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«Зов предков» – одно из самых захватывающих произведений Дже-ка Лондона, непревзойденного мастера приключенческого романа. В книге описывается жизнь удивительного пса по имени Бак, который оказывается в Канаде в самый разгар золотой лихорадки.
Для удобства читателя оригинальный текст незначительно адапти-
рован, сопровождается комментариями и кратким словарем.

Предназначается для продолжающих изучать английский язык (уровень 4 – Upper-Intermediate).

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Chapter I.
INTO THE PRIMITIVE

Buck did not read the newspapers, or he would have known that trouble was coming, not only for himself, but for every strong dog, muscular and with warm, long hair, from Puget Sound to San Diego. Because men had found a yellow metal, and thousands of them were rushing into the Northland. These men wanted strong dogs.
Buck lived at a big house in the sun-kissed Santa Clara Valley. Judge Miller’s place, it was called. It stood back from the road, and there were great stables, ser-vants’ cottages, outhouses, grape, berries, green fields, gardens, and an artesian well.

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And over this great territory Buck ruled. Here he was born, and here he had lived the four years of his life. Of course, there were other dogs, but they did not count. Buck was not a house-dog. The whole place was his. He swam in the swimming tank or went hunting with the Judge’s sons; he escorted Mollie and Alice, the Judge’s daughters, on their walks; on winter nights he lay at the Judge’s feet before the library fire; he carried the Judge’s grandsons on his back. He walked imperi-ously, for he was king,—king over all creeping, crawl-ing, flying things of Judge Miller’s place, humans in-cluded.
His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard1

, had been the
Judge’s inseparable companion, and Buck followed the way of his father. He was not so large,—he weighed only one hundred and forty pounds,—for his mother, Shep, had been a Scotch shepherd2

dog. Nevertheless,
one hundred and forty pounds, to which was added the dignity that comes of good living and everyone’s respect, made him behave likе a king. Since his pup-pyhood he had lived the life of an aristocrat; he had pride in himself, was even a bit egotistical, as country

1
St. Bernard — сенбернар
2
Scotch shepherd — шотландская овчарка

5

gentlemen sometimes become. But he had saved him-self by not becoming a simple house-dog. Hunting and a number of outdoor delights had kept down the fat and hardened his muscles; and to him the love of water had been a tonic and a health preserver.
This was the way Buck lived until the autumn of 1897, when the Klondike fever called men from all the world into the frozen North. But Buck did not read the newspapers, and he did not know that Manuel, one of the gardener’s helpers, was a bad friend. Manuel had one awful sin. He loved to play Chinese lottery. And to playlottery requires money, while the salary of a gar-dener’s helper does not exceed the needs of his wife and numerous children.
The Judge and the boys were not at home on the memorable night of Manuel’s treachery. No one saw him and Buck go off through the garden on what Buck imagined was just a walk. And no one saw them arrive at a little place known as College Park. Some man talked with Manuel, and money were passed between them. Then Manuel fastened a rope around Buck’s neck. “Twist it, and you’ll choke him alright,” he said. Buck did not like the rope, of course, but he had learnt to trust in men he knew. But when the ends of the

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rope were placed in the stranger’s hands, he growled menacingly. He had just showed his displeasure, but to his surprise the rope tightened around his neck, block-ing his breath. In quick rage he sprang at the man, who met him halfway, and threw him over on his back. Then the rope tightened cruelly, while Buck struggled in a fury, his tongue lolling out1

of his mouth and his
great chest shaking. Never in all his life had he been so awfully treated, and never in all his life had he been so angry. But his strength left him, his eyes closed, and he knew nothing when the train was started moving and the two men threw him into the baggage car.
The next he knew, he was aware that his tongue was hurting. The sound of a locomotive told him where he was. He had often travelled with the Judge and knew the sensation of riding in a baggage car. He opened his eyes, and into them came the anger of a kidnapped king. The man approached him, but Buck’s jaws im-mediately closed on his hand.
Suffering awful pain from throat and tongue, with the life half gone out of him, Buck attempted to face his kid-nappers, when they came again. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly. Then he was put into a cage.

1
his tongue lolling out — вывалив язык

7

There he lay, nursing his wrath and wounded pride1

.

He could not understand what it all meant. He felt some coming trouble. Several times during the night he sprang to his feet when the door opened, expecting to see the Judge, or the boys at least. But each time it was the face of the saloon-keeper. And each time the joyful bark that was in Buck’s throat transformed into a savage growl.
In the morning four men entered and picked up the cage. More kidnappers, Buck decided; and he raged at them through the bars. Then he, locked in the cage, began a passage through many hands. After the express office he was put in another wagon; a truck carried him upon a ferry steamer; he was taken off the steamer, and finally he was put in an express car.
For two days and nights in this express car Buck neither ate nor drank. He did not mind the hunger so much, but the lack of water made him suffer. Because of the ill treatment2 he had a fever.
He was glad for one thing: the rope was off his neck. Now he would show them. They would never get an-other rope around his neck. Upon that he was sure. His

1
nursing his wrath and wounded pride — вынашивая свой гнев и ущемленную гордыню
2
ill treatment — дурное обращение

8

eyes turned blood-shot1

, and he looked like a devil. So
changed was he that the Judge himself would not have recognized him; and the express messengers breathed with relief when they carried him off the train at Seat-tle.
Four men brought the cage in a small, high-walled back yard. A stout man in a red sweater that was too wide at the neck came out and signed the book for the driver. That was, Buck thought, the next kidnap-per, and he flung himself savagely against the bars. The man smiled grimly, and brought an axe and a club.
Buck was truly a devil, hair bristling, mouth foam-ing2

, a mad glitter in his blood-shot eyes. When out from the cage, straight at the man he rushed his one hundred and forty pounds of fury. In mid air, just as his teeth were ready to close on the man, he received a blow and fell on the ground on his back and side. He had never been struck by a club in his life, and did not understand. With a snarl he was again on his feet and jumped into the air. And again he was brought to the ground. This time he was aware that it was the

1
His eyes turned blood-shot — его глаза налились кровью
2
hair bristling, mouth foaming — ощетинившийся, с пеной у рта

9

club, but his madness knew no caution. Many times he tried, and each time the club smashed him down. Finally, the man gave him a frightful blow on the nose. In agony of pain, covered with blood, Buck roared li-on-like and tried to spring at him. But the man coolly caught him by the under jaw. Buck described a com-plete circle in the air, and half of another, then crashed to the ground on his head and chest. For last time he rushed — and, having received the final blow, went down, totally senseless.
After a while, Buck’s senses came back to him, but not his strength. He lay where he had fallen, and from there he watched the man in the red sweater. “‘Answers to the name of Buck,’” the man read, quoting from the saloon-keeper’s letter which had de-scribed the cage and contents. “Well, Buck, my boy,” he went on in a kind voice, “You’ve learnt your place, and I know mine. Be a good dog and all will go well. Be a bad dog, and I’ll crash you. Understand?”
As he spoke he fearlessly touched the head he had hit, and though Buck’s hair involuntarily bristled un-der his hand, he did not protest. When the man brought him water he drank eagerly, and later ate a portion of raw meat from the man’s hand.

10

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw that he stood no chance against1

a

man with a club. He had learnt the lesson, and he never forgot it. That club was a revelation. It was his introduction to the primitive law, and he understood it quickly. As the days went by, other dogs came, in cages and at the ends of ropes, some calmly, and some raging as he had come; and he watched them pass under the reign of the man in the red sweater. The lesson was simple: a man with a club was a master to be obeyed, though not necessarily tolerated. This last Buck never did, though he saw beaten dogs that wagged their tails2

, and licked his hand. Also he saw
one dog, that neither tolerated nor obeyed, finally killed in the fight for mastery.
Now and again men came, who talked to the man in the red sweater. And at such times money passed between them and the strangers took one or more of the dogs away with them. Buck wondered where they went, for they never came back; but the fear of the fu-ture was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not chosen.

1
to stand no chance against somebody — не иметь возмож-ности противостоять кому-либо
2
to wag one’s tail — вилять хвостом