



ILDI HORVÁTH

Small Dogs, Big Dogs

a book about dogs
for children

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text and illustrations
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FOREWORD



I'm an illustrator, so why am I writing a guide to dogs? Well, the answer is not a simple one. The family I grew up in was unusual, my parents were biologists and worked in animal husbandry. As a result, I spent my childhood in the countryside, constantly surrounded by masses of animals: hundreds of ornamental fish swimming about in aquariums stacked from floor to ceiling in our garage; newts, ornamental blue crabs, and turtles in the suffocating humidity of various rooms and terrariums; and, in dozens of cages in an outbuilding in the garden, there were ornamental parrots, hens, cats and of course dogs. I remember that our house was always surrounded by swarms of Puli puppies, you couldn't get away from them for a moment. They jumped up, licked, and bit you if they could, and yapped.

I felt I'd had more than enough of them for a lifetime, so as an adult I decided I would have a house with a garden, but no dog. And so it came to pass. I grew up, had a family of my own with two little girls. As they sprouted up, one day the eldest turned to me and asked for a dog. I was adamant. We had chickens, a Greek tortoise, and runner ducks, but there would be no dog, and that was that. However, my little girl was a tough nut to crack, she persisted, and before I even knew it, we were spending our Sunday mornings at an animal shelter, walking the dogs there... Am I right in the head?

'Okay! we can take the shelter dogs out for walks, but there will be no dogs for us!' I declared firmly.

For a year and a half, we went to the shelter come rain, wind, or frost. Then I gave up. As a family, we agreed to adopt a little dog from the shelter the following spring. There, so much for not having a dog... Then one autumn Sunday morning something unexpected happened. We wandered into the yard at the shelter and there were some tiny mongrel puppies jumping around in one of the pens. 'I'm done for,' I thought, 'there's no turning back from here'. The children begged and pleaded and then chose one of the pups. He became Crusty, our family dog.

Why Crusty? You could say it was the colour of his coat, but that's not quite true. One of the characters in a book I did with the author Margit Balla is a dog called Crusty, a name that suited this puppy so perfectly that really, we had no other choice.

The dog craze has been with us ever since then, and we wanted to learn as much as possible about dogs. Which is why I thought I'd take the plunge and create a handy little guide that could be useful to other children, not to mention parents, in navigating the complex world of dogs.



HERE'S HOPING YOU
ENJOY THE BOOK!



A LITTLE HISTORY

Now, let's get down to business! What do we see when we look around the dog world today? You can find palm-sized lapdogs and also guard dogs the size of calves; angelic, playful family dogs, and thousands of other breeds of dogs of all colours, sizes, and temperaments. But where did they all come from? How long have they lived with us humans? And how did they become so varied in type?

Archaeologists have come up with some of the answers. The oldest dog skull we know of today is an ancient one, from an animal that is thought to have died 31 000 years ago. It was found in the Goyette Caves in what we think of today as Belgium.



As far as we know, dogs have been domesticated several times in Europe and Asia. Archaeological evidence suggests that prehistoric domesticated dogs from Asia spread further, replacing breeds already domesticated in Europe. From there they spread to Africa and across the Bering Strait to the Americas, eventually populating the entire globe. Who would have guessed that of all the domesticated animals, the dog is the one that has lived with us the longest?



PREHISTORIC HUMANS AND DOGS

Sitting in front of our computers in warm, heated rooms, it's difficult to imagine that once upon a time, back in the distant past, people had difficulty even finding food. They lived in small, scattered communities in the countryside, where women gathered seeds and mushrooms, and men hunted animals with simple spears. Where there was hunting, there was blood. The smell of flesh and blood soon attracted wolf-like furry quadrupeds whose way of life was very similar to that of the first humans: they hunted together in packs, chasing their game to exhaustion. They may have evolved into the first prehistoric dogs.

In fact, these four-legged creatures, unlike other beasts, were not hostile to our ancestors, and roamed around the hunting grounds and later the settlements of the first humans. Could it be that orphaned puppies were taken in by our forebears and became the first dogs?

In fact, we don't know for sure whether it was the humans or these wolf-like creatures that initiated the friendship, but we do know that hunting later forged their destinies.

The tamed dogs soon took on important roles in human settlements: they would signal with their barks if they sensed a stranger nearby, they would cuddle up to their owners at night for warmth, or they would play with their children, and last but not least, they were a source of food in times of scarcity.



Over time, prehistoric dogs became the scouts and hunting companions of the hunting cave dwellers. As the settled lifestyle of animal husbandry developed into a new way of life, hunting became a pastime. Man did not abandon the dog as a trusted companion, but selected and cross-bred the best of them to create new breeds. Some were bred for tracking, others for guarding flocks, saving lives or specifically as lapdogs.



Did you know... that some dogs can tell the difference between nickel, copper, zinc, and sulphur-containing rocks by smell? These dogs have also discovered deposits that no search tool has ever detected.



GOODBYE!

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