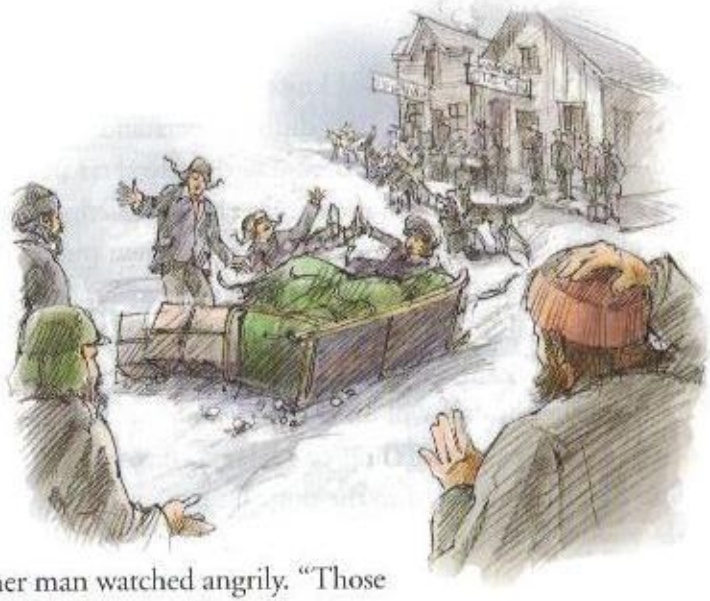

Another man watched angrily. "Those poor dogs," he thought. "That man is very stupid, but I have to help those dogs." So he shouted to Hal, "Break the ice under the sledge. The dogs want to work hard, so don't hit them. Help them, and your sledge will move."

Hal didn't want to listen to the man, but his dogs couldn't move. So he broke the ice, and the sledge slowly moved down the street. But the road suddenly turned left and the large sledge fell over. Bags and boxes went everywhere. Then the harnesses broke from the sledge, and the dogs ran away.

Many nice people came and helped Hal, Charles, and Mercedes. They found their things and brought the dogs back.

One man said, "You'll have to buy more dogs. Your sledge is very heavy."

So Charles bought more dogs, and now they had fourteen animals. They started again, and the men felt happy and important.

The heavy sledge moved slowly down the street. The dogs worked as hard as they could.

The trip back to Dawson was very bad. Hal, Charles, and Mercedes fought every day. They didn't have any plans and they didn't know about

this cold country. They started late in the morning and finished early in the afternoon. So they didn't go many kilometers in a day. They hated the cold, the snow, and the Yukon.

They also didn't know about dogs, so they didn't bring much food for them. The dogs began to die because they were tired, weak, and very hungry. In one week, six dogs died, and the other dogs were almost dead.

It was beautiful spring weather. The sun came up early and went down late every day. The birds sang, and the trees were green again. The ice on the river started to break. But through these wonderful days, with new life everywhere, the two men, the woman, and the dogs walked. They didn't enjoy the spring. They thought only of the hard work and the pain.

Buck and the other dogs had no life in them when they arrived, one evening, at John Thornton's camp. When the sledge stopped, every dog fell down in the snow. They looked dead.

"What's the best way to Dawson?" Hal asked Thornton.

Thornton looked at the sledge and thought, "I know these people. They're stupid. I know they won't listen to me. But I want to help those dogs."