

# How Summer Came to the Yukon

## *An Indian Legend*

ONCE UPON A TIME, many centuries ago, winter held the Yukon in its grasp for the entire twelve months of the year. Glaciers filled the hollows, and deep snow covered the whole country. There were no trees or bushes or flowers to be seen at any time, nor were there any lakes or rivers in the broad expanse of the territory. It was a land of perpetual cold.

One day a band of Indians were hunting, when they came upon a huge black bear. He was the largest animal they had ever seen; but what impressed them most was that he carried a sack suspended from a collar about his neck. The Indians had always held the bear in reverence, so instead of killing this animal they talked with him. One of the braves asked what the bag contained, and the bear told him it was filled with heat; that if this heat was released from the bag, summer would visit the Yukon for a portion of the year. Then the rivers would flow, the trees and flowers would spring from the ground, and there would be fish and berries in abundance.

The hunters could think of nothing they desired more than the possession of this bag, so one of the braves asked the bear what he would take in trade for it. The bear replied that he would not part with it for any consideration. The Indians coaxed, and they begged, but the bear was firm in his refusal. When they saw that it was useless to argue any longer, they decided to return to their tribe and think up some plan to get the coveted bag.

After hearing the story in detail, the chief called his braves together. Here was a prize worth having, and he didn't mean to let it get away. There was great discussion, and one of the learned men of the tribe suggested that as the bear was a very greedy animal, they might fill him up with food, after which he would lie down to sleep, and it would then be a simple matter to take the bag away from him. The chief thought this was a very good plan, so he ordered the hunters to invite the bear to eat with them.

A great feast was prepared. The daintiest parts of the caribou and moose were cooked up. Even if the bear were not hungry, he could not resist gorging himself with such tempting food.

In the meantime the hunters had gone forth in search of bruin, and when they located him they asked him to attend the feast that night. He readily accepted the invitation, and told them that as he was very hungry, he would appreciate a big meal.

That evening the bear arrived, but to the great disappointment of all the tribe, he did not bring the sack of heat with him. The feast was served, however, and after filling himself with the warm food, the bear grew drowsy and fell asleep. Then the chief called four of the best hunters in the village and ordered them to follow their guest home and forcibly take the sack from him.

The next morning the bear awakened, and after bidding his