



# Jack London - Love Of Life & Other Stories (Illustrated)

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**Jack London - Love Of Life & Other Stories (Illustrated)** Jack London

By Karl Janssen on December 12, 2011

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Love of Life is a collection of short stories published by Jack London in 1907. These eight stories are all set in Alaska or the Yukon Territory, with the exception of one set in northern California which also touches on the subject of the Klondike gold rush. Though overall not his best work, the collection contains a few exceptional pieces that elevate it above the mediocre.

Three stories stand out here as a cut above the rest. In "Negore, the Coward," a tribe of indigenous Alaskans flees a troop of pursuing Russian conquerors. In order to win the heart of the woman he loves, the titular character must redeem his tarnished reputation by bravely ensnaring the oppressors. In "The Sun Dog Trail," London's recurring character Sitka Charley, a Native trail guide for hire, recalls how he led a mysterious rich woman back and forth across the frozen North on a grueling, epic manhunt. "The Unexpected" tells of a brutal act of violence in a remote cabin. The survivors are left to figure out what to do with the perpetrator. When so far removed from civilization, do conventional notions of law and justice still have any meaning?

At the beginning of his career, London published four great collections of Klondike stories: The Son of the Wolf, The God of His Fathers, Children of the Frost, and The Faith of Men. Love of Life came out a few years later, and although it includes a few gems, overall these later stories are inferior to those earlier works, and often feel like rehashes of subjects already covered by London. "Brown Wolf," for example, covers ground previously trod by the novel White Fang. The north woods soap opera of "A Day's Lodging" is reminiscent of earlier tales of marital discontent like "The Priestly Prerogative" and "The Great Interrogation." And with "The White Man's Way," London has examined one too many times the Indian's perspective on those silly White men and their confusing laws. The story "Love of Life," though a rather well-written and suspenseful offering, amounts to little more than a preliminary attempt at the intense man vs. nature struggle that London would capture far more successfully a year later in his classic tale "To Build a Fire," only in this take the hero faces starvation rather than death by freezing. Of course, if you are approaching London's stories for the first time and have never read those other works, then Love of Life would most likely prove to be a thoroughly enjoyable read. Those who read a lot of London, however, will find that, judging by the standards of the master's work as a whole, Love of Life is a satisfying collection of stories."

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