

MACMILLAN READERS

ELEMENTARY LEVEL

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White Fang

Retold by Rachel Bladon



MACMILLAN

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The Cave in the Riverbank

For many days, the she-wolf and her mate hunted for food together. But after a time, the she-wolf became less interested in hunting. She was looking for something. She spent a lot of time searching under fallen trees. She looked under rocks and in caves in the riverbanks. But she could not find what she wanted.

She was a large wolf—almost five feet long. Her coat was mainly gray, but sometimes it looked a little red. She was getting heavier every day, and she could only run slowly now. Once, when she was running after a rabbit, she suddenly stopped. Then she lay down and rested. Her mate came to her and licked her neck gently. But she growled at him angrily, and he moved away. She was often angry now. But her mate was more patient than ever, and more caring.

Finally the she-wolf found what she was looking for. It was a few miles up a small frozen river. The she-wolf was running behind her mate when she came to the high river bank. She slowed down and walked over to it. There was a small cave in the bank. She went inside it. The entrance to the cave was very small, but inside there was a large round space. It was dry and comfortable. The she-wolf walked around the cave carefully. Then she chose a place in the middle and lay down. She felt pleased and happy.

The she-wolf's mate watched her from the cave's entrance. When she lay down, he wagged his tail from side to side. Then he too lay down in the cave's entrance, and slept.

Outside the cave, the April sun was shining brightly on the snow. Spring was coming, and everything was beginning to grow.

After a while, the she-wolf's mate woke up. He got up and went over to his mate. He wanted her to get up. But she just growled at him. So her mate went out alone into the bright sunshine. He went up the frozen river. The snow was deep and soft, and traveling was difficult. He was gone for eight hours, but he did not find any food. He came back even hungrier.



When he arrived back, he stopped in surprise at the entrance to the cave. There were strange sounds coming from inside. They were not the sounds of his mate. As he moved carefully into the cave, the she-wolf growled. She did not want him near her, so he lay down in the cave's entrance. But he listened to those strange quiet noises for a

little while. And soon, the she-wolf's mate fell asleep.

When morning came, the she-wolf's mate heard the strange noises once more. He wanted to see where they were coming from. In the morning light, he could just see five strange little animals. They were lying next to the she-wolf, between her legs. They made tiny crying noises, and their eyes were shut. The she-wolf's mate was surprised.

The she-wolf growled at him. Like all mother wolves, she somehow knew that there was danger. Some father wolves ate their baby cubs. The she-wolf had a strong fear of this. Because of that fear, she would not let her mate near his cubs.

But there was no danger. The she-wolf's mate, too, had a strong feeling. He knew what he had to do. Turning his back on his new-born family, he went out to hunt for meat.

The she-wolf's mate was gone all day. But when he came back, he brought meat for the she-wolf. When she saw this, the she-wolf licked her mate lightly on the neck. She growled at him again when he went near the cubs. But her growl was less angry now. He was doing what a wolf-father should do. And she no longer felt so afraid of him.

Four of the cubs all had the slightly red coat of their mother. But one cub was gray, like his father. The gray cub was a fierce little animal—he was strong and ready to fight. His brothers and sisters were, too. After all, their parents and grandparents were meat-killers and meat-eaters. But the gray cub was the fiercest of all the cubs. He growled louder than the others. He was the first one that pushed over another cub with his paw. And he was the first one that pulled at another cub's ear with his teeth.

For the first month of his life, the gray cub spent most of the time sleeping. But soon he could see quite well, and he stayed awake longer. He still drank his mother's milk, but he