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The Wolverine Gary Gildner

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Gary Gildner

THE WOLVERINE

Word got around town: a wolverine was being shown in Rae Brothers parking lot. Some last-minute Christmas shoppers went to look. Many of the younger people had never seen one before, not up close like this. It lay curled in the back of a pickup, on the tailgate, and someone—a small girl—said it looked like a big fuzzy caterpillar. The man holding her hand said, "See those teeth? You wouldn't want to fool with them!" And somebody else asked, "What is it?" The ranger, who had received it from the trapper, said it was a male. About thirty pounds. He said he was surprised: wolverines were supposed to have been long gone from the area. The trapper was surprised too: he'd been after bobcat. He had his foot up on a rear tire and was leaning against his knee; his hat was pushed back; he could look down and see the animal as he talked. The man holding the small girl's hand asked what he used to catch it. "A snare," the other said. "With that good aircraft cable that don't kink." He shook his head at the surprise of it all, or at the snare's effectiveness, or maybe only as a kind of punctuation; and a couple of older men, whose eyes were watery-bright from age, shook their heads too. It got cold standing there in Rae Brothers parking lot, and people began drifting away. One of these, a girl, said to her boyfriend, "I hate those things." He laughed, then flung his arm around her neck, pulling her closer.