**Ulysses and the Dogman**

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Do you know the time of the dogmen?

When the forefinger of twilight begins to smudge the clear-drawn lines of the Big City there is inaugurated an hour devoted to one of the most melancholy sights of urban life.

Out from the towering flat crags and apartment peaks of the cliff dwellers of New York steals an army of beings that were once men. Even yet they go upright upon two limbs and retain human form and speech; but you will observe that they are behind animals in progress. Each of these beings follows a dog, to which he is fastened by an artificial ligament.

These men are all victims to Circe. Not willingly do they become flunkeys to Fido, bell boys to bull terriers, and toddlers after Towzer. Modern Circe, instead of turning them into animals, has kindly left the difference of a six-foot leash between them. Every one of those dogmen has been either cajoled, bribed, or commanded by his own particular Circe to take the dear household pet out for an airing.

By their faces and manner you can tell that the dogmen are bound in a hopeless enchantment. Never will there come even a dog-catcher Ulysses to remove the spell.

The faces of some are stonily set. They are past the commiseration, the curiosity, or the jeers of their fellow-beings. Years of matrimony, of continuous compulsory canine constitutionals, have made them callous. They unwind their beasts from lamp posts, or the ensnared legs of profane pedestrians, with the stolidity of mandarins manipulating the strings of their kites.

Others, more recently reduced to the ranks of Rover’s retinue, take their medicine sulkily and fiercely. They play the dog on the end of their line with the pleasure felt by the girl out fishing when she catches a sea-robin on her hook. They glare at you threateningly if you look at them, as if it would be their delight to let slip the dogs of war. These are half-mutinous dogmen, not quite Circe-ized, and you will do well not to kick their charges, should they sniff around your ankles.

Others of the tribe do not seem to feel so keenly. They are mostly unfresh youths, with gold caps and drooping cigarettes, who do not harmonize with their dogs. The animals they attend wear satin bows in their collars; and the young men steer them so assiduously that you are tempted to the theory that some personal advantage, contingent upon satisfactory service, waits upon the execution of their duties.

The dogs thus personally conducted are of many varieties; but they are one in fatness, in pampered, diseased vileness of temper, in insolent, snarling capriciousness of behaviour. They tug at the leash fractiously, they make leisurely nasal inventory of every door step, railing, and post. They sit down to rest when they choose; they wheeze like the winner of a Third Avenue beefsteak-eating contest; they blunder clumsily into open cellars and coal holes; they lead the dogmen a merry dance.

These unfortunate dry nurses of dogdom, the cur cuddlers, mongrel managers, Spitz stalkers, poodle pullers, Skye scrapers, dachshund dandlers, terrier trailers and Pomeranian pushers of the cliff-dwelling Circes follow their charges meekly. The doggies neither fear nor respect them. Masters of the house these men whom they hold in leash may be, but they are not masters of them. From cosey corner to fire escape, from divan to dumbwaiter, doggy’s snarl easily drives this two-legged being who is commissioned to walk at the other end of his string during his outing.

One twilight the dogmen came forth as usual at their Circes’ pleading, guerdon, or crack of the whip. One among them was a strong man, apparently of too solid virtues for this airy vocation. His expression was melancholic, his manner depressed. He was leashed to a vile white dog, loathsomely fat, fiendishly ill-natured, gloatingly intractable toward his despised conductor.

At a corner nearest to his apartment house the dogman turned down a side street, hoping for fewer witnesses to his ignominy. The surfeited beast waddled before him, panting with spleen and the labour of motion.

Suddenly the dog stopped. A tall, brown, long-coated, wide-brimmed man stood like a Colossus blocking the sidewalk and declaring:

“Well, I’m a son of a gun!”

“Jim Berry!” breathed the dogman, with exclamation points in his voice.

“Sam Telfair,” cried Wide-Brim again, “you ding-basted old willy-walloo, give us your hoof!”

Their hands clasped in the brief, tight greeting of the West that is death to the hand-shake microbe.

“You old fat rascal!” continued Wide-Brim, with a wrinkled brown smile; “it’s been five years since I seen you. I been in this town a week, but you can’t find nobody in such a place. Well, you dinged old married man, how are they coming?”

Something mushy and heavily soft like raised dough leaned against Jim’s leg and chewed his trousers with a yeasty growl.

“Get to work,” said Jim, “and explain this yard-wide hydrophobia yearling you’ve throwed your lasso over. Are you the pound-master of this burg? Do you call that a dog or what?”

“I need a drink,” said the dogman, dejected at the reminder of his old dog of the sea. “Come on.”

Hard by was a café. ‘Tis ever so in the big city.

They sat at a table, and the bloated monster yelped and scrambled at the end of his leash to get at the café cat.

“Whiskey,” said Jim to the waiter.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

“You’re fatter,” said Jim, “and you look subjugated. I don’t know about the East agreeing with you. All the boys asked me to hunt you up when I started. Sandy King, he went to the Klondike. Watson Burrel, he married the oldest Peters girl. I made some money buying beeves, and I bought a lot of wild land up on the Little Powder. Going to fence next fall. Bill Rawlins, he’s gone to farming. You remember Bill, of course—he was courting Marcella—excuse me, Sam—I mean the lady you married, while she was teaching school at Prairie View. But you was the lucky man. How is Missis Telfair?”

“S-h-h-h!” said the dogman, signalling the waiter; “give it a name.”

“Whiskey,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

“She’s well,” he continued, after his chaser. “She refused to live anywhere but in New York, where she came from. We live in a flat. Every evening at six I take that dog out for a walk. It’s Marcella’s pet. There never were two animals on earth, Jim, that hated one another like me and that dog does. His name’s Lovekins. Marcella dresses for dinner while we’re out. We eat tabble dote. Ever try one of them, Jim?”

“No, I never,” said Jim. “I seen the signs, but I thought they said ‘table de hole.’ I thought it was French for pool tables. How does it taste?”

“If you’re going to be in the city for awhile we will—”

“No, sir-ee. I’m starting for home this evening on the 7.25. Like to stay longer, but I can’t.”

“I’ll walk down to the ferry with you,” said the dogman.

The dog had bound a leg each of Jim and the chair together, and had sunk into a comatose slumber. Jim stumbled, and the leash was slightly wrenched. The shrieks of the awakened beast rang for a block around.

“If that’s your dog,” said Jim, when they were on the street again, “what’s to hinder you from running that habeas corpus you’ve got around his neck over a limb and walking off and forgetting him?”

“I’d never dare to,” said the dogman, awed at the bold proposition. “He sleeps in the bed, I sleep on a lounge. He runs howling to Marcella if I look at him. Some night, Jim, I’m going to get even with that dog. I’ve made up my mind to do it. I’m going to creep over with a knife and cut a hole in his mosquito bar so they can get in to him. See if I don’t do it!”

“You ain’t yourself, Sam Telfair. You ain’t what you was once. I don’t know about these cities and flats over here. With my own eyes I seen you stand off both the Tillotson boys in Prairie View with the brass faucet out of a molasses barrel. And I seen you rope and tie the wildest steer on Little Powder in 39 1—2.”

“I did, didn’t I?” said the other, with a temporary gleam in his eye. “But that was before I was dogmatized.”

“Does Misses Telfair—” began Jim.

“Hush!” said the dogman. “Here’s another café.”

They lined up at the bar. The dog fell asleep at their feet.

“Whiskey,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

“I thought about you,” said Jim, “when I bought that wild land. I wished you was out there to help me with the stock.”

“Last Tuesday,” said the dogman, “he bit me on the ankle because I asked for cream in my coffee. He always gets the cream.”

“You’d like Prairie View now,” said Jim. “The boys from the round-ups for fifty miles around ride in there. One corner of my pasture is in sixteen miles of the town. There’s a straight forty miles of wire on one side of it.”

“You pass through the kitchen to get to the bedroom,” said the dogman, “and you pass through the parlour to get to the bath room, and you back out through the dining-room to get into the bedroom so you can turn around and leave by the kitchen. And he snores and barks in his sleep, and I have to smoke in the park on account of his asthma.”

“Don’t Missis Telfair—” began Jim.

“Oh, shut up!” said the dogman. “What is it this time?”

“Whiskey,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

“Well, I’ll be racking along down toward the ferry,” said the other.

“Come on, there, you mangy, turtle-backed, snake-headed, bench-legged ton-and-a-half of soap-grease!” shouted the dogman, with a new note in his voice and a new hand on the leash. The dog scrambled after them, with an angry whine at such unusual language from his guardian.

At the foot of Twenty-third Street the dogman led the way through swinging doors.

“Last chance,” said he. “Speak up.”

“Whiskey,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

“I don’t know,” said the ranchman, “where I’ll find the man I want to take charge of the Little Powder outfit. I want somebody I know something about. Finest stretch of prairie and timber you ever squinted your eye over, Sam. Now if you was—”

“Speaking of hydrophobia,” said the dogman, “the other night he chewed a piece out of my leg because I knocked a fly off of Marcella’s arm. ‘It ought to be cauterized,’ says Marcella, and I was thinking so myself. I telephones for the doctor, and when he comes Marcella says to me: ‘Help me hold the poor dear while the doctor fixes his mouth. Oh, I hope he got no virus on any of his toofies when he bit you.’ Now what do you think of that?”

“Does Missis Telfair—” began Jim.

“Oh, drop it,” said the dogman. “Come again!”

“Whiskey,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” said the dogman.

They walked on to the ferry. The ranchman stepped to the ticket window.

Suddenly the swift landing of three or four heavy kicks was heard, the air was rent by piercing canine shrieks, and a pained, outraged, lubberly, bow-legged pudding of a dog ran frenziedly up the street alone.

“Ticket to Denver,” said Jim.

“Make it two,” shouted the ex-dogman, reaching for his inside pocket.