

插图·中文导读英文版



The Law of Life
生命法则

[美] 杰克·伦敦 著
王勋 纪飞 等 编译



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内 容 简 介

本书精选了美国著名作家杰克·伦敦的短篇小说8篇,其中包括《生命法则》、《黑西哥人》、《静寂的雪野》、《黄金谷》和《强者的力量》等世界短篇小说文学宝库中的经典名篇。这些世界公认的文学名著被译成各种文字,影响了一代又一代世界各地的读者,并且被改编成戏剧、电影、电视剧和卡通片等。无论作为语言学习的课本,还是作为通俗的文学读本,这些经典名篇对当代中国的读者都将产生积极的影响,为了使读者能够了解英文故事概况,进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平,在每篇的开始部分增加了中文导读。同时,为了让读者更好地理解故事内容,书中加入了大量插图。

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图书在版编目(CIP)数据

生命法则=The Law of Life: 插图·中文导读英文版/(美)杰克·伦敦(London, J.)著;王勋,纪飞等编译. —北京:清华大学出版社, 2012.10
ISBN 978-7-302-29841-0

I. ①生… II. ①杰… ②王… ③纪… III. ①英语—语言读物 ②短篇小说—小说集—美国—近代 IV. ①H319.4: I

中国版本图书馆CIP数据核字(2012)第197159号

责任编辑:柴文强 李 晔

封面设计:傅瑞学

责任校对:徐俊伟

责任印制:宋 林

出版发行:清华大学出版社

网 址: <http://www.tup.com.cn>, <http://www.wqbook.com>

地 址: 北京清华大学学研大厦A座 邮 编: 100084

社总机: 010-62770175

邮 购: 010-62786544

投稿与读者服务: 010-62776969, c-service@tup.tsinghua.edu.cn

质 量 反 馈: 010-62772015, zhiliang@tup.tsinghua.edu.cn

印 装 者: 清华大学印刷厂

经 销: 全国新华书店

开 本: 148mm×210mm 印 张: 6.5 字 数: 156千字

版 次: 2012年10月第1版

印 次: 2012年10月第1次印刷

印 数: 1~5000

定 价: 12.50元

产品编号: 048308-01



杰克·伦敦（Jack London，1875—1916），原名约翰·格利菲斯·伦敦（John Griffith London），美国著名作家，在世界文学史上享有崇高的地位。

1876年1月12日，杰克·伦敦生于旧金山，是个私生子。后来，母亲改嫁给境况不佳的约翰·伦敦。他的童年是在穷苦中度过的，当过牧童、报童、童工、工人、水手。他还参加过1893年大恐慌中失业大军组成的抗议队伍，以流浪罪被捕入狱，被罚做苦工几个月。出狱后，他一边拼命干活，一边刻苦学习，广泛涉猎达尔文、斯宾塞、尼采和马克思等人的著作。1896年，他考进加利福尼亚大学，一年后辍学。后来受到阿拉斯加淘金热的影响，杰克·伦敦加入了淘金者的行列，却因病空手而归。在经历各种失败和挫折之后，杰克·伦敦萌发了写作的愿望。

1899年，他发表了第一篇小说《给猎人》；1900年，在他出版短篇小说集《狼之子》后，立即享誉文坛，并获得了丰厚的收入。从此，杰克·伦敦埋头读书写作，成为了职业作家。他是个多产的作家，一生共写了19部长篇小说、150多篇短篇小说以及3部剧本等。除《狼之子》之外，杰克·伦敦的著名作品还有：描写反抗压迫、回归自由与自然的《野性的呼唤》（1903），描写伦敦贫民生



活的特写集《深渊中的人们》(1903),描写兽性般残忍和利己主义的长篇小说《海狼》(1904),野性的幼狼如何从荒野中进入文明世界的《白牙》(1906),政治幻想小说《铁蹄》(1908),自传体长篇小说《马丁·伊登》(1909)等。1916年11月22日,年杰克·伦敦在精神极度苦闷、空虚中自杀身亡。

除了长篇小说之外杰克·伦敦的短篇小说,在世界上也享有很高声誉,本书精选了他的小说8篇,采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中,我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓,也尽可能保留原作的故事主线。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读英文故事之前,可以先阅读中文导读,这样有利于了解故事背景,从而加快阅读速度。同时,为了让读者更好地理解故事内容,书中加入了大量插图。我们相信,该经典著作的引进对加强当代中国读者,特别是青少年读者的人文修养是非常有帮助的。

本书主要内容由王勋、纪飞编译。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有郑佳、刘乃亚、赵雪、熊金玉、李丽秀、熊红华、王婷婷、孟宪行、胡国平、李晓红、贡东兴、陈楠、邵舒丽、冯洁、王业伟、徐鑫、王晓旭、周丽萍、熊建国、徐平国、肖洁、王小红等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平,书中难免会有不当之处,衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。



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生命法则

The Law of Life



老科斯库什独自坐在那里，听着外面发生的一切。他的视力已经严重衰退，听力却仍很敏锐。他的外孙女正对着狗边套缰绳边骂，他的儿子正在拆兽皮小屋，女人们收拾行李，男人们拉紧皮带，他们都要走了，整个部落将迁徙至食物丰盛的远方。他们已经走出了他的生活，剩下的日子，老科斯库什将与一小捆木柴为伴，然后静静地走向死亡。

儿子走到科斯库什的旁边跟他告别，询问他好不好。老科斯库什告诉儿子，自己有些累了，但是还好。然后，儿子便带着全家离开了这里，脚踩雪地的声音越来越远，最后听不见了。老科斯库什心满意足地坐着，陷入了沉思。

在老科斯库什看来，新陈代谢是自然的现象，每一个女人都曾年轻漂亮、每一个动物都曾活蹦乱跳，终归于被抛弃、死去。个体的死活并不重要，种族的延续位于首位。他不埋怨子女们抛弃了自己，因为他也曾抛弃过自己的父亲。老科斯库什往火堆里加了一根木柴，思绪飘向了更遥远的过去。他想到了很久以前的一场大饥荒，三年没有下雪、三年又没有解冻的那些年头。他又想到自己儿时经

历的富饶岁月，他们有吃不完的食物，每个人都饱食终日、无所事事。那时，他跟自己的伙伴金哈一起学着打猎。他们发现了一只老驯鹿和一群狼的搏斗，老驯鹿挣扎了很长的路，还击败了一次狼群，最终还是被狼群吃掉了。金哈后来成了全族最优秀的猎手，之后冻死在一个冰窟窿里。老科斯库什则成了部落酋长，做了很多勇敢的事。他回想着年轻时的岁月，火堆也烧了很久。这时，老科斯库什感到狼群围了过来。他挥舞着燃烧着的木柴，同时想到了那挣扎的老驯鹿。想到他和老驯鹿都已经完成了自然的使命，便疲倦地停了下来。

Old Koskoosh listened greedily. Though his sight had long since faded, his hearing was still acute, and the slightest sound penetrated to the glimmering intelligence which yet abode behind the withered forehead, but which no longer gazed forth upon the things of the world. Ah! that was Sit-cum-to-ha, shrilly anathematizing the dogs as she cuffed and beat them into the harnesses. Sit-cum-to-ha was his daughter's daughter, but she was too busy to waste a thought upon her broken grandfather, sitting alone there in the snow, forlorn and helpless. Camp must be broken. The long trail waited while the short day refused to linger. Life called her, and the duties of life, not death. And he was very close to death now.

The thought made the old man panicky for the moment, and he stretched forth a palsied hand which wandered tremblingly over the

small heap of dry wood beside him. Reassured that it was indeed there, his hand returned to the shelter of his mangy furs, and he again fell to listening. The sulky crackling of half-frozen hides told him that the chief's moose-skin lodge had been struck, and even then was being rammed and jammed into portable compass. The chief was his son, stalwart and strong, head man of the tribesmen, and a mighty hunter. As the women toiled with the camp luggage, his voice rose, chiding them for their slowness. Old Koskoosh strained his ears. It was the last time he would hear that voice. There went Geehow's lodge! And Tusken's! Seven, eight, nine; only the shaman's could be still standing. There! They were at work upon it now. He could hear the shaman grunt as he piled it on the sled. A child whimpered, and a woman soothed it with soft, crooning gutturals. Little Koo-tee, the old man thought, a fretful child, and not overstrong. It would die soon, perhaps, and they would burn a hole through the frozen tundra and pile rocks above to keep the wolverines away. Well, what did it matter? A few years at best, and as many an empty belly as a full one. And in the end, Death waited, ever-hungry and hungriest of them all.

What was that? Oh, the men lashing the sleds and drawing tight the thongs. He listened, who would listen no more. The whip-lashes snarled and bit among the dogs. Hear them whine! How they hated the work and the trail! They were off! Sled after sled churned slowly away into the silence. They were gone. They had passed out



of his life, and he faced the last bitter hour alone. No. The snow crunched beneath a moccasin; a man stood beside him; upon his head a hand rested gently. His son was good to do this thing. He remembered other old men whose sons had not waited after the tribe. But his son had. He wandered away into the past, till the young man's voice brought him back.

"Is it well with you?" he asked.

And the old man answered, "It is well."

"There be wood beside you," the younger man continued, "and the fire burns bright. The morning is gray, and the cold has broken. It will snow presently. Even now is it snowing."

"Ay, even now is it snowing."

"The tribesmen hurry. Their bales are heavy, and their bellies flat with lack of feasting. The trail is long and they travel fast. go now. It is well?"

"It is well. I am as a last year's leaf, clinging lightly to the stem. The first breath that blows, and I fall. My voice is become like an old woman's. My eyes no longer show me the way of my feet, and my feet are heavy, and I am tired. It is well."

He bowed his head in content till the last noise of the complaining snow had died away, and he knew his son was beyond recall. Then his hand crept out in haste to the wood. It alone stood between him and the eternity that yawned in upon him. At last the measure of his life was a handful of fagots. One by one they would

go to feed the fire, and just so, step by step, death would creep upon him. When the last stick had surrendered up its heat, the frost would begin to gather strength. First his feet would yield, then his hands; and the numbness would travel, slowly, from the extremities to the body. His head would fall forward upon his knees, and he would rest. It was easy. All men must die.

He did not complain. It was the way of life, and it was just. He had been born close to the earth, close to the earth had he lived, and the law thereof was not new to him. It was the law of all flesh. Nature was not kindly to the flesh. She had no concern for that concrete thing called the individual. Her interest lay in the species, the race. This was the deepest abstraction old Koskoosh's barbaric mind was capable of, but he grasped it firmly. He saw it exemplified in all life. The rise of the sap, the bursting greenness of the willow bud, the fall of the yellow leaf—in this alone was told the whole history. But one task did Nature set the individual. Did he not perform it, he died. Did he perform it, it was all the same, he died. Nature did not care; there were plenty who were obedient, and it was only the obedience in this matter, not the obedient, which lived and lived always. The tribe of Koskoosh was very old. The old men he had known when a boy, had known old men before them. Therefore it was true that the tribe lived, that it stood for the obedience of all its members, way down into the forgotten past, whose very resting-places were unremembered. They did not count;

they were episodes. They had passed away like clouds from a summer sky. He also was an episode, and would pass away. Nature did not care. To life she set one task, gave one law. To perpetuate was the task of life, its law was death. A maiden was a good creature to look upon, full-breasted and strong, with spring to her step and light in her eyes. But her task was yet before her. The light in her eyes brightened, her step quickened, she was now bold with the young men, now timid, and she gave them of her own unrest. And ever she grew fairer and yet fairer to look upon, till some hunter, able no longer to withhold himself, took her to his lodge to cook and toil for him and to become the mother of his children. And with the coming of her offspring her looks left her. Her limbs dragged and shuffled, her eyes dimmed and bleared, and only the little children found joy against the withered cheek of the old squaw by the fire. Her task was done. But a little while, on the first pinch of famine or the first long trail, and she would be left, even as he had been left, in the snow, with a little pile of wood. Such was the law. He placed a stick carefully upon the fire and resumed his meditations. It was the same everywhere, with all things. The mosquitoes vanished with the first frost. The little tree-squirrel crawled away to die. When age settled upon the rabbit it became slow and heavy, and could no longer outfoot its enemies. Even the big bald-face grew clumsy and blind and quarrelsome, in the end to be dragged down by a handful of yelping huskies. He remembered



how he had abandoned his own father on an upper reach of the Klondike one winter, the winter before the missionary came with his talk-books and his box of medicines. Many a time had Koskoosh smacked his lips over the recollection of that box, though now his mouth refused to moisten. The "painkiller" had been especially good. But the missionary was a bother after all, for he brought no meat into the camp, and he ate heartily, and the hunters grumbled. But he chilled his lungs on the divide by the Mayo, and the dogs afterwards nosed the stones away and fought over his bones.

Koskoosh placed another stick on the fire and harked back deeper into the past. There was the time of the Great Famine, when the old men crouched empty-bellied to the fire, and let fall from their lips dim traditions of the ancient day when the Yukon ran wide open for three winters, and then lay frozen for three summers. He had lost his mother in that famine. In the summer the salmon run had failed, and the tribe looked forward to the winter and the coming of the caribou. Then the winter came, but with it there were no caribou. Never had the like been known, not even in the lives of the old men. But the caribou did not come, and it was the seventh year, and the rabbits had not replenished, and the dogs were naught but bundles of bones. And through the long darkness the children wailed and died, and the women, and the old men; and not one in ten of the tribe lived to meet the sun when it came back in the spring. That *was* a famine!

But he had seen times of plenty, too, when the meat spoiled on their hands, and the dogs were fat and worthless with overeating—times when they let the game go unkilld, and the women were fertile, and the lodges were cluttered with sprawling men-children and women-children. Then it was the men became high-stomached, and revived ancient quarrels, and crossed the divides to the south to kill the Pellys, and to the west that they might sit by the dead fires of the Tananas. He remembered, when a boy, during a time of plenty, when he saw a moose pulled down by the wolves. Zing-ha lay with him in the snow and watched—Zing-ha, who later became the craftiest of hunters, and who, in the end, fell through an air-hole on the Yukon. They found him, a month afterward, just as he had crawled halfway out and frozen stiff to the ice.

But the moose. Zing-ha and he had gone out that day to play at hunting after the manner of their fathers. On the bed of the creek they struck the fresh track of a moose, and with it the tracks of many wolves. "An old one," Zing-ha, who was quicker at reading the sign, said—"an old one who cannot keep up with the herd. The wolves have cut him out from his brothers, and they will never leave him." And it was so. It was their way. By day and by night, never resting, snarling on his heels, snapping at his nose, they would stay by him to the end. How Zing-ha and he felt the blood-lust quicken! The finish would be a sight to see!

Eager-footed, they took the trail, and even he, Koskoosh, slow of sight and an unversed tracker, could have followed it blind, it was so wide. Hot were they on the heels of the chase, reading the grim tragedy, fresh-written, at every step. Now they came to where the moose had made a stand. Thrice the length of a grown man's body, in every direction, had the snow been stamped about and uptossed. In the midst were the deep impressions of the splay-hoofed game, and all about, everywhere, were the lighter footmarks of the wolves. Some, while their brothers harried the kill, had lain to one side and rested. The full-stretched impress of their bodies in the snow was as perfect as though made the moment before. One wolf had been caught in a wild lunge of the maddened victim and trampled to death. A few bones, well picked, bore witness.

Again, they ceased the uplift of their snowshoes at a second stand. Here the great animal had fought desperately. Twice had he been dragged down, as the snow attested, and twice had he shaken his assailants clear and gained footing once more. He had done his task long since, but none the less was life dear to him. Zing-ha said it was a strange thing, a moose once down to get free again; but this one certainly had. The shaman would see signs and wonders in this when they told him.

And yet again, they come to where the moose had made to mount the bank and gain the timber. But his foes had laid on from

behind, till he reared and fell back upon them, crushing two deep into the snow. It was plain the kill was at hand, for their brothers had left them untouched. Two more stands were hurried past, brief in time-length and very close together. The trail was red now, and the clean stride of the great beast had grown short and slovenly. Then they heard the first sounds of the battle—not the full-throated chorus of the chase, but the short, snappy bark which spoke of close quarters and teeth to flesh. Crawling up the wind, Zing-ha bellied it through the snow, and with him crept he, Koskoosh, who was to be chief of the tribesmen in the years to come. Together they shoved aside the under branches of a young spruce and peered forth. It was the end they saw.

The picture, like all of youth's impressions, was still strong with him, and his dim eyes watched the end played out as vividly as in that far-off time. Koskoosh marvelled at this, for in the days which followed, when he was a leader of men and a head of councillors, he had done great deeds and made his name a curse in the mouths of the Pellys, to say naught of the strange white man he had killed, knife to knife, in open fight.

For long he pondered on the days of his youth, till the fire died down and the frost bit deeper. He replenished it with two sticks this time, and gauged his grip on life by what remained. If Sit-cum-to-ha had only remembered her grandfather, and gathered a larger armful, his hours would have been longer. It would have been easy. But she

was ever a careless child, and honored not her ancestors from the time the Beaver, son of the son of Zing-ha, first cast eyes upon her. Well, what mattered it? Had he not done likewise in his own quick youth? For a while he listened to the silence. Perhaps the heart of his son might soften, and he would come back with the dogs to take his old father on with the tribe to where the caribou ran thick and the fat hung heavy upon them.

He strained his ears, his restless brain for the moment stilled. Not a stir, nothing. He alone took breath in the midst of the great silence. It was very lonely. Hark! What was that? A chill passed over his body. The familiar, long-drawn howl broke the void, and it was close at hand. Then on his darkened eyes was projected the vision of the moose—the old bull moose—the torn flanks and bloody sides, the riddled mane, and the great branching horns, down low and tossing to the last. He saw the flashing forms of gray, the gleaming eyes, the lolling tongues, the slavered fangs. And he saw the inexorable circle close in till it became a dark point in the midst of the stamped snow.

A cold muzzle thrust against his cheek, and at its touch his soul leaped back to the present. His hand shot into the fire and dragged out a burning faggot. Overcome for the nonce by his hereditary fear of man, the brute retreated, raising a prolonged call to his brothers; and greedily they answered, till a ring of crouching, jaw-slobbered gray was stretched round about. The old man listened to the