

FIRST
DOG
ON
EARTH
IRV WEINBERG

FIRST DOG ON EARTH

A NOVEL BY IRV WEINBERG

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**PREFACE**

In the spring of 1994, a team of cave explorers stumbled into the find of a lifetime. A treasure trove of prehistoric art painted onto the walls of Chauvet Cave in Southern France. These now famous paintings, dating back more than 30,000 years, are considered to be among the world's greatest works of art.

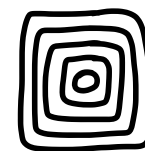
But just as astonishing as the art on the walls was what they found on the cave's floor. A fossilized trail of footprints, left behind by a small boy and his dog that stretched on for more than 150 feet.

The relaxed shapes of their footprints tell a story of the trust, care and affection these two must have shared as they walked calmly together into the darkness of the cave.

The companionship and love between humans and dogs. It's a tale as old as time. A tale every person who has ever had the privilege to love and be loved by a dog can understand. This is the story of that first dog that consciously left the company of wolves and joined the family of man.

SECTION
HOW IT ALL BEGAN

1



CHAPTER 1

The she-wolf dragged her swollen belly across the rough dirt floor to a cool, quiet corner at the back of the den. Enough moons had passed and now the time had come.

Panting hard, she pushed back at the pain and pushed out the first of her five pups that entered the world wet and bloody, not knowing how much they had changed it.

One by one she licked them clean and nudged them to her waiting nipples. She watched them tumble and fumble over each other until they learned to hang on and feed. Born hungry, they learned quickly.

The she-wolf ran her nose over each of them, drawing in their essence, drawing in their scents and locking them in her memory. This was not her first litter. She had seen many others being born, as all in the pack had, but never one like this one.

A bolt of cold fear ran across her spine as she felt the warmth of their tiny bodies against her. In the wolf pack, differences were dangerous things. They made you an outsider and being an outsider made you prey.

Month after month the she-wolf kept her quickly growing puppies apart from the rest of the pack, hoping that given time they would change enough to blend in. But the differences grew more obvious.

Their bodies stayed smaller and sleeker. Their eyes looked larger and closer together. Their behavior was more trusting and tamer, more curious and playful, more approachable and affectionate. And they were smarter by far than any of the other pups around them.

Before the sun began to climb, the she-wolf knew the day had come. Her pups' differences could no longer go unnoticed.

She would not let the old alpha male or any of the other males of the pack vying for leadership prove their virility with the blood of her pups.

In the dim light of early morning while the rest of the pack was still asleep, she nudged her pups awake and led them farther into the forest than they had ever been before and turned her back on them.

They would either live or die, according to the will of nature and the moods of the gods. Better that, the she-wolf knew, than in the jaws of the old alpha or any of the hungry pack.

At first the pups, always at her side, did not understand as she pushed them off and backed away. But each time they tried to come close to her,

she snarled and lunged at them until they turned and ran away, their tails wrapped tightly beneath them.

The gods took pity as the fleeing pack followed Oohma, as he would one day be called, south, always south toward the warming sun. They were not alone. The earth was on the move again as the returning sun began to warm the planet.

Each day as night ended, Oohma looked up at the black ribbons of birds unspooling across the sky. Oohma knew birds know what others don't. Not just what is in the sky around them but on the earth below them. Where they flew Oohma and the pack would follow.

As they traveled south, the land of cold they had come from faded from their memories. The weather now was more agreeable, food more plentiful, shelter easier to find. Nothing unknown or dangerous had come at them from the thick brush and forest all around them. Not yet.

AFTERWORD

In 1914 in Oberkassel, Germany, researchers uncovered a ceremonial gravesite holding the bones of humans and their dogs buried together side by side.

Though the bones were ancient, the story of the extraordinary love affair between humans and dogs keeps being told. It's one that reaches from the dawn of humanity out into the infinite future.

Those first dogs that consciously came out of the forest and chose us as their companions have now grown to more than 900 million, many still in the wild and 340 recognized breeds from a Chihuahua to an English Bull Mastiff.

But no matter their size or their shape, every dog shares one innate thing. Their love for us.

Whether that first dog was Oohma or some other, long forgotten by memory and time, its legacy lives on as we come to understand on the deepest level that one of the greatest gifts ever given to mankind was the dog.

They just might be the reason that back in a cold distant past we first learned the warmth of that love.