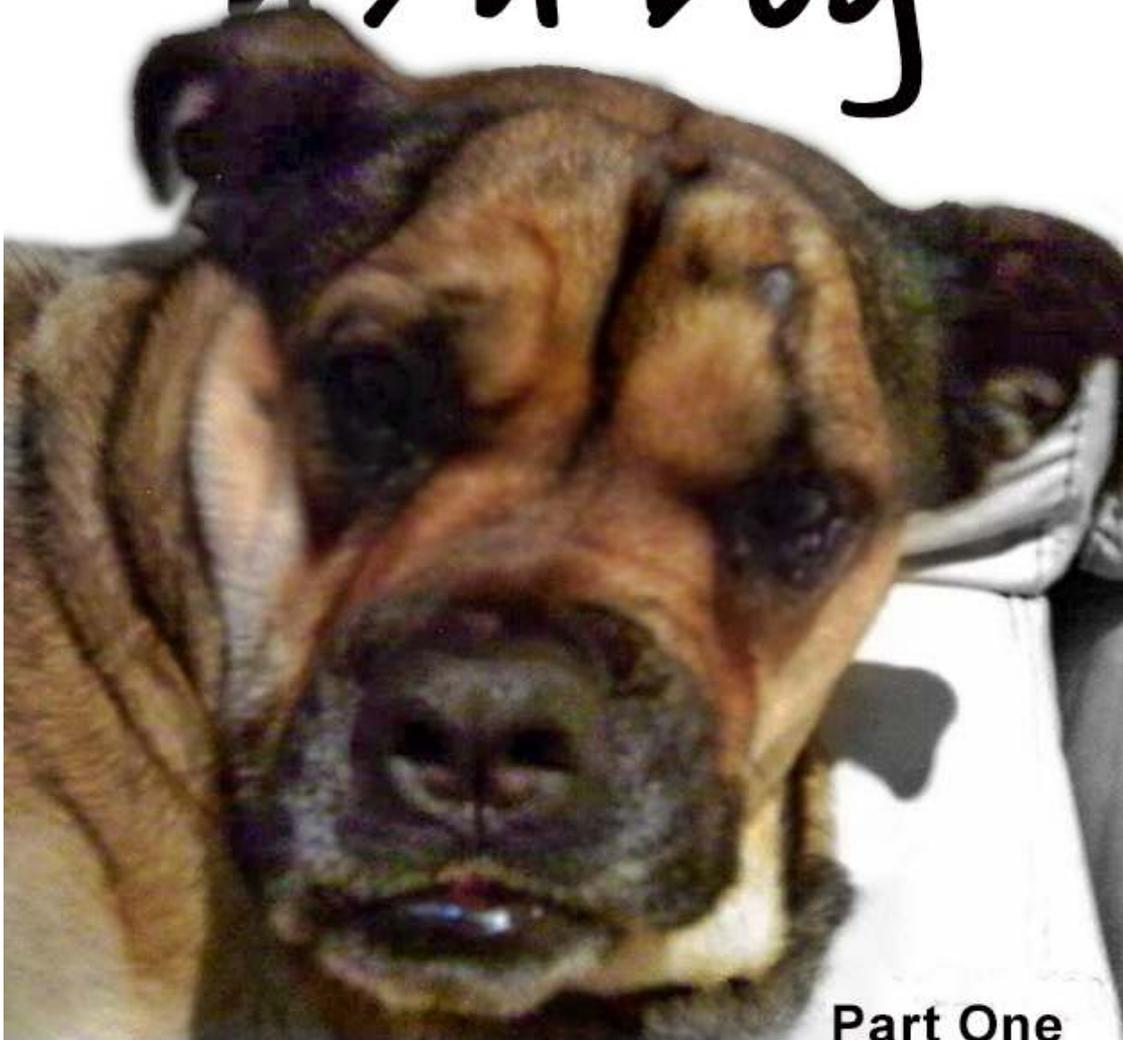


My Life as a Dog



Part One

By Hennessy Montes

Forward by Gene Rosov

Text Copyright © 2013 Eugene A. Rosov

All Rights Reserved

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE & DEDICATION.....	4
Chapter One: Puppy Hate – My Birth, the Litter, How I got Hurt.....	7
Chapter Two: Lost, Desperate, andFound! – Jose Finds Me.....	9
Chapter Three: Love and My New Master - Velvet Ears.....	11
Chapter Four: Jose’s Friends & Godfather	14
Chapter Five: Trips to the Vet – My Eye Gets Fixed	18
Chapter Six: Life on 60th Street – Chewing for Fun and Attention.....	22

PREFACE & DEDICATION

I met Hennessy when she was about 3 months old. She was so small that I could nearly hold her in the palm of one hand...a sweet, smiling little fur-ball of a puppy, more like a German shepherd than a bulldog, and more like a roly-poly rabbit than a pup. Her soft, teddy-bear fur begged you to sink your face into her side and snuggle, and her funny little bull doggy face was as sweet and cute as a mean-looking tiny pup could pretend to be. She was, in short, adorable.

“What do you think, Gringo?” asked Jose. I smiled and laughed and had some hidden bitter thoughts that peeked out a bit. “Well, Joseito,” I said, “she’s a cute as the day is long. I hope you’re planning to take good care of her.” “Of course!” he said, slightly offended. “Of course I’m gonna take great care of her. I love her!” About that I had no doubt. Joseito is, above all, a sweet, delightful and loving young man, and, as “mi sobrino” he had learned something about responsibility.

But I was apprehensive. He’d never before had a routine care in the world, and in all the eight years I’d known him, and mentored him, he had scrupulously avoided any routine (except excessive sleep). I had never known him to pursue anything for longer than 6 weeks.

“A dog is a real responsibility,” I said seriously. “You have to take her for walks. You have to feed her at least a couple times a day when she’s a puppy; and above all you have to comb her and flea comb her and brush her many times a day. It’s like having a baby and changing diapers. You have to. It’s nasty and mean if you don’t. And she’ll be unhappy...and so too will you when you get flea-bites.” Fleas are endemic in Florida.

“Don’t worry, of course I will!” he exclaimed. “She’s gonna sleep in my bed, so she can’t have fleas.” I smiled. “I think you will do what’s right, and I hope so. She’s an adorable pooch. I thought I was going to be unhappy, but I’m really quite happy you have her. Tell me – how did she come to you?”

“She was just walking down the side of the street, in the hot sun,” he explained, “kinda wiggling from side to side, and her tail straight up like a little comma.” Joseito wasn’t often poetic, but this was a great expression...still true today and as fresh as when he first said it. “No idea where she came from?” “Nope. She was looking for me. She came right over, and I picked her up, and she lay in my hands with her feet in the air. She trusts me!” He was right. I’d learned years ago that the way to tell a fine, people-responsive puppy was to put her on her back, and see if she stayed. Joseito knew it instinctively. He was, and is, in fact, one of the more intuitive people I’ve known. Maybe that’s a benefit of little formal education.

So - Hennessy came into our lives. Jose named her Hennessy after his much loved, long-lost dog who’d been ripped from him when he was fourteen by a frustrated and mean step-father. (In a way, it was perhaps his own fault, because he never took care of the old Hennessy, although surely he adored her. Sometimes we are all like that with our family members – we ignore them until it’s too late.) This is her story, her own story about herself. It’s a story with meaning for all of us, although I can’t tell you exactly why. I’m sure of it, though. Quite sure. All of it is almost all true, and some of it is supposition and guesswork, and much of it is the stuff that

dreams are made of – the dreams that insert themselves into reality and take on a life in our worlds, and the other worlds also. *Selah.*

It's probably only fair to say that Hennessy is my "friend of friends" – truly the finest, and most honorable person ever to cross my path and remain in my life. This book is dedicated, by her (as dictated to me) to all loving dogs and dog-owners. The next page is a poem I wrote about her (thanks to E. A. Poe for his guidance). *Gene Rosov*

To Hennessy

Henny, your sweetness is to me
Like none from any friends of mine
So gently does my heart find thee;
I wander weary labyrinthine times
And find you in my mind.

On lonely paths I hapless roam –
Your soulful eyes, your chilly nose,
Your endless faith has found a home
To a purity of love and life
That never came by child or wife.

See, how upon the cushioned chair
Curled, comma-like, I see you wound
Alert beyond the hunting hound.
Ah friend for life, I stroke your hair –
Our love is holy ground

Chapter One: Puppy Hate – My Birth, the Litter, How I got Hurt

My mother was beautiful, and I love her and loved her so much. I think about her every day. I hope that everyone has a mother like mine. Probably you do. Even when my eyes were barely open, she fed me and licked me and comforted me, and I felt so cared for and adored. My first few days on green Earth were just about the happiest days of my life. I have learned a lot since then. I'm not sure that what I've learned made me happier. But I'm a better dog today because of what I've learned. Sometimes learning things is important, even if it makes you a little unhappy.

Maybe she is still alive, but I have no way to find her, and I miss her. When Gene asks me why I'm sad, it's almost always it's because I think of her. I know I will never see her again.

She was a German shepherd, the smaller type I guess, although it has been so long since I saw her that I can't really remember. She had a long flag of a tail – like mine, but bushier. I have her colors and hair length, but in other ways I look more like my Dad. And she was always smiling. I smile a lot, too. Most dogs smile with their tails. There were five or six of us in the litter of puppies, but I can't remember the exact number because I couldn't count very well back then. I think that most of us looked like her. I think I was the smallest, and maybe that's why she gave me so much extra attention. Unfortunately, it didn't help, as I'll tell you in a minute.

My father was an American bulldog. He was the white and brown-coated type, and I inherited a lot of things from him. I didn't spend any time with him at all, that I remember, but he was very nice to my mother, I think. I remember him trying to lick us, but I don't think he did a good job of it, and his tongue was so rough, and his paw so heavy when he held me, that I whined. He had long, powerful nails and a heavy paw. I remember whining, but he didn't really care about it. I never whined when my mother licked me. I loved it.

Like him, I have a deep, serious ridge in the middle of my head, between my eyes. It makes me look serious and smart, but I'm not usually either one or both. Well, sometimes I'm smart, and sometimes I'm serious. I have my mother's ears, but I inherited the way he stands, and sits, and his big broad chest. When I sit, I do it with my back legs together, and I sit up tall and straight, like he did. He did it because he was proud, I guess. I do it because I just think it's the right way to sit, and I like it. My tail is more like his than my mother's, too, although I have her colors on my tail. And, like my father, my lower teeth stick out sometimes. So every now and again I look mean...but really, I'm not. My upper lip drops over my lower jaw, just like so many bulldogs or mixed bulldogs. My nose is short and stubby, more like a pit-bull terrier than a shepherd, and I have some wrinkles of skin between the tip of my black nose and my eyes, and a little on my back legs – but only when I sit. Gene says it makes me look a little like a Shar-Pei, but I don't think that so. My coat fits me quite well, thank you. Just so you know – I don't have any picture of me when I was a puppy, so I'm only going to be able to show you a picture of me today. It's on the front cover.

One day when we were about 2 months old, I found a small chicken bone in the yard. I know that people say that chicken bones aren't really good for dogs, and they're right about the cooked ones. They can break into small pieces and really hurt you inside. (I really love frozen chicken, but more about that later.)

If you chew on chicken bones pretty well I suppose it's OK to eat them (if you're a dog), and so I was chewing on it. It was just a small bone, maybe from one of those cooked wings that people seem to like so much.

My oldest brother wanted it, and I didn't want to give it up. And so, he bit me. I don't think he wanted to really hurt me, but his sharp little teeth sunk deep into my head over my left eye. He couldn't get his teeth out, and he tore a big chunk of flesh right down to my eye. I yowled and dropped the bone, but for some reason he didn't let go, or couldn't let go. His teeth had torn a large piece of fur and flesh from above my eye, and my eye filled up with blood. My mother came running over, and started licking me. I can remember even now how much it hurt. I couldn't see, and I was crying and crying. Over the next few days, Mom kept the wound clean by licking it, and it healed, but it left a big scar. I thought my eye was gone and that I would never see again from it...just shadows, and some movement. The worse part was that my eyelid was damaged. It kept hanging down into my eye, and my eye watered and watered all the time. I had a hard time to see out of that eye. I think my eye was really pretty damaged, too, but mostly it healed up. Even today I don't see perfectly from the right side, and I'm kind of skittish about things coming at me from the right. I flinch whenever that happens, even if people are well-meaning. But I'll tell you more about how the eye problem got fixed pretty much, because I don't want you to worry. It's more or less OK, now – a lot better than it was. I'll never see perfectly well on the right, and it took a long time for it to be repaired. Just don't worry, because now it's really OK. Anyway, dogs have amazing vision on the sides – it's called “peripheral vision,” I learned later – a lot better peripheral vision than people like you.

Once my wound healed – it took about a week – I was more or less OK, but I was very afraid of everything. My mother did all she could to comfort me, but my five brothers took a lot of her time and effort. So I felt kind of neglected. First of all, I was the only girl of the lot, and second because I was so sad about my eye that I didn't want to run and play like the other dogs, and I couldn't at first, because I just didn't see well, and I couldn't run and jump without being afraid.

Then, something happened that changed my life forever. Of course, anything can (and often does) change your life forever. It's important to be careful, and it's important to be free. For a dog, or I suppose a boy or girl, that's a difficult balance. How careful? How free? As a dog, I know it's easy to make mistakes and hurt yourself. Fortunately, I've only had one really bad injury, and maybe I could have avoided it. But I've had lots of near-misses, and lots of little hurts that could have been big ones. I think I should have spent more time near my mother. Now, that's ancient history, and you can't go back and live again through some bad minute or situation. I would like to, and I bet you would, too. It's a good idea to be careful.

In fact, I was frantic and afraid, and really totally freaked out. I just kept walking and walking and walking on the grass on the side of the road. The big cars going by scared me a lot, but no one stopped to help me. I think I was too small. And who would want a little puppy with a big scar on her face?

And then, I saw him.

He was a boy...well, a young man. To us, all men are boys, and ladies are girls. I liked the smell of him a lot. It was a mixture of cigarettes and hamburgers, of day-old laundry and the inside of cars. Now that you know a little bit more about smells, and wooking, I think you will find it more amazing every time you think about it. I can tell you a two-week history of a dog or a person from their smell, and pretty much everything they have done, eaten, and even where they have been. We build libraries of smells and smell-combinations, and we put them into little imaginary boxes in our heads. Like when you go to the library, did you ever see that every book has a number, and a letter, and then dots and more numbers? Our wook-storage system is kind of like that. But more about that later.

The boy called to me in a sweet, high voice. "Here, pup pup puppy. Come here, little dog. Awwww..... You're lost and cute and sad. Commere." He said it so sweetly, and so kindly, that I went over to him right away, and he patted my head, and stroked the deep ridge in my head. I wagged my tail...it was still pretty little, but strong. I looked into his face and saw love. Not exactly the love of my mother, but real, true love...unselfish and sweet love.

He picked me up, and kissed me. I remember that first kiss of his, and it was as sweet as ever my mother's licks were and better than my father's, and filled with honest affection. He held me in his hands that smelled like a Volkswagen (every car has a different wook, by the way), and turned me over, and I lay there and looked up at him. "I'm taking you home, little dog," he said. "You're just like my lost Hennessy, so I will call you 'Hennessy'." That has been my name ever since.

Jose carried me down the street. It was a hot day, and the hard pavement and gravel on the side of the road had hurt my little black paws and feet. They felt better now. The cars passed by, but I wasn't afraid of them any more. The hot pavement and tall scary grass were an unpleasant distant memory, and quickly forgotten. I didn't think of anything except this wonderful, strong boy holding me, nuzzling me like my mother used to, and rubbing the deep ridge in my forehead, the one I inherited from my brave father. I felt like I had found my dear mother again, in this wonderful protecting friend.

I have always been a pretty lucky dog. I know that people sometimes say "lucky dog" and probably they think all dogs are lucky. It's not so. Maybe luck does or does not exist in this world, but I believe we make our own luck....with our bark and bite and wooks. This was not the first time that I would think about my good luck, nor the last.

Chapter Three: Love and My New Master - Velvet Ears

Jose carried me home, home to his home. It wasn't a long walk – well, I didn't walk at all, because he carried me. Every minute of that first walk was good. Jose spoke to me in a kind of clever baby-talk, and even now, from time to time, he still does it. Usually, he does when he first sees me, and then we talk for real. But his sweet, high-pitched caring voice was a treat for me, and it reminded me of the litter, and the other pups, and their crying and laughing and whining and wooking and playing. Jose has a beard, and every time he buried his nose in my fur, it tickled, and I smiled and laughed. He loves to make me laugh. “Gimme a kiss, Henny!” he'd say, and I'd look at him, and when he least expected it, I'd lick him, a whole bunch of times. Honestly, there's a part of me that likes to tease, and if I ever meet you I will tease you, too. Even today, when I run to get a ball or a Frisbee or play soccer with one of my big friends, I still like to tease. For me, it's a way to show that I care, and think, and love. It's nice to do, as long as you don't bite. Well, you can nibble, and even nip...but don't bite. Most people don't like it.

We walked down sunny streets and tree-lined paths. It was lovely. I was so happy, so content. Being lost, and then being found, is one of the greatest feelings of relief. This is especially true if you're found by someone nice. I'm glad I wasn't found by a nasty smelling ogre, or a cruel giant, or a dog-eating mountain lion.

Jose walked along the side of the road, and talked to me all the time. He nibbled my feet (said they smelled like popcorn... I guess they do, sort of) and kissed my wet nose, and he rubbed my roly-poly belly. Then he turned me over as he put me on his shoulder, and I had a great view of the road behind us, and straight down to the ground. (I noticed he wasn't wearing a belt, and he still doesn't. He just can't hold on to them, it seems. It's amazing his pants stay up. I'm glad I don't have to wear pants, or a belt.) His hand rested lightly on my back, and he rubbed my shoulders and cooed and talked and joked. It was so nice. These are moments I will never forget, ever. I was happy to finally be a young pup. I wasn't any longer the fearful runt of the litter. In fact, I wasn't even thinking about the litter. Somewhere in my thoughts I felt my mother, and I was hoping that she would not worry about me.

I had the chance to wook out some things about Jose during that brief trip down the road. An older dog would've figured out quite a lot about him – the wook of his mother and father; the places he'd been for the last week; what he'd had for dinner last night and breakfast today; even the brand of cigarettes he was smoking. But of course, being a young wooker, I didn't have a good library of wooks on the brain-shelves yet. So all I could figure was pizza hotpockets and chocolate milk for breakfast, menthol cigarettes, two males and one female friend. I wasn't wrong.

As I've gotten older, and my library is more complete – I suppose “extensive” is a better word, reallyh - I'm much better at the wooking game, and I have to tell you, there isn't much that's more fun for a smart young dog. In canine terms, it's like walking through the Metropolitan Museum of Art – or so Gene tells me. It's like the perfume section of Nieman-Marcus (for a girl)...like a chocolate shop for a kid. Wonderful, really wonderful.

We reached Jose's house, and walked in. He put me down, and I started exploring. There were lots of nice big rooms, lovely rugs and sofas, cool tiled floors, and the wooks of many different people from many different places. I figured out which one was Jose's bedroom right away – the same blend of cigarettes and Volkswagen. He picked me up again, and walked around the house into the kitchen (you can't imagine the wealth of wooks, by the way. For you, it'd be like shopping at the world's biggest mall with your father's black American Express card). "Hey, look what I found!" he said aloud. And there was his sister Amanda, smiling and laughing and saying "What a beautiful puppy! Where did she come from? Can we keep her?" "Keep her?" he repeated. "Of course we're going to keep her," Jose said. I loved the way he said that. "She was just walking down the street, with no one to care for her. Must've gotten out of someone's yard. I'll bet she's not even a month or two old. And look at that scar on her face." Amanda touched my head, and gently ran her finger over my scar. It had healed completely, but I blinked almost all the time, and my eye felt annoyed and almost constantly irritated – my eyelid and eyelashes were drooping into my eye all the time. "Awww, that must've really hurt, poor thing!" she intoned. I smiled at her. She was right. Yes, it had hurt a lot, but thanks to my Mother's licking it was fine now. I licked her hand, and she laughed, a sweet, musical laugh.

Jose and Amanda put out a bowl of water for me, and Jose picked up the phone. I heard him say, "Hey, Gringo! I need your help with something. I just found a puppy and I want to keep it. Can you come over?" I was so very glad to hear that! He wants to keep me! Yaay!

About three hours later I met Gringo, or Gene. Over the coming years, I would learn a lot more about Gene, and I came to admire him as the great friend and caring dog-lover he is. But when I first met him, I was afraid. He seemed stern and serious. So I whined and cried and pouted. I did not want to be separated from Jose, and I was worried. Gene looked me over, and spoke with Jose, and I saw him hand Jose some papers...I later learned that it is stuff called "money" and humans use it to get dogfood and dog-treats and things like that. Then he left, and Jose went out - to get some dogfood.

He came back with some cans of stuff (for me!) and dry food, and a new plastic blue bowl. I was so happy, let me tell you! He mixed up the dry and canned food together, and it smelled like heaven. Well, actually, it smelled mostly like cows and chickens and rice with wheat and beef bones and carrots. I ate and ate until my roly-poly belly was stuffed in all of its corners.

While I was munching away, Amanda set out a lovely smelling sweet old flannel blanket for me. She put it in Jose's bedroom, near his bed, on the floor. I wagged my tail at her, and she bent down and scratched my ears (my ears have really soft fur, and they are small, and usually stick up pretty straight and tall like little soldiers...except at their very tips, which bend down. I can move my ears any which way in order to hear better, and find out where a sound is coming from. The last time I counted, I have about 18 different muscles in my ears, so I can move them to figure out where a sound is coming from. And of course, you've probably heard that dogs like me can hear a lot better than humans generally, and that's really true. My hearing is at least four times as good as Jose's – and I can hear things a lot further away than he can. And he hears pretty well...a lot better than Gringo, at any rate).

But right now, I wasn't thinking about hearing anything, really, or pointing my ears anywhere. I was just enjoying Amanda scratching my soft, velvet ears. She was so gentle with me, and so sweet and loving. She put me down on the blanket, and I snuggled into it. It had a hundred smells from a dozen different people (I met some of them eventually, and remembered them from the blanket), and from being kept in a close closet with clean towels – I could smell the laundry detergent still on them – and cans of human food and the paper stuff that humans use in their bathrooms. I lay down with a big, deep sigh, snuggled again, and went right to sleep – comfortable, confident and finally, finally, home. It had been a long day.

Chapter Four: Jose's Friends & Godfather

That very first night, I slept very well, like a hibernating bear. I don't think I snore – I've never really been able to hear it of course (did you ever hear yourself snore? I will bet not!). I know that Licker snores, sometimes, but I'll tell you more about Licker soon - in the future. I know that I dream, because I remember my dreams. Gene asks me what I dream about, and I tell him. It's different than you might think.

What I dream about is...pretty much what you dream about. Like you, we dogs dream about the things we've been doing during the day. If you watched me – or just watch your own dog, since you probably won't be around when I'm sleeping – you'll see that a dog's eyes move around under the eyelids, because he's watching the dream go by, just like you'd watch a television show or a dream in your own head. Oh - by the way – it's hard for us dogs to watch TV, because of the way our eyes are built. But more of that some other time.

So like you, I dream several hours a night, and I love dreaming. Since my days are filled with really nice things – going to the park, playing ball, running, jumping, wooking everywhere, eating great food – I dream about those kinds of things. I love my dreams. I hope you love yours, also! It's very nice to have good dreams. Maybe because my life is quite safe and protected I've never had bad dreams. I don't dream about being hurt or chased down the street by some dog-eating ogre. Once in a while, when there's been a big thunderstorm - I'm afraid of thunder and lightening, and even though I know I'm safe, I still am afraid of them, quite a lot – I'll dream about it, but it is not often at all. When there's a lot of thunder, I want to crawl close next to Gene, and he holds me, and I shake until it's over. I love it when he holds me, because I know I'm safe with him.

I will probably tell you a lot more about Gene ... soon. Dogs and humans probably respond the same to treats...but my guess is that people have given up on food treats for learning tricks. So I'll just tell you – as a kind of treat, and to help you know and learn something so you can think about it – that Gene thinks that he and I were in the same family in some other lifetime. And I'll tell you why he thinks that, and maybe, just maybe, he's right. It is really difficult to know. You will be the judge of that. A good part of the reason that Gene and I are so close, much closer than he has been to other dogs or pets, even the exceptional ones, is that some kind of ancient, "maybe this happened before" kind of feeling spills out of our relationship. He loves me more than anyone he knows or has known, and it is a great thing. He's told me about why that is, and I'm looking forward to telling you. I think you'll be surprised. Then again, life is filled with all kinds of surprises and other unusual events, and this will be a nice surprise. I don't like bad surprises, and I'm sure you don't either. Good surprises are good fun.

I think that it was the same for Jose and Gene, as it is for me and Gene. When I first heard of him and met him, I didn't really like him. He's different. He wooks different (not at all like most humans, and I have a hard time figuring out what he's been eating); he talks different, and he is far more kindly and good-natured than you'd think anyone should be.

He almost never raises his voice and it is unusual when he's angry. Very unusual. I hate it when he is angry, and usually I just go under the nearest bed and cover my ears – because I know he hates to BE angry. I can hear the hating of it in his voice, and the whole thing makes me sad. I've learned that he is what he is (I learned that sentence from Jose, who says it in Spanish... "Esto es lo que es." My Spanish isn't good, but I'm learning! I know I'm a "perra" and I know when Jose says "Bastante!" I've gotta stop what I'm doing....I'm even learning to roll those R's in my throat.)

Gene sometimes tells me all about his life, and his family, and friends, and growing up. And his beautiful mother. Reminds me of mine, and I know just how he feels when he gets all quiet and teary. It's the kind of feeling that people call "bittersweet." I know that's a kind of chocolate, but I don't mean chocolate – you know that chocolate is death for dogs, right? It really is! – but I mean happy and sad at the same time, about equal amounts of each one. It's a little bit like waking up. You love to be up, and it's hard to actually wake up so you stay asleep – a little bit – and then you aren't really either sleeping or up, and it's uncomfortable. That's bittersweet...laying around in bed when you ought to be up and trying to love being lazy. No one likes being lazy, but we all do it. Well, I do it. I suppose you do also. And so I usually remember all these bittersweet things, and when I wake up, I get up. Mostly.

The next morning, early early early, I woke up. I yawned, and stretched, a big, beautiful stretch, and an even bigger and more glorious yawn. I look up and saw a fan in the ceiling whirring around, and woked cigarettes and Volkswagen nearby....Jose! I had been dreaming him, and about the hot black pavement, and walking down the road, and the panic I felt about being lost. And I dreamed about my new loving friend Jose, and the amazing feeling of comfort and homey-ness that I had in his arms. The change from fear to comfort is like the difference between night and day, like the difference between a hurricane in a dark forest and a balmy day at the beach.

I whined a little bit, to see if Jose would wake up. No such luck. I learned in time that he was almost impossible to wake up before lunch-time. There was another bed in the room, and I woked another person....it was a really nice smell of hamburgers and French fries, salads and ice-cream. The hamburger person sat up, and looked at me and smiled. He was handsome, dark and lean, and in two seconds he'd reached down and picked me up, and I was sitting on his chest and looking into his dark brown eyes. He patted and stroked me and laughed, a deep, fruity, musical laugh. "Why little dog!" he said "you've been sleeping like a sailor and dreaming like an angel." I'm not sure that I know how sailors sleep, but I guess they have to learn to sleep when the boat is rocking, and even sleep during a storm. And angels...well, angels probably dream about heaven and about their days in Eternity doing glorious errands for their Master. "It must be a compliment," I thought. And indeed, it was. Compliments make me wag my tail.

He kissed my little wet nose, and I licked his broad dry one. Oh – I know I haven't said much about noses, but you probably know that mostly, dogs' noses are wet. And there's a really good reason.

When you wook something (as a dog), you want to know where it's coming from. It's always wafted to you on some tiny little breeze, or a puff of wind or even the air moving from a bird's wings overhead. Yes, believe me, that's all we need, and birds and dogs are very good

friends, even though we seem to want to chase them. The real reason is that in former lives, dogs were almost always birds....but that's a story for another time.

The place that the wook is coming from – the wook you want to know about and focus on – a dog can feel it because her nose dries out just a tiny, tiny bit in that direction. That's pretty interesting, isn't it? So breezes (we call tiny little breezes "zets" but I think we used to call them "breezets".....) are really useful if you want to wook out just exactly where a smell is coming from. And of course, when some wook is on the ground, just breathing in through my nose makes a zet.

"You are so cute, so very very cute!" Baraka intoned, as he stroked my head and ears, and looked into my serious brown eyes. I have worried looking eyebrows, but sometimes they make me look serious-eyed. I wanted to tell him he was cute, too, but at the time I hadn't learned enough English. I wagged my tail, and that was enough. "Let's go out and pee," he said. He – I later learned his name was "Baraka" - got up out of bed, and took me with him to the front door. He opened the door, and the morning sun walked in and fell on the rug in front of the door - a fine day.

The light streamed into the room, and there were dark places, and cool places, sunny spots and shady spots everywhere. I wanted to nose around, but he held me, and we went outside. "I'll do that later," I thought. "So much to explore and wook out."

"Go on now, go pee" he said gently. I knew what he meant. It doesn't take long for a dog to learn the difference between "inside" and "outside," and keeping your bathroom duties outside is good for everyone. I padded over to the nearest patch of grass, and crouched down. "What a smart doggy! Good dog!" he said in a nice, sing-song kind of way. Then he thought about it, and picked me up and hugged me....and I licked his neck, just because it was right there. "Good Hennessy!" He said. It was the third or fourth time I'd heard my name, and I liked it. And from then forward, my name has been my name. Sometimes, Gene will call me "Henny," or, as a kind of variation, "Honey." Jose usually calls me "Hennessyyyyyy" with a stress on the ending...and his voice goes up like a whistle. It's so good that he loves my name so much that he wants to make it go on for a long, long time....

Baraka put me down on the ground, and I waddled into the house ahead of him. (All puppies waddle, you know....it's our way of sauntering and saying we really feel great. It helps us wag our tails.) I wanted to see Jose, and Amanda, and I wanted to play with my new friend Baraka. I went into Jose's room, and tried to jump up on his bed. It was too high...way too high. I vocalized a bunch of little yelping barks, and Baraka laughed and laughed. It was that same wonderful laugh that sounded like apple and pear trees in blossom: fragrant, fruity, as sweet as a walk in an orchard.

He picked me up, and put me on top of Jose's covers, which were on top of Jose. I did a whole bunch of mountain climbing to get to his face, and then started licking him, licking his face. He woke up pretty quickly then. He put his arms around me, and rolled around, and kissed me and hugged me. It was so nice, so different than anything I'd had from anyone...my mother, my father, my brothers. To go from being lost and alone, to being loved and befriended....you can't imagine the difference. And to know what it's like to be really truly loved, loved without

any stop or any hesitation or any barrier.....my little heart was singing and my tail beating time to the melody.

Maybe someday someone will be like that for you. If you are really fortunate, it has already happened. I hope that you have a Jose of your own. Every good dog deserves one. If you don't now, maybe someday you will, and I will be happy, so happy, for you. I will always, always have mine, and I know how lucky you are when you're with friends who love you for no reason, with no hesitation. I learned from Jose that love is patient and kind, and doesn't envy, or boast or get angry easily. I learned from him that love doesn't keep a record of wrongs, and you'll find that all we dogs are like that. We protect, we trust, we hope, and we are bulldog persistent. You can learn a lot about real love from your dog. I know that some people say that we're man's best friend. But really, we are a lot more than that. If you listen carefully, we're also man's best teacher. I'm not smart enough to tell you exactly what it is that you'll learn from us, but I am sure that it's worth more than all the gold and silver and paper stuff on this sweet green earth.

Chapter Five: Trips to the Vet – My Eye Gets Fixed

I don't suppose you remember that I had a problem with my right eye. It was a serious problem. In the squabble over the chicken-bone – which never should have happened of course! – my eye was injured. Well, it wasn't exactly or really my eye. It was the skin and covering just above my eye. I learned from listening to the veterinarian, who described the problem to Gene, that the set of nerves that controls my upper eyelid was damaged by the bite and tear. My lower eyelid's nerve was also cut ("severed," said the vet), and it hangs down a bit, and makes me look a little like that wonderful sad-eyed lowland dogs with droopy eyes and eyelids. I remember that the vet suggested something called "cryo-surgery," and I thought it had something to do with crying. I can tell you that I was unhappy, and afraid.

The truth is that I couldn't control my eyelids very well, and the hairs of my top eyelid kept drooping into my eye. Little by little, I was losing my vision in that eye, as the eyelid's hairs scraped across the top of my eye. I come to learn that this part of the eye is called the "cornea," and so my cornea was being destroyed. In addition to this slow, ongoing destruction of my vision, my eye kept watering, and so I blinked all the time, and it was very uncomfortable.

Imagine what it would be like to have some piece of wood or metal in your eye, and how terrible it would be if you couldn't get it out. No matter how much I rubbed it with my paws, and blinked, and no matter how much my eye watered, it just stayed irritated. Sometimes I even had trouble sleeping.

One day, I went again to visit the vet with Gene. I knew something was up, because he was sad, and I could feel that he was sad. He explained it to me in the car (I always have liked car rides, but I didn't feel very good about this one). "Henny," he said, "you are going to have to stay at the animal hospital for an afternoon. I'm going to leave you there, and then pick you up later in the day, around dinner time. I am really going to miss you a lot." He kissed me. He was very sad, and I was very sad, and quite scared. Gene explained to me what was going to happen. "You are going to go to sleep, Henny," he said, "and when you wake up your eye is going to feel different, and a great deal better. In fact, I expect that it will feel perfect – just like it did when you were a little, little puppy." I wagged my tail, a little slowly, because I wasn't sure about the going to sleep part. I usually like to go to sleep on my own, thank you, and the idea of someone making me go to sleep was a bit scary. However, I really trusted Gene, and I trust him even more now, because he has always tried to make good decisions for me. I was still afraid.

I didn't want to go into the animal hospital, because I didn't want to go to sleep. I wanted to be awake and running around, even though my eye just made me so unhappy and so irritated, leaking and itching all the time. When I ran around, chasing a ball or just running with Jose or Gene – sometime Jose let me pull him on his rollerblades, and that was wonderful fun! – I usually forgot about my eye, but it was never far away from my thinking and perceptions.

Perhaps you don't know, but we dogs have quite remarkable vision. It isn't as wonderful as our sense of smell, but it is different than your vision, and better – in some ways – and worse in others. If we had to drive a car on the street, we'd have a problem, because we can't really tell the difference between red lights and green lights.

I like to pretend that I can drive, and so when Gene puts me in the front seat of the car – the passenger’s seat – I almost always move in front of the steering wheel. I sit up tall, and straight, and try to look very chauffeur-like. I look straight ahead, and use my terrific sideways vision (it’s called peripheral vision, by the way, but I only learned that yesterday when I looked it up online) to keep track of the traffic on either side. Of course, we aren’t moving, and I’m not driving...but it’s OK to pretend, isn’t it? Then Gene sits down next to me – it’s a bit of a squeeze of course, because I’m sitting smack-dab-middle of the driver’s seat – and always says, always... “Hennessy, you don’t have a license yet, so you really just can’t drive. You’re not old enough.” I look at him knowingly, because he isn’t thinking clearly. In human years, I’m about 3 something, maybe three and a half. But in “dog years” I’m over 21....surely old enough to have at least a learner’s permit! I wonder when Gene is going to get me one.....I’d like to drive.

But about dog vision and human vision... Unlike you, we dogs can see much better in the night-time, and our “high-frequency” vision is exceptional. Here’s what I mean. When you look at a rainbow, you’ll see that there are colors that go from red to yellow to green to blue to purple in beautiful curving bands of pastel colors...rainbows are always so amazing, and you probably know that they’re part of a promise about the world ending...or really, not ending. We dogs can’t see very well in the red section of the rainbow, but we see far above the purple area. So we see differently than you do, and in some ways better. And in some ways worse. Reds and greens look sort of gray-ish to us, and I can tell the difference between red and green....it just takes me some time to think about it. Because of that thought-time issue, we just wouldn’t make good drivers all the time (although I really like to sit in the driver’s seat of the car, and I don’t yet have a license. I hope to have one, someday. Maybe by my next birthday?). I am going to work on thinking faster about red and green color differences. I’ll put that on my self-improvement list. I hope you have a self-improvement list. If you don’t, why not start one?

There’s another odd thing about our vision that is different than a human’s. Our eyes are pretty different from yours, and as I mentioned a minute ago, we see a lot better in the dark than you do. And again, we just don’t see all the same colors you see, and we see some different ones that are more purple than purple. But for driving, really and truly, it usually doesn’t matter much, because we can tell things like traffic lights from their position, not their color. And also unlike you, we use our other senses – including some pretty accurate visual senses like texture and brightness and position – along with our wooking – to tell us about things. It’s easy to know when to cross a street without even looking at the traffic lights, although of course it’s better to look, just like your mother told you. When you combine our additional senses with our vision of things behind us – because we see a lot more behind us than you do – we generally know what’s going on quite a bit better than you would. Unless you have eyes in the back of your head, and even though Gene once told me that his mother probably had eyes like that, I doubt that too many people do. Maybe it’s special to mothers...mothers of humans, that is.

Even if I were completely blind, I wouldn’t really be terribly unhappy, because all my other senses would be working. Of course, I don’t want to be blind, but it isn’t a disaster. I would call it an inconvenience.

And so – to get back to the story – I went to see the vet, and she was really wonderful. She talked a lot to me about what she was going to do, and explained it all very carefully, just as if I were a person. Of course, I am a person, but most people don’t know that I understand almost

everything that you would understand. The vet told me that she was going to put me to sleep, and I would not feel anything bad. She explained that she was going to freeze the tiny little cells in my eyelid, so that the hairs would not grow back, and then they would no longer irritate my eye. And she said that maybe I'd have to come back for a second operation (and eventually I did have to come back, but the second time I was quite confident about the operation, since I knew all about it). She was so nice, and calm, and loving that I was OK to leave Gene's hold on my leash, even though I was afraid of all the unknown things and smells and ideas floating around in the veterinary hospital. Gene kissed me good-bye, and looked at him sadly...not because I was afraid, but because I didn't want him to be afraid for me. I think he was, and it was very sweet of him. I knew that I was going to be fine. I have always been lucky with trips to the vet.

And of course, I was fine. When I woke up from the sleep, it felt like I had been sleeping for week! I had a hard time moving my legs, but eventually I stood up and looked around. I was in a cage – a nice, comfy, clean cage with a warm, sunny blanket – and there were a bunch of other dogs in earshot. Some were talking, and some were crying, and some were cheery and others were whining for their much-loved human friends. In my case, I didn't want to say very much, and I usually don't. I'm generally pretty even-tempered and quiet, and sometimes Gene even says that I'm "Zen-like." I don't know what that means, but I think it means very calm and thoughtful.

A minute or two after I woke up, one of the vet's assistants came by and looked in on me. "Hey, Hennessy!" she said, with a voice like Christmas. "How are you feeling, puppy?" It was so lovely and lilting and cheerful that I started wagging my tail, and that made me feel better already. You can do the same thing with a smile, by the way. Don't you think it's funny that I smile with my tail, and you smile with your mouth? Once you know a dog-friend really well, you'll come to know the hundreds of tail-expressions that she has. (Maybe later in this story I'll tell you about the ten basic tail-talks.)

"Come on, let's go for a little walk," she said, and she opened the door to the cage, and out I came. Well, actually she picked me up with one arm around my chest, and another at my belly, and gently put me down on the floor. The floor was hard and chilly, but not unfriendly.

At first, I was a little unsteady on my feet, but we pups have a really good sense of balance, and in no time at all I was walking confidently around the clinic. The vet came over, and looked at my face, and held it – and examined my eye. I wagged my tail to say "Hey, thanks!" "Good," she said. "Very good. It looks like you're going to be fine. Sooner or later you'll come back for another operation, and you will be 110%. But for now, it's great – and you're going to feel a lot better."

It was true. My eye felt A-OK, and I didn't need to blink at all. In fact, although a second operation did eventually completely clear up the problem of eyelashes on my eyeball (it's called the "cornea," and mine still has a little cloudy gray patch from the original irritation), I was pretty happy right about now. I didn't have any itching, and my eye wasn't watering very much, and I could stand and look straight ahead with blinking. I tried doing that, and it worked extremely well. Gosh, was I happy! I wagged my tail, and the vet patted me affectionately. "Good girl," she intoned. "You were a great patient, and I'm happy that you are fully recovered... as good as new!"

The vet said that I was so good and calm that I could walk around the exam room. It was so much fun. I visited all the incoming dog-patients, and wagged and wooked with them. I met a really happy-go-lucky, beautiful gray Weimaraner; a terribly serious and all-too-responsible German shepherd (I'm half shepherd, remember?), a flirtatious white Bichon, and a yappy, cute and sharp-as-a-tack Jack Robinson Terrier. They were all in for various minor things, and we made friends quite quickly. "They are all philosophers," says Gene sometimes about us, and he's pretty much correct. We all wind up getting along, except the really abused and angry dogs whose masters are foolish and unloving. I think that those two qualities go together. Smart dogs and smart masters are loving with one another...and their own kind as well.

In a few hours, Gene came to pick me up. He was so happy to see me, and he hugged me and kissed me and petted me, and told me how much he had missed me. I'd missed him, too. It had been a long and important day. The chicken bone incident was a distant memory, and the pain of the injury something that had the glimmer of a long-past bad dream. I don't like injuries, and I don't want to have them. (That's why I don't chase cats, by the way. It's a prescription for injuries.)

I've always been quite a healthy dog. Even now and again my stomach feels funny, and I eat some grass and drink lots of water. Once, I hurt my leg running, but it healed up in a few days. I can't think of any other injury, unless eating too much chicken liver is an injury. And that's only half my fault, and half the fault of the people who love me. "A good father disciplines the son he loves," says Gene and there isn't a saying that's truer. Spot-on, I'd say.

I'm very grateful that my body is good to me, and strong and well-developed. Gene sometimes says that I'm a rabbit when I run; and Jose laughs at me, and loves to throw balls for me because I love to chase them and bring them back...usually. It's also fun to chew on the ball, and I chase it, lie down, and chew until someone comes over and throws it again. That way, I get to run the show. I'm just telling you so that when you come to the baseball field with me, you'll know the rules.

Chapter Six: Life on 60th Street – Chewing for Fun and Attention

In time, I learned that Jose had found me on 58th street... 58th street in West Miami, by the way. That very first day he picked me up, and we walked to his home, I was much too enthralled with him and his wooks to notice where we were going. We must've walked about 5 or 6 blocks to Jose's house, but time and the passage of time were dead stopped for me: I was simply filled with a new kind of love, trust, affection, joy that I had never felt before, and I really thought my little body was going to burst with the happiness that filled every nook and cranny. Have you ever felt that happy, so happy that your body is crying for joy and about to burst like an overblown balloon? It's a wonderful feeling, and I have always wanted to find it again. It hasn't happened often to me, and, I suspect, not very often to you either. You always remember it when it does happen, though...and I hope you feel that way every time the sun comes up and streams in your window early in the morning.

Of course, I was wagging my tail. Now, you may think that wagging tail equals happy dog. It's true...only sometimes. When I'm hungry and I want a bit of food, yes, I'll look longingly and sincerely at you, and wag, slowly and wide. But if some other big four-legger comes along, and I'm feeling unhappy, my tail flies around faster, and my ears go back, and my eyes get very, very wide (even the one that was injured). Tails are good for balance if you're navigating a narrow stretch of fence or a fun-to-climb-on board, just like you might put out your arms. I didn't start wagging until I was about 6 weeks old or so, and then only when I wanted my mother to know I was hungry, or the other pups were ganging up on me. "Truce, truce!" is what I was saying.

Like many other dogs, I wag my tail mostly to the right (my right, not yours, silly) when I'm happy, and more to the left when I'm distressed or afraid. And then I wag it kinda low, not high. High equals happy; low equals insecure. It's just like your smiling. I've noticed that when people smile, it's not exactly the same on both sides...as if you folks smile more with one side of your face than the other.

I don't wag when I'm alone, even if I think of funny things. (Maybe I do when I'm dreaming, but I can't honestly say.) Other dogs are pretty smart about knowing what I mean by the many different kinds of wags I can do, and I know what they mean also. It's a...doggie kind of thing, you know. I have no idea what dogs without tails do, but they're certainly at a communication disadvantage, that's for sure!

I'll bet that you have friends you agree with a lot, and then a lot of friends with whom you simply never quite agree. You might be saying about now, "Agree about what? Disagree about what?" With tail waggors, any two dogs will agree on a whole host of things...and agree to disagree about just as many more. For example, if it's obviously dinner-time – the food is sitting in a bowl, and clearly it's time to dig-in and chomp away – most dogs will agree. I suppose I should add that I'm sometimes a rather careful (Gene would say "finicky") eater, but I like to know what going to mush around in my stomach, and as cheerful as I am in general, I worry about what's in a piece of meat, a bone, a chunk of kibble and a mouthful of milk bone. So I'm pretty careful, and you could easily mistake being careful for being finicky.

You wouldn't believe what magically appears in dog food! I've found all kinds of unwanted things in my dog-food. Have you ever woken up in the morning, and started to pour your first cup of fresh-brewed coffee, and whoops! There's a roach in your cup!

Things that you think are awful are sometimes quite tasty for us. Just a few days ago, I found a poor old black garden snake that had been decapitated by the lawn mower. Now, I know that humans eat rattlesnake meat...cooked...but you probably don't know that we woggies (as Gene calls us – sometimes he calls us “woggles” but it just about the same) really appreciate a bit of fresh, or reasonably fresh, snake-meat. So – I ate it. It took a bit of chewing, because a snake's skin isn't so easy to tear apart, but finally I got it down, and it was an enjoyable feast. Now of course, you would never want to eat a raw snake, and it'd probably be unpleasant as well. For a dog like me, however, it's easy and quite normal. I suppose the reason is that we have a very different – and even a truly unique – digestive system.

You know how your mother always told you to chew your food, and then swallow? As usual, your mother was right (even dog mothers and cat mothers and opossum mothers are always right!), and the reason is that digesting food, for a human person, starts right in your mouth from the very first bite. The liquid in your mouth mixes with the food, and making food useful for your body and your life starts right there with the chewing. Listen to your mother.

This is completely and totally and utterly different for us woggies. It is so different that you just won't believe it. Our mouths – and you probably know how powerful and effective our teeth are, if you've ever been even slightly bitten by your best friend – are made only to tear things into little pieces. Well, littler pieces, pieces small enough to swallow. We don't do any of our digesting in our mouths. Nope. None. No digestion for woggies in their mouths. Really.

So if you think that we're gulping our food and not paying attention to how good it tastes, think again! We are justdoing what dogs do! And what dogs are supposed to do.

All of our digestion happens in our stomach. The liquid in our stomachs – the acid – is so strong that if you put some on your hand it'd burn a hole in it! (Not all the way through like a bullet, silly, but it'd be really painful and burn off some of your skin.) If your father knows any chemistry (or your mother, for that matter), ask them how acidic a “pH of 1.0 is.” And they'll probably say, “Wow...very, very acid. Dangerously acid.” Your chemistry teacher, if you have one ever, will tell you that acidity is measured in pH units, and regular water has a pH of 7. Your human stomach has a pH of about 5 (last time I looked). AND...our stomach has a pH that's many, many times more acid than yours. The reason is pretty clear if you think about it...we have to digest things like bones, and snake skins (where all this chemistry stuff started) and chunks of meat and all kinds of interesting stuff. We have a “heavy-duty digestion apparatus” – and it serves us very well. Probably comes from our history. .

So all of that is to say that a snake, and its skin, is a tear-apart treat for me, even though Gene chased me around the yard because he probably thought it'd be bad for me. (Well, it wasn't.) As usual, though, he had a reason, as he explained later to me. “

Henny,” he said, “I didn't want to deprive you of your fun with the snake-skin.” Then he hugged me and rubbed my stomach, and I snuggled into his arm under my head. “I was worried about frogs.” “OK,” I said, “that doesn't make any sense. We're talking about snakes here, not

frogs.” “Yes, you’re right, Henny, but snakes eat frogs sometimes, and some frogs here in Florida are really poisonous, and they have been known to make woggies very very sick.” “Oh.....” I said, and let out a snort. “Don’t you think I’d know that? I can smell what the snake had for dinner three nights ago. It was one or two young lizards, a pine vole, and he washed it down with some water from the fountain.”

Gene’s a decent naturalist, so I figured he’d know what a vole was (a bit like a mouse, but smaller, rounder and ...sadly...cuter. Snakes are not very sympathetic to “cute” when it comes to their dinners). “How’d you know it was water from the fountain?” asked Gene. We have a fountain in our backyard, and it makes the most delightful plashing and splashing noises as it trickles and flows and drops. Gene built it for me. More about the fountain later, OK?

“Chlorine,” I said. “Oh.....” said Gene, like the air going out of a balloon. Sometimes he forgets that I’m not bad at organic and inorganic chemistry -- the two big types of substances, and we woggies are super-sensitive to the millions of combinations of the 88 naturally-occurring elements (yeah, I know that people say there are really 92, but there’s a whole bunch of super-technical reasons why this really isn’t true. When you turn 12 years old, give me a call and I’ll tell you more about that!). Truthfully, a dog with his nose in a paint-can could smell water with chlorine in it from three jungles away - a jungle, by the way, is a dog-distance of 6 blocks or so. You can probably count on your fingers and toes how many blocks are in three jungles!

I suppose if you really looked at what you’re eating – or smelled it – there are probably quite a few things you wouldn’t want to eat, or even touch at all. I’ve seen humans smell their food, but not very often. (Gene says it’s not polite for a person to do that. Of course, I do it all the time and he thinks it’s sweet. I wonder if that makes sense.)

Honestly, small insects, worm-trails, termite-droppings and butcher’s fingerprints are pretty much opaque to your human tongues (I just learned the word “opaque,” so you may have to look it up....I’m not telling!), but we dogs can figure those things out just like you know where the holes are in your socks. You might put up with the holes in your socks, and we might tolerate the crunch of a small roach in the meaty hamburger. Poor thing! I mean, poor roach. The hamburger was unconscious long ago! No person likes holes in her socks, and no dog likes roach-crunch in her food. In fact, we dogs can wook if a roach just walked across an uncooked hamburger, even after it’s been grilled or cooked in the frying pan. Now, I don’t have anything against roaches, and I tend to be a sort of “live and let live” person. I chase them, but I’d never bite them (their smell would tell any woggie that they taste like last year’s potato chips). As long as the roaches don’t leave smelly black trails in my nice wooden food bowl or go swimming in the drinking water, I’m OK with them being around. But that’s where I really draw the line.

We had a lot of roaches in the West Gables house. Maybe they just liked the cool of the floors, which were tile, and dark, and wonderfully chilly and smooth to lie upon. Maybe it’s because the windows were small, and the sun had a tough time trickling in through the curtains.

There’s a funny thing about Jose and roaches. For some reason he never explained to me, his nickname was “Roach.” He looks less like a roach than I do, honestly, and while his skin is brown in the summertime, or when he’s been fishing during the daytime – which isn’t often – he is hardly six-legged, and definitely not brown-skinned and crackly. It’s one of life’s many little

puzzles, isn't it? There are so many things to wonder and think about. You could spend your whole day thinking about puzzles. Sometimes I do.

So when we'd all see a roach crawling or racing across the floor, he's say "Hey, leave my cousin alone!" The odd thing is that just as often as not, he'd jump up and squash it. So much for insect relatives.

There were wonderful, cozy places in the West Gables house. A cool, windowless hallway between the kitchen and the back bedroom was ideal for avoiding lightning and thunderstorms, which are common in Florida in hurricane season. The Mexican tile floor near the front door was always cooler than the rest of the floors, because the air conditioning vent from the living room blew that way – when it was on, which was pretty much most of the time. But – mostly I stayed in Jose's room, because I liked being around him, especially when he was sleeping. I considered it my job to make sure that nothing happened, and several times I managed to keep someone (I won't name names) from taking what little extra money he had in his pockets. He slept a lot (and it drove both me and Gene to distraction...me, because he didn't play, hug and cuddle when he was asleep or sleepy; and Gene because he always wanted to have Jose get a job and earn some of that green stuff that people say doesn't grow on trees). Of course, Jose was much more likely to wake up and cuddle and play than he was likely to wake up and find a job. You really can't work while you're sleeping, and, in fact, I think he slept more than most humans I've ever lived with. It was 12 hours a day if it was a minute, and he slept like a concrete block for ten of the twelve. Then, he'd start tossing and turning and stretching and sniffing, and coughing from those darned cigarettes and other weird smoky rolled-up things, and you had to stay out of the way or you might be clobbered by a flying arm or stretching leg. I was always positioned well out of harm's way when he was about to stretch, and my internal alarm clock would always tell me when ten hours were up.

We dogs do have excellent internal alarm clocks – and no, we didn't buy them at Sears and swallow them. We are born with them in place. Actually, I've heard that everyone has one, including little insects and rats and your ancestors the monkeys. They help us in the same way they help you: to live a more regular and responsible life. We use our alarm clocks to tell us about very simple things – like when dinner is up – and more complex and interesting, unusual things, like when our friends go off to work for the day, what time they'll return from work, and what day of the week it is. Yes, we know the days of the week, although we have our own names for them. (Just for your information: our days begin when the sun goes down.) We know the days of the week because we know about the months (you call them "weeks" and "months" but we call them something quite different. That's stuff for another book, but I'll remember to tell you about it someday, I promise).

The reason is that we are, like our ancient ancestors the wolves, creatures of the moon, and we have a little tick-tock assembly inside of us, in our heads and noses (different than our alarm clocks, actually), that tells exactly when the cycles of the moon – or months as you call them - come and go, and precisely how long the moon cycle is. That helps us keep track of the weeks and the days – even though you humans took a long, long time to figure out the real number of days in the month. Well, some of you took a long time. The People of the Book knew about it from the very Beginning, because they listened to the Great One Gray, as we call Him (we call Him "GOG" but you usually call Him "God"). And we were named, by you, after Him, which was very smart of you in the Early Days. This is why our name – dog – is your

name for Him spelled backwards). But that, my great gray friends, is a story for another time, and another book. I can just tell you, briefly and quickly, that the month we woggles count in our heads is exactly 29 days, 12 hours, 44 minutes – plus a few seconds. We are born knowing it. Any puppy can tell you this after her eyes are open. The weird thing is that no one every asks.

Although I did not have an especially reliable and regular life on 60th Street in the West Gables, it was generally quite pleasant. I was almost always, nearly ever, surrounded by loving and delightful human beings. From Baraka (Jose's friend) to Jose, from Chungie (Jose's cousin) to Amanda, (Jose's sister), everybody was a fun, playful and considerate Roach-relation. They always had a minute or two to walk or talk or joust with me, and I never felt neglected or lonely – except, *except* when everyone was away. That happened far too often for my tongue and taste, but I always managed to find things to amuse myself. And as I said earlier, there are an endless number of things to puzzle over. When no one's around, I read – and write of course! But usually by dictation (to Gene, who's learned how to hear what I say)– but no woggle worth her weight in cheese will ever, ever let on that she knows how to read (or, for that matter, write, Heaven forbid!). But when you find a book lying spread out on the sofa or on the floor, or mysteriously open on the coffee table, you can almost always be sure that it was your best friend snooping through it to learn some new and interesting, if not valuable (for a dog)

Jose had a terrible habit – and I think he still does, actually, have the same problem habit, but maybe it's different, or “better” now – of sleeping until 12 or 1 or 2 in the afternoon. Then he'd lurch out of bed, eat something, smoke, and sit with me and gently, absent-mindedly stroke me. It was so wonderful to sit with him. These were some of the happiest moments of my little life.

I didn't care if he held me or played with me or really did anything with me at all. Being next to him was enough. As we sat there, I thought, remembered vividly, that first, wonderful whiff of his life...car, tobacco, clothing, sneakers, chicken, beard...and just sitting or lying down next to him called up all those lovely memories. Gene later told me that it's what people call “love at first sight,” but we should really call it “love at first wook,” since for us woggles that's really what it is. It happens all the time, for dogs as well as people. Usually it works out better for dogs, probably because we're a lot more reliable – and devoted – than you guys are.

But on my human person side (and I'll tell you more about that in another chapter) I'm very devoted also. It comes from being a female, and a mother.

We have boxes in our heads. No, not REAL boxes, silly! Just a way of separating and storing smells and thoughts and memories. That's where I had the smells, thoughts and feelings about Jose. You have boxes, too. Hundreds and thousands and hundreds of millions of storage boxes. They aren't real, physical boxes made out of cardboard or wood or some such. They're like those little forms you use to make cookies. I suppose you could call them “templates” if you wanted to be scientific, but I call them boxes.

We put ideas and little bits and pieces of memories in them – all kinds of ideas. Things for now, things for the future. Smells and noises, pictures and images, photos and paintings. With us dogs, there are a lot – and I mean a LOT – of smell-memories. We put in them things we've said, and things we've done. Some of the boxes' contents are happy and wonderful to think about. Some are really ugly, and you want to put some tape and locks over them, but that

doesn't work too well. Maybe they are all sort of open boxes, like the little crates of chicken eggs that hold 30 eggs and they show off their shining little bottoms...or are they tops?.... to the whole world, cracked or not.

Gene tells me that his father used to sell eggs, and they should always go into the egg-carton with their tops up. I haven't discussed it with any chickens. If you've ever looked under a roosting chicken, maybe you've seen how they sit on their eggs – and the eggs' position. Most eggs sit on their sides in a chicken's nest. Maybe everyone has been packing them completely wrong all these years.

The wonderful stuff about being with Jose was...being with him! He was my father, mother, brothers and sisters all rolled up into a single delightful package....like a Christmas present that answers and satisfies every need you ever had. The terrible thing about being with Jose was not being with him. I mean, there were many times – probably every day – that he would leave me alone in the house, sometimes for hours and hours (and hours). It was terrible. In order to relieve my boredom, frustration and anxiety about being away from him, I took to chewing things. And I mean...things. Everything. Whatever would fit in my mouth was worth chewing on. Now I know - today – that there are lots of things which really no one should chew....not you, not me, not Baby Jane. However, when you're a very young puppy, and every chromosome in your body is telling you that you're a pack animal, but there's no pack around, and no Jose! You really have to do something to relieve the boredom. And so – I chewed.

Of course, the nicest things to chew were the ones that smelled like Jose, but Baraka and Amanda wooked like pretty good substitutes when I ran out of socks, shoes, sneakers, cell phones, X-box controllers, extension cords or pretty much anything that he'd had his hands on that wasn't made of metal (and, occasionally, some that were). I liked the big Indian rug that Jose walked on frequently. It was really fun to tear it apart, but of course, the most important thing was chew on the smell I wanted to be reminded of. So I had to work on it very diligently for hours at a stretch to get from a place on the corner that had zero Jose-wook, to a place nearer the middle that was deliciously his.

I don't think anyone in the house had much of an idea of how dogs think. Of course, how puppies think is very different from how an adult dog things, and I was very much a puppy. It's normal for a puppy to chew, especially when you're not around. We're not being sneaky. We are lonely, and it helps to chew when you're trying to forget about your loneliness. Think about what you do when your bored and lonely. You might flip around a pencil in circles, or bite your nails, or twiddle your thumbs, or (if no one's really watching) pick at your nose. Chewing is a lot better than most of these, especially numbers two and four. You should try it sometime. It works pretty well. Of course, you might not like chewing on a shoe or a cell phone or a rug, but a sock probably wouldn't hurt your feelings (or your teeth).

Boredom, loneliness and fear of being alone – I guess you have to call it “anxiety” – are really pretty powerful and gripping feelings. I mean, when you feel those emotions you pretty much don't feel or think anything else. They take up your “whole field of vision.” (I suppose I should tell you that dogs have much, much better side-vision than you do. You call it peripheral vision, but we call it nearside/farside looking. Just so you know: the near side is the left side, and the far side is the right side. It's the same for a horse, if you've ever been horseback riding. I have! I did it once with Gene, and it was scary and wonderful.)

Sometimes Jose would get home from driving around at 3 or 4 or 5 AM, and I'd be waiting at the door for him, my tail wagging (to the right, of course), holding an X-box controller or cellular phone or sneaker. Most people would have been angry at a puppy like me, but Jose intuitively knew how it was with me, and I think also he felt really bad about leaving me alone for so long. He knew it was wrong to do, but maybe he didn't have any choice. No matter what I had in my mouth, or what carnage was scattered around the rooms - I usually stuck to his room and the living room, because that's where his smell was easily wooked - he'd pick me up, and snuggle with me, and I would wook his wonderful, glorious smell that I had fallen in love with that beautiful day he found me. And then, of course, everything was OK, and however long I'd been alone simply didn't matter: he was back! And he loved me. (He still loves me of course, and I adore him...but it's different now. That's what happens when you grow up, I guess.)

I've said before that Jose was very intuitive, and I guess you know it means that he had very good instincts about lots of things. Those instincts were a guide-dog for his thoughts and behavior. He was intuitive about me, and he knew right away to never, never, EVER punish a puppy for chewing something. Sure, you can say "NO!" or even "Bad Dog!" the very instant (but only the very instant, please) you see your puppy chewing a no-no; but even so it won't do much good, if any. Jose knew it was his job to keep things away from me that he didn't want chewed on, and that I should have other things handy which were good for me to chew on. So we worked on that from time to time, but it was hard to figure it all out at 4 AM in the morning. It was hard for him, just like it was hard for me. I just wanted to snuggle down with him, snuggle in his warmth and near his heart and revel in the memory of our first magnificent meeting.

Eventually, I learned what I could and should chew on, and what wasn't a good chewee. I should probably mention that when we puppies are just getting our new teeth, the ones that will stay forever, we have to encourage the old baby teeth to fall out and the new teeth to grow. Chewing is really a big help with all that, and we know by instinct that it's really important to chew. It's up to you to tell us what's good and what isn't. Then we'll do it! If you ever have another puppy, remember what Jose did, because that's the right way to do it for us little guys.

Don't be mad if we chew up your Rolex or cherished Audubon engravings. Just give us the right chew-stuff and we'll try to stick to it. Believe me, there's nothing a puppy loves more than making you happy. We want to make you happy, not angry. It's so much more fun to be happy, don't you think? When your puppy hears you say "Good dog!" and you really, truly mean it with your heart and thought, she will be very happy - and she'll remember what caused you to say that. We don't forget much, we woggles. And since chewees are connected directly to wooks, because every chewee has a taste and a wook, we never, ever forget wooks. They're all stored away in that little box system I mentioned to you earlier. You can count on that.

I'm really anxious to tell you about the rest of my life: how Jose and I went to live with Gene; how sad and depressed I was when Jose moved out and left me, and other things like Licker - who's my best friend, and a glorious American Bulldog - coming to live with us. There are some other really interesting things that I think you'll find pretty remarkable. I want to tell you about why our name - "DOG" - is of course "GOD" spelled backwards, and I have a suggestion about that, too. And you'll learn about how I pray, and what it's done for me, which is remarkable and wonderful.

Finally, I want you to know about what happened to me before I was born, which is another story all of its own.

There's a reason for everything, I think – don't you? – and there's a very good reason I am who I am, and why I'm with Gene. There's a reason why you are who you are, and why you're with the person or family or friends you're with. You can learn more about all that kind of stuff in Part Two. I'm working on it now! See you then!