

7554

ONLY A DOG

Y

ALBISTER CROWLEY

## ONLY A DOG

It was not even his own dog. He said it barked and had the mange... Most dogs bark; and if it had a tenth of the diseases he has, it would have been kindness to kill it. But what business was it of his? It was her brother's dog; it was her mother's pet.

Jeanne had come up to my room in the hotel. I had explained the truth (God's truth, not man's) to the clerk, so there was no difficulty. Besides you can get away with anything in America, if you have an English accent. She had her mother's letter in her hand when she came in. I had never heard of Fritz before - Fritz was the dog's name - I only knew there had been some trouble about a dog. Now the whole story came out. He - that's her husband, only he was never that, more than twice her age and a permanent invalid - hates everything and everybody and himself into the bargain. - A little like Count Cenci, without the nobility of the passion! A little like Guido Franceschini - and to tell you the truth, that's what I'm afraid of. Well, his hatred concentrated on this dog. He's a liar and a coward, he kept off inquiries for weeks, saying that he had sent it away to be looked after, or given it away, or - oh! any lie that sounded plausible. And now the truth was out; he had confessed to Jeanne:

## ONLY A DOG

It was not even his own dog. He said it barked and had the mange... Most dogs bark; and if it had a tenth of the diseases he has, it would have been kindness to kill it. But what business was it of his? It was her brother's dog; it was her mother's pet.

Jeanne had come up to my room in the hotel. I had explained the truth (God's truth, not man's) to the clerk, so there was no difficulty. Besides you can get away with anything in America, if you have an English accent. She had her mother's letter in her hand when she came in. I had never heard of Fritz before - Fritz was the dog's name - I only knew there had been some trouble about a dog. Now the whole story came out. He - that's her husband, only he was never that, more than twice her age and a permanent invalid - hates everything and everybody and himself into the bargain. A little like Count Cenci, without the nobility of the passion! A little like Guido Franceschini - and to tell you the truth, that's what I'm afraid of. Well, his hatred concentrated on this dog. He's a liar and a coward, he kept off inquiries for weeks, saying that he had sent it away to be looked after, or given it away, or - oh! any lie that sounded plausible. And now the truth was out; he had confessed to Jeanne:

he had had it murdered. So she had come straight round to me. Poor little Frits! if it did bark, what a fair was that of his? A few days and he would be going West, perhaps - probably - I pray God - never to return.

Of course he is mad. I have suspected softening of the brain for some time. His brother's death last year shook him heavily. He hears his brother's voice calling him - that's insanity without doubt. And he bursts into violent rages and violent tears on no provocation.

He is an utterly vile old man. He has ever tried to make Jeanné's sisters his mistresses. (And he threatens me with the Blue Laws!) However, this is the main point: he is mad. The neighbours are all ready to testify; if he makes one step against us, we shall assume the offensive and send him to Matteawan or wherever it is. Then Jeanné will have no further scruple in divorcing him. Only her sense of duty has stood in the way so far. Her heart's so beautiful! She will suffer anything herself rather than give pain to her worst enemy. So there she is, tied to this monster, and I honour her so for her pure heart that I won't urge her to do otherwise. But I'm not bound in any way myself; I'll free her somehow. (Oh God! God! I pray God for her

he had had it murdered. So she had come straight round to me. Poor little Fritz! if it did bark, what a fair was that of his? A few days and he would be going West, perhaps - probably - I pray God - never to return.

Of course he is mad. I have suspected softening of the brain for some time. His brother's death last year shook him heavily. He hears his brother's voice calling him - that's insanity without doubt. And he bursts into violent rages and violent tears on no provocation.

He is an utterly vile old man. He has even tried to make Jeanne's sisters his mistresses. (And he threatens me with the Blue Laws!) However, this is the main point: he is mad. The neighbours are all ready to testify; if he makes one step against us, we shall assume the offensive and send him to Matteawan or wherever it is. Then Jeanne will have no further scruple in divorcing him. Only her sense of duty has stood in the way so far. Her heart's so beautiful! She will suffer anything herself rather than give pain to her worst enemy. So there she is, tied to this monster, and I honour her so for her pure heart that I won't urge her to do otherwise. But I'm not bound in any way myself; I'll free her somehow. (Oh God! God! I pray God for her

Freedom!) Yet I would not hurt him. I would only put an end to his unhappiness. For he is utterly wretched, as are all who hate. And when she met me, and loved me, (that very first minute) and went back to his house, he saw it in her face that she was happy, and for that he hated her the more. What I am so afraid of is that his madness may break out in violence, that he may murder her as he murdered the poor little dog.

I don't know which of us began it. I was sitting in the big arm chair; Jeanne was standing against the wall with her hands behind her, resting against them, and swaying on their lovely elasticity. She told me all the story so simply and so sadly. Yes, I think I began it, for she came over when she saw me fighting with the tears, and knelt besides me, and took me in her arms, and patted me, and hushed me - but it was no good. We broke down, both of us; we cried for quite ten minutes in each other's arms. I was so ashamed of myself; it was so silly to cry over a dog I didn't even know. But it was so cruel and so senseless that it seemed a very parable of the universe itself. There was *Meltschmerz* in those tears, be sure.

Then it was time for me to play the man, to console her - as God gave me grace and power to do. *Amor vincit omnia*. But I am still moved by the crime; months later, as it is, I cannot think of it without something pulling at my heart, If

there be a soul o' good in all things evil, it may here be this, that Jeanne knew then surely without possibility of doubt how utterly tender I am of heart, and childlike. I am not really ashamed that I cried; I would be ashamed if I had not. For another thing, the incident may help to steel her when the crisis comes.

For he is coming East in a week or so, and her sister and I have agreed to strike home, if there's half a chance of it. Even Fritz, who was only a dog, and barked, and had the mange, may find avengers.

But what strange creatures women are! Jeanne's mother had written a letter full of tears, so simple, so pathetic; "Where is my little dog? I want my little dog." All the while it was lying dead. Jeanne wrote back, <sup>told</sup> ~~again~~ what the monster had at last confessed - and the next time her mother wrote, it was to minimize the tragedy: after all, Fritz was "only a dog."

My own heart's of different stuff; I'll not forget Fritz - whom I never knew - so long as I live; and if God put not forth hand to avenge him, I will. Only a dog!

---