

## To Build a Fire

By Jack London

The day had begun cold and gray. The man was already well on his way across the frozen Canadian northland toward his distant goal. He turned aside from the main Yukon River trail and climbed the hill, where a little traveled trail led eastward through the forestland. It was a steep slope, and he paused for breath at the top, looking at his watch. It was nine o'clock. There was no sun nor hint of sun, though there was not a cloud in the sky. It was a clear day, and yet there seemed a gloom that made the day dark, and that was due to the absence of sun. This fact did not worry the man. Living so close to the North Pole, he was accustomed to the lack of sun in winter. It had been days since he had seen the sun, and he knew that a few more days must pass before that cheerful sun, due south, would just peep above the sky-line.

The man took a look back along the way he had come. The Yukon River lay a mile wide and hidden under three feet of ice. On top of this ice were two feet of snow. North and south, as far as his eye could see, it was unbroken white, save for a dark trail that curved south, where it disappeared behind a pine-covered island. This dark hair-line was the main trail that led south five hundred miles to the Alaskan sea port. It was the trail that led north seventy miles to the city of Dawson, still on to the north a thousand miles to the freezing Eskimo towns, and finally to the ice-bound Bering Sea, a thousand

miles more.

But all this awesome nature -- the far-reaching trail, the endless pine forest, the absence of sun from the sky, and the tremendous cold -- made no impression on the man. It was not because he was used to it. He was a newcomer in the land, a "chechaquo," and this was his first winter in the frozen border area of Canada and Alaska. The trouble with him was that he was without imagination. He was not alert to the *significance* of things. Trees were trees. Snow was snow. Cold was just cold. Fifty degrees below zero meant just that. Such a fact impressed him as being uncomfortable, and that was all. It did not lead him to think upon his weakness as a human being who could only to live within certain narrow limits of heat and cold. And it did not lead him to think of mortality and man's place in the universe. Fifty degrees below zero stood for a bit of frost. Frost hurt, and that must be guarded against by the use of mittens, ear-flaps, warm moccasins, and thick socks. Fifty degrees below zero was to him just fifty degrees below zero. That there should be anything more to it than that was a thought that never entered his head.

But there was more to it.

As he turned to go on, he spat toward the ground. There was a sharp, explosive crackle that startled him. He spat again. And again, in the air, before it could fall to the snow, the spit crackled. He knew that, at fifty below, spit crackled on the snow, but this spit had crackled in the *air*. Undoubtedly it was colder than fifty below zero -- how much

colder he did not know. Temperatures like this are cold even for Canada and Alaska, and cold of this sort is dangerous even for the people who have adapted the arctic world of ice.

As cold as it was, the temperature did not matter much to him. The man was busy, after all. He was bound for the old gold mine on the left fork of Henderson Creek, where the boys were already camping. They had come over across from the Indian Creek country, while he had come the roundabout way to take a look at the possibilities of getting out logs in the spring from the islands in the Yukon River. He would be in to camp by six o'clock; a bit after dark, it was true; but the boys would be there, a fire would be going, and a hot supper would be ready.

As he plunged in among the big pine trees, the trail was hard to see. A foot of snow had fallen since the last sled had passed over, and he was glad he was without a sled, traveling light. In fact, he carried nothing but a lunch wrapped in the handkerchief, hidden beneath his coat. He was surprised, however, at the cold. It certainly was cold, he concluded as he rubbed his numb nose and cheek-bones with his mittened hand. He was a warm-whiskered man, but the hair on his face did not protect his high cheek-bones and his long nose. Still, he wasn't worried -- his hike would be over in a few hours.

At the man's heels trotted a dog -- a big native husky, gray-coated and without any visible difference from its brother, the wild wolf. The animal, unlike the man, was worried. It was worried by the

tremendous cold. The dog sensed that it was no time for traveling. Of course, a dog *knows* nothing; but it *senses* a great deal. These senses arise from millions of years of instinct -- nature's way of telling animals what to do. Birds fly south in winter not by thought, but by instinct. Mother bears protect their cubs not by thought, but by instinct. The dog who traveled with the man wanted to head for warmth -- not by thought, but by basic instinct. And this is one of the great differences between men and beasts. The dog's instinct told it a truer tale than was told to the man by the man's judgment. The dog sensed that it was colder than sixty below; colder than seventy below. Knowing nothing about temperatures or thermometers, the husky experienced a vague fear, a fear pushing him to seek shelter.

The man was out and moving, and the dog had to follow -- like it or not. Man and dog sniffed the ultra-cold air. The frozen moisture of their breathing had settled upon them in a fine powder of frost. On they pushed. Man and dog, covered in white frost, moved forward across the icy world like driven ghosts.

The man held on through the level stretch of woods for several miles and dropped down to the frozen bed of a small stream. This was Henderson Creek, and he knew he was ten miles from camp. He looked at his watch. It was ten o'clock. He was making almost four miles an hour, and he calculated that he could arrive at the fork of the river at half-past twelve. He decided to celebrate that event by eating his lunch there. After lunch, he would be within five hours of camp. The man stepped forward with a little extra speed, encouraged by the

thought of a some good eating

The dog dropped in again at his heels, its tail hanging in discouragement as the man walked along the creek-bed. The old sled-trail was visible, but a dozen inches of snow covered the sled marks. No man had come up or down that silent creek for a whole month. Cold had kept sensible men away. But *this* man held steadily on, only slightly impressed by the deathly cold. He was not much given to thinking, and just then he had nothing to think about, except that he would eat lunch at the forks and that at six o'clock he would be in camp with the boys. There was nobody to talk to. And if there had there been someone there, speech would have been impossible because of the ice covering his mouth. So he continued silently.

Once in a while the thought hit him that it was *very* cold and that he had never experienced such cold. It was a bit *too* cold. As he walked along, he rubbed his cheek-bones and nose with the back of his mittened hand. But the instant he stopped rubbing, his cheek-bones went numb, and the following instant the end of his nose went numb. *Too cold*, he thought. He was sure to get a bit of frost-bite on his cheeks. But it didn't matter much, after all. What were frosted cheeks? A bit painful, that was all. They were never serious.

As he walked, the man always noted where he placed his feet. Once coming around a bend, he stepped back abruptly, like a startled horse, curved away from the place where he had been walking, and retreated several steps back along the trail. The creek was frozen

clear to the bottom -- no creek could contain water in that arctic winter -- but he knew also that there were warm springs from deep in the earth -- springs that bubbled out from the hillsides and ran along under the snow and on top the ice of the creek. He knew that the coldest snaps never froze these springs, and he knew likewise their danger. They were traps. They hid pools of water under the snow that might be three inches deep, or three feet. Sometimes a skin of ice half an inch thick covered them, and in turn was covered by the snow. Sometimes there were alternate layers of water and ice-skin, so that when one broke through he kept on breaking through for a while, sometimes wetting himself to the waist. And to be wet in this frozen world was to be dead. Wet instantly becomes ice -- and death.

That was why he had stepped back in such panic. He had felt the give under his feet and heard the crackle of a snow-hidden ice-skin. And to get his feet wet in such a temperature meant trouble and danger. At the very least it meant delay, for he would be forced to stop and build a fire, and under its protection to bare his feet while he dried his socks and moccasins. The man stood and studied the creek-bed and its banks, and decided that the flow of water came from the right. He thought for a moment, rubbing his nose and cheeks, then moved to the left, stepping carefully and testing the footing for each step. Once clear of the danger, he took a fresh chew of tobacco and swung along at his four-mile per hour speed.

In the course of the next two hours he came upon several similar traps. Usually the snow above the hidden pools had a sunken

appearance that advertised the danger. Suspecting danger, he compelled the dog to go on in front. The dog did not want to go. It hung back until the man shoved it forward, and then it went quickly across the white, unbroken surface.

Once, the animal it broke through, floundered to one side, and got away to firmer footing. It had wet its forefeet and legs, and almost immediately the water that clung to his limbs turned to ice. The husky made quick efforts to lick the ice off its legs, then dropped down in the snow and began to bite out the ice that had formed between the toes. This was a matter of instinct, not intelligence. To permit the ice to remain would mean sore feet. The dog did not *know* this. It merely obeyed the mysterious forces that arose from the deep instincts of its being. But the man knew, and he removed the mitten from his right hand and helped tear out the ice-particles from between the dog's toes. He did not expose his fingers more than a minute, and yet he was astonished at the swift numbness that attacked them. It certainly *was* cold. He pulled on the mitten hastily, and beat the hand savagely across his chest. Feeling returned. The mitten was replaced. Man and dog moved on.

At twelve o'clock the day was at its brightest. Yet the sun was too far south on its winter journey to clear the horizon. At half-past twelve, to the minute, he arrived at the fork of the creek. He was pleased at the speed he had made. If he kept it up, he would certainly be with the boys by six. He unbuttoned his jacket and shirt and drew forth his lunch. The action took no more than half a minute, yet in that

brief moment the numbness took hold of the exposed fingers. He did not put the mitten on, but, instead struck the fingers a dozen sharp smashes against his leg. Then he sat down on a snow-covered log to eat. The sting that followed upon the striking of his fingers against his leg ceased so quickly that he was startled. He had had no chance to take a bite of biscuit. He struck the fingers repeatedly and returned them to the mitten, baring the other hand for the purpose of eating, He tried to take a mouthful, but the ice covering his bearded mouth prevented it. He had forgotten to build a fire and thaw out. He chuckled at his foolishness, and as he chuckled he noted the numbness creeping into the exposed fingers. Also, he noted that the stinging which had first come to his toes when he sat down was already passing away. He wondered whether his toes were warm or numb. He moved them inside the moccasins and decided that they were numb.

He pulled the mitten on hurriedly and stood up. The man was a bit frightened for the first time that day. He stamped up and down until the stinging returned to the feet. It certainly *was* cold, he thought. A bit *too* cold. That old man from Sulphur Creek had spoken the truth when telling how cold it sometimes got in the country. And he had laughed at him at the time! There was no mistake about it, it *was* cold. He walked up and down, stamping his feet and moving his arms, until reassured by the returning warmth. Then he got out matches and proceeded to make a fire. From the undergrowth, where high water of the previous spring had lodged a supply of dry twigs, he got his firewood. Working carefully from a small beginning, he soon

had a roaring fire, over which he thawed the ice from his face and in the protection of which he ate his biscuits. For the moment the cold was outsmarted. Man and dog took satisfaction in the fire, stretching out close enough for warmth and far enough away to escape being singed.

When the man had finished, he filled his pipe and took his comfortable time over a smoke. Then he pulled on his mittens, settled the ear-flaps of his cap firmly about his ears, and took the creek trail up the left fork of the frozen river. The dog was disappointed about leaving the temporary camp, and yearned back toward the fire. *This man did not sense true cold.* Men are from the south. Men evolved from jungle apes in Africa. All the generations of human ancestry have been ignorant of cold --of real cold, of cold one hundred and seven degrees below freezing point. But the dog sensed it all its ancestry had sensed it, and it had inherited the sense as instinct. It was not good to walk abroad in such fearful cold. It was the time to lie snug in a hole in the snow and wait for a hint of warmth.

The dog and the man were a world apart on matters of survival. In any event, there was no love or intimacy between the dog and the man. The one was the slave of the other, and the only caresses it had ever received were the caresses of the whip. So, the dog made no effort to communicate its worries to the man. It was not concerned with the welfare of the man; it was for its own sake that it yearned back toward the fire. But the man whistled, and spoke to the dog with the sounds of threats and whips, and the dog followed at the man's

heels, obedient but unloving.

The man took a chew of tobacco and proceeded to spit fresh ice balls into the super-frozen air. His moist breath quickly powdered his mustache, his eyebrows, and his eyelashes. At first, he watched out for the dangerous springs that could trap a man in an ice-bath, but there did not seem to be so many springs on the left fork of the Henderson River. For half an hour, the man saw no signs of any, and so he let his mind drift in satisfaction. And then it happened. At a place where there were no signs, where the soft, unbroken snow seemed to advertise solidity beneath, the man broke through the ice. The shock of the ice water was like a sledge hammer. His heart jumped at the freezing shock. Thank God the ice bath was not deep! He wet himself halfway to the knees before he floundered out to the firm crust on the bank of the frozen river.

He was angry, and cursed his luck aloud. Why should this happen to him? He had hoped to get into camp with the boys at six o'clock, and this would delay him an hour; for he would have to build a fire and dry out his foot-gear. A man must *never* stay wet at seventy-five below. Drying out was imperative at that low temperature -- he knew that much. He turned aside to the bank of the frozen river and climbed up to the pines above. On top, tangled in the underbrush about the trunks of several small pine trees, was a high-water deposit of dry firewood -- sticks and twigs, and also larger branches and fine, dry grasses. He threw down several large pieces on top of the snow. This served for a foundation and prevented the young flame from

drowning itself in the snow it otherwise would melt. The flame he got by touching a match to a small shred of birch bark that he took from his pocket. This burned even more readily than paper. Placing it on the foundation, he fed the young flame with wisps of dry grass and with the tiniest dry twigs.

He worked slowly and carefully, keenly aware of his danger. Gradually, as the flame grew stronger, he increased the size of the twigs with which he fed it. He knew there must be no failure. When it is seventy-five below zero, a man must not fail in his first attempt to build a fire -- that is, if his feet are wet. If his feet are dry, and he fails, he can run along the trail for half a mile and restore his circulation. But the circulation of wet and freezing feet cannot be restored by running when it is seventy-five below. No matter how fast he runs, the wet feet will freeze the harder.

All this the man knew. The old-timer on Sulphur Creek had told him about it the previous fall, and now he was appreciating the advice. Already, all sensation had gone out of his feet. To build the fire he had been forced to remove his mittens, and the fingers had quickly gone numb. His wet feet froze now. His nose and cheeks were already freezing, while the skin of all his body chilled as it lost the blood that pulled away from the skin and hid deep within the body.

But he was safe now. Toes and nose and cheeks would be only touched by the frostbite, for the fire was beginning to burn with strength. He was feeding it with twigs the size of his finger. In another

minute he would be able to power the flame with branches the size of his wrist, and then he could remove his wet foot-gear, and, while it dried, he could keep his naked feet warm by the fire.

The fire was a success. He was secure. He remembered the advice of the old timer on Sulphur Creek, and smiled. The old-timer had been very serious in laying down the law that no man must travel alone in the Klondike after fifty below. Well, here he was; he had had the accident; he was alone; and he had saved himself. *Old men!* All a fellow had to do was to keep his head, and he'd be all right. Any man who *was* a man could travel alone.

But it was surprising, the rapidity with which his cheeks and nose were freezing. And he had not thought his fingers could go lifeless in so short a time. Lifeless they were, for he could scarcely make them move together to grip a twig, and they seemed remote from his body and from him. When he touched a twig, he had to look and see whether or not he had hold of it.

Well, no matter. There was the fire, snapping and crackling and promising life with every dancing flame. He started to untie his moccasins. They were coated with ice. The thick German socks were like covers of iron halfway to the knees. And the moccasin strings were like rods of steel all twisted and knotted. For a moment he tugged with his numb fingers; then he drew his knife to cut the laces.

But before he could cut the strings, it happened. It was his own

fault. He should not have built the fire under the tree! He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. But the tree under which he had done this carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully weighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had caused a slight shaking of the tree -- a tiny shaking; but it was enough to bring about the disaster. High up in the tree one bough capsized its load of snow. This fell on the boughs beneath, capsizing them. This process continued, spreading out and involving the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire. And the fire was blotted out! Where it had burned there was a pile of fresh and disordered snow.

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own death sentence. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very still -- to think. If he only had a trail-mate, he would be in no danger now. The trail-mate could build the fire. But the man was alone. And freezing. It was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure.

**End of Part One**

## To Build a Fire

### -- Part Two

The man had broken through the ice, soaking himself halfway to the knees. He had built a fire to dry out his foot-gear. (A man must *never* stay wet at seventy-five below.) He had started to untie his moccasins, but before he could undo the strings, it happened! It was his own fault. He should not have built the fire under the tree! He should have built it in the open. But it had been easier to pull the twigs from the brush and drop them directly on the fire. The tree under which he had done this fire building carried a weight of snow on its boughs. No wind had blown for weeks, and each bough was fully weighted. Each time he had pulled a twig he had caused a slight shaking of the tree. This fell on the boughs beneath, spreading out to the whole tree. It grew like an avalanche, and it descended without warning upon the man and the fire. The fire was blotted out!

The man was shocked. It was as though he had just heard his own death sentence. For a moment he sat and stared at the spot where the fire had been. Then he grew very still -- to think. For the first time in his life he had to think. Really think! If he only had a trail-mate, he would be in no danger now. The trail-mate could build the fire. But the man was alone. And freezing. It was up to him to build the fire over again, and this second time there must be no failure. Even if he succeeded, he would most likely lose some toes. His feet must be badly frozen by now, and there would be some time before

the second fire was ready. .

These were his thoughts, but he did not sit and think them. He was busy all the time they were passing through his mind. It *had* to be fast. He made a new foundation for a fire, this time in the open, where no treacherous tree-snow could blot it out. Next, he gathered dry grasses and tiny twigs. He could not bring his fingers together to pull them out from the bushes, but he was able to gather them by the handful (or the *clawful*). In this way he got many rotten twigs and bits of green moss that were undesirable, but it was the best he could do. And all the while the dog sat and watched him, a certain yearning wistfulness in its eyes, for it looked upon him as the fire-provider, and the fire was slow in coming.

When all was ready, the man reached in his pocket for a second piece of birch bark. He knew the bark was there, and, though he could not feel it with his fingers, he could hear its crisp rustling as he fumbled for it. Try as he would, he could not clutch hold of it. And all the time in his consciousness, was the knowledge that each instant his feet were freezing. He fought against panic. He pulled on his mittens with his teeth, and waved his arms back and forth, beating his hands with all his might against his sides. All the while the dog sat in the snow, its wolf tail curled around warmly over its forefeet, its sharp wolf-ears pointed forward intently as it watched the man. And the man, beating wildly with his arms and hands, felt a great surge of envy as he looked at the creature that was warm and secure in its natural covering.

After a time he was aware of the first far-away signals of sensation in his beaten fingers. The faint tingling grew stronger till it evolved into a stinging ache that was excruciating, but encouraging. He stripped the mitten from his right hand and grabbed the birch bark. The exposed fingers were quickly going numb again. Next he brought out his bunch of matches. But the tremendous cold had already driven the life out of his fingers. In his effort to separate one match from the others, the whole bunch fell in the snow. He tried to pick them out of the snow, but failed. The dead fingers could neither touch nor clutch. He was very careful. He drove the thought of his freezing feet, and nose, and cheeks, out of his mind, devoting his whole soul to the matches. He watched, using the sense of vision in place of that of touch, and when he saw his fingers on each side the bunch, he tried to close them. The fingers did not obey. He pulled the mitten on the right hand and beat it fiercely against his knee. Then, with both mittened hands, he scooped the bunch of matches, along with much snow, into his lap.

After some manipulation he managed to get the bunch between the heels of his mittened hands. In this fashion he carried it to his mouth. The ice crackled and snapped when by a violent effort he opened his mouth. He drew the lower jaw in, curled the upper lip out of the way, and scraped the bunch with his upper teeth in order to separate a match. He succeeded in getting one, which he dropped on his lap. He was no better off. He could not pick it up. Then he devised a way. He picked it up in his teeth and scratched it on his leg.

Twenty times he scratched before he succeeded in lighting it. As it flamed he held it with his teeth to the birch bark. But the burning smoke went up his nostrils and into his lungs, causing him to cough. The match fell into the snow and went out.

*“The old-timer from Sulphur Creek was right,”* he thought in a moment of controlled terror. *“Under fifty below, a man should travel with a partner.”*

He beat his hands, but failed in exciting any sensation. Suddenly he bared both hands, removing the mittens with his teeth. He caught the whole bunch between the heels of his hands. Then he scratched the bunch along his leg. It flared into flame, seventy matches at once! There was no wind to blow them out. He kept his head to one side to escape the strangling fumes, and held the blazing bunch to the birch bark. As he so held it, he became aware of sensation in his hand. His flesh was burning. He could smell it. Deep down below the surface he could feel it. The sensation developed into pain that grew acute. And still he endured, it holding the flame of the matches clumsily to the bark that would not light readily because his own burning hands were in the way, absorbing most of the flame.

At last, when he could endure no more, he jerked his hands apart. The blazing matches fell sizzling into the snow, but the birch bark was lit. He began laying dry grasses and the tiniest twigs on the flame. He could not pick and choose, for he had to lift the fuel between the heels of his hands. Small pieces of rotten wood and

green moss clung to the twigs, and he bit them off as well as he could with his teeth. He cherished the flame carefully and awkwardly. It meant life, and it must not perish. The withdrawal of blood from the surface of his body now made him begin to shiver, and he grew more awkward. A large piece of green moss fell squarely on the little fire. He tried to poke it out with his fingers, but his shivering frame made him poke too far and he disrupted the nucleus of the little fire, the burning grasses and tiny twigs separating and scattering. He tried to poke them together again, but in spite of the tenseness of the effort, his shivering got away with him, and the twigs were hopelessly scattered. Each twig gushed a puff of smoke and went out. The fire had failed!

As he looked hopelessly about him, his eyes fell upon the dog, sitting across the ruins of the fire from him, in the snow, making restless movements, slightly lifting one forefoot and then the other, shifting its weight back and forth on them with worried eagerness.

The sight of the dog put a wild idea into his head. He remembered the tale of the man who was caught in a blizzard; he killed a cow and crawled inside the warm body, and so was saved. That was it! He would kill the dog and bury his hands in the warm blood of the body until the numbness went out of them. Then he could build another fire.

He spoke to the dog, calling it to him; but his voice had a strange note of fear that frightened the animal. Something was the

matter, and its suspicious nature sensed danger. Somewhere in its brain a fear of the man arose. The animal flattened its ears down at the sound of the man's voice, but it would not come to the man. He got on his hands and knees and crawled toward the dog. This unusual movement excited suspicion, and the animal moved away.

The man sat up in the snow for a moment and struggled for calmness. Then he pulled on his mittens, by means of his teeth, and got upon his feet. He glanced down at first in order to assure himself that he was really standing up, for the absence of sensation in his feet left him unrelated to the earth. His erect position in itself started to drive the webs of suspicion from the dog's mind; and when he spoke with the sound of whiplashes in his voice, the dog rendered its customary allegiance and came to him. As it came within reaching distance, the man lost his control. His arms flashed out to the dog, and he experienced genuine surprise when he discovered that his hands could not clutch, that there was neither bend nor feeling in the fingers. He had forgotten for the moment that they were frozen and that they were freezing more and more. All this happened quickly, and before the animal could get away, the man encircled the dog's body with his arms. He sat down in the snow, and in this fashion held the dog, while the creature snarled and whined and struggled.

But it was all he could do -- hold the dog's body encircled in his arms and sit there. He realized that he could not kill the dog. There was no way to do it. With his helpless hands he could neither draw nor hold his knife. He released it, and it plunged wildly away, with tail

between its legs, and still snarling. It halted forty feet away and surveyed him curiously, with ears sharply pricked forward. The man looked down at his hands in order to locate them, and found them hanging on the ends of his arms. It struck him as curious that one should have to use his eyes in order to find out where his hands were. There was no sensation. They hung like weights on the ends of his arms.

A fear of death came to him. This threw him into a panic, and he turned and ran up the creek-bed along the trail. The dog joined in behind and kept up with him. He ran blindly, without intention, in fear such as he had never known in his life. Slowly, as he plowed and floundered through the snow, he began to see things again, the banks of the creek, the old timber-jams, the leafless trees, and the sky. The running made him feel better. He did not shiver. Maybe, if he ran on, his feet would thaw out; and, anyway, if he ran far enough, he would reach camp and the boys. Without doubt he would lose some fingers and toes and some of his face; but the boys would take care of him, and save the rest of him when he got there. And at the same time there was another thought in his mind that said he would never get to the camp and the boys; that it was too many miles away, that the freezing had too great a start on him, and that he would soon be stiff and dead. This thought he kept in the background.

It struck him as curious that he could run at all on feet so frozen that he could not feel them when they struck the earth and took the weight of his body. He seemed to himself to skim along above the

surface, and to have no connection with the earth.

His theory of running until he reached camp and the boys had one flaw in it: he lacked the endurance. Several times he stumbled, and finally he tottered, crumpled up, and fell. When he tried to rise, he failed. He must sit and rest, he decided, and next time he would merely walk and keep on going. As he sat and regained his breath, he noted that he was feeling quite warm and comfortable. He was not shivering, and it even seemed that a warm glow had come to his chest and trunk. And yet, when he touched his nose or cheeks, there was no sensation. The thought came to him that the frozen portions of his body must be spreading. He tried to keep this thought down, but the thought asserted itself and produced a vision of his body totally frozen. This was too much, and he made another wild run along the trail. Once he slowed down to a walk, but the thought of the freezing extending itself made him run again.

And all the time the dog ran with him, at his heels. When he fell down a second time, it curled its tail over its forefeet and sat in front of him, facing him, curiously eager and intent. The warmth and security of the animal angered him, and he cursed it. The shivering came more quickly upon the man. He was losing in his battle with the frost. It was creeping into his body from all sides. The thought of it drove him on, but he ran no more than a hundred feet, when he staggered and pitched headlong. It was his last panic. When he had recovered his breath and control, he sat up and entertained in his mind the conception of meeting death with dignity. However, the conception did

not come to him in such terms. His idea of it was that he had been making a fool of himself, running around like a chicken with its head cut off. Well, he was bound to freeze anyway, and he might as well take it decently. With this new-found peace of mind came the first drowsiness. A good idea, he thought, to sleep off to death. Freezing was not so bad as people thought. There were lots worse ways to die.

He pictured the boys finding his body next day. Suddenly he found himself with them, coming along the trail and looking for himself. And, still with them, he came around a turn in the trail and found himself lying in the snow. He did not belong with himself any more, for even then he was out of himself, standing with the boys and looking at himself in the snow. *It certainly was cold*, he thought. When he got back to the States he could tell the folks what *real* cold was. He drifted on from this to a vision of the old-timer on Sulphur Creek He could see him quite clearly, warm and comfortable, and smoking a pipe.

"You were right, old man. You were right," the man mumbled to the old-timer of Sulphur Creek.

Then the man drowsed off into what seemed to him the most comfortable and satisfying sleep he had ever known. The dog sat facing him and waiting. The brief day drew to a close in a long, slow twilight. There were no signs of a fire to be made, and, besides, never in the dog's experience had it known a man to sit like that in the snow and make no fire.

As the twilight drew on, the dog's eager yearning for the fire mastered it, and with a great lifting and shifting of forefeet, it whined softly, then flattened its ears down, expecting to be yelled at by the man. But the man remained silent. Later, the dog whined loudly. And still later it crept close to the man. *Then* the dog caught the scent of death. This made the animal instinctively bristle and back away. A little longer it delayed, howling under the stars that leaped and danced and shone brightly in the cold sky. Then it turned and trotted up the trail in the direction of the camp. Without exactly knowing why, the dog sensed that it would find food, fire, and safety among other living creatures. It was an instinct -- something that all dogs possess.