

The Call of the Wild

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THE CALL OF THE WILD

Chapter 1

Into the Wild

Buck was a dog with strong muscles and soft long hair. Buck lived in a big mansion in the sunny Santa Clara Valley. His owner was Judge Miller. He was a very nice man who loved Buck a lot. The mansion was very beautiful with trees and flowers all around it. Buck was born in this great place four years ago. And of course there were other dogs to protect such a great place but they weren't as important as Buck. Buck wasn't an ordinary dog; he was the king of the place. He went hunting with the Judge's sons, walked with his daughters, and carried the Judge's grandsons on his back or played with them on the green grass. He guarded the mansion with full attention. He sat at Judge Miller's feet by the fire in the long winter nights.

Buck's father was called Elmo. He was a huge dog too; a St. Bernard. His mother was a shepherd dog. Buck was a dog with great dignity. He was proud of himself too. Hunting and outdoor activities made his muscles stronger.



Buck was the king of Judge Miller's mansion.

But it was 1897, a year that was not good for any big dog. Buck did not know anything but all the newspapers were full of the news that men had found gold in the North. Men from all around the world went to the frozen North to look for gold and they all needed strong and big dogs with soft fur to work in the cold.

Manuel, one of Judge Miller's gardeners, was a dangerous man. He loved gambling, especially Chinese lottery. The gardener needed money for his family. One day, Judge Miller was out for a meeting and his sons were busy organizing an athletic club. Manuel took Buck secretly and left the mansion. No one saw them leaving the mansion. Buck thought that the gardener was taking him for a walk, but he was wrong. They arrived at the

College Park Station. Manuel talked to a stranger at the station who gave him some money. Then, Manuel tied a piece of rope around Buck's neck. At first, Buck accepted the rope because he trusted the people he knew. When the stranger held the rope tight, he growled. He pulled the rope tightly around Buck's neck. Buck was surprised by this action. In rage, he attacked the man. The man grabbed Buck by the throat and threw him over on his back. Buck was in pain and in shock. No one had treated him in this way before. He had never been so angry in his life. Buck blacked out with pain and the man put him into the train.

When Buck opened his eyes, he knew he was on a train because he had often travelled by train with Judge Miller. Of course there was never a rope tied around his neck then. When he regained consciousness, he noticed the man he attacked. The man tried to hold his throat again so Buck bit the man's hand with a quick movement. He pulled the rope tightly again so that Buck couldn't move.

The man took Buck to a back room of a restaurant in San Francisco. The waiter watched the man with curious eyes. The man was trying to hide his hand from the waiter. But it was impossible to hide because his wounded hand was wrapped in a bloody handkerchief. His trousers were covered in blood, too.

'I'm taking the dog up for the boss to Frisco,' he said, still covering his wounded hand.

'How much are they paying you for this?' the other man asked.

'All I get is fifty dollars.'

'How about the man who stole him? How much did he get?'

'A hundred,' he murmured. 'He wouldn't take less.'

'That makes a hundred and fifty. This dog deserves that,' the waiter said.

The two men took off Buck's rope and put him into a crate. His throat and tongue hurt a lot. Buck lay in the box for the rest of the night. He could not understand why the people did this to him. What did these two strange men want from him? Why were they keeping him in such a prison? But he still had some hope that the Judge or his sons would come and rescue him.

The next day in the morning, four men came and picked up the box. Buck growled and barked through the bars of the box. They only laughed at Buck's helpless attempt and pushed sticks at him through the bars of the box. The men took Buck to the station and put him on a train again. For two days and nights Buck neither ate nor drank. Buck was hungry, thirsty, and tired for days and nights.

He was happy for one thing; the rope was off his neck. The train reached Seattle and the four men carried the box and took him to a small high-walled back garden. A huge man in a red coat came out and signed the book for the driver. Buck understood that this new man was his new tormentor. He growled through the bars of the box. The man smiled in an unfriendly way. He took an axe and a club.



Buck understood that the man was his new tormentor.

‘Are you going to take him out now?’ the driver asked.

‘Sure,’ the huge man replied. He broke the box with the axe. The other four men were watching him in the distance. Buck was jumping from side to side in the box. He was growling and snarling as he was extremely furious with the huge man. He tried to get Buck out of the box in a calm way.

‘Now, come on, you red-eyed devil,’ said the man to Buck, dropping his axe and taking the club in his right hand.

And Buck was truly a red-eyed devil. He jumped at the man with the two days’ and nights’ anger. Buck’s mouth was wide open, ready to bite the man’s throat. Before Buck attacked him, the man hit him with the club. Buck fell down. No one had ever hit him with a club before and he did not understand it was coming. He was unable to stand up. There was blood on his nose, mouth, and ears. The huge man hit Buck with the club again and again. He crashed to the ground on his head and chest. Buck was in great pain. He tried to stand up slowly and then he was on his feet, jumping at the man again. The man hit Buck on his nose. This time Buck could not move and closed his eyes.

‘He is very good at training dogs,’ said one of the men. After a while, Buck came to himself. He opened his eyes slowly but he did not have the strength to stand up. He

lay where he had fallen and watched the man in the red coat.

There was a letter on the box with some information about Buck. 'His name is Buck,' read the huge man. 'Well, Buck, my boy,' he said smilingly. 'We had a little fight, and now you know your place and who I am. The best thing to do is to get along. Be a good dog and I'll be your friend. But if you're a bad dog, I'll have to use my club again. Understand?'

As the man spoke, he patted Buck's head, and although Buck was very angry inside, he did not resist. When the man brought him water, he drank it quickly. Then, the man gave Buck some meat. He ate the meat piece by piece, from the man's hand.

Buck was beaten but he was not broken. He learnt that a man with a club was stronger than him. He had learnt his lesson, a lesson that he never forgot. Buck understood that a man with a club must be obeyed. As the days went by, other dogs came in boxes and with ropes around their necks. Buck watched them pass under the command of the man in the red coat. Buck knew that the man was very cruel to train dogs. Buck did not feel guilty when he watched the other dogs get beaten by the huge man. Also he saw one dog, which did not obey at all, get killed in front of his eyes.

Many men came to see the dogs. Some men paid money and left with one or more of the dogs. Buck was scared; he didn't know what would happen to him. He watched the other dogs leave with their new owners. He was happy each time when he was not selected.

One day, an old man came to look at Buck. He spoke a little English. 'He's a nice dog. How much do you want for him?' asked the man in a low voice. His name was Perrault.



Perrault wanted to buy Buck.

“Three hundred dollars, Perrault,’ replied the man in red coat.

Perrault smiled and he thought it was not a bad price for a dog like Buck. He knew that Buck was a fine dog.

‘One in ten thousand,’ Perrault said to himself.

Buck saw money put into the huge man’s pocket, and he was not surprised when he and another dog, Curly, were taken away by Perrault. That was the last time Buck saw the man in red coat, and also that was the last time he saw the warm Southland. The cold Northland was waiting for him. Perrault put Buck and Curly onto a ship. Then he took the two dogs down to the bottom of the ship. There, they met a man called François. He was tall and black. François was French-Canadian. Both were a new kind of men to Buck. Buck certainly did not like them. However, he had a great respect for both men. They were fair, calm and honest. They knew lots of things about dogs.

Two other dogs joined Buck and Curly on the ship. One of them was a big, snow-white dog called Spitz. He was friendly in a way but he stole Buck’s food. Buck was ready to punish the dog for stealing his food but François was quick enough to hit the dog before Buck. Another dog, Dave, was quiet all the time. He did not try to steal food from the other dogs. He was a miserable and unfriendly dog. He wanted to be alone. He ate, slept and yawned

between times, taking no interest in anything.

Each day was the same. Buck noticed that the weather was getting colder. One morning, they stopped the ship engines. Buck and the other dogs knew that something was going on. François leashed the four dogs and took them outside. Buck was very excited. He took the first step and felt something soft and mushy under his feet. It was something very much like mud but it was white. He stepped back, growling. This white stuff was also falling through the air. He shook himself to get rid of the thing falling on him. It was his first snow. He licked some of the snow on him curiously. It tasted differently. He tried it again. The result did not change. People were watching him and laughing. He felt ashamed.