Year 6/7 Short Stories Collection

Part 2

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The Journey Of Life

An Allegory

Once upon a time, a good many years ago, there was a traveler, and he set out upon a journey. It was a magic journey, and was to seem very long when he began it, and very short when he got halfway through.

He traveled along a rather dark path for some little time, without meeting anything, until at last he came to a beautiful child. So he said to the child, “What do you here?” And the child said, “I am always at play. Come and play with me.”

So he played with the child the whole day long, and they were very merry. The sky was so blue, the sun was so bright, the water was so sparkling, the leaves were so green, the flowers were so lovely, and they heard so many singing birds, and saw so many butterflies, that everything was beautiful. This was in fine weather.

When it rained, they loved to watch the falling drops and smell the fresh scents. When it blew, it was delightful to listen to the wind, and fancy what it said, as it came rushing from its home, whistling and howling, and driving the clouds before it, bending the trees, rumbling in the chimneys, shaking the house and making the sea roar in fury.

But when it snowed, that was the best of all; for they liked nothing so well as to look up at the white flakes falling fast and thick, like down frown the breasts of millions of white birds, and to see how smooth and deep the drift was, and to listen to the hush upon the paths and roads.

But one day of a sudden the traveler lost the child. He called to him over and over again, but got no answer. So he went on for a little while without meeting anything, until at last he came to a handsome boy. He said to the boy, "What do you here?" And the boy said, "I am always learning. Come and learn with me."

So he learned with the boy about Jupiter and Juno, and the Greeks and Romans,—more than I could tell, or he either; for he soon forgot a great deal of it. But they were not always learning; they had the merriest games that ever were played.

They rowed upon the river in summer, and skated on the ice in winter; they were active afoot and active on horseback; at cricket, and all games of ball; at prisoner's base, hare-and-hounds, follow-my-leader, and more sports than I can think of: nobody could beat them. As to friends, they had such dear friends, and so many of them, that I want the time to reckon them up. They were all young, like the handsome boy, and were never to be strange to one another all their lives through.

Still, one day, in the midst of all these pleasures, the traveler lost

the boy, as he had lost the child, and, after calling him in vain, went on upon his journey. So he went on for a while without seeing anything, until at last he came to a young man. He said to the young man, “What do you here?” And the young man said, “I am always in love. Come and love with me.”

But the traveler lost the young man as he had lost the rest of his friends, and, after calling to him to come back, which he never did, went on upon his journey. At last he came to a middle-aged gentleman. So he said to him, “What are you doing here?” And his answer was, “I am always busy. Come and be busy with me.”

The traveler began to be very busy with the gentleman, and they went on through the wood together. The whole journey was through a wood, only it had been open and green at first, like a wood in spring, and now began to be thick and dark, like a wood in summer; some of the little trees that had come out earliest were even turning brown.

The gentleman was not alone, but had a lady of about the same age with him, who was his wife; and they had children, who were with them too. They all went on together through the wood, cutting down the trees, and making a path among the branches, and carrying burdens and working hard.

Sometimes they came to a long green avenue that opened into deeper woods. Then they would hear a very distant little voice

crying, “Father, father, I am another child! Stop for me!” And presently they would see a very little figure, growing larger as it came along, running to join them. When it came up, they all crowded round it, and kissed and welcomed it; and then they all went on together.

Sometimes they came to several avenues at once; and then they all stood still, and one of the children said, “Father, I am going to sea;” and another said, “Father, I am going to India;” and another, “Father, I am going to seek my fortune where I can;” and another, “Father, I am going to heaven.”

So, with many tears at parting, they went, solitary, down those avenues, each child upon its way; and the child who went to heaven rose into the golden air and
vanished.

Whenever these partings happened, the traveler looked at the gentleman, and saw him glance up at the sky above the trees, where the day was beginning to decline, and the sunset to come on. He saw, too, that his hair was turning gray. But they could never rest long, for they had their journey to perform, and it was necessary for them to be always busy.

At last, there had been so many partings that there were no children left, and only the traveler, the gentleman, and the lady went upon their way in company. And now the wood was yellow;

and now brown; and the leaves, even of the forest trees, began to fall.

They came to an avenue that was darker than the rest, and were pressing forward on their journey without looking down it, when the lady stopped.

“My husband,” said the lady, “I am called.”
They listened, and they heard a voice a long way down the avenue say, “Mother, mother!”

It was the voice of the child who had said, “I am going to heaven!” and the father cried, “I pray not yet. The sunset is very near. I pray not yet.”

But the voice called, “Mother, mother!” without minding him, though his hair was now quite white, and tears were on his face.

Then the mother, who was already drawn into the shade of the dark avenue, and moving away with her arms still around his neck, kissed him and said, “My dearest, I am summoned, and I go!” And she was gone. The traveler and he were left alone together.

And they went on and on, until they came very near to the end of the wood; so near, that they could see the setting sun shining red before them through the trees.

Yet once more, while he broke his way among the branches, the traveler lost his friend. He called and called, but there was no reply, and when he passed out of the wood and saw the peaceful sun going down upon a wide purple prospect, he came to an old man sitting upon a fallen tree. He said to the old man, “What do you here?” And the old man said, with a calm smile, “I am always remembering. Come and remember with me.”

So the traveler sat down by the side of the old man, face to face with the serene sunset; and all his friends came softly back and stood around him. The beautiful child, the handsome boy, the young man, the father, mother, and children every one of them was there, and he had lost nothing. He loved them all, and was kind and forbearing with them all, and they all honored and loved him.

DEFINITIONS:—Scents, smells. Cricket, a game at ball very popular in England. Solitary, alone. Summoned, called. Allegory, a truth related in the form of a story.

Try Again

By Charlotte Elizabeth

“Will you give my kite a lift?” said my little nephew to his sister, after trying in vain to make it fly by dragging it along the ground. Lucy very kindly took it up and threw it into the air, but, her brother neglecting to run off at the same moment, the kite fell down again.

“Ah! now, how awkward you are!” said the little fellow. “It was your fault entirely,” answered his sister. “Try again, children,” said I.

Lucy once more took up the kite. But now John was in too great a hurry; he ran off so suddenly that he twitched the kite out of her hand, and it fell flat as before. “Well, who is to blame now?” asked Lucy. “Try again,” said I.

They did, and with more care; but a side wind coming suddenly, as Lucy let go the kite, it was blown against some shrubs, and the tail became entangled in a moment, leaving the poor kite hanging with its head downward.

“There, there!” cried John, “that comes of your throwing it all to one side.” “As if I could make the wind blow straight,” said Lucy. In the meantime, I went to the kite’s assistance; and having

disengaged the long tail, I rolled it up, saying, “Come, children, there are too many trees here; let us find a more open space, and then try again.”

We soon found a fine, open space, covered with green grass, and free from shrubs and trees. Then, all things being ready, I tossed the kite up just as little John ran off. It rose with all the dignity of a balloon, and promised a lofty flight; but John, delighted to find it pulling so hard at the string, stopped short to look upward and admire. The string slackened, the kite wavered, and, the wind not being very strong, down came the kite to the grass. “O John, you should not have stopped,” said I. “However, try again.”

“I won’t try any more,” replied he, rather sullenly. “It is of no use, you see. The kite won’t fly, and I don’t want to be plagued with it any longer.”

“Oh, fie, my little man! would you give up the sport, after all the pains we have taken both to make and to fly the kite? A few disappointments ought not to discourage us. Come, I have wound up your string, and now try again.”

And he did try, and succeeded, for the kite was carried upward on the breeze as lightly as a feather; and when the string was all out, John stood in great delight, holding fast the stick and gazing on the kite, which now seemed like a little white speck in the blue sky. “Look, look, aunt, how high it flies! and it pulls like a team of

horses, so that I can hardly hold it. I wish I had a mile of string: I am sure it would go to the end of it."

After enjoying the sight as long as he wished, little John proceeded to roll up the string slowly; and when the kite fell, he took it up with great glee, saying that it was not at all hurt, and that it had behaved very well. "Shall we come out to-morrow, aunt, and try again?"
"Yes, my dear, if the weather is fine. And now, as we walk home, tell me, what you have learned from your morning's sport."

"I have learned to fly my kite properly."

"You may thank aunt for it, brother," said Lucy, "for you would have given it up long ago, if she had not persuaded you to try again."

"Yes, dear children, I wish to teach you the value of perseverance, even when nothing more depends upon it than the flying of a kite. Whenever you fail in your attempts to do any good thing, let your motto be,—TRY AGAIN."

DEFINITIONS:—Entangled, twisted in, disordered. Assistance, help, aid. Disengaged, cleared, set free. Dignity, majestic manner. Disappointments, failures or defeats of expectation. Discourage, take away courage. Glee, joy. Perseverance, continuance in

anything once begun. Motto, a short sentence or a word full of meaning.

EXERCISE—What is the subject of this lesson? Why was John discouraged in his attempts to fly his kite? What did his aunt say to him? What may we learn from this? What should be our motto if we expect to be successful?

True Manliness

I. “Please, mother, do sit down and let me try my hand,” said Fred Liscom, a bright active boy, twelve years old. Mrs. Liscom, looking pale and worn, was moving languidly about, trying to clear away the breakfast she had scarcely tasted.

She smiled, and said, “You, Fred, you wash dishes?” “Yes, indeed, mother,” answered Fred; “I should be a poor scholar if I couldn’t, when I’ve seen you do it so many times. Just try me.”

A look of relief came over his mother’s face as she seated herself in her low rocking-chair. Fred washed the dishes and put them in the closet. He swept the kitchen, brought up the potatoes from the cellar for the dinner and washed them, and then set out for school.

Fred’s father was away from home, and as there was some cold meat in the pantry, Mrs. Liscom found it an easy task to prepare dinner. Fred hurried home from school, set the table, and again washed the dishes.

He kept on in this way for two or three days, till his mother was able to resume her usual work, and he felt amply rewarded when the doctor, who happened in one day, said, “Well, madam, it’s my

opinion that you would have been very sick if you had not kept quiet."

The doctor did not know how the "quiet" had been secured, nor how the boy's heart bounded at his words. Fred had given up a great deal of what boys hold dear, for the purpose of helping his mother, coasting and skating being just at this time in perfection.

Besides this, his temper and his patience had been severely tried. He had been in the habit of going early to school, and staying to play after it was dismissed.

The boys missed him, and their curiosity was excited when he would give no other reason for not coming to school earlier, or staying after school, than that he was "wanted at home."
"I'll tell you," said Tom Barton, "I'll find him out, boys—see if I don't!"

So, one morning on his way to school, he called for Fred. As he went around to the side door he walked lightly. and somewhat nearer the kitchen window than was absolutely needful. Looking in, he saw Fred standing at the table with a dishcloth in his hand. Of course he reported this at school, and various were the greetings poor Fred received at recess. "Well, you're a brave one to stay at home washing dishes!"

"Girl boy!" "Pretty Bessie!" "Lost your apron, haven't you,

Polly!"

Fred was not wanting either in spirit or in courage, and he was strongly tempted to resent these insults, and to fight some of his tormentors. But his consciousness of right and his love for his mother helped him.

While he was struggling for self mastery, his teacher appeared at the door of the schoolhouse. Fred caught his eye, and it seemed to look, if it did not say, "Don't give up! Be really brave!" He knew the teacher had heard the insulting taunts of his thoughtless schoolmates.

The boys received notice during the day that Fred must not be taunted or teased in any manner. They knew that the teacher meant what he said; and so the brave little boy had no further trouble.

II. "Fire! fire! " The cry crept out on the still night air, and the fire bells began to mug. Fred was wakened by the alarm and the red light streaming into his room. He dressed himself very quickly, and then tapped at the door of his mother's bedroom.

"It is Mr. Barton's house, mother. Do let me go," he said in eager, excited tones. Mrs. Liscom thought a moment. He was young, but she could trust him, and she knew how much his heart was in the request.

“Yes, you may go,” she answered; “but be careful, my boy. If you can help, do so; but do nothing rashly.” Fred promised to follow her advice, and hurried to the fire.

Mr. and Mrs. Barton were not at home. The house had been left in charge of the servants. The fire spread with fearful speed, for there was a high wind, and it was found impossible to save the house. The servants ran about screaming and lamenting, but doing nothing to any purpose.

Fred found Tom outside, in safety. “Where is Katy?” he asked. Tom, trembling with terror, seemed to have had no thought but of his own escape. He said, “Katy is in the house!” “In what room?” asked Fred. “In that one,” answered Tom, pointing to a window in the upper story.

It was no time for words, but for instant, vigorous action. The staircase was already on fire; there was but one way to reach Katy, and that full of danger. The second floor might fall at any moment, and Fred knew it. But he trusted in an arm stronger than his own, and silently sought help and guidance.

A ladder was quickly brought, and placed against the house. Fred mounted it, followed by the hired man, dashed in the sash of the window, and pushed his way into the room where the poor child lay nearly suffocated with smoke.

He roused her with some difficulty, carried her to the window, and placed her upon the sill. She was instantly grasped by strong arms, and carried down the ladder, Fred following as fast as possible. They had scarcely reached the ground before a crash of falling timbers told them that they had barely escaped with their lives.

Tom Barton never forgot the lesson of that night; and he came to believe, and to act upon the belief, in after years, that true manliness is in harmony with gentleness, kindness, and self-denial.

DEFINITIONS:—Languidly, feebly. Amply, fully. Opinion, judgment, belief. Absolutely, wholly, entirely. Resent, to consider as an injury. Consciousness, inward feeling, knowledge of what passes in one's own mind.

The Miller Of The Dee

By CHARLES MACKEY

There dwelt a miller hale and bold
Beside the river Dee;
He worked and sang from morn till night,
No lark more blithe than he;
And this the burden of his song
Forever used to be,—
“I envy nobody; no, not I,
And nobody envies me!”
“Thou’rt wrong, my friend!” said good King Hal;
“Thou’rt wrong as wrong can be;
For could my heart be light as thine,
I’d gladly change with thee.
And tell me now, what makes thee sing,
With voice so loud and free,
While I am sad, though I’m the king,
Beside the river Dee.”
The miller smiled and doffed his cap:
“I earn my bread,” quoth he;
“I love my wife, I love my friend,
I love my children three;
I owe no penny I cannot pay;
I thank the river Dee,
That turns the mill that grinds the corn,

To feed my babes and me."
"Good friend," said Hal, and sighed the while,
"Farewell! and happy be;
But say no more, if thou'dst be true,
That no one envies thee.
Thy mealy cap is worth my crown,
Thy mill my kingdom's fee;
Such men as thou are England's boast,
Oh miller of the Dee!"
DEFINITIONS:—Hale, hearty, strong. Blithe, happy. Quoth, said. Fee, wealth, possession.

A Boy on a Farm

By Charles Dudley Warner

Say what you will about the general usefulness of boys, it is my impression that a farm without a boy would very soon come to grief. What the boy does is the life of the farm. He is the factotum, always in demand, always expected to do the thousand indispensable things that nobody else will do. Upon him fall all the odds and ends, the most difficult things.

After everybody else is through, he has to finish up. His work is like a woman's,—perpetually waiting on others. Everybody knows how much easier it is to eat a good dinner than it is to wash the dishes afterward. Consider what a boy on a farm is required to do; things that must be done, or life would actually stop.

It is understood, in the first place, that he is to do all the errands, to go to the store, to the post office, and to carry all sorts of messages. If he had as many legs as a centiped, they would tire before night. His two short limbs seem to him entirely inadequate to the task. He would like to have as many legs as a wheel has spokes, and rotate about in the same way.

This he sometimes tries to do; and the people who have seen him "turning cart wheels" along the side of the road, have supposed that he was amusing himself and idling his time; he was only

trying to invent a new mode of locomotion, so that he could economize his legs, and do his errands with greater dispatch.

He practices standing on his head, in order to accustom himself to any position. Leapfrog is one of his methods of getting over the ground quickly. He would willingly go an errand any distance if he could leapfrog it with a few other boys.

He has a natural genius for combining pleasure with business. This is the reason why, when he is sent to the spring for a pitcher of water, he is absent so long; for he stops to poke the frog that sits on the stone, or, if there is a penstock, to put his hand over the spout,
and squirt the water a little while.

He is the one who spreads the grass when the men have cut it; he mows it away in the barn; he rides the horse, to cultivate the corn, up and down the hot, weary rows; he picks up the potatoes when they are dug; he drives the cows night and morning; he brings wood and water, and splits kindling; he gets up the horse, and puts out the horse; whether he is in the house or out of it, there is always something for him to do.

Just before the school in winter he shovels paths; in summer he turns the grindstone. He knows where there are lots of wintergreens and sweet flags, but, instead of going for them, he is to stay indoors and pare apples, and stone raisins, and pound

something in a mortar. And yet, with his mind full of schemes of what he would like to do, and his hands full of occupations, he is an idle boy, who has nothing to busy himself with but school and chores!

He would gladly do all the work if somebody else would do the chores, he thinks; and yet I doubt if any boy ever amounted to anything in the world; or was of much use as a man, who did not enjoy the advantages of a liberal education in the way of chores. —From "Being a Boy."

DEFINITIONS:—Factotum, a person employed to do all kinds of work. Indispensable, absolutely necessary. Perpetually, continually. Centiped, an insect with a great number of feet. Economize, to save. Dispatch, diligence, haste. Penstock, a wooden tube for conducting water. Chores, the light work of the household either within or without doors.

Meddlesome Mattie

Oh, how one ugly trick has spoiled
The sweetest and the best!
Matilda, though a pleasant child,
One grievous fault possessed,
Which, like a cloud before the skies,
Hid all her better qualities.
Sometimes, she'd lift the teapot lid
To peep at what was in it;
Or tilt the kettle, if you did
But turn your back a minute.
In vain you told her not to touch,
Her trick of meddling grew so much.
Her grandmamma went out one day,
And, by mistake, she laid
Her spectacles and snuffbox gay,
Too near the little maid;
"Ah! well," thought she, "I'll try them on,
As soon as grandmamma is gone."
Forthwith, she placed upon her nose
The glasses large and wide;
And looking round, as I suppose,
The snuffbox, too, she spied.
"Oh, what a pretty box is this!
I'll open it," said little miss.

“I know that grandmamma would say,
‘Don’t meddle with it, dear;’
But then she’s far enough away,
And no one else is near;
Beside, what can there be amiss
In opening such a box as this?”
So, thumb and finger went to work
To move the stubborn lid;
And, presently, a mighty jerk
The mighty mischief did;
For all at once, ah! woeful case!
The snuff came puffing in her face.
Poor eyes, and nose, and mouth, and chin
A dismal sight presented;
And as the snuff got further in,
Sincerely she repented.
In vain she ran about for ease,
She could do nothing else but sneeze.
She dashed the spectacles away,
To wipe her tingling eyes;
And, as in twenty bits they lay,
Her grandmamma she spies.
“Heyday! and what’s the matter now?”
Cried grandmamma, with angry brow.
Matilda, smarting with the pain,
And tingling still, and sore,
Made many a promise to refrain

From meddling evermore;
And 'tis a fact, as I have heard,
She ever since has kept her word.

DEFINITIONS:—Qualities, traits of character. Meddling, interfering without right. Forthwith, at once. Amiss, wrong, faulty. Woeful, sad, sorrowful. Tingling, smarting. Refrain, to keep from.

Harry And His Dog

By Mary Russell Mitford

“Beg, Frisk, beg,” said little Harry, as he sat on an inverted basket, at his grandmother’s door, eating, with great satisfaction, a porringer of bread and milk. His little sister Annie sat on the ground opposite to him, now twisting her flowers into garlands, and now throwing them away.

“Beg, Frisk, beg!” repeated Harry, holding a bit of bread just out of the dog’s reach; and the obedient Frisk squatted himself on his hind legs, and held up his fore paws, waiting for master Harry to give him the tempting morsel.

The little boy and the little dog were great friends. Frisk loved him dearly, much better than he did any one else, perhaps, because he remembered that Harry was his earliest and firmest friend during a time of great trouble.

Poor Frisk had come as a stray dog to Milton, the place where Harry lived. If he could have told his own story, it would probably have been a very pitiful one, of kicks and cuffs, of hunger and foul weather.

Certain it is, he made his appearance at the very door where Harry was now sitting, in miserable plight, wet, dirty, and half starved;

and there he met Harry, who took a fancy to him, and Harry's grandmother, who drove him off with a broom.

Harry, at length, obtained permission for the little dog to remain as a sort of outdoor pensioner, and fed him with stray bones and cold potatoes, and such things as he could get for him. He also provided him with a little basket to sleep in, the very same which, turned up, afterward served Harry for a seat.

After a while, having proved his good qualities by barking away a set of pilferers, who were making an attack on the great pear tree, he was admitted into the house, and became one of its most vigilant and valued inmates. He could fetch or carry either by land or water; would pick up a thimble or a ball of cotton, if little Annie should happen to drop them; or take Harry's dinner to school for him with perfect honesty.

"Beg, Frisk, beg!" said Harry, and gave him, after long waiting, the expected morsel. Frisk was satisfied, but Harry was not. The little boy, though a good-humored fellow in the main, had turns of naughtiness, which were apt to last him all day, and this promised to prove one of his worst. It was a holidays, and in the afternoon his cousins, Jane and William, were to come and see him and Annie; and the pears were to be gathered, and the children were to have a treat.

Harry, in his impatience, thought the morning would never be

over. He played such pranks—buffeting Frisk, cutting the curls off of Annie's doll, and finally breaking his grandmother's spectacles—that before his visitors arrived, indeed, almost immediately after dinner, he contrived to be sent to bed in disgrace.

Poor Harry! there he lay, rolling and kicking, while Jane, and William, and Annie were busy gathering the fine, mellow pears. William was up in the tree, gathering and shaking. Annie and Jane were catching them in their aprons, or picking them up from the ground, now piling them in baskets, and now eating the nicest and ripest, while Frisk was barking gayly among them, as if he were catching pears too!

Poor Harry! He could hear all this glee and merriment through the open window, as he lay in bed. The storm of passion having subsided, there he lay weeping and disconsolate, a grievous sob bursting forth every now and then, as he heard the loud peals of childish laughter, and as he thought how he should have laughed, and how happy he should have been, had he not forfeited all his pleasure by his own bad conduct.

He wondered if Annie would not be so good-natured as to bring him a pear. All on a sudden, he heard a little foot on the stair, pitapat, and he thought she was coming. Pitapat came the foot, nearer and nearer, and at last a small head peeped, half afraid, through the half-open door.

But it was not Annie's head; it was Frisk's—poor Frisk, whom Harry had been teasing all the morning, and who came into the room wagging his tail, with a great pear in his mouth; and, jumping upon the bed, he laid it in the little boy's hand.

Is not Frisk a fine, grateful fellow? and does he not deserve a share of Harry's breakfast, whether he begs for it or not? And little Harry will remember from the events of this day that kindness, even though shown to a dog, will always be rewarded; and that ill nature and bad temper are connected with nothing but pain and disgrace.

DEFINITIONS:—Inverted, turned upside down. Porringer, a small metallic dish. Remembered, had not forgotten. Plight, condition. Pensioner, one who is supported by others. Pilferers, those who steal little things. Vigilant, watchful. Inmates, those living in the same house. Holiday, a day of amusement. Buffeting, striking with the hand. Subsided, become quiet. Forfeited, lost. Connected, united, have a close relation.

EXERCISE.—What two lessons may be learned from this story? Is it a good rule to return kindness for unkindness? Do you think that Harry's dog brought him the pear because he was really grateful?

Little Boy Blue

By Eugene Field

The little toy dog is covered with dust,
But sturdy and stanch he stands;
And the little toy soldier is red with rust,
And his musket it molds in his hands.
Time was when the little toy dog was new,
And the soldier was passing fair,
And there was a time when our Little Boy Blue
Kissed them and put them there.
“Now, don’t you go till I come,” he said,
“And don’t you make any noise!”
So, toddling off to his trundle bed,
He dreamed of the pretty toys:
And, as he was dreaming, an angel song
Awakened our Little Boy Blue—
Oh, the years are many, the years are long;
But the little toy friends are true.
Ah, faithful to Little Boy Blue they stand,
Each in the same old place,
Awaiting the touch of a little hand,
The smile of a little face;
And they wonder, as waiting these long years thro’
In the dust of that little chair,

What has become of our Little Boy Blue,
Since he kissed them and put them there.

If I were a boy

If I were a boy again, and knew what I know now, I would not be quite so positive in my opinions as I used to be. Boys generally think that they are very certain about many things. A boy of fifteen is generally a great deal more sure of what he thinks he knows than a man of fifty.

You ask the boy a question and he will probably answer you right off, with great assurance; he knows all about it. Ask a man of large experience and ripe wisdom the same question, and he will say, “Well, there is much to be said about it. I am inclined on the whole to think so and so, but other intelligent men think otherwise.”

When I was a small boy, I traveled from central Massachusetts to western New York, crossing the river at Albany, and going the rest of the way by canal. On the canal boat a kindly gentleman was talking to me one day, and I mentioned the fact that I had crossed the Connecticut River at Albany. How I got it in my head that it was the Connecticut River, I do not know, for I knew my geography very well then; but in some unaccountable way I had it fixed in my mind that the river at Albany was the Connecticut, and I called it so.

“Why,” said the gentleman, “that is the Hudson River.”

“Oh, no, sir!” I replied, politely but firmly. “You’re mistaken.That is the Connecticut River.”

The gentleman smiled and said no more. I was not much in the habit, I think, of contradicting my elders; but in this matter I was perfectly sure that I was right, and so I thought it my duty to correct the gentleman’s geography. I felt rather sorry for him that he should be so ignorant. One day, after I reached home, I was looking over my route on the map, and lo! there was Albany standing on the Hudson River, a hundred miles from the Connecticut.
Then I did not feel half so sorry for the gentleman’s ignorance as I did for my own. I never told anybody that story until I wrote it down on these pages the other day; but I have thought of it a thousand times, and always with a blush for my boldness.

Nor was it the only time that I was perfectly sure of things that really were not so. It is hard for a boy to learn that he may be mistaken; but, unless he is a fool, he learns it after a while. The sooner he finds it out, the better for him.

If I were a boy, I would not think that I and the boys of my time were an exception to the general rule—a new kind of boys, unlike all who have lived before, having different feelings and different ways. To be honest, I must own that I used to think so myself. I was quite inclined to reject the counsel of my elders by saying to myself, “That may have been well enough for boys thirty or fifty

years ago, but it isn't the thing for me and my set of boys." But that was nonsense. The boys of one generation are not different from the boys of another generation.

If we say that boyhood lasts fifteen or sixteen years, I have known three generations of boys, some of them city boys and some of them country boys, and they are all very much alike—so nearly alike that the old rules of industry and patience and perseverance and self-control are as applicable to one generation as to another. The fact is, that what your fathers and teachers have found by experience to be good for boys, will be good for you; and what their experience has taught them will be bad for boys, will be bad for you. You are just boys, nothing more nor less.

DEFINITIONS:— Assurance, certainty. Route, road. Generation, people living at the same time. Applicable, can be applied.

The Tempest

By James T. Fields

We were crowded in the cabin;
Not a soul would dare to sleep
It was midnight on the waters,
And a storm was on the deep.
‘Tis a fearful thing in winter
To be shattered by the blast,
And to hear the rattling trumpet
Thunder, “Cut away the mast!”
So we shuddered there in silence,
For the stoutest held his breath,
While the hungry sea was roaring,
And the breakers threatened death.
And as thus we sat in darkness,
Each one busy in his prayers,
“We are lost!” the captain shouted,
As he staggered down the stairs.
But his little daughter whispered,
As she took his icy hand,
“Isn’t God upon the ocean,
Just the same as on the land?”
Then we kissed the little maiden,
And we spoke in better cheer;

And we anchored safe in harbor
When the morn was shining clear.

DEFINITIONS:—Deep, the ocean. Blast, tempest. Breakers, waves of the sea broken by rocks. Cheer, state of mind.

The Sounding Of The Call – Part 1

(From The Call of the Wild)

By Jack London

Thrown into the hard life of the frozen north of America, Buck has learnt to fight for his survival. Rough treatment by the men who drive the sleighs and the savagery of the other dogs has almost turned him into a wild animal. Now, only the love of John Thornton, his master, keeps him from joining a wolf pack.

Spring came on once more, and at the end of all their wandering they found, not the Lost Cabin, but a shallow place in a broad valley where the gold showed like yellow butter across the bottom of the washing-pan. They sought no farther. Each day they worked earned them thousands of dollars in clean dust and nuggets, and they worked every day. The gold was sacked in moosehide bags, fifty pounds to the bag, and piled like so much firewood outside the spruce-bough lodge. Like giants they toiled, days flashing on the heels of days like dreams as they heaped the treasure
up.

There was nothing for the dogs to do, save the hauling in of meat now and again that Thornton killed, and Buck spent long hours musing by the fire. The vision of the short-legged hairy man came to him more frequently, now that there was little work to be

done; and often, blinking by the fire, Buck wandered with him in that other world which he remembered.

The salient thing of this other world seemed fear. When he watched the hairy man sleeping by the fire, head between his knees and hands clasped above, Buck saw that he slept restlessly, with many starts and awakenings, at which times he would peer fearfully into the darkness and fling more wood upon the fire.

Did they walk by the beach of a sea, where the hairy man gathered shell-fish and ate them as he gathered, it was with eyes that roved everywhere for hidden danger and with legs prepared to run like the wind at its first appearance. Through the forest they crept noiselessly, Buck at the hairy man's heels; and they were alert and vigilant, the pair of them, ears twitching and moving and nostrils quivering, for the man heard and smelled as keenly as Buck. The hairy man could spring up into the trees and travel ahead as fast as on the ground, swinging by the arms from limb to limb, sometimes a dozen feet apart, letting go and catching, never falling, never missing his grip. In fact, he seemed as much at home among the trees as on the ground; and Buck had memories of nights of vigil spent beneath trees wherein the hairy man roosted, holding on tightly as he slept.

And closely akin to the visions of the hairy man was the call still sounding in the depths of the forest. It filled him with a great unrest and strange desires. It caused him to feel a vague, sweet

gladness, and he was aware of wild yearnings and stirrings for he knew not what. Sometimes he pursued the call into the forest, looking for it as though it were a tangible thing, barking softly or defiantly, as the mood might dictate. He would thrust his nose into the cool wood moss, or into the black soil where long grasses grew, and snort with joy at the fat earth smells; or he would crouch for hours, as if in concealment, behind fungus-covered trunks of fallen trees, wide-eyed and wide-eared to all that moved and sounded about him. It might be, lying thus, that he hoped to surprise this call he could not understand. But he did not know why he did these various things. He was impelled to do them, and did not reason about them at all.

Irresistible impulses seized him. He would by lying in camp, dozing lazily in the heat of the day, when suddenly his head would lift and his ears cock up, intent and listening, and he would spring to his feet and dash away, and on and on, for hours, through the forest aisles and across the open spaces where the niggerheads bunched. He loved to run down dry watercourses, and to creep up and spy upon the bird life in the woods. For a day at a time he would lie in the underbrush where he could watch the partridges drumming and strutting up and down. But especially he loved to run in the dim twilight of the summer midnights, listening to the subdued and sleepy murmurs of the forest, reading signs and sounds as man may read a book, and seeking for the mysterious something that called—called, waking or sleeping, at all times, for him to come.

One night he sprang from sleep with a start, eager-eyed, nostrils quivering and scenting, his mane bristling in recurrent waves. From the forest came the call (or one note of it, for the call was many noted), distinct and definite as never before—a long-drawn howl, like, yet unlike, any noise made by husky dog. And he knew it, in the old familiar way, as a sound heard before. He sprang through the sleeping camp and in swift silence dashed through the woods. As he drew closer to the cry he went more slowly, with caution every moment, till he came to an open place among the trees, and looking out saw, erect on haunches, with nose pointed to the sky, a long, lean, timber wolf.

He had made no noise, yet it ceased from its howling and tried to sense his presence. Buck stalked into the open, half crouching, body gathered compactly together, tail straight and stiff, feet falling with unwonted care. Every movement advertised commingled threatening and overture of friendliness.

It was the menacing truce that marks the meeting of wild beasts that prey. But the wolf fled at sight of him. He followed, with wild leapings, in a frenzy to overtake. He ran him into a blind channel, in the bed of the creek, where a timber jam barred the way. The wolf whirled about, pivoting on his hind legs after the fashion of Joe and of all cornered husky dogs, snarling and bristling, clipping his teeth together in a continuous and rapid succession of snaps.

Buck did not attack, but circled him about and hedged him in with friendly advances. The wolf was suspicious and afraid; for Buck made three of him in weight, while his head barely reached Buck's shoulder. Watching his chance, he darted away, and the chase was resumed.

Time and again he was cornered, and the thing repeated, though he was in poor condition or Buck could not so easily have overtaken him. He would run till Buck's head was even with his flank, when he would whirl around at bay, only to dash away again at the first opportunity.

But in the end Buck's pertinacity was rewarded; for the wolf, finding that no harm was intended, finally sniffed noses with him. Then they became friendly, and played about in the nervous, half-coy way with which fierce beasts belie their fierceness. After some time of this the wolf started off at an easy lope in a manner that plainly showed he was going somewhere. He made it clear to Buck that he was to come, and they ran side by side through the sombre twilight, straight up the creek bed, into the gorge from which it issued, and across the bleak divide where it took its rise. On the opposite slope of the watershed they came down into a level country where were great stretches of forest and many streams, and through these great stretches they ran steadily, hour after hour, the sun rising higher and the day growing warmer. Buck was wildly glad. He knew he was at last answering the call, running by the side of his wood brother towards the place from

where they surely came. Old memories were coming upon him fast, and he was stirring to them as of old he stirred to the realities of which they were the shadows. He had done this thing before, somewhere in that other and dimly remembered world, and he was doing it again, now, running free in the open, the unpacked earth underfoot, the wide sky overhead.

They stopped by a running stream to drink, and, stopping, Buck remembered John Thornton. He sat down. The wolf started on towards the place from where the call surely came, then returned to him, sniffing noses and making actions as though to encourage him. But Buck turned about and started slowly on the back track. For the better part of an hour the wild brother ran by his side, whining softly. Then he sat down, pointed his nose upward, andhowled. It was a mournful howl, and as Buck held steadily on his way he heard it grow faint and fainter until it was lost in the distance.

John Thornton was eating his dinner when Buck dashed into camp and sprang upon him in a frenzy of affection, overturning him, scrambling upon him, licking his face, biting his hand—'playing the general tomfool,' as John Thornton characterized it, the while he shook Buck back and forth and cursed him lovingly.

For two days and nights Buck never left camp, never let Thornton out of his sight. He followed him about at his work, watched him while he ate, saw him into his blankets at night and out of them

in the morning. But after two days the call of the forest began to sound more imperiously than ever. Buck's restlessness came back on him, and he was haunted by recollections of the wild brother, and of the smiling land beyond the divide and the run side by side through the wide forest stretches. Once again he took to wandering in the woods, but the wild brother came no more; and though he listened through long vigils, the mournful howl was never raised.

He began to sleep out at night, staying away from camp for days at a time; and once he crossed the divide at the head of the creek and went down into the land of timber and streams. There he wandered for a week, seeking vainly for fresh sign of the wild brother, killing his meat as he travelled and travelling with the long easy lope that seems never to tire. He fished for salmon in a broad stream that emptied somewhere into the sea, and by this stream he killed a large black bear, blinded by the mosquitoes while likewise fishing, and raging through the forest helpless and terrible. Even so, it was a hard fight, and it aroused the last latent remnants of Buck's ferocity. And two days later, when he returned to his kill and found a dozen wolverenes quarrelling over the spoil, he scattered them like chaff; and those that fled left two behind who would quarrel no more.

The blood-longing became stronger than ever before. He was a killer, a thing that preyed, living on the things that lived, unaided, alone, by virtue of his own strength and prowess, surviving

triumphantly in a hostile environment where only the strong survived. Because of all this he became possessed of a great pride in himself, which communicated itself like a contagion to his physical being. It advertised itself in all his movements, was apparent in the play of every muscle, spoke plainly as speech in the way he carried himself, and made his glorious furry coat if anything more glorious. But for the stray brown of his muzzle and above his eyes, and for the splash of white hair that ran midmost down his chest, he might well have been mistaken for a gigantic wolf, larger than the largest of the breed. From his St. Bernard father he had inherited size and weight, but it was his shepherd mother who had given shape to that size and weight. His muzzle was the long wolf muzzle, save that it was larger than the muzzle of any wolf; and his head, somewhat broader, was the wolf head on a massive scale.

His cunning was wolf cunning, and wild cunning; his intelligence, shepherd intelligence and St. Bernard intelligence; and all this, plus an experience gained in the fiercest of schools, made him as formidable a creature as any that roamed the wild.

The Sounding Of The Call – Part 2

A carnivorous animal, living on a straight meat diet, he was in full flower, at the high tide of his life, overspilling with vigour and virility. When Thornton passed a caressing hand along his back, a snapping and crackling followed the hand, each hair discharging its pent magnetism at the contact. Every part, brain and body, nerve tissue and fibre, was keyed to the most exquisite pitch; and between all the parts there was a perfect equilibrium or adjustment. To sights and sounds and events which required action, he responded with lightning-like rapidity. Quickly as a husky dog could leap to defend from attack or to attack, he could leap twice as quickly. He saw the movement, or heard sound, and responded in less time than another dog required to compass the mere seeing or hearing. He perceived and determined and responded in the same instant. In point of fact the three actions of perceiving, determining, and responding were sequential; but so infinitesimal were the intervals of time between them that they appeared simultaneous. His muscles were surcharged with vitality, and snapped into play sharply, like steel springs. Life streamed through him in splendid flood, glad and rampant, until it seemed that it would burst him asunder in sheer ecstasy and pour forth generously over the world.

‘Never was there such a dog,’ said John Thornton one day, as the partners watched Buck marching out of camp.

‘When he was made, the mould was broke,’ said Pete.

‘Py jingo! I t’ink so mineself,’ Hans affirmed.

They saw him marching out of camp, but they did not see the instant and terrible transformation which took place as soon as he was within the secrecy of the forest. He no longer marched. At once he became a thing of the wild, stealing along softly, cat-footed, a passing shadow that appeared and disappeared among the shadows. He knew how to take advantage of every cover, to crawl on his belly like a snake, and like a snake to leap and strike. He could take a ptarmigan from its nest, kill a rabbit as it slept, and snap in mid-air the little chipmunks fleeing a second too late for the trees. Fish, in open pools, were not too quick for him; nor were beaver, mending their dams, too wary. He killed to eat, not from wantonness; but he preferred to eat what he killed himself. So a lurking humour ran through his deeds, and it was his delight to steal upon the squirrels, and, when he had all but had them, to let them go, chattering in mortal fear to the tree-tops.

As the fall of the year came on, the moose appeared in greater abundance, moving slowly down to meet the winter in the lower and less rigorous valleys. Buck had already dragged down a stray part-grown calf; but he wished strongly for larger and more formidable quarry, and he came upon it one day on the divide at the head of the creek. A band of twenty moose had crossed over from the land of streams and timber, and chief among them was a

great bull. He was in a savage temper, and, standing over six feet from the ground, was as formidable an antagonist as even Buck could desire.

Back and forth the bull tossed his great palmated antlers, branching to fourteen points and embracing seven feet within the tips. His small eyes burned with a vicious and bitter light, while he roared with fury at sight of Buck.

From the bull's side, just forward of the flank, protruded a feathered arrowend, which accounted for his savageness. Guided by that instinct which came from the old hunting days of the primordial world, Buck proceeded to cut the bull out from the herd. It was no slight task. He would bark and dance about in front of the bull, just out of reach of the great antlers and of the terrible splay hoofs which could have stamped his life out with a single blow. Unable to turn his back on the fanged danger and go on, the bull would be driven into paroxysms of rage. At such moments he charged Buck, who retreated craftily, luring him on by a simulated inability to escape. But when he was thus separated from his fellows two or three of the younger bulls would charge back upon Buck and enable the wounded bull to rejoin the herd.

There is a patience of the wild—dogged, tireless, persistent as life itself—that holds motionless for endless hours the spider in its web, the snake in its coils, the panther in its ambuscade; this

patience belongs peculiarly to life when it hunts its living food; and it belonged to Buck as he clung to the flank of the herd, retarding its march, irritating the young bulls, worrying the cows with their half-grown calves, and driving the wounded bull mad with helpless rage.

For half a day this continued. Buck multiplied himself, attacking from all sides, enveloping the herd in a whirlwind of menace, cutting out his victim as fast as it could rejoin its mates, wearing out the patience of creatures preyed upon, which is a lesser patience than that of creatures preying.

As the day wore along and the sun dropped to its bed in the north-west (the darkness had come back and the fall nights were six hours long), the young bulls retraced their steps more and more reluctantly to the aid of their beset leader. The down-coming winter was harrying them on to the lower levels, and it seemed they could never shake off this tireless creature that held them back. Besides, it was not the life of the herd, or of the young bulls that was threatened. The life of only one member was demanded, which was a remoter interest than their lives, and in the end they were content to pay the toll.

As twilight fell the old bull stood with lowered head, watching his mates—the cows he had known, the calves he had fathered, the bulls he had mastered —as they shambled on at a rapid pace through the fading night. He could not follow, for before his nose

leaped the merciless fanged terror that would not let him go. Three hundredweight more than half a ton he weighed; he had lived a long, strong life, full of fight and struggle, and at the end he faced death at the teeth of a creature whose head did not reach beyond his great knuckled knees.

From then on, night and day, Buck never left his prey, never gave it a moment's rest, never permitted it to browse the leaves of trees or the shoots of young birch and willow. Nor did he give the wounded bull opportunity to slake his burning thirst in the slender trickling streams they crossed. Often, in desperation, he burst into long stretches of flight. At such times Buck did not attempt to stay him, but loped easily at his heels, satisfied with the way the game was played, lying down when the moose stood still, attacking him fiercely when he strove to eat or drink.

The great head drooped more and more under its tree of horns, and the shambling trot grew weak and weaker. He took to standing for long periods, with nose to the ground and dejected ears dropped limply; and Buck found more time in which to get water for himself and in which to rest. At such moments, panting with red lolling tongue and with eyes fixed upon the big bull, it appeared to Buck that a change was coming over the face of things. He could feel a new stir in the land. As the moose were coming into the land, other kinds of life were coming in. Forest and stream and air seemed palpitant with their presence. The news of it was borne in upon him, not by sight, or sound, or

smell, but by some other and subtler sense. He heard nothing, saw nothing, yet knew that the land was somehow different; that through it strange things were afoot and ranging; and he resolved to investigate after he had finished the business in hand.

At last, at the end of the fourth day, he pulled the great moose down. For a day and a night he remained by the kill, eating and sleeping, turn and turn about. Then, rested, refreshed and strong, he turned his face towards camp and John Thornton. He broke into the long easy lope, and went on, hour after hour, never at loss for the tangled way, heading straight home through strange country with a certitude of direction that put man and his magnetic needle to shame.

As he held on he became more and more conscious of the new stir in the land. There was life abroad in it different from the life which had been there throughout the summer. No longer was this fact borne upon him in some subtle, mysterious way. The birds talked of it, the squirrels chattered about it, the very breeze whispered of it. Several times he stopped and drew in the fresh morning air in great sniffs, reading a message which made him leap on with greater speed.

He was oppressed with a sense of calamity happening,* if it were not calamity already happened; and as he crossed the last watershed and dropped down into the valley towards camp, he proceeded with greater caution.

Three miles away he came upon a fresh trail that sent his neck hair rippling and bristling. It led straight towards camp and John Thornton. Buck hurried on, swiftly and stealthily, every nerve straining and tense, alert to the multitudinous details which told a story—all but the end.

The Sounding Of The Call – Part 3

His nose gave him a varying description of the passage of life on the heels of which he was travelling. He remarked the pregnant silence of the forest. The bird life had flitted. The squirrels were in hiding. One only he saw—a sleek grey fellow, flattened against a grey dead limb so that he seemed a part of it, a woody excrescence upon the wood itself.

As Buck slid along with the obscureness of a gliding shadow, his nose was jerked suddenly to the side as though a positive force had gripped and pulled it. He followed the new scent into a thicket and found Nig. He was lying on his side, dead where he had dragged himself, an arrow protruding, head and feathers, from either side of his body.

A hundred yards farther on, Buck came upon one of the sled-dogs Thornton had bought in Dawson. This dog was thrashing about in a death-struggle, directly on the trail, and Buck passed around him without stopping. From the camp came the faint sound of many voices, rising and falling in a sing-song chant. Bellying forward to the edge of the clearing, he found Hans, lying on his face; feathered with arrows like a porcupine. At the same instant Buck peered out where the spruce-bough lodge had been and saw what made his hair leap straight up on his neck and shoulders. A gust of overpowering rage swept over him. He did not know that

he growled, but he growled aloud with a terrible ferocity. For the last time in his life he allowed passion to usurp cunning and reason, and it was because of his great love for John Thornton that he lost his head.

The Yeehats were dancing about the wreckage of the spruce-bough when they heard a fearful roaring and saw rushing upon them an animal the like of which they had never seen before. It was Buck, a live hurricane of fury, hurling himself upon them in a frenzy to destroy. He sprang at the foremost man (it was the chief of the Yeehats), ripping the throat wide open till the rent jugular spouted a fountain of blood. He did not pause to worry the victim, but ripped in passing, with the next bound tearing wide the throat of a second man. There was no withstanding him. He plunged about in their very midst, tearing, rending, destroying, in constan t and terrific motion which defied the arrows they discharged at him. In fact, so inconceivably rapid were his movements, and so closely were the Indians tangled together, that they shot one another with the arrows; and one young hunter, hurling a spear at Buck in mid-air, drove it through the chest of another hunter with such force that the point broke through the skin of the back and stood out beyond. Then a panic seized the Yeehats, and they fled in terror to the woods, proclaiming as they fled the advent of the Evil Spirit.

And truly Buck was the Fiend incarnate, raging at their heels and dragging them down like deer as they raced through the trees. It

was a fateful day for the Yeehats. They scattered far and wide over the country, and it was not till a week later that the last of the survivors gathered together in a lower valley and counted their losses. As for Buck, wearying of the pursuit, he returned to the desolated camp. He found Pete where he had been killed in his blankets in the first moment of surprise. Thornton's desperate struggle was fresh-written on the earth, and Buck scented every detail of it down to the edge of a deep pool.

By the edge, head and fore feet in the water, lay Skeet, faithful to the last. The pool itself, muddy and discoloured from the sluice boxes, effectually hid what it contained, and it contained John Thornton; for Buck followed hi trace into the water, from which no trace led away.

All day Buck brooded by the pool or roamed restlessly about the camp. Death, as a cessation of movement, as a passing out and away from the lives of the living, he knew, and he knew John Thornton was dead. It left a great void in him, somewhat akin to hunger, but a void which ached and ached, and which food could not fill.

At times, when he paused to contemplate the carcasses of the Yeehats, he forgot the pain of it; and at such times he was aware of a great pride in himself—a pride greater than any he had yet experienced. He had killed man, the noblest game of all, and he had killed in the face of the law of club and fang. He sniffed the

bodies curiously. They had died so easily. It was harder to kill a husky dog than them. They were no match at all, were it not for their arrows and spears and clubs.

Thenceforward he would be unafraid of them except when they bore in their hands, arrows, spears, and clubs.

Night came on, and a full moon rose high over the trees into the sky, lighting the land till it lay bathed in ghostly day. And with the coming of the night, brooding and mourning by the pool, Buck became alive to a stirring of the new life in the forest other than that which the Yeehats had made. He stood up, listening and scenting. From far away drifted a faint, sharp yelp, followed by a chorus of similar sharp yelps. As the moments passed the yelps grew closer and louder. Again Buck knew them as things heard in that other world which persisted in his memory. He walked to the centre of the open space and listened. It was the call, the many-noted call, sounding more luringly and compellingly than ever before. And as never before, he was ready to obey. John Thornton was dead. The last tie was broken. Man and the claims of man no longer bound him.

Hunting their living meat, as the Yeehats were hunting it, on the flanks of the migrating moose, the wolf pack had at last crossed over from the land of streams and timber and invaded Buck's valley. Into the clearing where the moonlight streamed, they poured in a silvery flood; and in the centre of the clearing stood

Buck, motionless as a statue, waiting their coming. They were awed, so still and large he stood, and a moment's pause fell, till the boldest one leaped straight for him. Like a flash Buck struck, breaking the neck. Then he stood, without movement, as before, the stricken wolf rolling in agony behind him. Three others tried it in sharp succession; and one after the other they drew back, streaming blood from slashed throats or shoulders.

This was sufficient to fling the whole pack forward pell-mell, crowded together, blocked and confused by its eagerness to pull down the prey. Buck's marvellous quickness and agility stood him in good stead. Pivoting on his hind legs, and snapping and gashing, he was everywhere at once, presenting a front which was apparently unbroken so swiftly did he whirl and guard from side to side. But to prevent them from getting behind him, he was forced back, down past the pool and into the creek bed, till he brought up against a high gravel bank. He worked along to a right angle in the bank which the men had made in the course of mining, and in this angle he came to bay, protected on three sides and with nothing to do but face the front.

And so well did he face it, that at the end of half an hour the wolves drew back discomfited. The tongues of all were out and lolling, the white fangs showing cruelly white in the moonlight. Some were lying down with heads raised and ears pricked forward; others stood on their feet, watching him; and still others were lapping water from the pool. One wolf, long and lean and

grey, advanced cautiously, in a friendly manner, and Buck recognized the wild brother with whom he had run for a night and a day. He was whining softly,and, as Buck whined, they touched noses.

Then an old wolf, gaunt and battle-scarred, came forward. Buck writhed his lips into the preliminary of a snarl, but sniffed noses with him. Whereupon the old wolf sat down, pointed nose at the moon, and broke out the long wolf howl. The others sat down and howled. And now the call came to Buck in unmistakable accents. He, too, sat down and howled. This over, he came out of his angle and the pack crowded around him, sniffing in half-friendly, halfsavage manner. The leaders lifted the yelp of the pack and sprang away into the woods. The wolves swung in behind, yelping in chorus. And Buck ran with them, side by side with the wild brother, yelping as he ran.

And here may well end the story of Buck. The years were not many when the Yeehats noted a change in the breed of timber wolves; for some were seen with splashes of brown on head and muzzle, and with a rift of white centring down the chest. But more remarkable than this, the Yeehats tell of a Ghost Dog that runs at the head of the pack. They are afraid of this Ghost Dog, for it has cunning greater than they, stealing from their camps in fierce winters, robbing their traps, slaying their dogs, and defying their bravest hunters.

Nay, the tale grows worse. Hunters there are who fail to return to the camp, and hunters there have been whom their tribesmen found with their throats slashed cruelly open and with wolf prints about them in the snow greater than the prints of any wolf. Each fall, when the Yeehats follow the movement of the moose, there is a certain valley which they never enter. And women there are who become sad when the word goes over the fire of how the Evil Spirit came to select that valley for an abiding-place.

In the summers there is one visitor, however, to that valley, of which the Yeehats do not know. It is a great, gloriously coated wolf, like, and yet unlike, all other wolves. He crosses alone from the smiling timber land and comes down into an open space among the trees. Here a yellow stream flows from rotted moose-hide sacks and sinks into the ground, with long grasses growing through it and vegetable mould overrunning it and hiding its yellow from the sun; and here he muses for a time, howling once, long and mournfully, ere he departs.

But he is not always alone. When the long winter nights come on and the wolves follow their meat into the lower valleys, he may be seen running at the head of the pack through the pale moonlight or glimmering borealis, leaping gigantic above his fellows, his great throat a-bellow as he sings a song of the young world, which is the song of the pack.

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