder into the water, and as she bent her head so that the drip of it would not wet her, she pointed a playful finger at the dog.

"Now see what you've done, Trigger!" she cried. "I must go ashore and dry my hair, and you—you must swim!"

She swung the canoe quickly to the sandy shore, almost directly under Craig, and sprang out with the lightness of a fawn. Then her fingers slipped with feminine swiftness through the glistening strands of her hair, and before Craig could move it fell in a dark and rippling glory to her hips, enriched by the pale glow of the sun that was already sinking behind the forests. Craig slipped quietly away.

He was curiously excited, and he found himself thinking strange things. It was not exertion that had made his heart beat a little faster, or that had brought the warm glow into his face. His thoughts moved swiftly as he went towards Croisset's. He had looked upon a miracle. He had found beauty and purity and happiness in the heart of a wilderness, and in spite of him there rose another face before him—the face

of his life in her search for the happiness which had come to this girl whose only companion outside of her cabin home was a dog!

For an hour he smoked his pipe with Croisset, while Croisset's wife prepared an early supper. And then Marie came, running breathlessly with Trigger at her heels, her unbound hair still leaning in riotous beauty about her. When she saw Craig standing before her, straight and smiling, his hand reaching out to her, there came a swift change in her face. The red blood surged into her cheeks, the laughter left her eyes, and Craig, looking deep into them as he held her small, trembling hand, saw something in their shy loveliness that was not of the child—but of woman.

It was late when he left. The moon had risen and the wonderful world about him was bathed in its soft radiance. Croisset and the girl went with him to the beginning of the trail at the edge of the clearing. He shook hands with Pierre. The half-breed was relighting his pipe when he took Marie's hand again and looked once more down deep into her eyes. They met his own, a little frightened, a little questioningly, lustrously beautiful and pure in the moon-glow; and Craig saw in them that something—undefinable—more marvellous than life—which his soul had been crying to see in another woman's eyes since the dawn of desire within him. And now he knew that he had never seen it, not even in those first days of the Fairyland, years and years ago.

"Good night, little Marie," he whispered.

Twice each week, and then three times, Craig went to Croisset's cabin now. And each time that wonderful thing that he had found in the girl's eyes grew larger and more beautiful for him, until at last it walked with him, like a spirit, when he was alone, soothing the old pain at his heart, filling up the gnawing emptiness, covering over with sweetness and purity and love the ghastly ruins of what had once been. And still, as the weeks of spring drifted into summer, he spoke no word of love, and told Marie nothing of what had happened

in the days gone by. He dreaded the moment of telling the story of his broken and twisted life.

And at last the day of it came. They had climbed to the top of the Sun Rock, half a mile from the Croisset cabin, and a hundred feet beneath them the vast solitude of green swamp and forest and gulf lake reached out mile upon mile. Marie sat at his feet, gazing out upon the wonderful world, with her chin resting in the cup of her hands.

"Marie," he said suddenly, "I like your other name, best—the Indian name which your father sometimes calls you. It's going to be my name for you. Me-lee—what does it mean?"

He saw the colour deepening in the girl's cheek. She looked up at him, and there was a mischievous glow in her eyes.

"It is Cree," she said. "An old Indian first called me that down at the mission where I went to school."

"I know," he persisted. "But what does it mean?"

The colour grew deeper. She did not look up again.

"Do you see—off there, where the sun is setting?" she asked. "Out there—somewhere between the forests and the mountains—is what the Cree call the Valley of Silent Men. It is the Indian heaven. There was a time, ages and ages ago, when the Cree had no heaven, and at that time there lived a great chief who had a daughter so good and so beautiful that the Great Spirit himself fell in love with her, and came down upon earth to take her for his wife. But the old chief loved her, and wouldn't give her up, until at last the Great Spirit promised that in return for his daughter he would create a great happy hunting ground in which all of the chief's people would come to life and live for ever after death. The chief gave up his daughter, and so, when his people die, they now go into the Valley of Silent Men. The girl's name was Me-lee."

Craig's hand touched her shoulder. "The old Indian said down at the mission was right, Me-lee."

She felt the warmth of his hand, and trembled.

"Why?" she whispered.

"Because—because you are the purest

and the most beautiful girl in the world, Me-lee," he cried softly. "And I love you—love you—"

His arms gathered her close, and then, in the shame and the joy that swept through him like sudden fire, he knew that the time had come when he must tell her all that he had told Scottie back in the cabin—and more. He kissed her lips again and again; he felt the throb and quiver of her body against him, and heard the sobbing tremulousness of her breath as her face melted in sweet surrender against his own. He knew that she loved him—loved him as no other woman had ever loved him in his life, and when he lifted her face, and found her beautiful eyes humid with the tears of her happiness, he could only hold her closer, fighting to find a beginning for the thing which he wished to say.

It came hard, slowly at first, with Me-lee's pure eyes looking up into his own. And into those eyes, as he went on with the terrible story, there came the dark, startled pain of one who had learned that she is not first, the look that Craig had dreaded to see. But in an instant something else took its place, a look of wistful intensity, of pain for him—and her hand stub up to his face, and stroked it with the gentleness of one who understood, and who grieved because of his grief. Craig could look no longer into her eyes, and as he went on he gazed unseeing over her head into the world beyond. He felt nothing unsaid. And at the end he felt Me-lee press closer to him, and with the sweetness of a child she raised her lips to his and twined her arms about his neck.

After that, in the days that followed, Me-lee said to Craig something more than child or woman. In her eyes, in her gentle touch, in her wistful quickness to respond to his moods, he saw that she was fighting for him—and not for herself. Stranger to the world from which he had come, she saw his wounds and lived to heal them.

It was midsummer when a messenger came up from Nelson House with word for Craig. He was wanted there at once. There was no explanation.

Scottie carried word to Me-lee, while Craig started south on the next day. It was evening of the third day when

Craig reached Nelson House. There were lights in the factor's quarters, and Craig went there at once. Blood, the Hudson's Bay Company's agent, greeted him mysteriously. He wrung Craig's hands until they ached, and almost immediately excused himself a little excitedly. He was gone five minutes, and Craig sat down, wondering what was in the wind.

He heard Blood returning. And then the door to the big lighted room which was the factor's "den" opened and closed softly, and he heard a quick, gasping breath. His back was turned, and he whirled about.

"Good God!" he cried, springing to his feet.

Five steps away, her arms reaching out to him, her beautiful face filled with a longing and a joy which he had never seen there before, stood the woman who had once been his wife.

"Tom!"  
Some strange thing leaped into his head and dazed him. He staggered towards her with a wild, low cry, seeing her through half blindness, and her name fell from his lips in a great sob. For a few insane moments reason left him. He felt her arms almost choking him in their embrace. Her lips were kissing him. He heard her repeating his name over and over again, and he caught her to his breast madly.

"Isabel!"  
The sound of her name brought him back, and with a still stranger cry he thrust her away from him and stood facing her with a face as white as death.

"Tom! Tom!" she moaned, quivering before the terrible look which she saw in his eyes now. "I've been searching for you, hunting for you, for months and months. Oh, my God! Tom! Tom! You'll take me back! I didn't know how I loved you—until after that. You'll take me back—you'll take me back!"

Her arms reached to him pleadingly, but his fingers did not unclench. He noticed now that she was dressed in a white, shimmering gown that made her look like an angel. She was older; there were the faintest lines about her mouth; but she was more beautiful than ever.

"Forbes——" He spoke the name in

# The Little White Outlaw

By James Oliver Curwood

THEY say the beaver was a great maker of history; that it was he, as much as man, who had to do with the opening up of the Great West. One historian says that the Oregon Trail was paved with beaver pelts, and that if it had not been for the beaver and pursuing man the unknown West would have remained an unknown West for half a century longer. The beaver, in his days of extinction, is written down; but there is a smaller brother in the Far North that the Creeks know as "the little white outlaw of the snows," who has never come into his own and possibly never will. For this little white brother, so small that you could hide him in the hollow of your two hands, did more than open a west—he opened a new world; he was the reason for the beginning of the earliest and the oldest industry on the American continent. It was because of him that there came into existence the world's oldest and for centuries its most powerful trust—the Hudson's Bay Company—which not so very long ago owned a quarter of all Canada.

Today, when this little outlaw's brother invades a henhouse down in civilization he is spoken of quite contemptuously as a weasel; but six hundred miles north, where his pelt grows as silky as a woman's hair and as white as driven snow, in a temperature of from forty to sixty degrees below zero, he is still known as the royal and ancient friend of kings and empresses—the ermine—the "the savagiest of all living creatures and the bravest," says Lord Strathcona who, in the days when he was plain Donald Smith, was one of the greatest hunters and trappers in the employ of the Hudson's Bay Company. Fur-buyers from Montreal, Ottawa and Winnipeg will now penetrate far into the forests and pay from one to two dollars for this pelt; but in those days, more than two and a half centuries ago, when Prince Rupert formed his "company of gentlemen adventurers" and secured a charter that he might "hunt the ermine in the wilds of the New World," thus founding what became the Hudson's Bay Company, the ermine was actually worth more than his weight in gold.

At that time the price of his little pelt went as high as one hundred dollars, and it is known that the Chevalier Grosselet, who came over with a number of other

French gentlemen adventurers to get ermine, did "barter one black fox for the skins of twelve ermine," something over two and a quarter centuries ago.

Once I came upon the trail of a big northern rabbit and I knew by the trail that an ermine was fastened to the rabbit's throat. I found the dead animal—fifteen or twenty times the weight of its assailant—a rifle-shot distant, with its brains eaten out. At another time I came upon a spot in a balsam shelter where the little pirate of the snows had tackled a frigate too powerful for him. He had attacked a huge white snow owl—and lay mangled and dead on the scene of battle.

Last year, as nearly as can be estimated, about a hundred thousand ermine were caught in Canada, going mostly to London and Paris; and this is considered a big catch, in spite of the fact that one can travel scarcely a quarter of a mile over the snow without encountering fresh trails of the tiny animals. No other animal approaches them—unless it is the fox or the wolf—in the cleverness with which they evade the tricks and traps of the most artful fur-gatherer. In the snow their movements are so quick and elusive that it is impossible for human eyes to keep track of them for twenty consecutive seconds when they are in motion. I have fired at one of them, and from thirty or forty feet away he has been laughing at me, so to speak, by the time the shot reached the point where he was. He is the only animal in the North that is quicker than the jaws of a steel trap. Two years ago I had a twenty-mile trapline running through a deep swamp near Nipigon House, and on one of my rounds I came up quietly to find an ermine investigating the trap house. From behind a log I saw him. In a few moments he stepped on the pan of the trap, and simultaneously with the "give" of the pan he rose into the air like a flash, so that when the jaws came together he was safe—a foot above them. I reset the trap and he came back to the bait immediately. Three times he sprang the trap. It was with some regret that I shot him while he was nosing about the house, but it was an act necessitated by the fact that he would have spoiled my chances of getting the fisher cat I was after.

Of the same family, the mink and the

# The Other Woman

Continued

a hard, cold voice.

"He is dead," she said. "He died six months after—after—we were married, Tom. I've suffered—more than I can ever tell. I've been punished. Oh, Tom, I've been punished."

"And he left you his money?"

Her eyes lit up at the eagerness of his question.

"Yes—yes—I am rich, Tom. And it is yours, all yours! Oh, you will forgive me—you will forgive me—you will take me back—"

Her arms were about him again; her bosom throbbed against his breast.

He did not speak. His arms hung at his side. For a time he stared hard and unseeing at the wall. Then, so tenderly that a red flush of triumph surged into her face, he kissed her and pushed her away from him. The harshness was gone from his face. She saw a wonderful peace in his eyes.

"He left you—plenty of money?" he asked gently.

"Enough to last us always," she cried. "Nearly—nearly a million!"

ermine are the deadliest of enemies. The ermine is quicker and, were it not for his feebly courage, could always evade his more powerful foe. As it is, he often dies in the unequal fight; and after he is dead the mink tears his hide from his body and leaves him on the snow. Whenever one lands the other in a trap it means a profitless catch for the trapper, for the one that is free seldom leaves the other until he is torn and mangled. There is something of truth in the words of the factor at Nipigon House, who said to me: "The great Hudson's Bay Company may die, but the little devil who started it—the ermine—will go on living forever." He will.

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by Judy Eldridge.

Her white fingers were clasping and unclasping in the filmy lace at her breast.

"We can travel," she went on, excitement glorifying her eyes. "We can go where you have always wanted to go. You need never work again, Tom—never—never." She emphasised the words almost shrilly.

He held out his hand and led her to the door. It was a white, pure night. Over the top of the earth the pole star gleamed like a mellow moon. The Great Dipper shone like a constellation of suns. Under the glorious sky the wilderness lay black and silent and peaceful. She looked into his face, and marvelled at its quiet happiness.

"You have made me suffer—terribly," he said in a low voice, "but I do not lay it up against you. No, I do not forgive you to-night, Isobel, because I forgave you long ago—up there." And he pointed into the North. "I am glad he left you the money. It will be a reward for your suffering. I hope you will be happy—always. And I—"

"And you—" She trembled.

"See!" he cried, pointing again to the dazzling star. "Up there I went, wrecked and shattered, soul and heart gone, and I found peace. A woman—a girl—gave them back to me. What would you have me do?"

"We will pay her," whispered the woman who had been his wife.

"Yes, we will pay her," he repeated, and his face was illumined with the joy of the thought. "And what do you think would be fair payment for the saving of a man's soul?" he asked.

"Ten thousand—twenty thousand—more, more, if that is not enough."

He was tightening his belt.

"I am going to pay her—on Christmas Day," he said quietly. "We are going to be married then. Good-bye, Isobel, and may God bless you—always."

Like a shadow he slipped away into the white gloom of the night, into the North.

Taken from CASSELL'S  
MAGAZINE OF FICTION, May  
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