

## The Law of Club and Tooth

Buck's first day at Dyea Beach was terrible. Every hour there was some new, frightening surprise. There was no peace, no rest - only continual noise and movement. And every minute there was danger, because these dogs and men were not town dogs and men. They knew only the law of club and tooth.

Buck had never seen dogs fight like these dogs; they were like wolves. In a few minutes he learned this from watching Curly. She tried to make friends with a dog, a big one, although not as big as she was. There was no warning. The dog jumped on Curly, his teeth closed together, then he jumped away, and Curly's face was torn open from eye to mouth.

Wolves fight like this, biting and jumping away, but the fight did not finish then. Thirty or forty more dogs ran up and made a circle around the fight, watching silently. Curly tried to attack the dog who had bitten her; he bit her a second time, and jumped away. When she attacked him again, he knocked her backward, and she fell on the ground. She never stood up again, because this was what the other dogs were waiting for. They moved in, and in a moment she was under a crowd of dogs.

It was all very sudden. Buck saw Spitz run out from the crowd with his tongue out of his mouth, laughing. Then he

25 saw François with an ax and two or three other men with clubs jump in among the dogs. Two minutes later the last of the dogs was chased away. But Curly lay dead in the snow, her body torn almost to pieces. Curly's death often came back to Buck in his dreams. He understood that once a dog was down on the ground, he was dead. He also remembered Spitz laughing, and from that moment he hated him.

30 Then Buck had another surprise. François put a harness on him. Buck had seen harnesses on horses, and now he was made to work like a horse, pulling François on a sled into the forest and returning with wood for the fire. Buck worked with Spitz and Dave. The two other dogs had worked in a harness before, and Buck learned by watching them. He also learned to stop and turn when François shouted.

40 "Those three are very good dogs," François told Perrault. "That Buck pulls very well, and he's learning quickly."

45 Perrault had important letters and official papers to take to Dawson City, so that afternoon he bought two more dogs, two brothers called Billee and Joe. Billee was very friendly, but Joe was the opposite. In the evening Perrault bought one more dog, an old dog with one eye. His name was Sol-leks, which means The Angry One. Like Dave, he made no friends; all he wanted was to be alone.

50 That night Buck discovered another problem. Where was he going to sleep? François and Perrault were in their tent; but when he went in, they shouted angrily and threw things at him. Outside it was very cold and windy. He lay