

suddenly heard a noise which set his heart thumping in a miserable fever of fear. 'There was a scraping and shuffling as of some animal or animals trying to climb up to the footboard. In another moment, through the snow-encrusted glass of the carriage window, he saw a gaunt prick-eared head, with gaping jaw and lolling tongue and gleaming teeth; a second later another head shot up.

"There are hundreds of them," whispered Ableway; "they have scented us. They will tear the carriage to pieces. We shall be devoured."

"Not me, on my name-day. The holy Maria Kleopha would not permit it," said the woman with provoking calm.

The heads dropped down from the window and an uncanny silence fell on the beleaguered carriage. Ableway neither moved nor spoke. Perhaps the brutes had not clearly seen or winded the human occupants of the carriage, and had prowled away on some other errand of rapine.

The long torture-laden minutes passed slowly away.

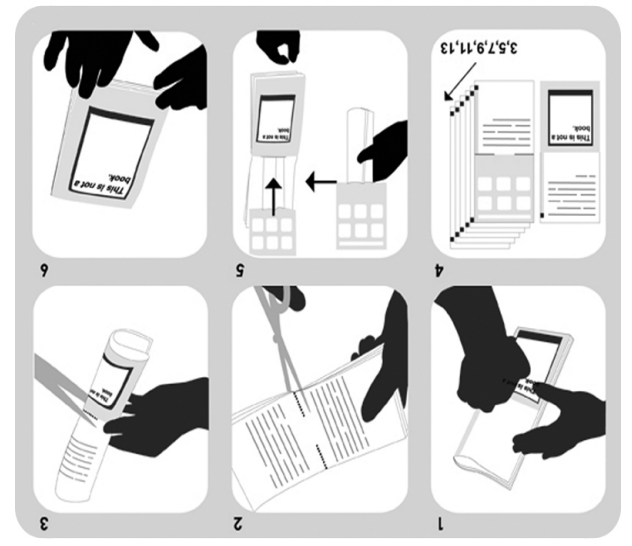
"It grows cold," said the woman suddenly, crossing over to the far end of the carriage, where

possession of his modest store of eatables he expanded into a famine tariff. As he was taking her the eleven kronen before her emergency tariff would have put on the ham, and hurried to pay Ableway wondered to himself what price she have on my name-day." "There is a piece of ham, but that I cannot let you be another three kronen, eleven kronen in all. piece of bread that I can let you have. That will Emmenthaler cheese and a honey-cake and a four kronen each. I have a small piece of will be given to us for nothing, but here they cost buy them cheaper, and in Paradise no doubt they there aren't any others to get. In Agram you can said the woman, with relentless logic, "because "You cannot get them any cheaper on this train," "Four kronen!" exclaimed Ableway; "four kronen kronen apiece." "In a railway accident things become very dear," said the woman; "these blood-sausages are four them," said Ableway with some enthusiasm. "I will give you fifty heller apiece for a couple of town shops." twenty-five heller each. Things are dear in the

hundred affairs of commerce, but with the continued to keep him there, still engaged in far city of Vienna, and, having sent him there, him one day on a prosaic business errand to the town. The firm that he worked for saw fit to send in the ordered atmosphere of an English country adventures were less easy to guard against than Ableway in later years into strange lands where an important commercial language which thrust lessons home. It was this enforced familiarity with employed old-fashioned methods in driving his master, who, though he taught modern subjects, plainly-expressed wishes of a foreign-language of the German tongue out of deference to the he had unwillingly acquired a thorough knowledge surrendered the way without hesitation. At school or a Mad Mullah had come his way he would have amendments at political meetings. If a mad dog wild beasts, and the moving of hostile intrigues, slim crusades, the tracking of wounded disposition that instinctively avoids Carlism been endowed by Nature with the sort of constitutionally timid. John James Ableway had non-adventurous, to the retiring, to the adventures. Quite as often they are to the Adventures, according to the proverb, are to the

The Name Day

Saki (H H Munro)



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possibilities of romance and adventure, or even misadventure, jostling at his elbow. After two and a half years of exile, however, John James Ableway had embarked on only one hazardous undertaking, and that was of a nature which would assuredly have overtaken him sooner or later if he had been leading a sheltered, stay-at-home existence at Dorking or Huntingdon. He fell placidly in love with a placidly lovable English girl, the sister of one of his commercial colleagues, who was improving her mind by a short trip to foreign parts, and in due course he was formally accepted as the young man she was engaged to. The further step by which she was to become Mrs. John Ableway was to take place a twelvemonth hence in a town in the English midlands, by which time the firm that employed John James would have no further need for his presence in the Austrian capital.

It was early in April, two months after the installation of Ableway as the young man Miss Penning was engaged to, when he received a letter from her, written from Venice. She was still peregrinating under the wing of her brother, and as the latter's business arrangements would take him across to Fiume for a day or two, she had

conceived the idea that it would be rather jolly if John could obtain leave of absence and run down to the Adriatic coast to meet them. She had looked up the route on the map, and the journey did not appear likely to be expensive. Between the lines of her communication there lay a hint that if he really cared for her --

Ableway obtained leave of absence and added a journey to Fiume to his life's adventures. He left Vienna on a cold, cheerless day. The flower shops were full of spring blooms, and the weekly organs of illustrated humour were full of spring topics, but the skies were heavy with clouds that looked like cotton-wool that has been kept over long in a shop window.

"Snow comes," said the train official to the station officials, and they agreed that snow was about to come. And it came, rapidly, plentifully. The train had not been more than an hour on its journey when the cotton-wool clouds commenced to dissolve in a blinding downpour of snowflakes. The forest trees on either side of the line were speedily coated with a heavy white mantle, the telegraph wires became thick glistening ropes, the line itself was buried more and more completely under a carpeting of snow, through which the not

very powerful engine ploughed its way with increasing difficulty. The Vienna-Fiume line is scarcely the best equipped of the Austrian State railways, and Ableway began to have serious fears for a breakdown. The train had slowed down to a painful and precarious crawl and presently came to a halt at a spot where the drifting snow had accumulated in a formidable barrier. The engine made a special effort and broke through the obstruction, but in the course of another twenty minutes it was again held up. The process of breaking through was renewed, and the train doggedly resumed its way, encountering and surmounting fresh hindrances at frequent intervals. After a standstill of unusually long duration in a particularly deep drift the compartment in which Ableway was sitting gave a huge jerk and a lurch, and then seemed to remain stationary; it undoubtedly was not moving, and yet he could hear the puffing of the engine and the slow rumbling and jolting of wheels. The puffing and rumbling grew fainter, as though it were dying away through the agency of intervening distance. Ableway suddenly gave vent to an exclamation of scandalised alarm, opened the window, and peered out into the snowstorm. The flakes perched on his eyelashes

and blurred his vision, but he saw enough to help him to realise what had happened. The engine had made a mighty plunge through the drift and had gone merrily forward, lightened of the load of its rear carriage, whose coupling had snapped under the strain. Ableway was alone, or almost alone, with a derelict railway wagon, in the heart of some Styrian or Croatian forest. In the third-class compartment next to his own he remembered to have seen a peasant woman, who had entered the train at a small wayside station. "With the exception of that woman," he exclaimed dramatically to himself, "the nearest living beings are probably a pack of wolves."

Before making his way to the third-class compartment to acquaint his fellow-traveller with the extent of the disaster Ableway hurriedly pondered the question of the woman's nationality. He had acquired a smattering of Slavonic tongues during his residence in Vienna, and felt competent to grapple with several racial possibilities.

"If she is Croat or Serb or Bosniak I shall be able to make her understand," he promised himself. "If she is Magyar, heaven help me! We shall have to converse entirely by signs."

"Are those -- dogs?" he called weakly.

"My cousin Karl's dogs, yes," she answered; "that is his inn, over beyond the trees. I knew it was there, but I did not want to take you there; he is always grasping with strangers. However, it grows too cold to remain in the train. Ah, ah, see what comes!"

A whistle sounded, and a relief engine made its appearance, snorting its way sulkily through the snow. Ableway did not have the opportunity for finding out whether Karl was really avaricious.

Transcribed from the 1914 John Lane, The Bodley Head edition by David Price,
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He entered the carriage and made his momentous announcement in the best approach to Croat speech that he could achieve.

"The train has broken away and left us!"

The woman shook her head with a movement that might be intended to convey resignation to the will of heaven, but probably meant noncomprehension. Ableway repeated his information with variations of Slavonic tongues and generous displays of pantomime.

"Ah," said the woman at last in German dialect, "the train has gone? We are left. Ah, so."

She seemed about as much interested as though Ableway had told her the result of the municipal elections in Amsterdam.

"They will find out at some station, and when the line is clear of snow they will send an engine. It happens that way sometimes."

"We may be here all night!" exclaimed Ableway.

The woman nodded as though she thought it possible.

"Are there wolves in these parts?" asked Ableway hurriedly.

"Many," said the woman, "just outside this forest my aunt was devoured three years ago, as she was coming home from market. The horse and a young pig that was in the cart were eaten too. The horse was a very old one, but it was a beautiful young pig, oh, so fat. I cried when I heard that it was taken. They spare nothing."

"They may attack us here," said Ableway tremulously; "they could easily break in, these carriages are like matchwood. We may both be devoured."

"You, perhaps," said the woman calmly; "not me." "Why not you?" demanded Ableway.

"It is the day of Saint Maria Kieopha, my name-day. She would not allow me to be eaten by wolves on her day. Such a thing could not be thought of. You, yes, but not me."

Ableway changed the subject.

"It is only afternoon now; if we are to be left here till morning we shall be starving."

"I have here some good eatables," said the woman tranquilly; "on my festival day it is natural that I should have provision with me. I have five good blood-sausages; in the town shops they cost

the heads had appeared. "The heating apparatus does not work any longer. See, over there beyond the trees, there is a chimney with smoke coming from it. It is not far, and the snow has nearly stopped, I shall find a path through the forest to that house with the chimney."

"But the wolves!" exclaimed Ableway; "they may

--"

"Not on my name-day," said the woman obstinately, and before he could stop her she had opened the door and climbed down into the snow. A moment later he hid his face in his hands; two gaunt lean figures rushed upon her from the forest. No doubt she had courted her fate, but Ableway had no wish to see a human being torn to pieces and devoured before his eyes.

When he looked at last a new sensation of scandalised astonishment took possession of him. He had been straitly brought up in a small English town, and he was not prepared to be the witness of a miracle. The wolves were not doing anything worse to the woman than drench her with snow as they gambolled round her.

A short, joyous bark revealed the clue to the situation.