

Escape
By: Bradley Perkins

The bare branches slash at my forearms shielding my face as I run through the forest. The wind carries the afternoon rain down on me. An open field is now in sight and so is freedom. The French trading post sits somewhere beyond in the same direction. As the forest thinned, the sun peaks from behind a gray cloud, briefly brightening up my surroundings until vanishing once more.

The open field seems just as bleak as the forest behind me. I begin to slow down my run to a stumbling halt. I need to catch my breath. I was stupid to trap so far East. As I slump over, gasping for air, two figures emerge from the tree line further down the valley. Suddenly, a sharp scream comes from that direction. More screams echo all around me. The Iroquois caught up fast.

I hit the ground and push forward. My bloodied forearms and hands scrape and pull my body against the terrain beneath. I free myself from beaver pelts, which are tied to a leather cord around my waist, so that I glide easier towards a large oak near the end of the field. When I reach the tree, I lay quietly near its base, resting and listening. I hear the faint sound of moving water. I slowly rise, risking to get a better sense of direction. There is a slight downward hill leading to a river and just beyond that, the trading post. Just as I lower myself, an arrow whizzes by my ear and pierces the tree where I once stood. Another shrieking scream fills the air, more calls follow. The Iroquois were closer.

Arrows hiss by from behind, as I rush downhill. When I reach the bottom, my momentum carries me over the edge of the bank, planting me in mud, just feet from the river. The river marks the territorial line, and the trading post sits just on the other side. The rushing river flows with a dangerous intensity, but it still was the lesser of two evils.

More war cries echo in the air. I start to shove a log into the water. Arrows again rain down, some puncturing the log as I give one final shove. The river quickly pulls the log downstream. I fall to the ground as I reach for it to before it floats away. I look at my leg, a single arrow protrudes from it. They were above me on the ridge now, surrounding me. Paying no mind to the pain, I make one final lunge into the river.

The current carries me quickly downstream, finally catching up to the advancing log. Arrows still come from above as I float further down the river. I try to hold on with my remaining strength, but my grip fails. My hands start to slip just as the log comes to a stop. I now lay at the shallow edge of the river. No war cries. No arrows. I had escaped.