5. A Grizzly Tale

Lewis and Chorus





Lewis: Monday, May 6th, 1805

We saw many tracks of bear of enormous size along the river shore. The Indians give a very formidable account of the strength and ferocity of this animal, which they never dare to attack but in parties of six, eight or ten persons.

[*with a bit of a sneer*]The Indians may well fear this animal. But in the hands of skillful riflemen, these bear are by no means as formidable or dangerous as they have been represented.

[smugly]The men, as well as myself, are anxious to meet with some of these bear.



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Lewis: Saturday, May 11th, 1805

About 5 p.m. my attention was struck by one of our party. He was running at a distance towards us, hollering as if in distress. It was Bratton. He arrived so much out of breath that it was several minutes before he could tell what had happened. He had shot a bear which immediately turned and pursued *him*! We all then pursued this bear about a mile and found him concealed in some very thick brush and shot him through the skull with two balls. It was a monstrous beast!

These bear being so hard to die rather intimidates us all.

[Confidentially]I must confess that I do not like the gentlemen and had rather fight two Indians than one bear.





Lewis: Tuesday, May 14th 1805:

The men discovered a large bear lying in open grounds about 300 paces from the river. Six of them went out to attack him, all good hunters. Four of them fired nearly at the same time and put each his bullet though the bear. In an instant this monster ran at them with open mouth. The two who had reserved their fires discharged *their* pieces at him. This, however, only retarded his motion for a moment. The men, unable to reload their guns, took to flight. [Understated] The bear pursued.

Concealed among the willows, two of the party reloaded their pieces and discharged. But the guns served only to direct the bear to *them*. He pursued them so close that they were obliged to throw aside their guns and throw *themselves* into the river, although the bank was nearly twenty feet perpendicular.



The enraged animal plunged into the river only a few feet behind the closest man. One of those who still remained on shore shot the beast through the head and *finally* killed him. [a sigh of relief]



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Lewis: Saw a brown bear swim the river above us. He disappeared before we can get in reach of him. [*dryly*]I find that the curiosity of our party is pretty well satisfied with respect to this animal.



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