

Escape
By: Bradley Perkins

The bare tree branches slash at my forearms while they shield my face as I run recklessly through the forest. The wind carries some of the afternoon rain down on me from the trees above. An open field is now in sight and so is freedom from these woods and closer to the French trading post. As the forest thinned, the sun peaks from behind a gray cloud, briefly brightening up my surroundings until it hid once more.

The open field is somehow more-bleak than the lifeless forest that I was hurled out of. I slow down my run to a stumbling halt. 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 cut the beaver pelts free from a leather cord around my waist, so that I may 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 was stupid to trap so far East. 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 a bank, planting me in mud, just feet from the river. The river marks the territorial line, and the trading post 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 once again rain down. A few punctures the log as I give one final shove. The river quickly pulls the log downstream. I fell as I try to grab the log before it floats away. I look at my leg, a single arrow had impaled it. They were above me on the ridge now, surrounding me. Paying no mind to the pain, I made 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 begin to slip 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.