

J had never been owned by a dog did
not become a dog ownee until the
age of forty enter Jack his full name
—what monosyllabic moniker can
adequately sum up or represent

such a complex & multi-layered being
as a dog?—was Our Brother Jack (comma)
Kerouac (full stop) with name-dropping nods
to the expat Aussie novelist &
San Francisco Superbeat however

putting such frivolous pretensions &
appellative tongue-twisters aside Our
Brother Jack (comma) Kerouac (full stop)
quickly & thankfully became known quite
simply as Jack Jack is watching her now

as she writes at a quarter to five in
the morning Mollie of course is nowhere
to be seen *I am having the watch of
Her even though it is the blackness &
we should be at sleep Mollie is dream-dream*

*but it has never been for Mollie to
have the watch of Her my eyes have the want
to go backwards but I keep them look by
having the jerk of my head I must do
the stay this is of the significant*

*duty at least she is not having the
wet-face or doing the go around all
in the no-light at least she is something
of happy & Boss Dog is not of the
maximum size Mollie did not arrive*

until Jack was four two kennel moves &
a leash of life changes later than where
this story begins thus you—dear Reader—
must linger for her rambunctious rock-rol-
licking & ready-for-anything *yip!*



J was unwell for some time before her
Edisonesque event her marriage had
ended her children had somehow transformed
from infants into teens she was somewhat
alone & she simply wanted something

to love many of these months remain mud
in her mind but she still remembers this
impulse something to love & then the light
switched on & her heart was lit & she saw
it up there the Dog Star *she is not with*

*the very well when she comes to pick me
up she holds me too squash even with the
worry-worry I do the sad & bold
goodbye to mother brother gather my
self for what next I have the comprehend*

*I will not be return I have too the
comprehend that I can love Her that I
will love Her that love will have all of the
everything good in the end* J had done
her fieldwork she was allergic to cats

despite their apparent attraction to
her appearing out of nowhere at friends'
houses on streets in parks to slide around
her legs take up residence on her lap
appraise her approvingly with other-

worldly eyes she could not warm to them cats
are regal independent pleasingly
aloof yes but up close first the sneezing
second the itching & finally the
complete inability to see J

did not dislike mogs she just could not bear
them thus prominent on her Pooch Research
List—perchance this particular matter
applied to dogs—was Non-Allergenic
Breed To The AKC Information

Site! 'single-coated' 'non-shedding' 'dander'
a whole new lexicon a whole canine
world Maltese Bichon Frise Portuguese
Water Dog Peruvian Inca o
lordy! To The Sea For A Think! & there

sitting on a rock on the sand minding
her business dangling her toes it came
upon her quick as a vision slow as
a dream poking his nose right at her knee
The Dog She Knew She Could Love swallowing

her customary compulsion she spoke
to the bloke at the end of the leash &
enquired as to the pup's pedigree 'er
Aussie Terrier' he gruffly replied
while gazing out above her head at a

pair of fluorescent bikinis the hound
was smallish exuding autonomy
companionship & everything nice as
he calmly tolerated her gaze he
was beautiful in a rugged kind of

way no cutesy-wutesy namby-pamby
here coat not too short not too long bluish-
black shot through with tan face strong & alert
eyes dark & keen & intelligent—o
those doggy adjectives!—ears upright &

vigilant J was smitten there & then
she knew this was the dog for her knew she
wanted the dog to be male & for some
whacky reason she knew that somewhere a-
waiting her was a little man named 'Jack'



local paper *The Age* the *Trading Post*
the supermarket noticeboard J searched
& searched but to cut a long story short
as they say (or in this case several
longish months into one shortish sentence)

she finally located a litter
of four Australian Terrier pups
(huzzah!) on the very far side of large
Melbourne her desire for a dog having
steadily progressed to a yearning &

that yearning having become pure longing
she made the trip trusty Melway upside-
down & unsteady on lap requisite
\$400 at the ready but
when she arrived only two of the brood

remained at least they were boys & how to
describe? a couple of fluffballs black &
pure gorgeousness expressing distinctly
differing temperaments even at
only eight weeks one was amok jumping

& tumbling from couch to basket to floor
to basket to couch—again again—the
other just sitting studying her face
answering her eyes difficult to put
into words she thinks she just stood there not

talking can't recall 'That one's Ben' (Amok)
'& the shy one he's Jack' Jack? as though in
a trance J picked up 'Jack' & headed for
the door she expects the seller mentioned
money she expects she paid he may have

proffered a profusion of detailed &
complex pup-raising hints may have offered
the recipe for his favourite self-
saucing chocolate pudding she has no
idea no memory at all of

the man's face/voice/name/suburb not the poor
den-mum who was no doubt nearby mourning
her imminent loss no nothing nothing
nothing at all except for the fact that
she had found him Little Man Jack! at last



for the road trip back there was no Melway
on lap but a prepossessing pup called
Jack driving along—in retrospect quite
unsafely let alone illegally
(given Jack’s place just beneath the steering-

wheel)—J was consumed with a seraphic
sense of calm she had found Her Dog! again
unsafely illegally she could not
help but gaze down periodically
at this compact collaboration of

trust innocence serenity warmth &
baby Jack just lay there—deep black eyes fixed
on hers—all the way home apart from one
essential deviation The Pet Shop
yes despite her assiduous dog-based

research over the preceding months J
had neglected to plan ahead—whatso-
ever!—in terms of the basic canine
essentials required in order to house
a pooch she had been unwell indeed! no

preparations at all in place no bed
no bowl no clippers or brush no collar
or tag or leash no toys or chew-bones no
anti-flea stuff no anti-pee stuff not
even any food thus The Pet Shop &

of course the only one she could think of
was located deep within the large &
loud local shopping mall now J could not
just leave her new Best Friend in the car could
she so pup-in-arms she fought their way to

Pet’s Paradise & accumulated
the obligatory investments (does
a dog really *need* all this?) so much to
carry instinctively J placed the pup
upon one of her shoulders to allow

her to ferry the vast doggy booty
& Jack seemed fine with that—happily perched
like a pirate’s parrot—& thus he stayed
until they made it back to the car o
lordy little did J realise what

an enormous precedent had firmly
& irrevocably been set in place
right from that very first morning well she
was a novice she admits & she had
hitherto never been owned by a dog



*I have the much like of it up here the
perfect sitting for a being like me a
more fuller & safer view of the all
than the seeing down there example when
we go to the many-people-place not*

*only will I have the all over what-
whats if travelling the way down below
but I have the understand I will be
trample up here I have the high eyes to
identify my all-arounds of course*

*I must go the way below some often
as I depend on the sniff to assess
& thereby deal with
but her shoulder is the very special
on account of my near-near to Her &*

*I have the see like she does which from a
philosophical brings us much close there
is more to life than feet feet feet I have
the assure having eventually
reached home (dog on right shoulder arms fully*

occupied with a dog's Christmas stash) J
set about the task of introducing
Jack to his new place of residence &
to her relief—once he had sniffed every
inch & snaffled down lunch—he sent her a

look which said Satisfied *I have much for
the occupy with the examine &
organise of the all new mine the toys
are joy example I have the instant
like to The Ball & the tiny pink-pink*

*with the ringing the tartan coat has the
warm-handsome-warm & the flame-box even
of warmer the choker does not have the
quite so joy or the push-pull-lead but in
the over I have the inherit of*

*distinct as to the bed well I will not
be doing the dream-dream in that one all
comfortable & stylish I have the
concede but never the lie-down in else-
where from Her never for a being like me*



Jack having completed a diligent
& thorough inspection of his new Home
it was time for J to attend to a
few overdue chores Little Man followed
her everywhere a constant miniature

shadow trotting behind her wherever
she went Organise washing Attend to
dishes Take out compost Jack already
& always a steady four feet at the
rear half an afternoon later—despite

his formidably focussed & extra
determined persistence in tailing her—
J realised he was tired *dog* tired ah!
now for the inaugural road-test of
his new comfy bed! it had been a long

& complex day after all picking up
the exhausted pup J gently placed him
in the quilted manger she had prepared
complete with home-knitted blanky (which had
wrapped her own babies in a former life)

a couple of cushions a soft toy or
two a shirt of hers which smelled—pleasantly
she trusted—of her but nope no go if
anything the new bed seemed to make Jack
wake up J tried a few more times cooing

gently stroking his tiny head & yes
his breathing slowed his eyes finally closed
& he appeared to doze while making those
angelic sweet baby sucking sounds but
each time she stood to continue her chores

he was back on duty in an instant
escorting her every move hmm well she
could not simply discard domestic &
cordons bleu concerns so she picked up Our
Brother Jack propped him on her right shoulder

where at last—despite an awkward clutching
of sorts—he did indeed fall asleep *arrh*
arrh me hearties big mistake even she
realised there was no going back from
here some hours later it was time for J

to attempt sleep herself yes the Little
Man had been untimely torn from mother
& sibling yes he had been subjected
to the psychedelic chaos of an
enormous urban shopping centre yes

he had been unceremoniously
supplanted into a new Home yes he
had ‘assisted’ with varied household tasks
(how he coped with the fumes of chopped onions
or that *Domestos* without wanting *Off*)

shoulder! Off! is beyond her) & simply
put his entire world had been turned upside-
down yes she realised all of that but
now it was time for bed so let the fun
begin her ablutions complete J kissed

the tiny tacker tickled his tummy
& tucked him into his snug little bed
in its snug little lounge-room corner &
proceeded to her own room where she had
barely reached the doorway & he was there

looking up at her with those delicious
liquid eyes no she would not be seduced
by a two-month-old dog Are you not tired
Little Man? Come on Back to bed seven?
seventeen? twenty-seven times? she was

not counting & she won't subject you to
a blow-by-blow description of each firm
but polite attempt to get the guy back
into his cot but—just for the record—
she tried yes she did she really really

tried anyway call her weak call her the
stupidest girl you have ever met but
she was tired too so she thought what the heck
his bed can be close to mine what is the
difference &—spent as she was—quickly

carried out a total relocation
of Jack's bedding essentials from the lounge
into her room over by the window
next to her desk a perfect place for a
sleepy pup nope no go not a bar of

it *non nein nyet* NO! it was going to
be a long night Jack just would not stay in
his bed o lordy it was *hours* she swears
before she moved it adjacent to hers
whereby she could hang down one arm her hand

on his back & thus they would blissfully
sleep nope no go even writing about
this is making her tired anyway—long
story short again—after much fruitless
negotiating Jack ended up on

her bed J knew this was not the correct
solution that dogs can live for fifteen
years but this was how things transpired she had
had it she was right out of ideas
yes quite with the good settled now thank you



following Jack's arrival—three? four? five
weeks?—J was again unwell she recalls
a room with walls made of glass & trays &
corridors & doors she recalls Helen
Hunt kissing Jack Nicholson &—twice? thrice?—

her own little Jack in the hospital
garden for visits the two were always
overjoyed to see each other & the
cuddles & ball-throwing & general
happy play was curative memories

of Jack are clearer than those of human
callers during that time there was no sense
of culpability or failure or
disgrace with him & he being Dog had no
agenda other than to be with &

love her in the moment with no other
thought than the Now no judgement no distress
no regret lending new sense to Macbeth's
famous pronouncement 'Throw physic to the
dogs' *I have the much sad of her gone her*

*not-there at the home is the nearly can't
take I am of the trouble with the dream-
dream & lose the like for the food & walk
& toys yes even The Ball it is Boss
Dog who is of the fault it is Boss Dog*

*who makes her have the go away this is
the worry-worry for me he is big
& I am small but I never throw the
hope that eventually she will be
finding the way back to home & to me*



shortly after J's return she packed up
car & picked up Jack & journeyed down to
the coast Venus Bay is a wild stretch of
unadulterated ocean-meets-land
not at all well represented by the

relatively tame term 'bay' its coast is wide & extensive drawing way away into distance until obscured—in both directions—by wave-tossed flotsam & soft briny mist walking this shoreline is an

inspirational exhilarating cleansing thing the most excellent dunes driftwood & kelp the moody shape-changing hue-changing sea &—most important—very very few people happy snaps from that

holiday show Jack as inquisitive Little Man nose down tail up sniffing & snuffling checking out yet another New World there he is all of six inches tall a most handsome chestnut tan invading

an otherwise pitch black coat ears far too big for such a small face racing along beach leaping to catch The Ball already revealing his 'ratter' instinct—*genus terrarius*—responding to calls Go

Get It! Go On! more than any other utterance she made (except of course his own name) a wonderfully overgrown garden surrounded their temporary home Jack seemed particularly taken

by flora it being mid-summer there was a plethora of flowers & any in his immediate vicinity were eye-balled snout-sniffed paw-tapped taste-tested eaten each morning J sat outside in

pyjamas & sun & watched Jack wander in wonder around the yard as though it were Eden (which it pretty much was) on a number of occasions—ensconced in his methodical & meticulous

examination of daisy or shrub—the pup was perhaps a tad too enthused & *ker-choo!* this event would catapult him backwards into a brief sitting stance before toppling him sideways into the

grass there he lay supine for two or three seconds—stunned by the ferocity of his own physicality—then reclaim an upright position shake himself back into doggy mode & resume his bold

exploration these sneezes filled J with such fits of laughter that she too almost collapsed happy moments are of untold worth utterly essential for living on this earth like sleep or water or air



dog & ownee visited the beach each day J is an unstoppable swimmer when it comes to saltwater regardless of shark warnings rip warnings storms on the opposite side of the coin dams—yabbies!

mud! I can't see the bottom!—& rivers—
snakes! logs! I can't see the bottom!—frighten
her but *the sea the sea* J would plant a
tent pole to secure Little Man & then
she was off now Jack by nature was not

what you would call a brave boy despite an
undeniable fervour for life he
was reticent & cautious something of
an introvert at heart but love it would
seem conquers all during one of J's brief

excursions into the turbulent &
mighty rumpus so characteristic
of Venus Bay she happened to glance back
at the beach & in that solitary
moment was forced to digest a full-scale

drama in an eye-blink for there stood the
tent pole empty of tenant & there—at
least thirty feet into the swirling white-
water—heading straight toward her through the
cacophonous ruckus of surf—was a

small black dot *Jack* breaker after breaker
assaulted his tiny frame submerged his
tiny head & with a mother's sudden
instinct J dove into immediate
& furious save-mode—*Please God! Please God!*

Let me get there in time!—endeavouring
to thrash through the football field or so of
recalcitrant swell that agitated
& churned between them time & again she
lost sight of the Little Man as he was

dunked by a continuous onslaught of
waves but—after what seemed like much longer
than it probably was—J finally
reached Her Dog Jack was stunned with shock & cold
& she clasped him in joy & he clung in

return as they waded back to shore safe
on the sand Jack wrapped in a towel she held
him & held him until he warmed & his
tremors eventually ceased *Brave Boy*
she kept saying *Brave Boy Brave Boy Brave Boy*



when J ruminates about that day she
remains unable to comprehend the
courage the determination the sheer
pluck of the dog in the face of what was
undoubtedly an indescribably

petrifying experience how had
a miniature three-month-old pup sustained
the enormous energy required to
press against such odds without succumbing
to the obvious? love devotion she

can muster no other explanation
not only was Jack her companion he
was now a warrior a soldier a
champion her hero J had not thought
her own love for this minikin being could

ever or at all expand but it did
it did in fact her heart could contain it
only just why do we love our dogs? well
perhaps that discussion can wait all J
knew at this single point in time was that

she would stand by him as he stood by her
regardless of what life threw up after
the Venus Bay incident—& despite
the fact that *Jack by nature was not a
brave boy*—he demonstrated no fear on

subsequent sojourns to the ocean one
is compelled to wonder if indeed he
recalls that day at all *I do not have
the much remember only for the smash-
smash & the under & the knowledge that*

*I must not be of the letting Her leave
from my eyes again not off with Boss Dog
or into the many-people-place or
the anywhere that I am not never
with the not look ever-ever again*



Venus Bay a good few weeks behind them
Jack was five months old when a second life-
threatening incident occurred this time
the Little Man would *never* forget &
scars from that day were forever scored on

his innocent sweet doggy soul as J's
health continued to improve she & Jack
ventured on longer & more frequent walks
or as she & Jack ventured on longer
& more frequent walks J's health continued

to improve the latter is probably
closer to the truth for—left to her own
devices—J most certainly would have
stayed shuttered from the world at this stage of
her recovery again Jack excelled

as her one & only true physician
in that he forced her out of the house by
default & into the open air with
Home as the obvious starting point there
were a number of walking routes from which

she always allowed the pooch to choose—left
right up down over around—which way shall
we go today? & what a production
it was initially Little Man would
conduct a full accomplished forensic

investigation of the small front yard
& nature strip nosing & sniffing the
usual spots in order to discern
All's Well With The World before coming to
a considered standstill at the base of

the driveway from there he would examine
each direction in turn & then hold his
head high (well as high as it could go) to
carefully sample the various wafts
of olfactory information &

late-breaking canine news when—all of a sudden—they were off! other times J drove them to a park or piece of bushland a bit further afield Diamond Creek & its fragrant surrounds was a favourite bird-

song & wildflowers in summer & a mystical foggy hush in the cold Jack proved a wonderful companion in terms of exploration together—the Little Man off-leash—they would muck about

down by the water sidestepping through stiff regal bullrushes rock-hopping great rounds of flat grey stone climbing the overgrown banks of grevillea acacia & Victoria's state floral emblem pink

heath enjoying nature's beatific gifts this particular day however was a Street Walk Day having completed the perfunctory observations & computations Jack finally made a

decision his tail curled back on itself in anticipation & joy it was a sunny late autumn afternoon & as they perambulated J thought *Life Is Good* now how long had it been since that

thought had tapped on the door of her mind let alone gained access? but those were the words that came—unbidden & unforced—*Life Is Good* in retrospect she should have heard those old alarm bells clanging away (for we

must never take even the smallest thing for granted) but she did not she was too busy savouring the feeling behind those three unassuming words then less than a block from Home it occurred abruptly

out of nowhere & with no warning two dogs—a smallish white bitsa & (far more disturbingly) a largish black Pit-Bull cross—appeared on the opposite side of the road unleashed & unaccompanied

they came hurling themselves in a dervish of maniacal barking & savage snapping across the bitumen toward little Jack & herself being a fair way off adulthood Jack was still wearing a

small blue harness instead of a collar for walking this was a godsend in that—without conscious thought & with pure instinct—J immediately tossed the pup up in the air whereby she swung him around

her head like a lasso yelling with Jack momentarily safe from those two sets of hellishly furious jaws it was obviously Jack the dogs were after & as a result J was not bitten

as such (though she was repeatedly clawed in their rabid attempts to seize the airborne Little Man) alerted by her screams three men—plumbers as she would later learn—similarly appeared out of nowhere