

ЛЕГКО ЧИТАЕМ
ПО-АНГЛИЙСКИ

4
УРОВЕНЬ



Jack London
THE CALL OF THE WILD

Джек Лондон
ЗОВ ПРЕДКОВ

словарь • комментарии

Легко читаем по-английски

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The Call of the Wild / Зов предков

«АСТ»

1903

УДК 811.111(075)
ББК 81.2Англ-9

Лондон Д.

The Call of the Wild / Зов предков / Д. Лондон — «АСТ»,
1903 — (Легко читаем по-английски)

ISBN 978-5-17-104327-8

«Зов предков» – одно из самых захватывающих произведений Джека 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 адаптирован, сопровождается комментариями и кратким словарем. Предназначается для продолжающих изучать английский язык (уровень 4 – Upper-Intermediate).

УДК 811.111(075)
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ISBN 978-5-17-104327-8

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Jack London / Джек Лондон

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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, servants' cottages, outhouses, grape, berries, green fields, gardens, and an artesian well.

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 imperiously, for he was king, – king over all creeping, crawling, flying things of Judge Miller's place, humans included.

His father, Elmo, a huge St. Bernard,¹ 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 like a king. Since his puppyhood he had lived the life of an aristocrat; he had pride in himself, was even a bit egotistical, as country gentlemen sometimes become. But he had saved himself 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 play lottery requires money, while the salary of a gardener'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 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, blocking 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 out³ 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.

¹ **St. Bernard** – сенбернар

² **Scotch shepherd** – шотландская овчарка

³ **his tongue lolling out** – вывалив язык

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 immediately closed on his hand.

Suffering awful pain from throat and tongue, with the life half gone out of him, Buck attempted to face his kidnappers, when they came again. But he was thrown down and choked repeatedly. Then he was put into a cage.

There he lay, nursing his wrath and wounded pride.⁴ 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 treatment⁵ 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 another rope around his neck. Upon that he was sure. His eyes turned blood-shot,⁶ 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 Seattle.

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 kidnapper, 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 foaming,⁷ 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 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 lion-like and tried to spring at him. But the man coolly caught him by the under jaw. Buck described a complete 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 described 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?”

⁴ **nursing his wrath and wounded pride** – вынашивая свой гнев и ущемленную гордыню

⁵ **ill treatment** – дурное обращение

⁶ **His eyes turned blood-shot** – его глаза налились кровью

⁷ **hair bristling, mouth foaming** – ошетилившийся, с пеной у рта

As he spoke he fearlessly touched the head he had hit, and though Buck's hair involuntarily bristled under 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.

He was beaten (he knew that); but he was not broken. He saw that he stood no chance against⁸ 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 tails,⁹ 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 future was strong upon him, and he was glad each time when he was not chosen.

Yet his time came, in the end, in the form of a little wizened man who spoke broken English and had many strange exclamations.

"Sacredam!" he cried, when he saw Buck. "That one bully dog! Eh? How much?"

"Three hundred," answered the man in the red sweater. "And as it's government money, you can spend it safely, eh, Perrault?"

Perrault smiled. Considering that the price of dogs had been raised high by the demand, it was not an unfair sum for so fine an animal. The Canadian Government would be no loser. Perrault knew dogs, and when he looked at Buck he knew that he was one in ten thousands.

Buck saw money pass between them, and was not surprised when Curly, a good-natured Newfoundland,¹⁰ and he were led away by the little wizened man. That was the last he saw of¹¹ the man in the red sweater. And as Curly and he looked at Seattle from the deck of the ship, it was the last he saw of the warm Southland. Curly and he were taken below by Perrault and given to a black-faced giant called Francois. Perrault was a French-Canadian, and swarthy; but Francois was a French-Canadian half-breed, and twice as swarthy. They were a new kind of men to Buck, and, though he had no affection for them, he honestly respected them. He quickly learnt that Perrault and Francois were fair men, calm and objective, and too wise to be fooled by dogs.

On the ship, Buck and Curly joined two other dogs. One of them was a big, snow-white fellow from Spitzbergen who had been brought away by a whaling captain,¹² and who had later accompanied a Geological Survey into the Barrens. He was friendly, in a treacherous sort of way, smiling into one's face the while he planned some trick. The other dog showed plainly that all he desired was to be left alone,¹³ and further, that there would be trouble if he were not left alone. "Dave" he was called, and he ate and slept, and took interest in nothing, not even when the ship was caught in a storm. When Buck and Curly were half wild with fear, he raised his head as though annoyed, looked at them, yawned, and went to sleep again.

Though one day was very like another, it was clear that the weather was slowly becoming colder. At last, one morning, there was the atmosphere of excitement on the ship. Francois brought them on deck. At the first step upon the cold surface, Buck's feet sank into a white something very

⁸ to stand no chance against somebody – не иметь возможности противостоять кому-либо

⁹ to wag one's tail – вилять хвостом

¹⁰ a good-natured Newfoundland – добродушный ньюфаундленд

¹¹ to see the last of something – видеть что-либо в последний раз

¹² a whaling captain – капитан китобойного судна

¹³ to leave alone – оставить в покое

like mud. He sprang back with a snort. More of this white thing was falling through the air. He shook himself, but more of it fell upon him. He sniffed it curiously, then licked it with his tongue. It bit like fire, and the next instant was gone. This puzzled him. He tried it again, with the same result. Those who looked laughed loudly, and he felt ashamed, he knew not why, for it was his first snow.

Chapter II. The Law of Club and Fang

Buck's first day on the Dyea beach was like a nightmare. Every hour was filled with shock. He had been suddenly taken from the heart of civilization and thrown into the heart of primordial things. Here was neither peace, nor rest, nor a moment's safety, for these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They were cruel, all of them, and knew no law but the law of club and fang.

He had never seen dogs fight as these wolfish creatures fought, and his first experience taught him an unforgettable lesson. It was not he but Curly who was the victim. She, in her friendly way, approached a husky dog, big, though not half so large as she. There was no warning, only a leap, a metallic clip of teeth, and Curly's face was ripped open¹⁴ from eye to jaw.

It was the wolf manner of fighting, to strike and leap away. Thirty or forty huskies surrounded the fighters. Buck did not understand that, nor the eager way with which they were licking their chops.¹⁵ Curly rushed at her antagonist, who struck again and leaped aside. He met her next rush with his chest, which threw her off her feet. She never stood up again. This was what the huskies had waited for. They closed in upon her,¹⁶ snarling and yelping, and she was buried, screaming with agony, beneath the mass of bodies.

Buck was shocked. He saw Spitz run out his scarlet tongue as if laughing; and he saw Francois, with an axe, spring into the mess of dogs. Three men with clubs were helping him. Two minutes from the time Curly went down, all dogs were clubbed off. But she lay there lifeless in the bloody snow, practically torn to pieces, the swarthy half-breed standing over her and cursing horribly. The scene often came back to Buck to trouble him in his sleep. So that was the way. No fair play. Once down, that was the end of you. Well, he would see to it¹⁷ that he never went down. Spitz ran out his tongue and laughed again, and from that moment Buck hated him.

Before he had recovered from the shock, he received another one. Francois fastened upon him a harness, such as he had seen people put on the horses at home. So he was set to work. He was hurt by being made a draught animal,¹⁸ but he was too wise to protest. He did his best, though it was all new and strange. Francois demanded instant obedience – and with his whip received instant obedience. Buck learnt easily, and under the combined tuition of Dave and Spitz – experienced sled-dogs and cruel teachers – and Francois made remarkable progress. Soon he knew enough to stop at “ho,” to go ahead at “mush,” to turn and to keep clear when the sled went downhill.

By afternoon, Perrault, who was in a hurry to be on the trail with his despatches, returned with two more dogs. “Billee” and “Joe” he called them, two brothers, and true huskies both. But they were as different as day and night. Billee's one fault was his good nature, while Joe was the very opposite. Buck met them in friendly fashion, Dave ignored them, while Spitz fought with both of them.

By evening Perrault brought another dog, an old husky, long and thin, with scars on his face and a single eye. He was called Solleks, which means the Angry One. Like Dave, he asked nothing, gave nothing, expected nothing; and even Spitz left him alone. He did not like to be approached on his blind side. When it happened, Solleks rushed upon Buck and slashed his shoulder to the bone. Forever after Buck avoided his blind side, and to the last of their comradeship had no more trouble. His only seeming ambition, like Dave's, was to be left alone; though, as Buck was later to learn, each of them had one other and more vital ambition.

¹⁴ **to ripe open** – порвать, разодрать

¹⁵ **to lick one's chops** – облизываться

¹⁶ **to close in upon somebody** – сомкнуться над кем-то, навалиться, наброситься

¹⁷ **to see to something** – убедиться, проследить за чем-либо

¹⁸ **a draught animal** – тягловое животное

That night Buck faced the great problem of sleeping. When he, naturally, entered the tent, Perrault and Francois threw him out. A chill wind was blowing outside. He lay down on the snow and attempted to sleep, but it was too cold. Miserable, he walked about among the tents. Here and there dogs rushed upon him, but he bristled his neck-hair and snarled (for he was learning fast), and they let him go his way.

Finally an idea came to him. He would return and see how his own team-mates were doing it. To his astonishment, they had disappeared. If they were not in the tent, where could they possibly be? Suddenly the snow sank beneath his legs. Something moved there. He sprang back, bristling and snarling, fearful of the unseen and unknown. But a friendly little yelp came to him, and he went back. A portion of warm air got to his nose, and there, curled up under the snow, lay Billee. He whined in a friendly way and even dared to lick Buck's face with his warm wet tongue.

Another lesson. So that was the way they did it? Buck chose a place, and with much waste effort dug a hole for himself. The heat from his body filled the space under the snow, and he fell asleep. The day had been long and nervous, and he slept soundly, though he growled and barked and had bad dreams.

In the morning, at first he did not know where he was. It had snowed during the night and he was completely buried. He felt the fear of the wild animal for the trap. It was a sign that he was going back to the lives of his ancestors; for he was a civilized dog, and of his own experience knew no trap and so could not himself fear it. His muscles worked spasmodically and instinctively, and with a awful snarl he jumped straight up. Before he landed on his feet, he saw the camp before him and knew where he was and remembered everything from the time he went for a walk with Manuel to the hole he had dug for himself the night before.

A shout from Francois greeted his appearance. "What I say? That Buck learns quickly."

Perrault nodded. As a courier for the Canadian Government, bearing important despatches, he was anxious to have the best dogs, and he was particularly glad that he had Buck.

Three more huskies were added to the team within an hour, making a total of nine, and in quarter of an hour they were in harness and on the trail toward the Dyea Canon. Buck was glad to be gone, and though the work was hard he found he did not dislike it. The eagerness of the whole team communicated to him; but more surprising was the change in Dave and Solleks. They were totally transformed by the harness. All passiveness was gone from them. The toil of the traces seemed all that they lived for, the only thing in which they took delight.

Dave was a wheeler, pulling in front of him was Buck, then came Solleks; the rest of the team was ahead, in a single file,¹⁹ to the leader, Spitz.

Buck had been placed between Dave and Solleks so that he might receive instruction. He was a good learner, and they were good teachers. Once, during a stop, when he got tangled in the traces and delayed the start, both Dave and Solleks flew at him and gave a good trouncing.²⁰ The resulting tangle was even worse, but Buck kept the traces clear from that moment on, so Francois's whip snapped less frequently, and Perrault even honoured Buck by examining his feet.

It was a hard day's run. They made their way past mountains, forests, glaciers and down the chain of lakes which fills the craters of dead volcanoes, and late that night arrived to the huge camp at the head of Lake Bennett, with thousands of goldseekers. Buck made his hole in the snow and slept the exhausted sleep.

Next day they made forty miles, as the trail was packed; but the next day, and for many more days, they were not so successful. As a rule, Perrault travelled in front of the team, packing the

¹⁹ **in a single file** – друг да другом, в одну линию

²⁰ **to give a good trouncing** – задать хорошую трепку

snow with webbed shoes²¹ to make it easier for them. Francois sometimes exchanged places with him, but not often. Perrault was in a hurry, and he prided himself on his knowledge of ice.

Day after day, since dawn till evening, Buck toiled in the traces. After darkness, in the camp, they ate their bit of fish. Buck was hungry. The pound and a half of sun-dried salmon, which was his ration for each day, seemed to go nowhere.

Buck found that his mates, finishing first, robbed him of his unfinished meal. So he started to eat as fast as they, and even could take what did not belong to him. He watched and learnt. When he saw Pike, one of the new dogs, a clever thief, steal a slice of bacon when Perrault's back was turned, he did the same. He was unsuspected; while Dub, who was always getting caught, was punished instead.

This first theft showed that Buck was fit to survive in the hostile Northland environment. It showed his adaptability, the lack of which would have meant a quick and terrible death. It also showed the decay of his moral nature, a useless thing in the struggle for existence. It was well enough in the Southland, under the law of love and fellowship, to respect private property and personal feelings; but in the Northland, under the law of club and fang, it was foolish.

Not that Buck understood it. The club of the man in the red sweater had beaten into him a fundamental and primitive code. Civilized, he could have died for a moral consideration. Now, he did not steal for joy of it, but because of hunger. He stole secretly, out of respect for club and fang. In short, the things he did were done because it was easier to do them than not to do them.

His development (or retrogression) was quick. His muscles became hard as iron, and he was now careless to ordinary pain. He achieved an internal as well as external economy. He could eat anything. Sight, scent and hearing became remarkably keen. He learnt to bite the ice out when it collected between his toes; and when he was thirsty and there was ice over the water, he broke it with his fore legs.

And not only he learnt by experience, but instincts long dead became alive again. The vague memory told him of the time the wild dogs ran in packs²² through the forest and killed their meat. He learnt to fight in the wolf-like fashion, like his ancestors had fought. And when, on the still cold nights, he pointed his nose at a star and howled long and wolf-like, it was the voice of his ancestors, howling through the centuries and through him. And his troubles were their troubles. This ancient song went through them and became his own again; the song about how men had found a yellow metal in the North, and of Manuel, a gardener's helper, whose salary did not cover the needs of his wife.

²¹ **packing the snow with webbed shoes** – утаптывая снег снегоступами

²² **a pack** – эд. стая

Chapter III. The Dominant Primordial Beast

The dominant primordial beast was strong in Buck, and under the conditions of trail life it grew and grew. Yet it was a secret growth. There was hatred between him and Spitz, but he did not demonstrate it.

On the other hand, Spitz never missed an opportunity of showing his teeth. He constantly wanted to start the fight which could end only in the death of one or the other.

At the end of one day they made a camp on the shore of Lake Le Barge. At their backs there was a perpendicular wall of rock, and Perrault and Francois had to make their fire and spread their sleeping robes on the ice of the lake itself. The tent they had left at Dyea in order to travel light.²³

Close to the rock Buck made his nest. But after supper, when Buck finished his meal and returned, he found his nest occupied by Spitz. This was too much. He sprang upon Spitz with a fury which surprised them both.

Spitz was crying with pure rage as he circled looking for a chance to spring in. Buck was no less cautious. But then the unexpected happened, and their struggle for supremacy²⁴ was postponed far into the future.

There appeared hungry huskies, who had scented the camp from some Indian village. When the two men sprang among them with clubs they showed their teeth and fought back. They were crazed by the smell of food. In an instant, they ate bread and bacon. They cried under the rain of blows, but struggled madly till the last piece had been eaten.

Never had Buck seen such dogs. They were just skeletons. But the hunger-madness made them terrifying. Buck was attacked by three huskies. He and his mates fought bravely. When Buck's teeth went through an enemy's artery, the warm taste of it in his mouth made him fiercer. He flung himself upon another, and at the same time felt teeth sank into his own throat. It was Spitz, treacherously attacking from the side.

Perrault and Francois hurried to save their sled-dogs. The hungry beasts fled, and for a moment Buck was free. But the two men had to run back to save the food, after which the huskies returned to attack the team. Billee sprang through the circle and fled away over the ice. The rest of the team followed. When Buck wanted to run after them, he saw Spitz rush upon him with the obvious intention of overthrowing him. If he fell under that mass of huskies, there would be no hope for him. But he managed to join the others in the flight out on the lake.

²³ **to travel light** – ехать налегке

²⁴ **a struggle for supremacy** – схватка за превосходство

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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