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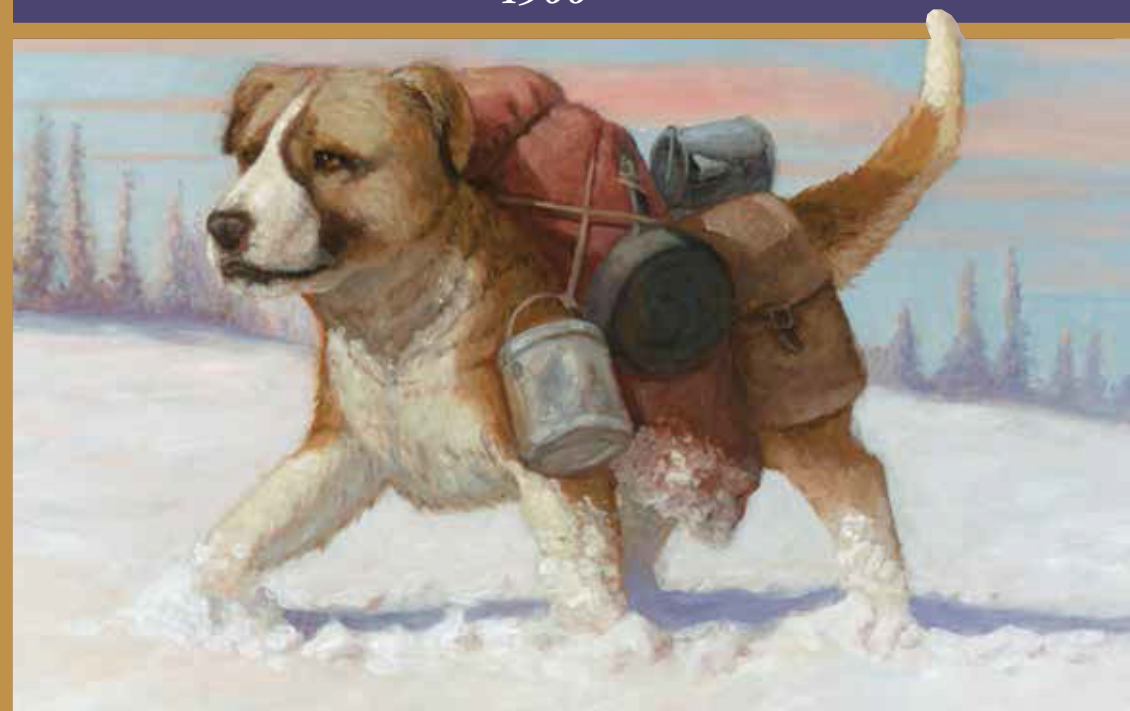
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The snow fell so fast and heavy that I could barely see Sally. Then above us, I heard a rumble. I barked. Sally turned and looked at me, then up at the overhang. Under the brim of her hat, I saw fear in her eyes as the rumble turned to a roar. The overhang, heavy with wet snow, gave way. It crashed over Sally, and she vanished in a cloud of white.

For an instant, I stood frozen in horror. The snow and Sally tumbled toward the river in a swirl of mud and rock, and it landed in a huge mound. Without hesitating I leaped to the shore. Furiously I began to dig.

Somewhere in the icy pile, Sally was buried—and I had to get her out!

Murphy
Gold Rush Dog



Although Sally and Mama are now free from their wealthy but oppressive family in San Francisco, they find that life in a mining town is challenging, even with Murphy by their side. Sally grows to love Nome, despite the threats from wild animals, menacing humans, and harsh weather. So when it seems they may have to return to San Francisco, she and Murphy strike out on their own, hoping to find gold and make a permanent home. But danger awaits, in the form of blizzards, bears, and Murphy's original owner, who will stop at nothing to get what he wants, whether it is an ill-gotten fortune or a valuable dog.

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To adventurous ladies past and present
—A. H.

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CHAPTER ONE

Carlick

June 5, 1900

M*arche!*" A whip stung my neck, but my legs were too weak to run any faster.

Old Blue led our team. Behind him, Cody and I trotted side-by-side, though Cody was starting to lag. Tooni, the Alaskan driver, jogged alongside us, panting as hard as we were. His snowshoes slapped against the crusted top layer of the snowy trail.

We were all bone-weary, but the man in the sledge again shouted for us to go faster. *Faster. Faster.* By now I hated that word and Carlick, the man who hollered it.



“Faster, you lazy beasts!” Carlick sat in the sledge, covered with skins, only his eyes visible beneath his fur cap.

Tooni’s lash struck Cody, who yelped and fell. Slowing, Blue and I dragged him, my raw feet scrabbling at the snow. The harness bit into my aching shoulders where the leather had rubbed off my fur. Then Cody regained his footing and we lurched forward again.

The ice cracked beneath my paws and I smelled

water. A hole ahead. Blue veered right. I tugged left, hoping the sledge would plunge into the freezing Yukon, taking Carlick with it.

“Gee!” the driver ordered. “Gee, you cursed dogs!” He had also spotted the hole.

Blue followed the command and forced us to the right, away from the river and onto a packed trail already crowded with travelers. Another team of dogs floundered in a snowdrift, its driver flogging them. We passed a man perched on a strange two-wheeled thing. Other men pulled their sledges like animals. A snow-covered horse, its head hanging wearily, high-stepped around them. The rider on its back was as hunched as the horse.

“Faster!” Carlick hollered. “I must get to Nome to stake a gold claim before all these stampedeers!”

Nome. Gold. Carlick had repeated these words each time we camped after leaving the place called Dawson City. As I ran along the frozen trail, my paws left bloody tracks. I hoped the words meant finding a home—and ending this terrible journey.



“Tie Murphy tightly,” Carlick told Tooni when we finally stopped.

Tooni reached for my harness. I growled and my hackles rose. I wanted to lunge at him, but the driver raised his whip and I cowered.

“He’s learning who’s master,” Carlick said approvingly. “And he’s still hearty after this hard trip.” He glanced at Blue and Cody. “The other two are done for. Tomorrow, cut them loose. They can fend for themselves. I’ll need Murphy to haul all my riches now that we’re at Nome.”

Tooni hammered a stake into the snowy earth and tied one end of a rope to it. He checked the other end, which was knotted to the leather collar around my neck.

Carlick returned to his cabin. When he opened the door, I could smell meat cooking inside. Cody and Blue whined hungrily. The driver threw us chunks of

raw tomcod, then crawled into his tent. I gulped my fish down, bone and all.

When I was young I had known a gentle touch, a heaping bowl, and a loving home. Then I'd been sold to Carlick who needed a new dog for his sled team. He'd driven us hard. We'd traveled for days and days with no kind words, no warm straw bed, and not enough food to fill our stomachs. So far, this place called *Nome* was no better than the camps where we'd stayed on the way. And it was not a home.

The snow was belly deep. Blue was already curled up, licking the sores on his paws. He had taught me well on the trip, but now he was thin, his coat was ragged, and he'd limped the last miles. Cody was also exhausted and lame. Tucking their heads under their tails, they fell asleep.

The wind howled around us. I circled, trying to make a nest. My thick fur kept me warm, but I couldn't rest.

Dark closed in and lights blinked in the distance.

Somewhere in this new place, there might be a home for me. I would never find my old littermates. They had long been scattered. But if I was to find a true home, I needed to get away from Carlick.

I gnawed on the rope. My teeth were strong and sharp, but the night was short. The sun would rise early. I had to be gone before the driver came out of his tent. I had to be gone before Carlick opened the cabin door.

The rope began to fray. Frantically, I chewed harder. With one last chomp, I broke it in two. I leaped to my feet, energy coursing through me. *Free!*

I sniffed Blue, then Cody. Snow covered them both like blankets. My sled mates didn't move in their warm cocoons. When they awoke, I would be gone.

Without a backward glance, I set off for the streets of Nome.