

BOSS AND OTHER DOGS

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649524464

Boss and Other Dogs by Maria Louise Pool

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MARIA LOUISE POOL

**BOSS AND
OTHER DOGS**

Boss and Other Dogs

By

Maria Louise Pool



New York

Stone & Kimball

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TO THE MEMORY OF
ORLANDO
YORKSHIRE TERRIER
MOST GAY MOST SAGACIOUS MOST DEVO-
TED OF COMPANIONS THIS LITTLE
VOLUME IS DEDICATED BY
HIS BEREAVED FRIEND
THE AUTHOR

BOSS

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BOSS

A ROUGH brown dog sat at the very edge of the tumble-down breakwater. He was looking steadily seaward. He was evidently old, and he was scarred by many fights; but his sunken mouth, from which he had lost many teeth, showed that he would not fight again victoriously.

He was gaunt from a lifetime of insufficient food, but yet he had the air of a dog who is loved.

Sometimes he turned from his gaze at the sea and glanced behind him at the child who was sitting in a wheelbarrow a few feet away. Every time he glanced thus he slightly wagged his stump of a tail, and the child smiled or she said in a soft voice:

“Good Boss!”

And then Boss wagged harder; but he could not give much attention to his companion, for his whole heart was with that bent old woman who was up to her waist in the water by the outermost ledge. It was there that the Irish moss grew, and at low tide the woman could gather it. She thrust her arm down to the shoulder each time for her handful of moss. She was

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wet, sodden wet, save for a small place across her back.

She had a man's straw hat fastened by a small rope tightly under her chin. Her face looked a hundred years old, it was in truth seventy — old, seamed, and leathery; and it was a face you loved to look at.

Every few moments she raised her head and put her dripping hand up over her eyes as she turned toward the land; she was at first dazzled by the glare of the water. When she looked up thus the little girl in the wheelbarrow always waved her hat; then a dim, beautiful smile would come in the faded eyes.

"It's jest a doin' of her lots of good," she would say aloud. "I'm awful glad I wheeled her down. I wish now I'd brought her down oftener this summer."

Twice as she looked shoreward she called out shrilly:

"Boss, you take care of her; won't you, Boss?"

Then Boss pricked up his ears and shook his tail, and the girl laughed and said she guessed she 'n' Boss could git along first-rate.

"We're use't to it; ain't we, Boss?"

When she said this the dog got up, came to her side, gave her a swift lick across the cheek, then hurried back and sat down on the edge of the planks again.

Boss

Once the woman out in the water slipped and fell splashing, and Boss jumped up, whining in a piteous quaver, and would not be comforted even when the child said soothingly:

“Never mind, old fellow!”

But when the woman floundered to her feet again and cried “All right!” the dog sat down. Still he frequently gave a little whine under his breath. He was thinking that this was the first summer when he had not gone out mousing with his dearest friend, and he could not understand why he was so stiff and clumsy that he was unable to run over the slippery rocks and keep close to her, nosing the moss she picked up, poking over lobsters and crabs, and seeing that nothing happened to her. Something was the matter with his legs, and with the whole of him, somehow, and he could not get over the rocks. Was it the same thing that kept him from gnawing bones? And he liked them just as well as ever. He noticed that the young dog who lived down the road could crack bones without any trouble. It was all very mysterious.

When he lay in the sun near where the moss was drying, dozing and snapping at the flies, he often looked as if he were thinking of all these things.

And what did the girl's grandmother

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mean only yesterday when she had stroked his head and said:

"Poor old Boss! You're gittin' old, jes' 's I be. 'Twon't be no kind of a place round this house 'thout Boss." He had nuzzled his head under her hand when she had spoken thus, but he didn't understand.

How pleasant this bright day was, with its sunny, gentle east wind—a wind that brought sweet, salt smells from the ocean.

The child sniffed the bracing odor and stretched out her hands, smiling happily.

To be sure, she could not walk, but granny often wheeled her to the break-water, where she could see the moss gathered.

It was a low course of tides, and now the water had gone far out, so that one could get to one of the ledges where the moss grew.

Granny had no boat as most of the mossers had—there were some boats now farther along, and little Molly could see the men put their long-handled rakes down and draw them up full. She knew that those men made more money than her grandmother, but then she didn't know much about money. Some of the neighbors often said that they themselves could not afford to keep a dog. When they said this granny shut her lips tight, and the first chance she had she would stroke the dog's head.