

ONCE IN LOVE WITH A PUPPY



LEE NETZLER

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LOVE POEMS FROM A POOR MAN

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"Waggin' Tails," Fox Valley Dog Training Club.

For Andy and Heather
who were two of my best friends

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THE SHADOW

I have a little shadow
who walks along with me.
 She stalks my heels
 just where she feels
A shadow ought to be.

So when I go out walking,
I know not far behind
 she keeps her place
 in perfect pace
as if she knew my mind.

I don't mind being followed,
but sense one small defeat:
 I cannot now
 remember how
I walked without six feet.

THE DIFFERENCE

It's the loudest bark
that earns the biggest treat,
but the fondest lick
is made on shoeless feet.

THE GETAWAY

Crouched beside the gauze expanse of screen,
dark eyes probing from beneath thick brows,
a shadow in a shadow lies unseen.
He moves no more than secrecy allows,
but shifts an ear to catch the distant sounds
of a cyclist wheeling daily rounds
and he waits. The whiskered demon waits
to hear the crack of a paper thunderclap
striking the step with a folded slap.
He explodes as if to burst the flimsy sheet,
but is held inside by the rider's swift retreat.

The successful getaway depends
upon each knowing what the other one pretends.
Later, when he pedals back to play
without his papers, they'll be friends.

TERRIER TEMPERAMENT

Typical dare delivery:

A challenging foursquare pose,
Tail up, stiff and quivery—
Push, push, broad black nose.

DOG MEAL

The hunter's ears are listening
while my steel weapon slays the can.
The fiercest eyes are watching me
spoon pre-cooked mixture into pan.
The stealthy feet pad toward the feast;
the hair is bristled stiff and straight.
The muscled legs are tensed to spring
as muzzle nuzzles dinner plate.
The savage jaws are clamping down
to chew the meat of canned meal through.
The sharpest fangs are snapping shut
to slice the kibble bits in two.
Thank God I don't encounter him
without sharp weaponry to carve
the hearts from dog food cans, because
without my opener, he'd starve.

THE TRIAL SCORE

Oh bitch! Why do you drag your feet
reluctantly across the trial floor?
You act as if we seek defeat;
can't you cooperate a little more?

Your actions are bewildering;
you know we didn't come here to retreat.
You know we're not abandoning
our entry fee—we came here to compete.

I didn't understand the thing
before she made me think about it more:
Until we're tested in the ring
we never jeopardize our perfect score.

THE PLAYERS

We never earn a trophy
or make the highest place.
We're never classed as winners;
we're barely in the race.

The competition's much too good
for us to hope to win.
In fact, I think we're lucky
they even let us in.

The prizes, ribbons, and awards
aren't really why we came.
There's just one reason why we're here—
we like to play the game.

SCHOOL - 14 LINES ONN ET

Do you remember when a daily nap
was part of kindergarten class? I'll tell
you that I thought our teacher's mind would snap
enforcing it. My dog stays down as well.

Can you recall how fidgety we were?
We sat and squirmed until the final bell.
And that poor teacher; how we tested her.
My dog obeys the sit and stay as well.

Remember days in spring when we forgot
to pay attention? They were really swell,
although our teacher thought that they were not.
My dog gives his attention just as well.

I'm teaching now, and dog's not minding well.
Quite truthfully, like us, he's gone to pot.

A GROOMING

The handle on this stripping comb is bone,
almost as hard as the bone in his jaws.
The teeth along this comb are fine-ground steel,
nearly as sharp as those his lips conceal.
With tool in hand I pull on coat that's blown,
observing that he doesn't like the feel.
Perhaps that is enough; I think I'll pause.

THOUGHTS FOR A PENNY

The first thing everybody learns
is Mother does the biggest part
of puppy chores. She also earns
the same-sized share of puppy's heart.

A Father squints his marksman's eye
and sees a Hunter, not a pet.
At 3 months old, he wonders why
his dog is not retrieving yet.

The kids will tell you what they see;
A puppy has to do with fun
and not responsibility—
but they'll divide the work for one.

No dog could fit all situations,
but puppies fill all expectations.

TRAVELIMERICKS

We packaged the dogs in a crate,
and shipped them along as air freight
when the clerk had explained
that their care was maintained,
and their fare was a PUPular rate.

The dogs weren't too happy we flew,
and fussed about traveling straight through,
but had little to say
as we flitted away,
and relaxed with an aerial view.

After half a day's travel by air
we arrived much too tired to care;
the report on the freight
did similarly state
that the crate held a dog-tired pair.

QUARANTINE CAGE T

Don't dance around as though you're left behind;
of course you'll get to go along with me.
Another world is waiting over there,
new things for you to sniff and me to see.

I hope he doesn't mind the wooden crate.
The ride is smooth, but it's a long, long run.
Be gentle, please, as you unload that box,
and turn it round so he can see the sun.

Are these the papers here that I must sign?
If that's the law, we'll certainly obey.
It isn't long, about two years as you
would reckon time. We'll visit every day.

Who put this chain link fence around my dog?
What right have you to cage this part of me?
We'll suffer for a hundred twenty days—
the scar will last long after we are free.

QUARANTINE CAGE M

Approach along the high green wall
and enter through the iron gate.
Continue on the dusty road
until the prison yard, then wait.

At proper time the guard will come,
unlock the gate, and let me in.
Proceed past cells of chain link fence
and shacks of corrugated tin.

But pausing as I walk along
to speak with inmates that I know
to see how long that they've been in,
and ask how long they have to go.

Arriving at the worn cell door,
unhook steel latch, and step inside
to visit with the inmate who
was only sentenced, never tried.

The law condemns the both of us.
In misery I share her lot,
for when our daily visit ends,
though I walk out, my dog cannot.

KAPIOLANI PARK

No drinking of intoxicating beverages.

This is a public park.

Parking for park users only.

No golfing

allowed.

No dogs.

Have fun.

No ball playing of any kind in this area.

Unlawful to cut coconut leaf.

Do not block driveway.

No drinking.

No littering.

No dogs.

Have fun.

No drinking or displaying of intoxicants.

No parking on pavement.

No parking on lawn.

Speed limit

25.

No dogs.

Have fun.

SAY MISTER

So who's the dog what lives next door
and what's his name you know?
I seen him by the house before
and figured he could go
around the block least once with me.
Was thinking you would know
the people. Maybe you could see
if it's O.K. to go.
Say Mister won't forget I owe
you. Come boy here we go.

THE FLEA

Flea, flea, flea, flea, flea,
itch, itch, itch, itch, itch,
scratch, scratch, scratch, scratch, scratch,
missed, missed, missed, missed, bitch!

AN APOLOGY

Sometimes, when players race for squeaking toys,
it's easy, when intent upon the chase,
to claim the right-of-way due little boys
and win a tie instead of second place.

I neither want to tie nor wish to win
if doing so might mean I'd lose a friend;
I'd rather be companions to begin
and find us friends at competition's end.

I ask the quarter that I did not give
and send this note to see if you'll forgive.

3 CORNERED HEARTS

My dog's a very fine and loyal friend
from whom I certainly would never part.
We pledge our lives as comrades to the end,
united in a brotherhood of heart.

Some weeks ago while tending his affairs
I spoke to him about a family.
I cautioned him he must have legal heirs
and continuity of pedigree.

My faithful dog quite sensibly agreed
that inquiries should be discreetly let
to find a proper female of his breed.
Friend that I am, I found his Juliet.

She is a black-haired beauty of a lass
who lit his fire the first time that they met.
I never thought the day would come to pass
when he would be somebody else's pet,
but here it is.

My grief is limitless.
He squanders his affections on that bitch.
I plead with him to stop his foolishness;
he answers he would rather fight than switch.

GENERATION GAP

I bought a puppy
way back when
and taught him good
behavior then.
And when we'd finished
he sure knew
what self-respecting
dogs must do.

I bought a young puppy
a long time ago
and set out to teach her
the things she should know.
And when we had finished
she thoroughly knew
what dogs of good breeding
must properly do.

There are puppies out
of the two I bought
who must learn the rules
like the pair I taught.
And I hope that after
their training's through
they behave much better
than their folks now do.

FROM JACKAL TO HIDE AT CHRISTMASTIDE

My dog's the best of friends all year
with everyone who comes to visit,
but in this yuletide atmosphere
he barks at all to ask who is it.

One rule: No begging from a guest.
I warned him he must show good breeding,
but now he never stops to rest
until he's found a hand that's feeding.

The slyest trick he's guilty of
is positively brash and shocking—
instead of tracking down the glove,
he leads us to his Christmas stocking.

THE NIGHT BEFORE CHRISTMAS

(with apologies to Clement C. Moore)

'Twas the night before Christmas,
and all through the house,
Not a dog was still stirring, nor even a mouse.
The doggy-bags hung by the chimney with care,
In hopes that Saint Nicholas soon would be there.

The puppies were nestled all snug in their beds,
While visions of Liva-Snaps
danced through their heads.

And Mamma in her 'kerchief, and I in my cap,
Had hung up the leash for a long winter's nap—

When out near the kennels arose such a clatter,
I sprang from my bed to see what was the matter;
Away to the window I flew like a flash,
Tore open the shutters and threw up the sash.

The moon on the breast of the new-fallen snow
Gave the lustre of midday to dog-runs below;
When, what to my wondering eyes should display,
But eight harnessed dogs, and a miniature sleigh.

With a little old trainer, so lovely and quick,
I knew in a moment it must be Saint Nick.
More rapid than eagles his canines they came,
And he whistled, and shouted,
and called them by name:

"Now Andre! now Amber! now Andy and Tico!
On, Seltzer! on Heather! on Don D and Dino!
To the top of the porch! to the top of the wall!
Now, heel away! heel away! heel away all!"

As dumbbells that before the wild new handlers fly,
When they meet with the hurdle boards
 mount to the sky,
So up to the house-top they doggedly drew,
With a sleigh full of treats,
 and Saint Nicholas, too.

And then in a twinkling the roof-top was clad
In prancing and pawing from each little pad.
As I drew in my head, and was turning around,
Down the chimney Saint Nicholas came with a bound.

He was dressed all in fur,
 from his head to his foot
And his clothes were all tarnished
 with ashes and soot!
A bundle of bones he had flung on his back,
Like utility trainer with article pack.

His eyes—how they twinkled!
 his dimples, how merry!
His cheeks were like roses,
 his nose like a cherry!
His droll little mouth was so pleasant and plump,
And the beard on his chin was as white as a jump.

The stem of a pipe he held tight in his teeth,
And the smoke,
 it "about-turned" his head like a wreath.
He had a broad face, and a little round belly
That shook when he laughed,
 like a bowlful of jelly.

He was chubby and plump, a right jolly old elf;
And I laughed when I saw him, in spite of myself.
A wink of his eye, and a twist of his head,
And I knew that I had no corrections to dread.

He spoke no commands,
but went straight to his work,
And filled all the doggy-bags, turned with a jerk,
And making hand signals aside of his nose,
And giving a nod up the chimney he rose.

He sprang to his sleigh,
to his dogs gave a whistle,
And away they all heeled,
with their tails at a bristle.
But I heard him exclaim, as he drove out of sight,
"Happy Christmas to all! and to all a good night!"

POSTCARD TO A TERRIER

No. Fond du Lac, WI
January 13, 19xx

Dear Andy,

Expect me back on Saturday. Mid-afternoon the plane is due. I thought I'd write this card to say my visit here is nearly through. Sure miss you while I've been away. Can't wait to board that westbound flight to Honolulu Saturday. Won't sleep, I'll bet, all Friday night.

Take care my friend. I'll see you soon. If all my plans work out OK we'll share a sunny afternoon together Saturday.

Aloha, Lee

A DOGMA

I'm hounded by the thought that we refer to dogs insultingly. Such words as cur, or bitch, or mongrel always mean the worst, and while we clearly recognize them first more subtle phrases say it other ways.

For instance, why are sultry days dog days? And why are we describing as dog-poor those who financially are insecure? What message does a dog-eared book convey? Are dog-legs to a route the normal way? And do we not enjoy discussing how the dogfight loser's in the doghouse now?

I surely am dog-tired and I balk at putting up with all this dog-cheap talk, and yet I only know too doggone well that I won't change it by my doggerel.

A STRAY

Once an Irish Setter
froth-mouthed and breathing hard
tense in a tangled coat with wild eyes
bore into the yard.

He pranced like a hunted buck,
no time to spend,
cornered, testing the boundary fence
from end to end.

I let him pace the lines
until he finally drooped a tail,
then I picked a shady spot out front
and set down a water pail.

Splashing freely, he filled his thirst,
then dropped to rest in the shade.
He let me approach with collar and leash
to fasten him where he laid.

When he panted easier there,
I walked to the house to call;
authorities could record the news—
not missing, after all.

As I stood inside at the phone
and watched through the front door frame,
a truck pulled up and a man got out.
He called the dog by name.

Stiffly he rose and slowly he wagged.
The man untied his red-haired stray,
led him off to the truck
and drove away.

When he left without a thanks,
I didn't mind,
but I think he could've left
our Sunday leash behind.

A COLLECTION OF DOG-WALKERS

We take a walk each day
since she insists we do.
I wonder as she picks our way
just who is walking who.

My bitch stands a foot at the wither.
We walk, and I'm kept in a dither
as her barking attacks
draw strange dogs in large packs—
I fear for my life while I'm with her.

On days it's hot she drags her feet,
but when it's not she's swift to beat.
I'd give a lot to find the spot
my pace would meet her strange dog-trot.

Some people look just like their dogs, they say,
and when we walk, I keep that thought in mind.
They proved it watching me the other day:
I look like mine, but only from behind.



As far as guarding things, there never was
a dog so good. We walk—his image sours.
He bites off more than we can chew, because
he thinks as far as he can see is ours.



We're occupied
with how he's tied.

I am in doubt
our path is out
quite far enough
to clear his arc.

He glances back
to check his slack
and eyes the rope
with silent hope
he'll reach his mark.

Now call the bluff:
I walk in fear
we'll come too near—
he waits most still
and hopes we will.



I walk a pair;
it's quite a sight
as one turns left,
the other right.

It never fails,
experience shows,
that when one stops
the other goes.

"Neither snow, nor rain, nor heat,
nor gloom of night
stays these ^{terriers}/_{couriers}
from the swift completion
of their ^{anointing}/_{appointed} rounds."

We take our last parade
beneath the late late moon.
When morning comes, I'm well repaid—
he lets me sleep till noon.

THE SCULPTURE

Before him stands the shapeless block.
Adjacent are the implements
of wood and bone and hard sharp steel—
tools fit to shape the face of rock,
to hew it by the proper feel
until the form makes perfect sense.

Sculpturing of the block begins:
Roughness becomes a gentle curve,
a slant is scissored to a square.
The eye, the hand, the sculptor's nerve
control. He cuts and carves and thins
and trims and snips not stone but hair.

A Scottish Terrier: Aloof,
a block of dignity and grace,
detachedly ignores the fuss
of barbering—impervious.
The sculptor stops to seek his proof:
Fire eyes in a finely chiseled face.

HALF-HEARTED

You know it recently occurred to me
you're not as feisty as you used to be.
I can recall the day you'd take a nip
for things that lately only curl a lip.
We used to fear the quiver in your jaws,
but now I find you sharpening your claws
on one old yellow stump of pet shop bone.
Whatever caused this change of heart you've shown?

Is it your faith in Master's not as strong
these days? Or did the bitches treat you wrong?
Do you oppose the new revised leash laws?
I think I know what really is the cause:
It's not religion, sex, or politics—
you found you're middle-aged and pushing six.

THE SCULPTURE

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FOUR POINTS

The thing I like about you most is that you're uncorrupted by a praising pat upon the head. Despite how well it goes, the points and titles that you win, your nose is never prone to strike a turned-up pose. The thing I like about you most is that.

PAPER DOGS

Why is it dogs are all you write about?

They're not.

But every piece you've written I have read—

Well, good.

and each one features dogs, without a doubt.

Somewhat.

I don't see how I could have been misled.

You could.

About the Author

Lee Netzler had his first poem published in 1953 while a freshman in high school. Since then, in addition to the publications acknowledged at the beginning of this book, his work has appeared in several books, magazines, newsletters and other publications. He has also written another book entitled Love Poems From A Poor Man.

During the period when the poems in this book were written, he was a member of the Fox Valley Dog Training Club, The Obedience Training Club of Hawaii, The Scottish Terrier Club of America, and The Aloha Scottish Terrier Club.

Lee has been employed by the Federal Aviation Administration since 1960 and is a Supervisory Air Traffic Control Specialist at the Denver Air Route Traffic Control Center in Longmont, Colorado. He is also co-owner of Ridgeview Ranch, Inc., a dressage/combined training equestrian facility located west of Loveland, Colorado.

His other interests include spending time with his Scottish Terrier, Piper, and occasionally trout fishing.

Epilogue

Work on this book began shortly after Heather's death. Several months later the manuscript was completed, except for this page, and placed in the mail to the printer. Andy died the next day.

ASHES

The vacuum cleaner fell behind
ten years ago, but still it whined
the day before. It labors yet,
but this time shedded coats from pup
to shaggy dog will get picked up.

There was a need to mop the floor
around the water pans
where it was always dribble wet.
It isn't puddled any more.

There's no time left for dog food cans,
or bones to chew, or a cookie treat,
for tangled hair or muddy feet,
and no more toys are teased around.
Two leather leashes wait to go.

Someday
I'll take you to a place I know
where ashes lightly kiss the ground
and good dogs rest without a sound
and summer breezes always blow.