

1

THE TRAIL OF THE MEAT



ur story begins on the silent, frozen landscape of the Northland Wild in Canada around 1890.

The land itself is desolate. It is lifeless and cold.

In a still dark forest two men are mushing a team of sled dogs*. They are pulling a coffin.

The two men, Bill and Henry, struggle against the cold. They drive their sled dogs onward through the snow as the sunlight fades. They hear a howl. It tells them there is the pack of wolves trailing them.

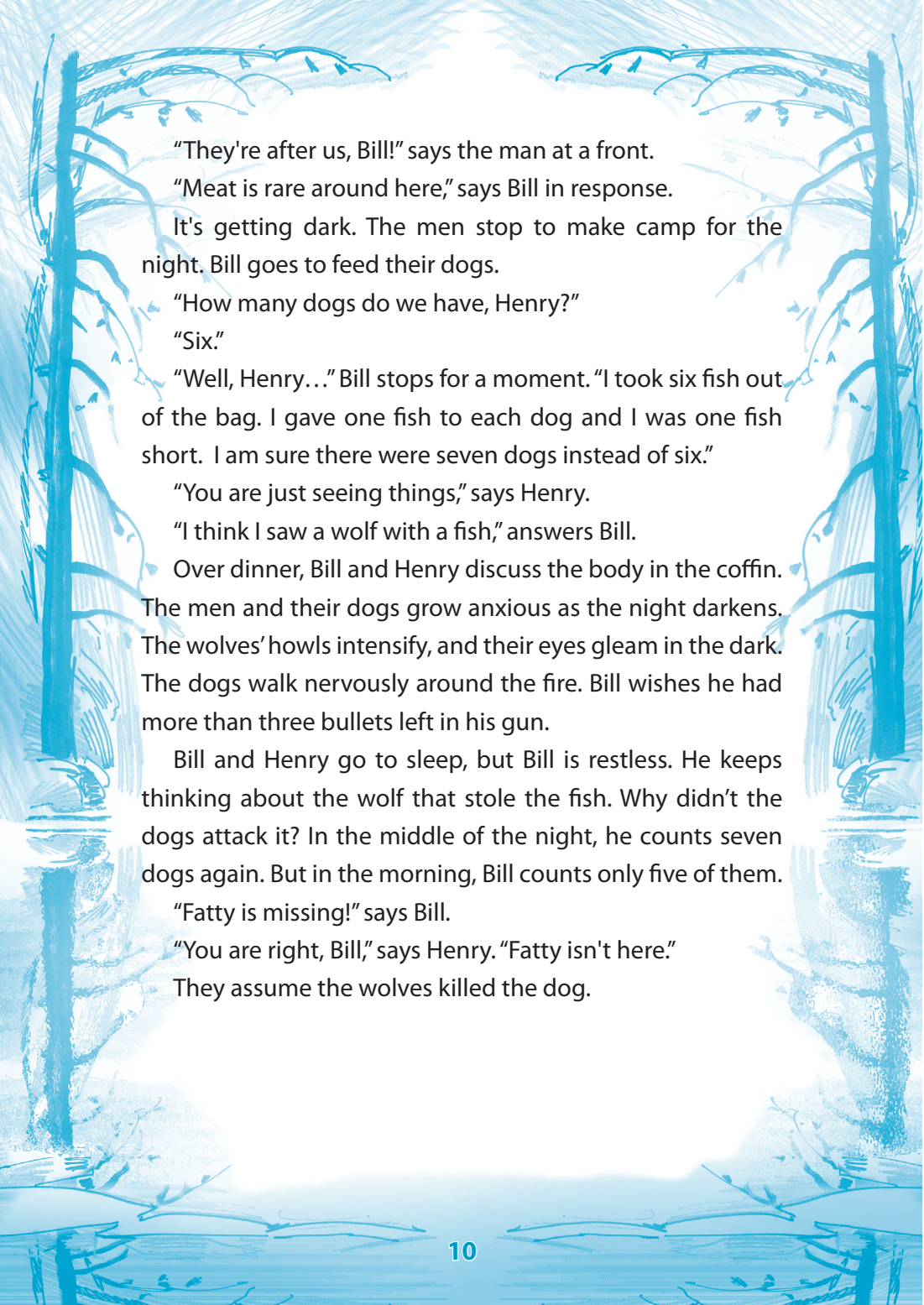
* To mush a team of sled dogs – íst' so psím záraham

1 CESTA ZA MÄSOM

Náš príbeh sa začína v tichej, zamrznutej krajine severskej divočiny v Kanade okolo roku 1890.

Samotný kraj je pusty, bez života a chladný. V tichom a tmavom lese idú dvaja muži so psím záprahom. Ťahajú rakvu.

Dvaja muži, Bill a Henry, bojujú s chladom. Ženú svojich psov snehom vpred, zatiaľ čo slabne denné svetlo. Počujú zavýtie, ktoré im prezradí, že ich stopuje vlčia svorka.



"They're after us, Bill!" says the man at a front.

"Meat is rare around here," says Bill in response.

It's getting dark. The men stop to make camp for the night. Bill goes to feed their dogs.

"How many dogs do we have, Henry?"

"Six."

"Well, Henry..." Bill stops for a moment. "I took six fish out of the bag. I gave one fish to each dog and I was one fish short. I am sure there were seven dogs instead of six."

"You are just seeing things," says Henry.

"I think I saw a wolf with a fish," answers Bill.

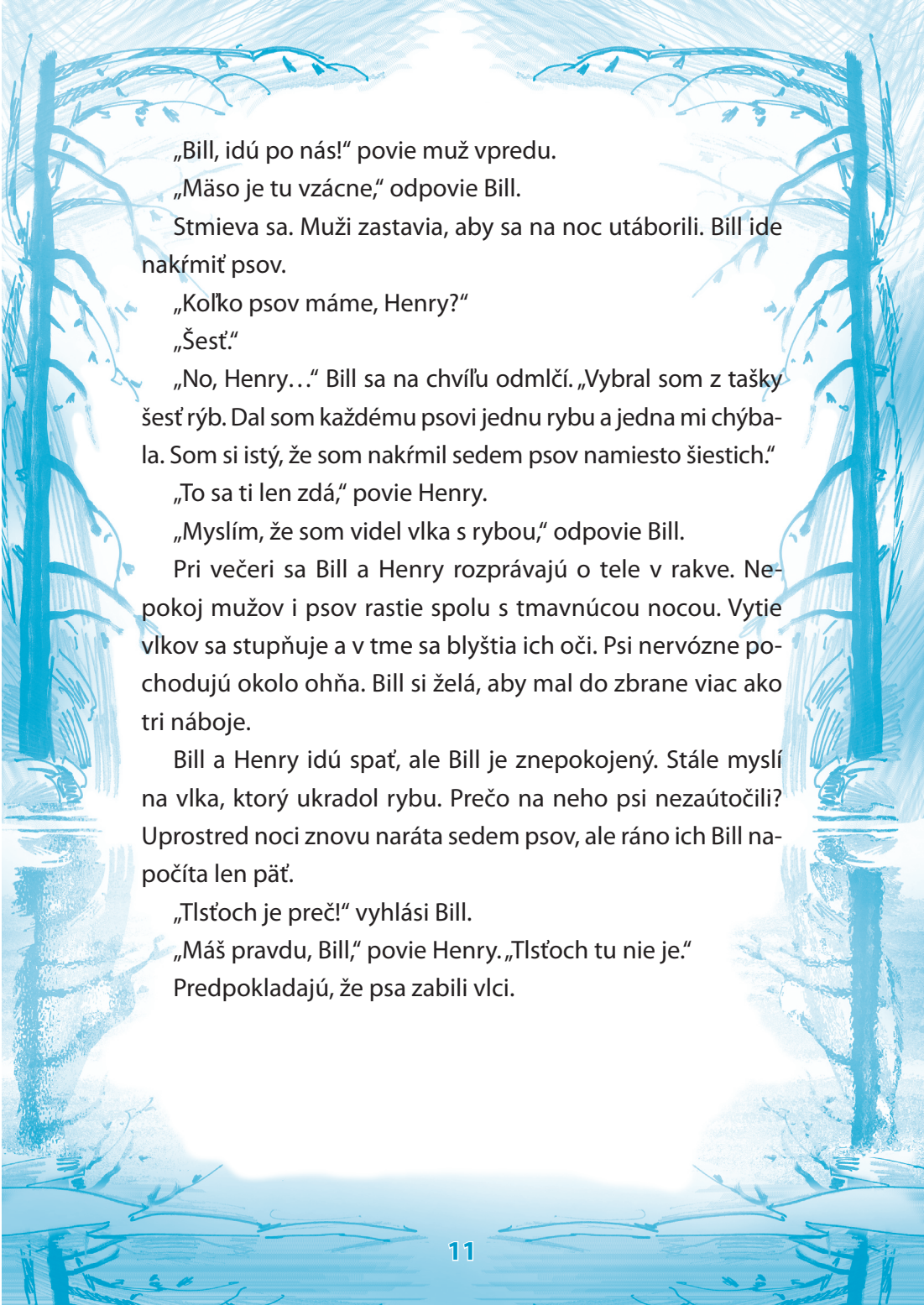
Over dinner, Bill and Henry discuss the body in the coffin. The men and their dogs grow anxious as the night darkens. The wolves' howls intensify, and their eyes gleam in the dark. The dogs walk nervously around the fire. Bill wishes he had more than three bullets left in his gun.

Bill and Henry go to sleep, but Bill is restless. He keeps thinking about the wolf that stole the fish. Why didn't the dogs attack it? In the middle of the night, he counts seven dogs again. But in the morning, Bill counts only five of them.

"Fatty is missing!" says Bill.

"You are right, Bill," says Henry. "Fatty isn't here."

They assume the wolves killed the dog.



„Bill, idú po nás!“ povie muž vpredu.

„Mäso je tu vzácné,“ odpovie Bill.

Stmieva sa. Muži zastavia, aby sa na noc utáborili. Bill ide nakrmiť psov.

„Koľko psov máme, Henry?“

„Šesť.“

„No, Henry...“ Bill sa na chvíľu odmlčí. „Vybral som z tašky šesť rýb. Dal som každému psovi jednu rybu a jedna mi chýbala. Som si istý, že som nakrmil sedem psov namiesto šiestich.“

„To sa ti len zdá,“ povie Henry.

„Myslím, že som videl vlka s rybou,“ odpovie Bill.

Pri večeri sa Bill a Henry rozprávajú o tele v rakve. Nepokoj mužov i psov rastie spolu s tmavnúcou nocou. Vytie vlkov sa stupňuje a v tme sa blyštia ich oči. Psi nervózne pochodujú okolo ohňa. Bill si želá, aby mal do zbrane viac ako tri náboje.

Bill a Henry idú spať, ale Bill je znepokojený. Stále myslí na vlka, ktorý ukradol rybu. Prečo na neho psi nezaútočili? Uprostred noci znovu naráta sedem psov, ale ráno ich Bill napočíta len päť.

„Tlstoč je preč!“ vyhlási Bill.

„Máš pravdu, Bill,“ povie Henry. „Tlstoč tu nie je.“

Predpokladajú, že psa zabili vlci.

2 THE SHE-WOLF

Bill and Henry travel the whole of the next day. Again, they make camp in the evening. The hungry wolves are howling around them. The men are feeling nervous.

The next morning Bill and Henry discover that Frog, the strongest and the smartest of the dogs, is missing. They assume the wolves ate him. The next night, they tie each dog to a stick in the ground so they can't wander off.

Later on, the dogs begin whining. In the firelight the men see a female wolf, which they start calling a she-wolf. Henry realizes this is the cause of their dogs' disappearance.

The she-wolf seems tame* but wary of men. Her behaviour is very similar to the behaviour of a dog. Bill and Henry start thinking.

"She runs with the wolves, but I think she also ate from the hand of man," says Henry. Bill nods off to sleep.

The next morning there's no sign of Spanker, another of their dogs. The only thing they find is a stick a couple of hundred yards away.

The men travel through the day. They notice the she-wolf trails them. They are becoming more anxious.

* Tame – skrotený

2 VLČICA

Bill a Henry sú na ceste celý ďalší deň. Znovu sa večer utáboria. Hladní vlci vyjú okolo nich. Muži sú nervózni.

Nasledujúce ráno Bill s Henrym zistia, že chýba Skokan, najsilnejší a najmúdrejší zo psov. Predpokladajú, že ho zjedli vlci. V tú noc každého psa priviažu k tyči, aby sa nemohli zatúlať.


Neskôr začnú psi kňučať. Vo svetle ohňa muži zbadajú samicu vlka, ktorú začnú volať vlčica. Henry si uvedomí, že ona stojí za zmiznutím ich psov.

Vlčica sa zdá krotká, ale ostražitá voči mužom. Jej správanie sa veľmi podobá správaniu psa. Bill a Henry začnú premýšľať.

„Behá s vlkmi, ale myslím si, že tiež jedla z ľudskej ruky,“ povie Henry. Bill zaspí.

Ráno niet ani stopy po Spankerovi, ďalšom z ich psov. Jediná vec, ktorú nájdú, je tyč, ktorá je niekoľko stoviek yardov ďaleko.

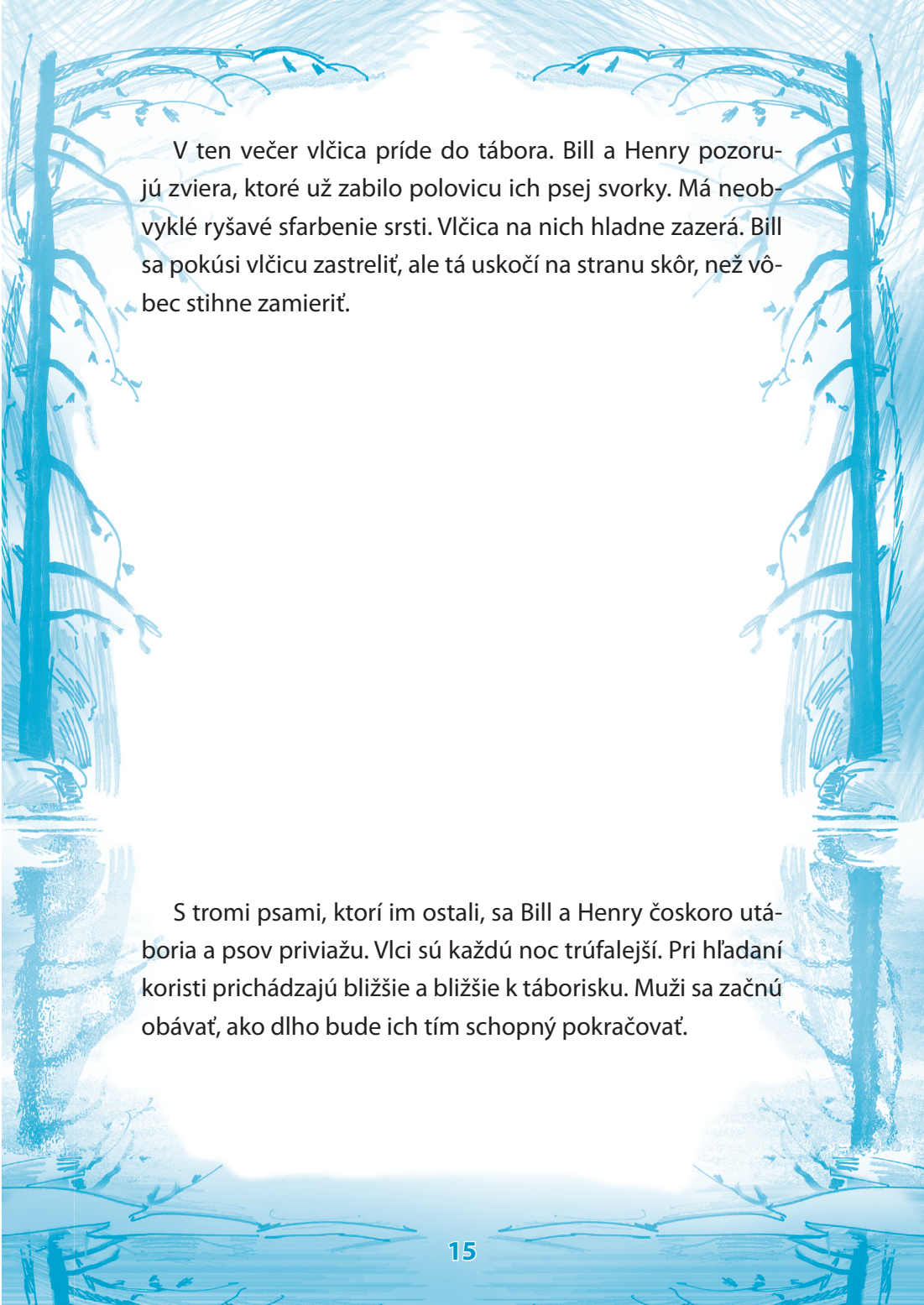
Muži sú cez deň na ceste. Všimnú si, že ich vlčica stopuje. Ich úzkosť rastie.



That evening, the she-wolf comes to the campsite. Bill and Henry observe the animal that already killed half of their dogs. It has an unusual reddish* colouring to its coat. The she-wolf stares at them hungrily. Bill tries to shoot the she-wolf, but she jumps aside before he can even aim.

With only three dogs left, Bill and Henry make camp early and tie the dogs down. The wolves are more daring each night. They are coming closer and closer to the campsite looking for their prey. The men begin to worry how long their team will be able to continue.

* Reddish – červenkasté; ak však ide o vlasy alebo chlpy znamená ryšavé



V ten večer vlčica príde do tábora. Bill a Henry pozorujú zviera, ktoré už zabilo polovicu ich psej svorky. Má neobvyklé ryšavé sfarbenie srsti. Vlčica na nich hladne zazerá. Bill sa pokúsi vlčicu zastreliť, ale tá uskočí na stranu skôr, než vôbec stihne zamieriť.

S tromi psami, ktorí im ostali, sa Bill a Henry čoskoro utáboria a psov priviažu. Vlci sú každú noc trúfalejší. Pri hľadaní koristi prichádzajú bližšie a bližšie k táborisku. Muži sa začnú obávať, ako dlho bude ich tím schopný pokračovať.