

A DOG'S TALE

He eyed the jiggling kennel crates
which held the feisty litter mates
and asked, "What are these scrappy things?"

"They're Scottish Terriers," she said,
"and they're a little different."

Not sure exactly what she meant
he watched the pups bounce to and fro,
then spoke amid his ponderings:
"And for what purpose are these bred?"

"These days, most for companionship,
although it wasn't always so.
They're terriers--'earth dogs,' that is,"
she said replying to his quiz.
"Their evolutionary trip
from varmint-chasing ancestry
to win Westminster Best-in-Show
took less than half a century."

"It started in the Scottish hills
where strong men toiled to tame the land
but couldn't gain the upper hand
to drive the wily foxes out
and stop livestock and poultry kills.
That's where these dogs turned that about."

"First curious, they learned to chase,
but when the quarry won the race
and safely scurried underground,
these enterprising dogs soon found
a hundred ways to dig them out
or burrow down to fight below."

"In time these dogs became renowned
for fervor and for fearlessness
who, once engaged, would not let go.
Eventually their stubbornness
to finish fights increased their fame
until "Die Hard" became their name."

"But now," he asked, "what are they for?"
"These days few pests are left to fight."

"In fact," she said, "They now do more."
"They still do trouble rats and mice,
chase cats and scare wild birds to flight,
but new skills make them triple-nice:
Beyond success at shooing pests
they're also eager to compete.
Agility, obedience,
and conformation judging tests
make growing lists of trial bests.
To make their three-fold lives complete,
they have become our trusted friends."

"It's likely we don't have full sense
of what their bond of friendship lends
to us and generations hence,
but surely from the present trends
we may expect the finest ends."

"No matter how their effort brings
proud wins in competition rings,
or how they guard the house and store
by far the most important part
is in between--they steal your heart."

"These days, that's what these dogs are for."

by Lee Netzler