



THE RELUCTANT SHAMAN

FINE July day, a tourist took his small boy into a shop in Gahato, New York. The sign over the shop read:

CHIEF SOARING TURTLE

Indian Bead-Work-Pottery

Inside, a stocky, copper-colored man stood amidst a litter of burntleather cushions, Navajo blankets made in Connecticut, and similar truck.

"Have you got a small bow-and-arrow outfit?" the tourist asked. "Ugh," said the Indian. He rummaged and produced a small bow and six arrows with rubber knobs for heads.

"Are you a real Indian?" the boy asked.

"Ugh. Sure. Heap big chief."

"Where are your feathers?"

"Put away. Only wear urn for war dance."

The tourist paid and started out. At that instant, a copper-colored boy of fifteen years entered from the back.

"Hey, Pop, one of the kittens just et the other!" he called loudly. The Indian lost his barbaric impassiveness. "What? Jeepers Cripus, what kind of mink farmer do you call yourself? I told you to shift 'em to separate cages yesterday, before they began to fight!"

"I'm sorry, Pop. I guess I forgot."

"You'd better be sorry. That be good money throwed down the sewer."

The tourist's car door slammed, and as the car moved off, the thin voice of the tourist's little boy was wafted back:

"He talks just like anybody else. He don't sound like a real Indian to me."

But Virgil Hathaway, alias Chief Soaring Turtle, was a real Indian. He was a Penobscot from Maine, forty-six years old, a highschool graduate, and-except that he did not bathe as often as some people thought he should-a model citizen.

Shortly after the departure of the tourist, another man came in. This visitor had Hathaway's distinctive muddy coloring and Mongoloid features, though he was fatter, shorter, and older than Hathaway.

"Morning," he said. "You're Virgil Hathaway, ain'tcha?"

"That's who I be, mister."

The man smiled so that his eyes disappeared in fat. "Pleased to know you, Mr. Hathaway. I'm Charlie Catfish, of the Senecas."

"That so? Glad to know you, Mr. Catfish. How about stopping over for some grub?"

"Thanks, but the folks want to make Blue Mountain Lake for lunch. Tell you what you can do. I got eight stone throwers with me. They was let come up here providing they behaved. I got enough to do without dragging them all over, so if you don't mind I'll leave 'em in your charge."



"Stone throwers?" repeated Hathaway blankly.

"You know, Gczhunga. You can handle 'em even though you're Algonquin, being as you're a descendant of Dekanawida."

"I be what?"

"A descendant of Hiawatha's partner. We keep track-" A horn blast interrupted him. "Sorry, Mr. Hathaway, gotta go. You won't have no trouble." And the fat Indian was gone.

Hathaway was left puzzled and uneasy. It was nice to be descended from Dekanawida, the great Huron chief and cofounder of the Iroquois League. But what were Gahunga? His smattering of the Iroquoian dialects included no such term.

Then there was another customer, and after her Harvey Pringle lounged in, wearing a sport shirt that showed off his strength and beauty.

"Hi, Virgil," he drawled. "How's every little thing?"

"Pretty good, considering." Hathaway felt a sudden urge to bring his accounts up to date. Young Pringle could waste more time in one hour than most men could in three.

"I finished my ragweed pulling for today."

"Huh?" said Hathaway.

"Yeah. The old man got shirty again about my not doing anything. I said, why take a job away from some poox~ guy that needs it? So I appointed myself the county's one-man ragweed committee. I pull the stuff up for one hour a day, heh-heh! Babs been in?"

"No," replied Hathaway.

"Oh, well, she knows where to find me." Harvey Pringle yawned and sauntered out. Hathaway wondered what Barbara Scott could see in that useless hulk. Then he listened to the noise.

It was like a quick, faint drumming, queerly muffled, as though the drum were half full of water. Hathaway looked out the screen door; no parade. Timothy weeds nodded peacefully in the breeze, and from the Moose River came the faint scream of old man Pringle's sawmill.

The noise seemed to be behind Hathaway, in the shop, like the sound of a small Delco plant in the cellar. The noise increased. It waxed, and eight figures materialized on the rug. They looked like Iroquois warriors two feet tall, complete with moccasins, buckskin leggings, and scalps shaven except for stiff crests on the crown. One squatted and tapped a three-inch drum. The other seven circled around him, occasionally giving the loon cry by slapping the hand against the mouth while uttering a long, shrill yell.

"Hey!" barked Hathaway. The drumming stopped. "Who the devil be you?"

The drummer spoke:

"Adenlozlakstengen agoiyo-"

"Whoa! Don't you speak English?"

"Ayuh, mister. I -thought if you was a medicine man, you'd talk Iroquois-"

"If I was what?"

"Medicine man. Charlie said he was gonna leave us with one while he went to Canada."

"Be you the stone throwers?"



"Ayuh. I'm chief, name of Gaga, from Cattaraugus County. Anything you want us to do?"

"Yeah. Just disappear for a while." The Gahunga disappeared. Hathaway thought that Charlie Catfish had played a dirty trick on him to spring these aboriginal spooks without explanation.

He brightened when Barbara Scott entered, trim, dark, and energetic. Hathaway approved of energy in other people.

"Have you seen Harvey, Virgil?" she asked. "I had a lunch date with him."

"Uh-huh," said Hathaway. "Prob'ly sleeping on somebody's lawn." Miss Scott stiffened. "You're as bad as the rest, Virgil. Nobody's fair to poor Harvey."

"Forget it," said Hathaway with a helpless motion of his hands. "When a girl toward whom you felt a fatherly affection seemed bent on marrying the worthless son of the town's leading businessman, who was also your landlord, there wasn't much a moderate man could do. "You still be having that séance tomorrow night?"

"Yep. Dan Pringle's coming."

"What? He swears you're a fake."

"I know, but maybe I can win him over."

"Look here, Babs, why does a nice girl like you do all this phony spook business?"

"Money, that's why. Being a secretary and notary won't get me through my last year of college. As for being phony, how about that ug-wtzig dialect you use on the tourists?"

"That be different."

"Oh, that be different, be it? Here's Harvey now; so long."

The eight Gahunga reappeared.

"What you want us to do for you, mister?" asked Gaga. "Charlie told us to be helpful, and by luskeha, we're gonna be."

"Don't exactly know," Hathaway cautiously replied.

"Is there anything you want?"

"Well," said Hathaway, "I got a good breeding female mink I wish somebocly'd offer me five hundred bucks for."

The Gahunga muttered together.

"I'm afraid we can't do anything about that," Gaga said finally. "Anything else?"

"Well, I wish more customers would come in to buy my Indian junk."

"Whoopee! U-u-u-u!" shrilled Gaga, drumming. "Come on!"

The seven pranced and stamped for a few seconds, then vanished.

Hathaway uneasily waited on a customer, wondering what the Gahunga were up to.

Earl Delacroix, owner of The Pines Tea-Shoppe, was passing on the other side of the street, when he leaped and yelled. He came down rubbing his shoulder and looking about resentfully. As soon as he started to walk, there was a flat spat of a high-speed pebble striking his clothes, and he jumped again. Spat! Spat! The bombardment continued until he hurled himself into Chief Soaring Turtle's shop.

"Somebody's shooting me with an air rifle!" he gasped.



"Bad business," agreed Hathaway.

There was another yell, and Hathaway looked out. Leon Buttolf was being driven inexorably down the street to the shop. As soon as he was inside, the bombardment overtook Mrs. Camaret, wife of a worker in Pringle's mill.

By the time she had been herded in, the streets were deserted.

"Somebody ought to go to jail for this," Buttoif said.

"That's right," said Delacroix. He looked keenly at Hathaway. "Wonder how everybody gets chased in here?"

"If I sink you have somesing to do wiz zis, Virgil, I tell my Jean," Mrs. Camaret said. "He come, beat you up, stomp you into a leetle jelly!"

"Jeepers Cripus!" protested Hathaway. "How should I make a BB shot fly out in a circle to hit a man on the far side? And my boy Calvin's out back with the mink. You can go look."

we ain't suspecting you," said Buttolf.

"I'll walk with you wherever you be going, and take my chance of getting hit," Hathaway said.

"Fair enough," said Delacroix. So the four went out and walked down the street a way. Delacroix turned into his restaurant, and the others went about their business. Hathaway hurried back to his shop just as a pebble hit Wallace Downey in the seat of the pants.

"Gaga!" Hathaway yelled in desperation. "Stop it, blast your hide!"

The bombardment ceased. Downey walked off with a look of deep suspicion. When Hathaway entered his shop, the Gahunga were sitting on the counter.

Gaga grinned infuriatingly.

"We help you, huh, mister?" he said. "Want some more customers?"

"No!" shouted Hathaway. "I don't want your help. I hope I shan't ever see you again!"

The imps exchanged startled glances. Gaga stood up.

"You don't want to be our boss no more?"

"No! I only want you to leave me alone!"

Gaga drew himself to his full twenty-five inches and folded his arms.

"Okay. We help somebody who appreciates us. Don't like Algonquins anyway." He drummed, and the other seven Gahunga did a solemn dance down the counter, disappearing as they came to the pile of miniature birch-bark canoes.

In a few minutes Hathaway's relief was replaced by a faint unease. Perhaps he had been hasty in dismissing the creatures; they had dangerous potentialities.

"Gaga!"

Nothing happened. Calvin Hathaway put in his head.

"Did you call me, Pop?"

"No. Yes, I did. Ask your maw when dinner's gonna be ready."

It had been a mistake; what would he tell Catfish?

After dinner, Hathaway left his wife in charge of the shop while he went for a walk, to think. In front of Tate's hardware store he found a noisy group consisting of old man Tate, Wallace Downey, and a state trooper. Tate's window was broken, and he was accusing Downey of breaking it and stealing a fishing rod. Downey accused Tate of throwing the rod at him through the window. Each



produced witnesses.

"I was buying some film for my camera in the store when bingo! away goes the winda," a witness said. "Mr. Tate and me, we look around, and we see Wally making off with the rod."

"Did you see Downey inside the window?" asked the trooper.

"No, but it stands to reason--"

"What's your story?" the trooper interrupted him, as he turned inquiringly at Downey.

"I was sitting on the steps of the bank havin' a chaw, when Wally comes along carrying that reel, and zowie! out comes the rod through the winda, with busted glass all over the place. If old man Tate didn't throw it at him somebody musta."

Puzzled, the trooper scratched his head. Finally, since Tate had his rod back and the window was insured, he persuaded the two angry men to drop the matter.

"Hello, Virgil," said Downey. "Why does everything screwy have to happen in this town? Say, do you know anything about those BB shot? You yelled something, and they quit."

"I don't know nahthing," said Hathaway innocently. "Some kid with an air rifle, I suppose. What was all this run-in with Tate?"

"I went down to the river to fish," explained Downey. "I had a new tackle, and I no sooner dropped it off the bridge than I got a strike that busted the rodrigh off short. Musta been the biggest bass in the river. Well, I saved the reel, and I was bringin' it back home when old man Tate shies a new rod at me, right through his window."

Hathaway could see how the Gahunga were responsible for these events; they were being "helpful." He left Downey and sauntered down Main Street, passing the Adirondack Association office. Barbara Scott made a face at him through the glass. Hathaway thought she needed to be spanked, either on account of the seances, or her infatuation with Harvey Pringle, or both.

Returning to his shop, the middle-aged Indian noted that the Gahato Garage seemed to have an unusually brisk trade in the repair of tires. The cars included the trooper's Ford with all four tires flat. Bill Bugby and his mechanics were working on tires like maniacs.

The trooper who had handled the Tate-Downey incident was walking about the street, now and then stooping to pick up something. Presently he came back.

"Hey, Bill!" he shouted, and conferred in low tones with Bugby, who presently raised his voice. "You're crazy, Mark!" he cried. "I ain't never done a thing like that in all the years I been here!"

"Maybe so," said the trooper. "But you got to admit that somebody scattered bright new nails all over this street. And if you didn't, who did?"

Hathaway prudently withdrew. He knew who had scattered the nails.

Newcomb, the game warden, lounged into Chief Soaring Turtle's shop and spread his elbows along a counter. Hathaway asked him what he was looking so sad about.



The warden explained.

"I was walking by the bank this afternoon, when a big car drives up and a young man gets out and goes in the bank," he said. "There was a canvas bundle on the back of the car. I didn't think anything of it, only just as I get past it the canvas comes tearing off the bundle, like somebody is pulling it, and there on the bumper is tied a fresh-killed fawn."

"You don't say so?"

"Three months out of season, and no more horns than a pussycat. 'Well, you know and I know there's some of that all the time. I run 'em in when I catch 'em, and if it makes me unpopular that's part of my job. But when this young man comes out and I ask him about it, he admits it-and then it turns out he's Judge Dusenberry's son. Half the village is looking on, so I got to run young Dusenberry in."

"Will that get you into trouble?"

"Don't know; depends on who wins the election next fall. Now, Virgil, I'm not superstitious myself. But some of these people are, especially the Canucks. There's talk of your putting a hoodoo on the town. Some have had rocks thrown at 'em, or something, and Wallace Downey is saying you stopped them. If you can stop it, why can't you start it?"

"I don't know a thing about it," said Hathaway.

"Of course, you don't-I realize that's all nonsense. But I thought you ought to know what folks are saying." And Newcomb slouched out, leaving behind him a much worried Indian.

The next day, Hathaway left his wife in charge of the shop and drove towards Utica. As he was turning on to the state highway, Barbara Scott walked past and called good morning. He leaned out.

"Hi, Barbara! Be you still going to have your spook hunt?"

"You bet, Chief Wart-on-the-Nose."

"What'll you do if old man Pringle gets up and denounces you as a fake?"

"I don't tell my victims I'm not a fake. I say they can watch and judge for themselves. You don't believe in spirits, do you?"

"Never did. Until a little while ago, that is."

"What the devil do you mean by that crack, Virgil?"

"Oh, just some funny things that happened."

Barbara tactfully refrained from pressing for details.

"I never did either, but lately I've had a feeling I was being followed," she said. "And this morning I found this on my dresser." She held out a slip of paper on which was scrawled:

"Don't you worry none about Daniel Pringle that old sower-puss. We will help you against him-G."

"I got an idea who sent this, but it won't do no good to explain now," Hathaway mused. "Only I'd like to see you before your séance. G'by."

Three hours later, Hathaway gave up his search through the stacks of the Utica Public Library, having gone through every volume on anthropology, folklore, and allied subjects. He had learned that the stone throwers belonged to the genus of sprite known to the Iroquois as Dzhungeun. They all lived in the southwest part of the state and comprised the



stone-throwing Gahunga, the fertility-producing Gendayah, and the hunting and burrowing Ohdowa. But, although it was intimated in several places that the Iroquois shamans had known how to control these spirits, nowhere did it tell how.

Hathaway thought a while. Then he left the library and walked along Genesee Street to a pay telephone. He grunted with pain when he learned the cost of a call to the vicinity of Buffalo, but it couldn't be helped. He resolved, if he ever caught up with Charlie Catfish, to take the money either out of the Seneca's pocket or out of his hide.

"Give me the Tonawanda Reservation," he said.

When he got the reservation, he asked for Charlie Catfish. After a long wait, during which he had to feed the coin box, he was told that Catfish would not be back for weeks.

"Then give me Chief Cornplanter."

Another pause. Then: "He's gone to Buffalo for the day."

"Listen," said Hathaway. "Have you got any medicine men, hexers, spook mediums, or such people among you?"

"Who wants to know?"

"I be Virgil Hathaway, of the Penobscots, member of the Turtle clan and descendant of Dekanawida."

He explained his difficulties. The voice said to wait. Presently an aged voice, speaking badly broken English, came from the receiver.

"Wait, please," said Hathaway. "I got to get me a pencil. My Seneca ain't so hot. . -

When Hathaway was driving back to Gahato, he attempted to pass a truck on one of the narrow bridges over the Moose River at McClintock. The truck driver misjudged his clearance, and Hathaway's car stopped with a rending crunch, wedged between the truck and the bridge girders. When the garage people got the vehicles untangled and towed to the garage, Hathaway learned that he faced a four-hour, fifty-dollar repair job before he could start moving again, let alone have his fenders straightened. And the afternoon train north had just left McClintock.

That evening, Barbara Scott had collected the elite of Gahato for her séance: Doe Lenoir and his wife; Levi Macdonald, the bank cashier, and his better half; the Pringles, father and son; and a couple of other persons. Dan Pringle greeted Barbara with a polite but cynical smile. He was plump and wheezed and had seldom been worsted in a deal.

Barbara sat her guests- in a circle in semidarkness to await the arrival of her "influences." When Harvey Pringle had fallen asleep, she got out her paraphernalia. She sat on a chair in the cabinet, a thing like a curtained telephone booth, and directed the men to tie her securely to the chair. Then she told them to drop the curtain and put out the lights. She warned them not to risk her health by turning on the lights without authorization. It was not an absolutely necessary warning, as she could control the lights herself by a switch inside the cabinet.

On the table between the cabinet and the sitters were a dinner bell, a



trumpet, and a slate. The chair on which Barbara sat came apart easily. Concealed in the cabinet was a quantity of absorbent cotton for ectoplasm. There was also a long-handled grasping device, painted black. Her own contribution to the techniques of this venerable racket was a system of small lights which would warn her if any of the sitters left his chair.

Soon, Barbara gave the right kind of squirm, and the trick chair came apart. The loose bonds could now be removed. Barbara moaned to cover the sounds of her preparations and chanted a few lines from the Iliad in Greek. She intended to have Socrates as one of her controls this time.

She was still peeling rope when she was astonished to hear the dinner bell ring. It wasn't a little ting such as would be made by someone's accidentally touching it, but a belligerent clangor, such as would be made by a cook calling mile-away farmhands. The little signal lights showed all the sitters to be in their seats. The bell rang this way and that, and the trumpet began to toot.

Barbara Scott had been séancing for several years and had come to look upon darkness as a friend, but now childish fears swarmed out of her. The cabinet began to rock. She screamed. The cabinet rocked more violently. The door of the false side flew open; the cotton and the grasper were snatched out. The curtain billowed. The table began to rock too. From the darkness came an angry roar as the grasper tweaked Doe Lenoir's nose.

From somewhere came the muffled beat of a drum and a long, ululating loon-cry:

"U-u-u-u-u-u-u-u!"

The cabinet tipped over against the table. Barbara fought herself out of the wreckage. She remembered that her private light switch was in series with the room's main switch, so that the lights could not be turned on until the secret switch had been thrown. She felt for it, pushed it, and struggled out of the remains of the cabinet.

The terrified sitters were blinded by the lights and dumb at the spectacle of the medium swathed in loose coils of rope with her hand on the switch, her dress torn, and the beginnings of a black eye. Next they observed that the bell, slate, grasper, and other objects were swooping about the room under their own power.

When the lights came on, there was a yell and a command in an unknown language. The slate smashed down on Dan Pringle's head. While he stood blinking, glasses dangling from one ear and the frame of the slate around his neck, other articles went sailing at him. He stumbled over his overturned chair and bolted for the door. The articles followed.

When Pringle reached the street, pebbles began picking themselves up and throwing themselves after the mill owner. It took about three tries to get his range. Then a pebble no bigger than the end of one's thumb, traveling with air-rifle speed, hit the back of his thigh with a flat spat. Pringle yelled, staggered, and kept running. Another glanced off his scalp, drawing blood and making him see stars.

The inhabitants of Gahato were entertained by the unprecedented sight of their leading businessman panting down the main street and turning purple with effort. Every now and then there would be the sound of a pebble striking. Pringle would make a bucking jump and come down running harder than ever.



His eye caught a glimpse of Virgil Hathaway letting himself into his shop, and a faint memory of silly talk about the Indian's supernatural powers stirred his mind. He banked and galloped up the porch steps of Soaring Turtle's establishment just as Hathaway closed the screen door behind him. Pringle went through the door without bothering to reopen it.

"Jeepers Cripus!" exclaimed Hathaway mildly. "What be the matter, Dan?"

"L-l-isten, Virgil! Are you a medicine man?"

"Aw, don't pay no attention to superstitious talk like that-"

"But I gotta have help! They're after me!" And he told all.

"Well!" said Hathaway doubtfully. "I'll see what I can do. But they're Iroquois spooks, and don't think much of us Algonquins. Got some tobacco? All right, pull down the shades."

Hathaway took Pringle's tobacco pouch and opened his shattered screen door. He threw a pinch of tobacco into the dark and chanted in bad Seneca:

I give you tobacco, Dzhungeun,
Wanderers of the mountains.
You hear me and will come.
I give you tobacco.
I have done my duty towards you.
Now you must do yours.
I have finished speaking.

All eight Cahunga imps materialized on the lawn. Hathaway sternly ordered them to come inside. When they were in, he questioned them:

"What have you little twerps been up to now?"

Gaga squirmed. "We was only trying to do Miss Scott a favor," he said. "She wants to put on a good spook show. So we help. She don't like this old punkin Pringle. All right, we throw a scare into him. We wasn't going to hurt him none."

"You know you was let come up here for your vacations only if you didn't use your stone-throwing powers," Hathaway said. "And you know what Eitsinoha does to little imps who don't behave."

"Eitsinoha?" cried Gaga. "You wouldn't tell heTr'

"Dunno, yet. You deserve it."

"Please, mister, don't say nothing! We won't throw even a sand grain! I swear by luskeha! Let us go, and we'll head right back to Cattaraugus!"

Hathaway turned to the quivering Pringle. "Changed your mind about raising my rent, Dan?"

"I'll lower it! Five dollars!"

"Ten?"

"Seven and a half!"

"Okay. Gaga, you and your boys can disappear. But stick around. And don't do anything-understand?-unless I tell you to." The Gahunga vanished.

Pringle recovered some of his usual self-assurance and said:

"Thanks, Virgil! Don't know what I'd have done without you."

"That's all right, Dan. You better not say anything about this, though."



Remember, being a medicine man is a kind of joke among us Indians, like being the High Exalted Potentate of one of those there lodges."

"I understand. So they were doing her a favor, huh? It would be bad enough to have my son marry a phony medium, but I can see where a real one would be worse. No sale, and you can tell her I said so. And Harvey'll do what I say, because he has to in order to eat."

"But-" said Hathaway. He wanted to defend Barbara Scott; to tell Pringle that even if she was a crooked medium in a mild way, she was still better than that no-count son of his.

"What?" said Pringle.

"Nahthing." Hathaway reconsidered; everything was working out fine. Barbara would get over her crush on that big loafer, finish her college, and be able to drop the medium racket. Why stir things up? "Good night, Dan."

He hadn't done badly, thought Hathaway as he locked up, considering that he had only been in the medicine-man business a couple of days. He must take a trip out to Tonawanda in the fall and look up Charlie Catfish. Maybe the thing had commercial possibilities.