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Man in the Wilderness

By Jack DeWitt

Come on, get up!
Get up!
We'll never make it back to the river
pulling this hulk.
- Why do we do it?
- For gold, that's why.
Them beaver pelts are solid gold.
I'm sorry, sir. I missed mine.
Maybe my gun ain't sighted proper.
I know.
You got a lead on a running animal.
Ain't that right, Mr. Bass?
Sorry, sir.
Sorrow never helped anyone, boy.
Take that one back to camp.
The other can't be far.
Captain Henry!
Captain Henry!
Come on, you louts.
Come on. Give me that gun.
Ferris. Where's Ferris?
The barber,
he went back for his tools.
Ferris! Ferris!
Coming, Captain Henry.
I thought we was being attacked
by those bleeding Indians again.
I've brought me kit in case
one of those ignorant gits got hurt.
Oh. Bass.
At least he's left us enough meat
to get to the river.
- He's good as dead, sir.
- Sew him up.
Sir, I'm a surgeon,
not a bloody undertaker.
So long as God's breath is left in him...
All right, Captain.
I'll sew him up, make him look pretty.
He ain't going to look like new.
Here, some of you pork-knockers,
help me get him down near the water.
Take it easy, lads.
He's only got one more river to cross.

Charon's waiting.
Come on, then.
This one's all right.
Look at his chest.
How come a good hunter like Zach
tangled with a bear?
For a man who fought the demon whale,
to be killed by a grizzly...
He went in the brush
after a gut-shot critter.
Eh?
Well, it was my shot.
It was just too high.
Well?
Broken leg, sir,
three busted ribs, umpteen abrasions.
And he's lost enough blood
to drain a barrel.
Don't know what's keeping him breathing.
Oh, here's Zach's map
what we're traveling by, sir.
We must move on or the Indians will start
making our decisions for us.
Two years' work will go for nothing.
Zach's good as dead.
Can't risk all our lives staying here.
You're not going to leave him here alive,
are you, sir?
I want two men to stay behind
and bury him.
Here, give me the book.
I want two men to stay behind
and bury him.
Maybe it was partly my fault.
That's a...
- That's a rare fine rifle of Zach's, Captain.
- I'll take that rifle.
Well, can I have what's left?
You'd take the pennies
off your dead mother's eyes, Fogarty.
What are you squalling about? Eh?
It's me going on the line, ain't it?
Me and the kid!
All right. That's enough. Move out.

- Well, what if he ain't dead by morning?
- Kill him.
- Did Zach have any kin, sir?
- None he ever spoke of.

Lowrie,

I want you to say some words
over Zach's grave.

Say, "Zach fought against life all his life.
"Now his fight's with you, God."

That's where he always figured it was,
anyhow.

Repeat that.

"Zach fought against life all his life.
Now his fight's with you, God."

Cholera, it is God's
curse on sinners.

Then there's the son.

What sins would he be committing
at his age?

The poor little dolt.

Now he's an orphan.

He'll be a stranger in a strange land.

Are you going to let
the lad see his mother off?

Well, in God's name, it's his right, isn't it?

Zachary!

Zachary!

Zachary!

Zachary!

Let me in, Zachary. Open the door.

Nobody's going to hurt you now.

And, therefore,

commit her body to the deep,

turn into corruption,

looking for the resurrection of the body

when the sea shall give up her dead,

in the life of the world to come.

Through our Lord Jesus Christ,

who at his coming

shall change our vile body

that it may be like his glorious body

according to the mighty working, whereby

he is able to subdue all things to himself.

- Amen.

- Amen.
- It was God's will.
- Aye. It was God's will.
Damned Indians and their spirits
give me the creeps.
What he give him? A passport to hell?
Hey! Hey!
Get your ass in here. Dig his grave.
It'll be ready the minute he is.
Come on. Don't have to be deep.
Stay out of the open,
God damn it!
There's Indians and there's Indians,
but them Rickarees,
they're mean.
I seen a woman on the river
at Council Bluffs the Rees had worked on.
And her husband, they sat him on a stick
planted in the ground
and left him for the buzzards.
- And even worse than that, they got...
- Shut up!
It ain't natural, I tell you.
The way he hangs on like
a... Like a gut-shot wolf.
- I ain't never seen anybody like him.
- What the hell did you know about him?
- He was a fine man.
- Lf he learned you to hunt.
What did anybody know about Zach Bass?
Critter!
Mouse maybe.
God damn it!
A man ought to know when his time's up.
Hey!
Kid!
They've read signs.
They're backtracking that darn boat!
- Maybe they're just hunting meat.
- Them is man hunters not meat hunters.
When they move like that,
ain't hunting, just going.
- Zach told me.
- God damn you.

Say "Zach" to me again
and I'll leave you with him.
Christ! I told you. He ain't human.
You can't. They'll hear!
He's trying to talk.
He's trying to talk!
Yeah.
Well, you listen to him.
Come on, we got to read over him,
like the Captain said.
Let him read it his self
on the way to hell.
All his life
he fought... He fought against God.
I'm sorry, Mr. Bass.
Please, mister, I'm sorry.
This will be the Bible quiz.
Complete my questions.
Morton, what is God?
God is love.
Darby. The Lord, thy God...
Is a jealous God.
Montgomery Jr.
God's will...
Will be done on Earth as in heaven.
Zachary Bass, who made the world?
Bass?
Are we going through this again?
Repeat.
The Lord is my father in heaven.
Who made the world?
Answer, Bass!
Who made the world?
God, Bass!
God made the world.
Repeat!
God!
God!
God!
God!
God!
God made the world.
Kill him.
Put your backs in it.

The kingdom of heaven
is within you, as it is in all things.
The sea, the wind, the fields.
Have you never seen it?
Have you never felt it?
Sometimes I get the feeling
that you know some things
that nobody else knows.
I know you, sir.
There's not very much in that now.
It's not true.
It's everything.
Kingdom of heaven is within you,
as in all things.
In the sun.
In the sky.
Sea.
Have you never seen it?
Have you never felt it?
No. Never.
It's within you,
as it is within me now.
Your seed, it's... it's part of you.
It's God's gift.
Life... Feel it, Zach.
Isn't it a miracle?
- I don't feel a thing.
- Wait.
There.
It's your son.
Speak with him.
I think it's best I speak with you now,
'cause by the time you're born,
I won't be back.
I don't... I don't know very much.
But your mother knows, so you watch her.
Learn from her.
As for me, it's...
Well, it's best you imagine who I am.
Captain of some sailing ship.
A pirate, or some foreign king.
You've chosen to be born.
I don't know why
because it's hell here on Earth.

For that, I am truly sorry.
And that's about all.
Except, someday,
when someone points to you
and says there goes Zachary Bass' son,
I want you to think back
to our little chat.
And, remember, that though I wasn't here
when you both
might have needed me most,
I care for you, for both of you
more than any living thing on Earth.
Captain! Captain Henry!
It's Lowrie! Fogarty!
Captain! Captain Henry!
They're back! Hey, Captain!
It's Lowrie and Fogarty.
I can't say I missed you, Fogarty.
We've been hearing Indian sounds,
but we ain't spotted any.
Smarter to run
the other way, Fogarty.
Oh, all right. Let's hear it.
Well?
It was close, Captain.
Those Indians
was breathing down our necks.
It's the God's truth, Captain.
Got out of it? What happened?
- We left him.
- Left him?
- What do you mean, you left him?
- We couldn't help it, Captain.
One shot and them Indians
would have been all over us.
He just laid there.
Well, you'd have done the same thing!
I mean,
what's the sense getting your hide peeled,
to save a dying man?
Ought we to go back, Captain?
- I'm willing.
- Too late for that.
He's dead now.

I don't think he's dying, sir.
He was trying to talk.
I decide whether we stay or not.
And I say we go on.
Gentlemen, you'll learn
that man is expendable.
We're exploring new frontiers,
must always push on,
give our lives, if need be.
This is more than a trapping mission.
We're here to explore the New America!
Dig into its pagan regions!
And we can't afford to fail.
Man must be prepared to sacrifice.
A father should give his son's life gladly.
Zach was like a son to me.
I know he'd be proud of my decision.
Our father, who art in heaven,
we commend to thee
the soul of this thy son.
Where that he may live with thee
in heavenly peace.
Forever and ever,
world without end. Amen.
I should've been there.
I should've been there.
Better wind them a minute, Captain.
Keep them coming!
Captain! Rickarees!
Rickarees!
Battle stations. Load and prime.
Fire!
Benoit!
Benoit! Fire!
At what?
I said, fire!
First time I fire at nothing.
Move off. We're changing course.
Heading north.
Right, sir.
Mount up!
What the hell was he shooting at?
Same thing he's looking at. Bass.
Come on.

There's nothing worse
than eating sick mule.
I'll take a hunk of that.
I knew a trapper once who ate his squaw.
"Well, meat's meat," he said.
Ate his squaw?
All except her fingernails.
Picked his teeth with those.
Look at him up there.
I tell you, gives me the creeps,
the way he keeps staring off.
Like he was expecting Zach Bass' ghost
to come walking out of them woods.
It ain't natural, I tell you.
Ever since he changed our course...
Yeah. But he's still our captain.
Yeah.
If Zach was alive, I mean,
if he weren't dead...
Well, you don't think
he could actually find us?
Zach's dead, Fogarty.
What are you afraid of?
I'm only afraid of what I can't see,
and I can't see what he's staring at.
Kill him.
- Get up!
- Come on, move!
Come on!
Come on. Get up!
Come on. Get up!
- Get up!
- Come on, come on!
Come on!
He's your son, Zach.
I should have been here.
There was nothing you could have done.
It was God's will.
I never much agreed with God's will.
Don't you want to meet him, Zachary?
No, not now.
One day maybe.
You raise him.
Bring him up with the gentleness

that your daughter had.

Captain?

Fogarty.

It's the men, sir.

I thought maybe you'd be interested
in knowing
what some of them's been talking about.

Like what?

Well, they've been saying
maybe we ought to burn the boat,
pack the skins on the mules,
work our way back.

What do you think?

Well, sir, I don't know
what's so important about this boat.

I mean, without it,
well, we'd be clear of the snow
and onto flat lands by now.

Mr. Fogarty, that's more than just a boat.

It's what's left of my last command.

I don't intend to see it burn.

- Now or ever.

- Yes, sir.

But when we all signed on,
we figured there was a chance.

But not the way we're headed now.

I mean, what good is all them pelts
if we are dead?

Winter's on us,
Rickarees just waiting to make their move,
and him.

Captain?

Do you think he's alive?

Captain, what the hell's so special
about Zach Bass?

Why can't you let go of him?

He's about the only man
I ever truly respected
or ever feared.

Zach was a stowaway.

He'd run off from an orphanage,
swam out to my ship in Boston Harbor.

I liked his unfearing look and kept him on.

He'd become like a son to me.

Didn't see me as his father.
He learned young to live alone.
Be his own man.
All the years we was together,
never let me come close enough to ask
"What's on your mind, Zach,
what's bothering you?"
He drew a circle, like, around himself.
Nobody dared enter it.
You do think he's alive,
don't you, Captain?
Yes, Fogarty, he's alive.
I've known it all along.
You keep away, Zach Bass!
You go back to hell, where you belong.
What is it?
Out there! I got him. I got him!
Benoit! Ferris!
Is it Bass?
Well, is it Bass?
It's Lowrie, Captain!
I can't stitch this one up, Captain.
He's got a hole in his chest
as big as me fist.
Lowrie?
But it can't be!
It was Zach Bass!
I seen him.
Well, it's done.
We'll bury him.
Say some words.
Move out in the morning.
Come on, get up there!
Get up!
Come on, keep moving!
Captain!
- Captain!
- Whoa, whoa!
The river. What is left of it.
The spring thaw will fill it again,
won't it, Captain?
No.
We're too late.
Too late.

Hey. Hey, listen to this.

"If a man dies shall he live again?

"For there is hope for a tree

if it be cut down, it will sprout again

"and that its shoots will not cease

though its root grow old in the earth,

"and its stump die in the ground."

"Stump die in the ground."

Henry.

Captain.

Battle stations! Man the guns!

Prime your weapons!

Fire!

They're coming at us.

Fire.

Ferris.

I believe that's my gun.

I've got a son out there.

I'm going to find him.

I'm going home.

English - SDH