

# Jack London's The King of Mazy May



**TextProject  
Background Builders**

**Staircase of Automaticity: Indigo**

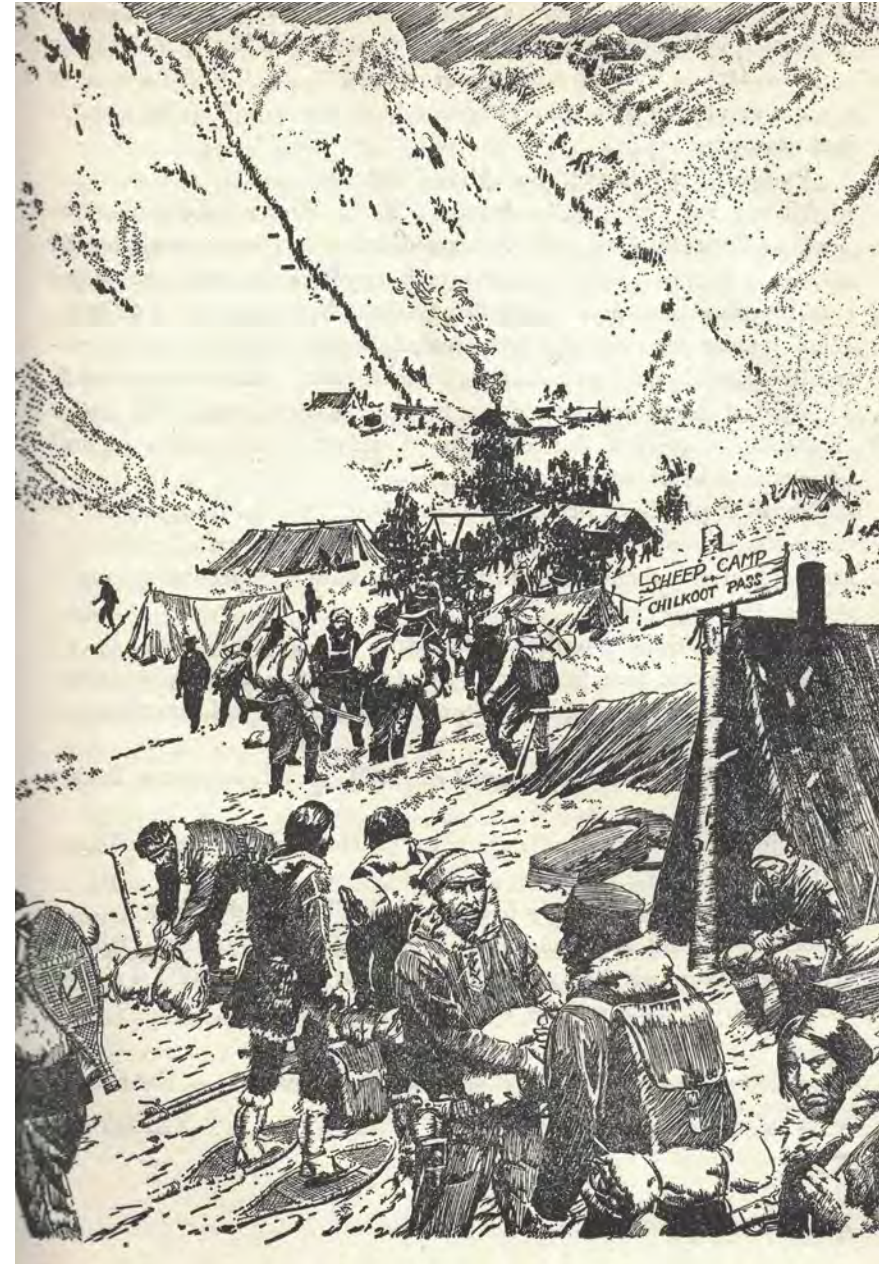
## The Journey to Klondike Gold

When gold was discovered in Canada's Yukon Territory, thousands of fortune hunters from around the world rushed to Seattle. But getting to the Klondike goldfields was like climbing a mountain while carrying a piano on your back.

In Seattle, supplies needed to be bought. The Canadian government demanded each person bring 2,000 pounds of food and gear—enough to survive a full year. That meant flour, bacon, beans, tools, and warm clothes. No supplies, no entry into Canada.

From Seattle, steamships carried fortune hunters north to Alaska. Then the real nightmare began. The Chilkoot Pass was a 45-degree wall of ice and rock. Men climbed it in single file, carrying massive loads on their backs. They called it the “Golden Stairs”—1,500 steps carved into ice. Most men could only carry 50 pounds at a time, so they made this deadly climb 40 times to move all their supplies.

Avalanches buried men alive. Storms froze others to death. Many gave up and turned back. The ones who survived still faced 500 miles of dangerous rivers and wilderness. Thousands tried the journey. Only the toughest survived it.



Prospectors needed to climb the steep Chilkoot Pass, carrying heavy packs on their backs on their way to hunt for gold in the Klondike.



This statue in Dawson, Yukon shows what really happened to most gold seekers. Look how exhausted this prospector is, slumped over with his tired dog. Most found no gold and lost everything chasing an impossible dream.

## **When Gold Fever Struck: Working the Claims**

The short Yukon summer—just four months from June to September—was make-or-break time. During these precious months, prospectors worked frantically from dawn to dusk. The ground was finally soft enough to dig, and the creeks flowed fast enough to wash gold from dirt and gravel. With nearly twenty hours of daylight, exhausted miners barely stopped working.

But first, they had to stake their legal claims. Picture hundreds of desperate men rushing into Dawson City. At the government office, they'd register their claims and pay the fees. No claim meant no legal right to any gold they found.

Winter changed everything. Temperatures went down to forty degrees below zero. Many prospectors retreated to Dawson, waiting for spring. The bravest ones stayed at their claims, burning fires to thaw the frozen ground and stockpiling dirt to process later.

Spring meant one thing: another desperate race to get back out there before someone jumped their claim.

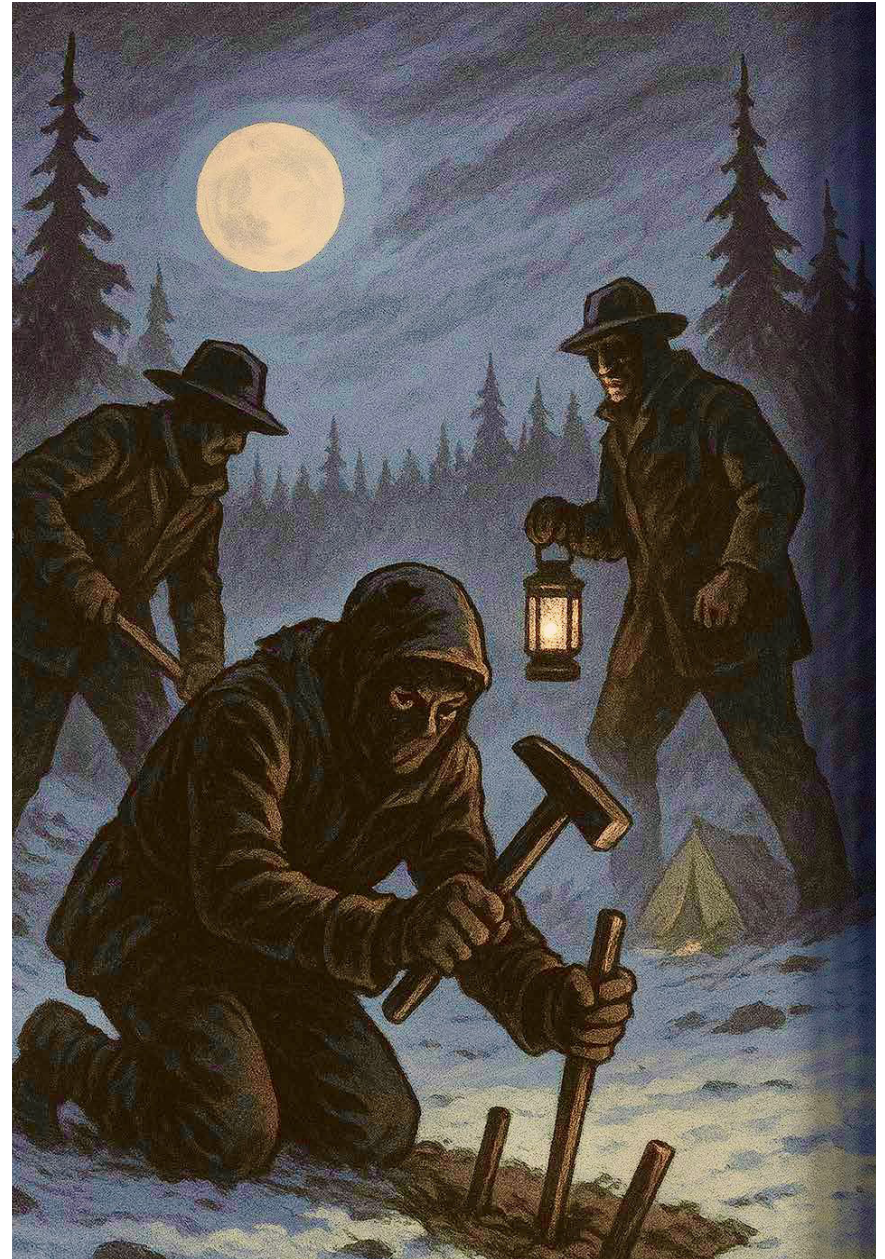
## **Claim Jumping: Thieves in the Goldfields**

Imagine spending months digging in frozen ground, finally striking gold—then waking up to find strangers working your claim. Welcome to the nightmare of claim jumping, the most feared crime in the Klondike.

Claim jumping was pure theft. A prospector would stake out a piece of creek, mark it with wooden posts, and start the backbreaking work of finding gold. Then professional thieves called “stampeder” would sneak in like wolves in the night. They’d pull up the original stakes and plant their own, stealing months of hard work in minutes.

Stampeder were organized criminals who targeted claims where prospectors had left to get supplies. They’d quickly move in and take over. By the time the real owner returned, the stampeder would be dug in and ready to fight.

The only protection was racing to Dawson City to record the claim at the gold commissioner’s office. But this meant a dangerous journey of 20 miles or more through brutal wilderness—and not everyone had dog sleds.



Ruthless stampeder crept onto prospectors' gold claims under cover of darkness to steal months of hard work. nobody's bothered to sing yet.

## Wolf Dogs: Lifeline of the Klondike

In the frozen wilderness of the Klondike, dog sleds were the best way to travel. The toughest dogs were wolf dogs—powerful, dangerous animals that were the size of a small pony. These wolf dogs weren't pets, but prospectors risked working with them because the dogs were unstoppable.

A team of six or more wolf dogs could haul a thousand pounds of supplies many miles a day across frozen rivers and mountain passes. They survived on scraps of meat and slept easily in freezing temperatures.

The person driving the sled, called a musher, had to guide these fierce animals with voice commands since there were no reins. The lead dog at the front had to know how to follow trails and respond to commands. A bad lead dog could cause the team to go off the trail and get stuck in deep snow, which meant death in the wilderness.



In the deadly Klondike winter, sled dogs were the difference between life and death. No GPS, no cell phones—just you and your dogs against the frozen wilderness.

## Staircase of Automaticity: Indigo



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