

of Dog?

Illustrations by Louis Fancher

ident of welcome?; that was in the yard bright and early the next morning, wagging his tail nineteen to the dozen in rapturous greeting? the dog that adopted you so hard and fast that mother, father, cook, aunt, uncle, all—were unable to disabuse his mind of the legality of the affair? the dog that was permitted, perforce, to remain and become yours? Never. Pat is unforgettable—a very Sirius in the constellations of memory.

Pat seemed to be his name from the start. You never had a doubt about it. There was no need. Pat answered to Pat as to the manner born. He seemed, moreover, emblazoned with the name Pat from stem to stern. It was preposterous to think that he had ever been called anything else. He arrived on the highway of your life already named and ticketed as yours—like that forward young woman in the mythology book who sprang full grown and completely armed from her father's head or helmet, or something. You were glad she was armed, and you often wondered whether or not she was legged, too; but as she got around in the upper world considerably and performed a lot of deeds for you to study, she probably was. What a relief Pat was after myths! He was so intensely real.

But he was nothing to look at. No, indeed. His homeliness was of a stern and unimpeachable character. Perhaps that is why they all hated him so, for grown-ups are always partial to such of their animals as are nice looking—including their children. A plain child has to walk an awfully straight path. Certainly Pat was no beauty. He was of a dirty white from tip to tip and he had a diabolical black smudge around one eye. Two black eyes might have made for symmetry, therefore was Pat denied them. Nature accorded to Pat no meanest advantage. His one black eye gave him a frightful proscribed and sinister appearance. It was as if some fiend had fashioned him in a moment of sport and then had chased him from Hades with an ink bottle.

But he was all yours—that was his one and sufficient beauty. He stuck to you as no shadow could stick, independent quite of where the sun happened to be in the heavens. A shadow is a mere fair-weather friend, and fickle in comparison with Pat. The only times he was ever in doubt of your whereabouts (and no wonder) was when you were polished off and haled to church; and when he finally found you, after a panting search and in the middle of the sermon, his conversation on the subject was poignant. The minister and the congregation all looked at you with remonstrance—as if you had been the barker.



in certain thoughtlessnesses

In the way of hiding his crimes from the hard-hearted others, you performed services for Pat which you would have hated to perform for the angel Gabriel. Your own clustered sins were few and fairly coverable compared with the frightful things Pat could do, and did, do.

Will you ever forget that morning when you found him careening around the garden with a rose-bush in his jaws? That beast of a plant was a pampered thing, a kind of family pet, and was all but rocked to sleep every night; it was certainly watched every minute of the day and its wretched buds counted every half hour. Well, Pat showed himself a connoisseur. That was the bush he wanted and no other. It branched from his glad head like the horns of a deer, and the more anguished you became in an attempt to recover it, the more of a game Pat took it to be. The bush was a sorry thing when you finally did recover it. You had to manicure it for a full fifteen minutes before you could tell it from pea brush. Then you replanted it; and you had to rake the whole bed to hide your traces. Your particular Nemesis must have been to a ball game, or something, that morning; for it mercifully came on to rain. Seldom indeed did the elements conspire any way but against you. Still, rain it did; and you were saved, for the subsequent death of that rain-refreshed bush was a slow and somewhat normal affair, and was attributed to blight.

Then the fearful afternoon when you caught him trotting to the lawn with the ham bone which was to form the nucleus of that night's supper—what a soul-searing time you had trying to trim that mangled bone back to some faint semblance of its former seemly self; and the horror you endured at the table during the few tense moments that the maternal eye studied that bone disapprovingly; and the cool thankful perspiration which poured down your spine when the maternal edict was that no servant could be trusted!

The slippers you had to retrieve! The chewed pens and pencils you had to burn. The holes you had to fill up! The footmarks you had to erase! The meat and milk that you were forced to pilfer! The milk matter was easy, though; for a trifle of water added to the pitcher fixed that. But obtaining meat was a harder job. You endured all the pangs of a father of a family with a strike "on" and the price of beef "up." You used to try sliding your portion of the roast to Pat at dinner time, under the table; but he exposed the combine by snapping his paws gratefully together and slobbering an audible appreciation of your bounty. Then, of course, the Assembled Don'ts got in an interdict. And why? Wasn't it your meat, once it was on your plate?

But they begrudged Pat everything, even his optimism. He could not so much as wag his tail that somebody did not make unpleasant mention of fleas—the inference being that Pat shook fleas from that amiable stump much as dew is scattered from a waving branch. Fleas! Whoever heard of such a thing? Why, if you had been given five cents each for every flea on Pat's whole body you wouldn't have had enough money to buy a bicycle—a high-grade one, that is. And the queer way they had of transferring the odium to you of all that was reprehensible in your pet. You were made to feel that every solitary flea was a plague spot due to your own stained and mutilated soul; that had you been fair and unsmirched from your infancy up, Pat would have been flealess. The absurdity of this never struck you until it was years too late. At the time you felt that it was all more or less probable. Sins and their punishments were mysteries together. You never quite knew what everything was all about. Such times as your conscience was as pure as an Easter lily, someone would box your head nearly off your



Pat was no beauty

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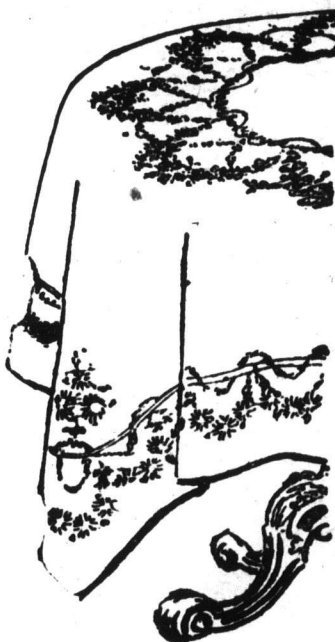
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