

The Old Trapper Meets ANGEL OF DEATH

by Mike Camp

“**T**hree more miles, just three more lousy miles to the cabin,” said the old man to himself as he snowshoed into the twilight gloom. He had already covered 12 miles that day without stopping for lunch. And sleeping last night in his unheated tent was never a pleasant experience. “Thank God for that down sleeping bag,” he said to no one in particular, although a rabbit did dart unseen through the underbrush at the sound of his voice. But he would soon be home with propane lights and a proper woodstove and his own box spring double bed. Although only 20 feet square, it was a snug and comfortable home to the trapper, even though it couldn’t boast of running water or electricity.

“I’m really getting too old for this crap,” he muttered to himself beneath his breath as his snowshoes pounded out their muffled beat. But then a smile slowly came to his lips as he remembered the perfect quiet and peace of the last two days. “How many men in the world today,” he thought to himself, “have a chance to live so free? One in a thousand? Probably more like one in a million.”

He did realize he was one of the lucky ones; one of the few people who were able to do exactly what they wanted at the precise time in their life when they wanted to do it. For him there was to be no more chasing after the fleeting ghosts of careers or wealth or women. This is not to say that he had been unsuccessful in his pursuit of any of them. He had done above average in all departments, if the truth were to be told. However, three years ago when he had turned sixty, he did a major reassessment of his life, and found himself wanting more. It was then that he had decided to “retire” from these activities, as they had all somehow just become too much bother.

Throughout his life he had maintained a close friendship with the wilderness, as he had been fortunate enough to have spent his youth there. And now in his old age it seemed the natural place to spend his final years.

“And what about your friends, sir?” he asked of himself. The handful of real friends he had made during his lifetime he still kept in touch with through letters and occasional visits. As far as gathering together many casual friendships, he had never felt the need or desire to do so. “Just another mouth to feed at the funeral,” he mused to himself.

“And how about women, Mr. Declaration of Independence?” he then asked himself. He had been seriously in love three times in his life. And his record was totally consistent. He had never been the one to end any of the relationships, but looking back through the cushion of time, he was not sorry either that he was now living alone.

The first woman he had married and fathered a son with, but he had to admit that he had never found the real spiritual companion that he had always longed for. Once you got past the sex and material & social obligations, there just never seemed to be much left. And he was finding it increasingly difficult to carry on a serious conversation with anyone in recent years. That was alright with the old man, though, as he found himself becoming more and more content with his own company. And there was always so much to do living in the bush, that he was never really bored or lonely. The only times he could clearly remember experiencing either of those two emotions was when he had been stuck living in the city for a while.



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