

Dogs of Destiny

Paul Brown and Fairfax Downey



TO
THE K-9 CORPS AND MARINE WAR DOGS
OF THE SECOND WORLD WAR

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DOGS OF DESTINY

BY
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AND
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WITH PEN-AND-INK ILLUSTRATIONS BY
PAUL BROWN

Living Book Press

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A LEGEND OF THE DOG

Not long after the creation of the world, a crack opened in the surface of the earth. Slowly and steadily it widened. Soon it would become a broad, impassable chasm.

Man found himself on one side of the gap, with all the beasts on the other.

Alone among the animals the dog gave heed to the separation. Whining piteously, he ran along the edge. At last he sat and gazed across at the man with wistful and imploring eyes.

“Come!” called the man.

By now the chasm, dangerously wide, revealed a fearful abyss. Yet the dog never hesitated. With all his strength he jumped. He did not quite clear it, but his forelegs reached and clung to the farther side.

Quickly the man grasped the dog and drew him up to safety at his side.

“You shall be my comrade,” the man declared.

So the dog ever since has remained.

DOG OF DOOM

INSTRUMENT OF FATE

THIS is a dog story written on papyrus more than 3600 years ago. It begins with a Pharaoh of Egypt whose heart was grieved that no man-child had been born to him. He prayed for a son to the Hathors, the gods of time, and they granted his wish, but in the same moment pronounced the boy's doom.

“He shall die by the crocodile, or by the serpent, or by the dog.”

By every means, the Pharaoh strove to protect his son against his cruel destiny, keeping him in a stone tower on a mountain top, carefully guarded. Yet as the lad grew, he could no longer be confined. No sooner had he stepped into the world outside than he beheld a strange animal.

“What is that that runs behind a man walking on the road?” he asked his page.

“It is a dog,” the servitor answered.

“Let one be brought me exactly like it,” commanded the young Prince.

Pharaoh was distraught but could not deny his son. “Let

him be given a young running dog lest his heart be saddened," he directed.

So upon the Prince was bestowed a coursing hound, one of those fleet animals-probably a Saluki-with which the Egyptians overtook the swiftest game. Not even when his father revealed the fate hanging over him could the lad be persuaded to give up his pet. The dog followed faithfully at his heels when he departed from Egypt and sought adventure in foreign lands.

The Prince, disguised as the son of a soldier of the chariots, won the hand of the beautiful daughter of the King of Naharinna from many suitors by performing the task of scaling the sheer walls of her tower, seventy cubits high. But the King, believing the Prince to be of mean birth, drove him and his bride from court.

While the Prince and his wife were dwelling in exile, he told her of the prophecy declaring that one of three animals would prove his doom. She looked at the hound, which had faithfully followed them, and begged: "Slay the dog that runs before thee." But he refused without hesitation. "I cannot slay the dog that I brought up when it was little," he said.

It was not the dog, however, but a serpent that came first to bring the Prince's fate upon him. The Princess saw the poisonous thing crawling toward her husband as he slept. Quickly she placed a bowl of milk in its path. When the snake lapped it up and grew torpid, she chopped it to bits with a hatchet.

Then came the crocodile. The huge reptile crept up from the river one night, seized the Prince in its jaws and began to drag him off. And as it crawled, it spoke to its victim:

"Behold, I am thy doom, following after thee..."

There, tantalizingly, the story breaks off, for the last part of

the papyrus was destroyed by a powder explosion. But scholars have reconstructed this ending.

The valiant Princess slew the crocodile also. Now the jealous suitors set out in pursuit of their successful rival and his wife, and the young couple and their dog hid in a cave. As the suitors passed it, the dog barked a warning and betrayed the hiding place. Bravely the Prince fought his assailants, but they were too many. The Princess sacrificed herself for him, stepping in front of him to take a javelin in her breast, and the dog died, too, defending his master. Finally the Prince fell beneath the suitors' blows.

Doom was fulfilled. Satisfied, the gods restored all three to life. Such perfect devotion, they decreed, deserved to live on.



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ARGUS

HOUND OF ULYSSES

ULYSSES had bred the dog Argus. His trait of watchfulness, evident even in puppyhood, must have caused him to be named for the fabled giant who had a hundred eyes. When Ulysses left his island kingdom of Ithaca to join the Greek expedition against Troy, Argus was still too young to train. But the image of his master was fixed in the puppy's mind, and the memory of dogs is long.

In Ithaca, Argus, grown large and swift, coursed deer, wild goats, and hares with the huntsmen. He was no "table dog"-animals the Greeks kept as house pets-but of the strong, fierce breed used for the chase or to guard the herds and flocks.

After a siege of ten years, Troy was taken by the stratagem of the wooden horse, and Ulysses began that long voyage home which is the theme of Homer's *Odyssey*. It was a journey fraught with such perilous adventures that it consumed ten years more and demanded all the hero's courage and craft before he reached Ithaca.

There most believed Ulysses dead. Few besides his faithful wife Penelope still hoped. The supposed widow was only able

to put off scores of importunate suitors by promising to make her choice among them when she completed a garment; all she wove by day she unraveled each night.

None knew Ulysses when he returned, disguised in a beggar's rags, but the still loyal swineherd, Eumaeus, accompanied the stranger in an invasion of the palace that would end in triumph over the suitors.

Without the gates they beheld an old dog, derelict and masterless, lying on a dung heap for warmth, his hide twitching under the torment of ticks. Argus knew Ulysses instantly. He dropped his ears forward, and his tail thumped with joy, yet he was too feeble to drag himself toward his master.

Ulysses brushed away a tear. "Eumaeus," he said, "how strange such a dog lies on a dunghill. He is beautifully formed, but I am not certain whether his speed and strength match his looks, or whether he is merely one of the table dogs their masters keep for show."

"Truly," the swineherd answered, "that is a dog of one who died in a far-off country. If his form and strength were still as they were when Ulysses departed for Troy, you would marvel at his fleetness and courage. No quarry he tracked into the depths of the forest could escape him. Now he has fallen on evil days, his master has perished in a foreign land, and neglectful women give him no more care."

Now that he had looked on the master for whom he had waited so long, the old dog's eyes closed.

"Argus the dog," Homer relates, "went down into the blackness of death, that moment he saw Ulysses after twenty years."

An epitaph, written by another Greek poet, would serve well for the faithful Argus.

“Thou who passest on this path,
If haply thou dost mark this monument,
Laugh not, I pray thee, though it is a dog’s grave.
Tears fell for me, and the dust was heaped above me
By a master’s hand.”

