

James Oliver CURWOOD

# KAZAN

Kyiv  
"ZNANNIA"

## **Chapter 1**

### **THE MIRACLE**

Kazan lay mute and motionless, his gray nose between his forepaws, his eyes half closed. A rock could have appeared scarcely less lifeless than he; not a muscle twitched; not a hair moved; not an eyelid quivered. Yet every drop of the wild blood in his splendid body was racing in a ferment of excitement that Kazan had never before experienced; every nerve and fiber of his wonderful muscles was tense as steel wire. Quarter-strain wolf, three-quarters "husky," he had lived the four years of his life in the wilderness. He had felt the pangs of starvation. He knew what it meant to freeze. He had listened to the wailing winds of the long Arctic night over the barrens. He had heard the thunder of the torrent and the cataract, and had cowered under the mighty crash of the storm. His throat and sides were scarred by battle, and his eyes were red with the blister

of the snows. He was called Kazan, the Wild Dog, because he was a giant among his kind and as fearless, even, as the men who drove him through the perils of a frozen world.

He had never known fear — until now. He had never felt in him before the desire to *run* — not even on that terrible day in the forest when he had fought and killed the big gray lynx. He did not know what it was that frightened him, but he knew that he was in another world, and that many things in it startled and alarmed him. It was his first glimpse of civilization. He wished that his master would come back into the strange room where he had left him. It was a room filled with hideous things. There were great human faces on the wall, but they did not move or speak, but stared at him in a way he had never seen people look before. He remembered having looked on a master who lay very quiet and very cold in the snow, and he had sat back on his haunches and wailed forth the death song; but these people on the walls looked alive, and yet seemed dead.

Suddenly Kazan lifted his ears a little. He heard steps, then low voices. One of them was his master's voice. But the other — it sent a little tremor through him! Once, so long ago that it must have been in his puppyhood days, he seemed to have had a dream of a laugh that was like the girl's laugh — a laugh that was all at once filled with a wonderful happiness, the thrill of a wonderful love, and a sweetness that made Kazan lift his head as they came in. He looked straight at them, his red eyes gleaming. At once he knew that she must

be dear to his master, for his master's arm was about her. In the glow of the light he saw that her hair was very bright, and that there was the color of the crimson *bakneesh* vine in her face and the blue of the *bakneesh* flower in her shining eyes. Suddenly she saw him, and with a little cry darted toward him.

"Stop!" shouted the man. "He's dangerous! Kazan —"

She was on her knees beside him, all fluffy and sweet and beautiful, her eyes shining wonderfully, her hands about to touch him. Should he cringe back? Should he snap? Was she one of the things on the wall, and his enemy? Should he leap at her white throat? He saw the man running forward, pale as death. Then her hand fell upon his head and the touch sent a thrill through him that quivered in every nerve of his body. With both hands she turned up his head. Her face was very close, and he heard her say, almost sobbingly:

"And you are Kazan — dear old Kazan, my Kazan, my hero dog — who brought him home to me when all the others had died! My Kazan — my hero!"

And then, miracle of miracles, her face was crushed down against him, and he felt her sweet warm touch.

In those moments Kazan did not move. He scarcely breathed. It seemed a long time before the girl lifted her face from him. And when she did, there were tears in her blue eyes, and the man was standing above them, his hands gripped tight, his jaws set.

"I never knew him to let any one touch him — with their naked hand," he said in a tense wondering voice.

“Move back quietly, Isobel. Good heaven — look at that!”

Kazan whined softly, his bloodshot eyes on the girl’s face. He wanted to feel her hand again; he wanted to touch her face. Would they beat him with a club, he wondered, if he *dared!* He meant no harm now. He would kill for her. He cringed toward her, inch by inch, his eyes never faltering. He heard what the man said — “Good heaven! Look at that!” — and he shuddered. But no blow fell to drive him back. His cold muzzle touched her filmy dress, and she looked at him, without moving, her wet eyes blazing like stars.

“See!” she whispered. “See!”

Half an inch more — an inch, two inches, and he gave his big gray body a hunch toward her. Now his muzzle traveled slowly upward — over her foot, to her lap, and at last touched the warm little hand that lay there. His eyes were still on her face: he saw a queer throbbing in her bare white throat, and then a trembling of her lips as she looked up at the man with a wonderful look. He, too, knelt down beside them, and put his arm about the girl again, and patted the dog on his head. Kazan did not like the man’s touch. He mistrusted it, as nature had taught him to mistrust the touch of all men’s hands, but he permitted it because he saw that it in some way pleased the girl.

“Kazan, old boy, you wouldn’t hurt her, would you?” said his master softly. “We both love her, don’t we, boy? Can’t help it, can we? And she’s ours, Kazan, all *ours!* She belongs to you and to me, and we’re going to

take care of her all our lives, and if we ever have to we'll fight for her like hell — won't we? Eh, Kazan, old boy?"

For a long time after they left him where he was lying on the rug, Kazan's eyes did not leave the girl. He watched and listened — and all the time there grew more and more in him the craving to creep up to them and touch the girl's hand, or her dress, or her foot. After a time his master said something, and with a little laugh the girl jumped up and ran to a big, square, shining thing that stood crosswise in a corner, and which had a row of white teeth longer than his own body. He had wondered what those teeth were for. The girl's fingers touched them now, and all the whispering of winds that he had ever heard, all the music of the waterfalls and the rapids and the trilling of birds in spring-time, could not equal the sounds they made. It was his first music. For a moment it startled and frightened him, and then he felt the fright pass away and a strange tingling in his body. He wanted to sit back on his haunches and howl, as he had howled at the billion stars in the skies on cold winter nights. But something kept him from doing that. It was the girl. Slowly he began slinking toward her. He felt the eyes of the man upon him, and stopped. Then a little more — inches at a time, with his throat and jaw straight out along the floor! He was half-way to her — half-way across the room — when the wonderful sounds grew very soft and very low.

"Go on!" he heard the man urge in a low quick voice. "Go on! Don't stop!"

The girl turned her head, saw Kazan cringing there on the floor, and continued to play. The man was still looking, but his eyes could not keep Kazan back now. He went nearer, still nearer, until at last his outreaching muzzle touched her dress where it lay piled on the floor. And then — he lay trembling, for she had begun to sing. He had heard a Cree woman crooning in front of her tepee; he had heard the wild chant of the caribou song — but he had never heard anything like this wonderful sweetness that fell from the lips of the girl. He forgot his master's presence now. Quietly, cringingly, so that she would not know, he lifted his head. He saw her looking at him; there was something in her wonderful eyes that gave him confidence, and he laid his head in her lap. For the second time he felt the touch of a woman's hand, and he closed his eyes with a long sighing breath. The music stopped. There came a little fluttering sound above him, like a laugh and a sob in one. He heard his master cough.

"I've always loved the old rascal — but I never thought he'd do that," he said; and his voice sounded queer to Kazan.

## Chapter 2

### INTO THE NORTH

Wonderful days followed for Kazan. He missed the forests and deep snows. He missed the daily strife of keeping his team-mates in trace, the yapping at his heels, the straight long pull over the open spaces and

the barrens. He missed the “Koosh — koosh — Hoo-yah!” of the driver, the spiteful snap of his twenty-foot caribou-gut whip, and that yelping and straining behind him that told him he had his followers in line. But something had come to take the place of that which he missed. It was in the room, in the air all about him, even when the girl or his master was not near. Wherever she had been, he found the presence of that strange thing that took away his loneliness. It was the woman scent, and sometimes it made him whine softly when the girl herself was actually with him. He was not lonely, nights, when he should have been out howling at the stars. He was not lonely, because one night he prowled about until he found a certain door, and when the girl opened that door in the morning she found him curled up tight against it. She had reached down and hugged him, the thick smother of her long hair falling all over him in a delightful perfume; thereafter she placed a rug before the door for him to sleep on. All through the long nights he knew that she was just beyond the door, and he was content. Each day he thought less and less of the wild places, and more of her.

Then there came the beginning of the change. There was a strange hurry and excitement around him, and the girl paid less attention to him. He grew uneasy. He sniffed the change in the air, and he began to study his master’s face. Then there came the morning, very early, when the babiche collar and the iron chain were

fastened to him again. Not until he had followed his master out through the door and into the street did he begin to understand. They were sending him away! He sat suddenly back on his haunches and refused to budge.

“Come, Kazan,” coaxed the man. “Come on, boy.”

He hung back and showed his white fangs. He expected the lash of a whip or the blow of a club, but neither came. His master laughed and took him back to the house. When they left it again, the girl was with them and walked with her hand touching his head. It was she who persuaded him to leap up through a big dark hole into the still darker interior of a car, and it was she who lured him to the darkest corner of all, where his master fastened his chain. Then they went out, laughing like two children. For hours after that, Kazan lay still and tense, listening to the queer rumble of wheels under him. Several times those wheels stopped, and he heard voices outside. At last he was sure that he heard a familiar voice, and he strained at his chain and whined. The closed door slid back. A man with a lantern climbed in, followed by his master. He paid no attention to them, but glared out through the opening into the gloom of night. He almost broke loose when he leaped down upon the white snow, but when he saw no one there, he stood rigid, sniffing the air. Over him were the stars he had howled at all his life, and about him were the forests, black and silent, shutting them in like a wall. Vainly he sought for that one scent that was missing, and Thorpe heard the low note

of grief in his shaggy throat. He took the lantern and held it above his head, at the same time loosening his hold on the leash. At that signal there came a voice from out of the night. It came from behind them, and Kazan whirled so suddenly that the loosely held chain slipped from the man's hand. He saw the glow of other lanterns. And then, once more, the voice —

“Kaa-aa-zan!”

He was off like a bolt. Thorpe laughed to himself as he followed.

“The old pirate!” he chuckled.

When he came to the lantern-lighted space back of the caboose, Thorpe found Kazan crouching down at a woman's feet. It was Thorpe's wife. She smiled triumphantly at him as he came up out of the gloom.

“You've won!” he laughed, not unhappily. “I'd have wagered my last dollar he wouldn't do that for any voice on earth. You've won! Kazan, you brute, I've lost you!”

His face suddenly sobered as Isobel stooped to pick up the end of the chain.

“He's yours, Issy,” he added quickly, “but you must let me care for him until — we *know*. Give me the chain. I won't trust him even now. He's a wolf. I've seen him take an Indian's hand off at a single snap. I've seen him tear out another dog's jugular in one leap. He's an outlaw — a bad dog — in spite of the fact that he hung to me like a hero and brought me out alive. I can't trust him. Give me the chain —”

## CONTENTS

Chapter 1. The Miracle .....	3
Chapter 2. Into the North .....	8
Chapter 3. McCready Pays the Debt .....	16
Chapter 4. Free From Bonds.....	25
Chapter 5. The Fight in the Snow .....	41
Chapter 6. Joan .....	50
Chapter 7. Out of the Blizzard.....	65
Chapter 8. The Great Change.....	74
Chapter 9. The Tragedy on Sun Rock.....	81
Chapter 10. The Days of Fire.....	91
Chapter 11. Always Two by Two .....	101
Chapter 12. The Red Death.....	114
Chapter 13. The Trail of Hunger.....	125
Chapter 14. The Right of Fang.....	134
Chapter 15. A Fight under the Stars .....	139
Chapter 16. The Call.....	144
Chapter 17. His Son .....	155
Chapter 18. The Education of Ba-Ree .....	163
Chapter 19. The Usurpers.....	172
Chapter 20. A Feud in the Wilderness .....	179
Chapter 21. A Shot on the Sand-Bar .....	194
Chapter 22. Sandy's Method.....	202
Chapter 23. Professor McGill.....	211
Chapter 24. Alone in Darkness .....	216
Chapter 25. The Last of McTrigger.....	222
Chapter 26. An Empty World.....	230
Chapter 27. The Call of Sun Rock .....	234