

## WHITE FANG

by Jack London



### THE STORY TO DATE:

Two mushers, Henry and Bill, bound south bearing on their sled the coffin of a titled prospector, are trailed by wolves. Each night the circle of pursuers closes nearer; each night a sled dog disappears, lured by a she-wolf that looks like a former sled dog. Bill sets out to drive away the pack. He never comes back. Henry builds a fire circle to keep off the wolves. Relief comes just as the wolf pack is about to devour him, and the wolf pack, headed by the she-wolf and old One-Eye, starts out to run new game. After many days' run meat is found and then begins the war of love between One-Eye and his younger rivals for the she-wolf's favor. Having vanquished the younger wooers, One-Eye and the she-wolf start away through the woods. Arriving at an Indian camp the she-wolf shows a strange attachment to the spot. One-Eye roves,

### INSTALLMENT 6.

THE LAIR.  
For two days the she-wolf and One-Eye hung about the Indian camp. He was worried and apprehensive, yet the camp lured his mate and she was loath to depart. But when, one morning, the air was rent with the report of a rifle close at hand, and a bullet smashed against a tree trunk several inches from One-Eye's head; they hesitated no more, but went off on a long, swinging lunge that put quick miles between them and the danger.

They did not go far—a couple of days' journey. The she-wolf's need to find the thing for which she searched had now become imperative. She was getting very heavy, and could run but slowly. Once, in the pursuit of a rabbit, which she ordinarily would have caught with ease,

she gave over and lay down and rested. One-Eye came to her; but when he touched her neck gently with his muzzle she snapped at him with such fierceness that he tumbled over backward and cut a ridiculous figure in his effort to escape her teeth. Her temper was now shorter than ever; but he had become more patient than ever and more solicitous.

And then she found the thing for which she sought. It was a few miles up a small stream that in the summer time flowed into the Mackenzie, but that then was frozen over down to its rocky bottom—a dead stream of solid white from source to mouth. The she-wolf was trotting wearily along, her mate well in advance, when she came upon the overhanging high clay bank. She turned aside and trotted over to it. The wear and tear of spring storms and melting snows had underwashed the bank and in one place had made a small cave out of a narrow fissure.

She paused at the mouth of the cave and looked the wall over carefully. Then, on one side and the other, she ran along the base of the wall to where its abrupt bulk merged from the softer-lined landscape. Returning to the cave, she entered its narrow mouth. For a short time she felt she was compelled to crouch, then the walls widened and rose higher in a little round chamber nearly six feet in diameter. She barely cleared her head. It was dry

and cozy. She inspected it with painstaking care while One-Eye, who had returned, stood in the entrance and patiently watched her. She dropped her head, with her nose to the ground and directed toward a point near to her closely bunched feet, and around this point she circled several times; then with a tired sigh that was almost a grunt she curled her body in, relaxed her legs, and dropped down, her head toward the entrance. One-Eye with pointed, interested ears, sat at her, and beyond, outlined against the white wall waving good naturedly. Her light she could see the brush of his own ears with a snuggling movement, laid their sharp points backward and down against the head for a moment, while her head was up, and her tongue lolled peacefully out, and in this way she expressed that she was pleased and satisfied.

One-Eye was hungry. Though he lay down in the entrance and slept, his sleep was fitful. He kept awaking and cocking his ears at the bright world without, where the April sun was blazing across the snow. When he dozed, upon his ears would steal the faint whispers of hidden trickles running water, and he would rouse and listen intently. For a while he came back, and all the awakening Northland world was calling to him. Life was stirring. The feel of spring was in the air, the feel of growth, life under the snow, of sap ascending in the trees, of buds bursting the shackles of the frost.

He cast anxious glances at his mate, but she showed no desire to get up. He looked outside, and half a dozen snowbirds fluttered across his field of vision. He started to get up, then looked back to his mate again, and settled down and dozed. A shrill and minute singing stole upon his hearing. Once, and twice, he sleepily brushed his nose with his paw. Then he woke up. There, buzzing in the air at the tip of his nose, was a lone mosquito. It was a full grown mosquito, one that had lain frozen in a dry log all winter and that had now been thawed out by the sun. He resisted the call of the world no longer. Besides, he was hungry.

He crawled over to his mate and tried to persuade her to get up. But she only snarled at him, and he walked out alone in the bright sunshine to find the snow surface soft under foot and the travelling difficult. He went up the frozen bed of the stream, where the snow, shaded by the trees, was hard and crystalline. He was gone eight hours, and he came back through the darkness, hungrier than when he had started. He had found game, but he had not caught it. He had broken through the melting snow crust, and wallowed while the snowshoe rabbits had skimmed along on top lightly as ever.

He paused at the mouth of the cave with a sudden shock of suspicion. Faint, strange sounds came from within. They were sounds not made by his mate, and yet they were remotely familiar. He belated cautiously inside and was met by a warning snarl from the she-wolf. This he received without perturbation, though he obeyed it by keeping his distance; and he remained interested in the other sounds—faint, muffled sobbings and slubberings.

His mate warned him irritably away, and he curled up and slept in the entrance. When morning came and a dim light pervaded the lair, he again sought after the source of the remotely familiar sounds. There was a new note in his mate's warning snarl. It was a jealous note, and he was very careful in keeping a respectful distance. Nevertheless, he made out, sheltering between her legs against the length of her body, five strange little bundles of life, very feeble, very helpless, making tiny whimpering noises, with eyes that did not open to the light. He was surprised. It was not the first time in his long and successful life that this thing had happened. It had happened many times, yet each time it was as fresh a surprise as ever to him.

His mate looked at him anxiously. Every little while she emitted a low growl, and at times, when it seemed to her he approached too near, the growl shot up in her throat to a sharp snarl. Of her own experience she had no memory of the thing happening; but in her instinct, which was the experience of all others of wolves, there lurked a memory of fathers that had eaten their new

born and helpless progeny. It manifested itself as a fear strong within her, that made her prevent One-Eye from more closely inspecting the cubs he had fathered.

But there was no danger. Old One-Eye was feeling the urge of an impulse, that was, in turn, an instinct that had come down to him from all the fathers of wolves. He did not question it, nor puzzle over it. It was there, in the fibre of his being; and it was the most natural thing in the world that he should obey it by turning his back on his new-born family and by trotting out and away on the meat trail whereby he lived.

Five or six miles from the lair, the stream divided, its forks going off among the mountains at a right angle. Here, leading up the left fork, he came upon a fresh track. He smelled it and found it so recent that he crouched swiftly, and looked in the direction which it had disappeared. Then he turned deliberately and took the right fork. The footprint was much larger than the one his own feet made, and he knew that in the wake of such a trail there was little meat for him.

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Tomorrow: Stalking Game.

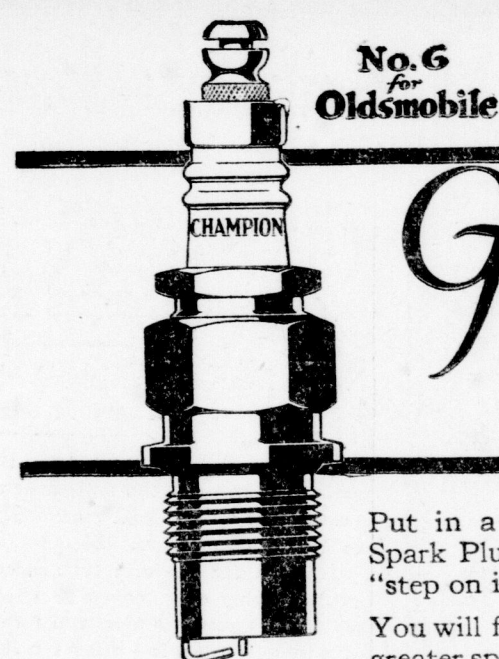
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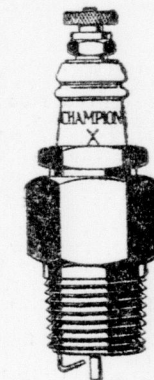
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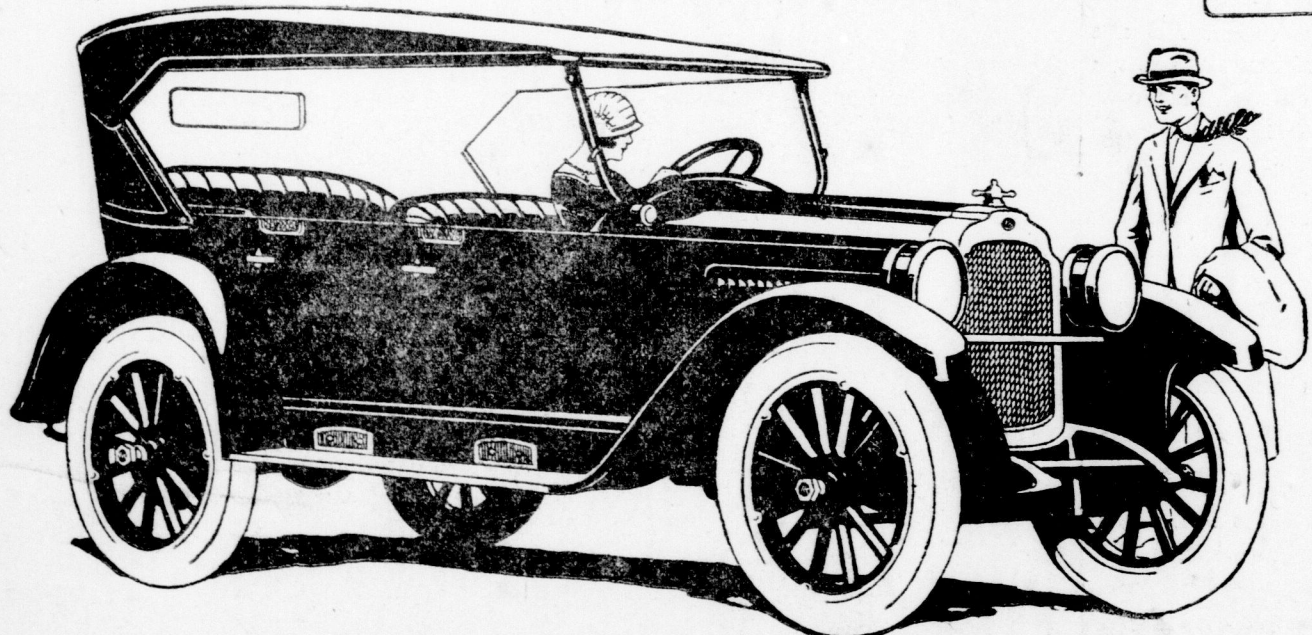
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