

Brothers of the Mountain

By Jeremy Perry

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Henry McCarty steered his buckskin mount slowly through the timbered foothills of the Rocky Mountains. The mountain man had been trailing the small alliance of Blackfoot Indians for two grueling days. He wrangled with a fierce urge to charge into their camp with guns blazing, but he could never compromise the life of his brother. Instead, he continued to bide his time, waiting for the right moment to free Lucas and escape the savagery for which the Blackfoot were known.

The tough mountain man had witnessed an array of tragedies ever since he and his younger brother had arrived in the Rocky Mountains to become free trappers. He had many cold and hellish memories of such vile occasions. It was only two years before that he and Lucas had stumbled upon a young couple that had been brutally tortured and murdered at the hands of renegade Indians. He only hoped *this* would not be another one of those occasions.

The flashback weighed heavily on the mountaineer's mind as he rode along.

"Goddamn savages," were the words he muttered under his breath.

Henry rode higher up the hillside and circled into position. He reined in on the stallion and sat quietly, gazing with cold brown eyes at the four Blackfoot warriors below.

"There's them sons-of-bitches, Chester," he whispered to his faithful companion.

The small group appeared not to be dressed in decorative war garb, but gave the appearance of a small hunting party. Henry knew that, much like any renegade alliance, this group harbored vigorous killing instincts as well, and would not hesitate to prove it at the expense of any white man.

He watched as two of the vile rogues carefully skinned a large mule deer. Another scoundrel tended to the horses, while the fourth began building a fire in the middle of the camp.

Presumably, a feast was in the making, and Henry wanted desperately to crash their party.

"Can't really make out who them injuns are," he said to his horse. He squinted, cocked his head to the right, and brought his focus back to the hooligan who was looking after the ponies.

"I wouldn't swear to it, but one of them ruffians looks like ole Mighty Wind himself."

Mighty Wind was the legendary Blackfoot warrior and son of Chief Eagle Spirit. He was infamous among the trappers in the western frontier.

Henry's eyes continued to gaze over the small clearing below. As he was about to presume the unthinkable, he finally discovered his brother tied to a tree on the outskirts of the Blackfoot camp.

“Would you look at that,” he said to Chester. “They got Lucas bound like some crazed animal.”

Lucas appeared beaten down and horribly famished, but at least he was alive. He sat on the ground with his broad, muscular frame slouched forward. His long, sandy brown locks hung down his face, hiding his prominent square jowl.

It was then, while looking down upon the camp, Henry realized Mighty Wind did not intend to kill Lucas, at least not right away. Bringing back a captured white man to the Blackfeet village, Henry knew, would bring great honor to Mighty Wind, and would position him higher in the village council. However, this would not stop the warriors from making Lucas’ life a living hell.

Henry would have to make a decision and make it soon. By morning, the four Blackfeet, along with Lucas, would be on their horses and headed back to their village, and any hope of freeing Lucas would be lost forever.

Time was running out, but the current odds were not in Henry’s favor. As much as he loathed the idea, the mountain man would have to wait for a more suitable opportunity.

“Them damn injuns are gonna pay – and pay dearly,” he said, wheeling his horse back around. He and Chester eased back to camp and waited for nightfall.

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