

seemed different and exciting. Buck could feel that something had changed. François took the dogs up onto the boat's deck—the open top part—and when Buck put his feet down, they went into something cold, soft, and white. He jumped back, frightened. There was more of the white stuff falling through the air. Buck opened his mouth and caught some. It was like fire on his tongue³⁰ for a moment, and then, suddenly, it had gone. Buck could not understand it. He tried again, and everyone laughed at him. Buck felt embarrassed³¹, but he did not know why. He had arrived in the Northland, and it was his first snow.



Into the Northland

Buck's first day in Canada, on Dyea Beach, was terrible. Everything here was very different from his quiet life in the sunny Santa Clara Valley, and Buck felt that he was back at the beginning of time. The dogs and men here were not town dogs and men. They were wild, and their only rule³² was the rule of club and teeth. The dogs did what they were told so that their masters did not hit them, and they fought to stay alive. Buck had never seen dogs fight like these ones.

That first day, Buck learned a lesson that he never forgot. Curly, who was always very friendly, moved toward a husky³³ dog, but the dog jumped at her, biting. In a moment her face was cut open from her eye to her mouth, and a big group of huskies ran up to Curly and stood watching. Buck saw them, mouths open and eyes shining³⁴, but he did not understand what they wanted at first. Curly jumped back at the husky who had hurt her, but he pushed her back. She fell to the ground, and suddenly, the other huskies moved forward. This was what they had wanted. They jumped onto Curly, growling and barking, and Buck could no longer see her. He could only hear her terrible cries.

It happened so suddenly that Buck could not believe it. François jumped into the circle of blood-hungry dogs, hitting them with his ax. Three other men with clubs helped to send them away. But it was too late. Curly was already dead. Her body lay covered with blood in the snow. Buck saw Spitz watching. Spitz opened his mouth and made a laughing sound, and from that moment, Buck hated him.

After that, Buck often woke up in the night and saw poor Curly's broken body in his head. But he had learned that once