



KICSI - - - The Story of a Puli



by Hayes Blake Hoyt



CH. FRUSKA, Swiss Puli bitch.

THIS IS a story that escaped from the Iron Curtain, and because the participants are free and happy, we won't give their names. Dr. X was associated with a hospital in Hungary and part of his duties was to check the health of the employees. He told me:

"On the hospital grounds we had a herd of 25 or 30 sows guarded by one man and his Puli. One day when I stopped there, one of the sows wandered off. The man said to his dog: 'Look, that (here he mentioned a name) is going off again. Get her back!' The Puli did it. It surprised me and I asked the man if the dog knew all the pigs by name. He said 'Yes', and invited me to pick out any one, and he would get his dog to drive that particular sow to us. For about 20 minutes the dog drove to us the ones picked by me, after his master indicated them by name only.

"The faithfulness of the Pulik is proverbial in Hungary. I heard many mothers, among them my own, telling their children when they stuck too close to them, or hindered them in their work, 'Say, you stick to me like a Puli!'"

Therefore Doctor X did not wonder at the devotion between the farm laborer and his Puli, nor the fact that the man claimed he had not taught her—"She just listens to what I say; she can understand me as I can understand her."

Soon a dark cloud settled over the hospital—even the most impersonal of doctors and the most devoted of nurses were under suspicion. Could it be that without one spoken word their pity for the beaten, tortured patients could be felt, and construed as criticism of the new Soviet regime? The only safeguard was silence and lack of personal interest, so difficult for those who guard and cherish life.

Just one little beam of light remained, and this was the Puli, Kicsi Munkas (meaning "little worker" and pronounced Ki Ki), owned by the swineherd. Often the sick children watched her, at first shyly and then gladly as Kicsi ran over to them, gave a shaggy paw, and uttered little barks of invitation to be gay. The adults, more frightened than the children, could not resist a smile at these innocent attempts to be normal.

Then, alas, the swineherd forgot to be silent! "Your dog is so pretty and so kind to the children," said a young nurse. "Much kinder than the humans around us now," he answered in a gruff voice.

Two days later he came to the dispensary to see Dr. X. "Doctor," he began, "I'm in trouble! I must go. I do not fear. All that can hurt me would be the death of my Kicsi. She has been wife and children to me, and they will guess this. Do you undertsand?"

Dr. X looked at him, a rugged man in dirty clothes with a dark, noble face which did not match his simple speech, and the dog: gray, small, shaggy, with the most glowing, intelligent eyes, now fixed unmoving on her master's face.

"But, Eugene, what can I do? I hope—no, I cannot tell you. How can I keep Kicsi? You know our regulations!"

"Help me, Doctor," said Eugene, "And you will not regret it."

Then while Dr. X stood undecided, he bent and whispered to the dog. "Goodbye, Kicsi Munkas; from now on you belong to this man. Serve him, be faithful, be—be

loving. Now—stay!" His voice broke, he turned abruptly, and left the office.

There sat the little Puli, ears cocked, nose quivering; her eyes followed Eugene through the door, and then she turned and looked at Dr. X. Those gentle, heartbroken eyes met his without flinching; slowly she got up, walked over to him, and laid her head against his knee. What could be do—that shaggy little creature, so faithful that she accepted him completely on another human's order?

Some day we will tell you of their adventures together, their escape to America, but for now only two episodes may be told.

Dr. X found his little companion, as he put it, "a Hungarian Rhapsody," with all the gaiety and warmth, humor and high intelligence of her country—and something else. He told me:

"Proudly each morning, even our first, without being asked she has never failed to fetch my slippers to my bed. She was forever on guard, and yet if I said, 'Keep quiet!' she would rouse me if necessary by a gentle tug instead of even a low growl. She learned not to bark, and also when to bark. In fact, I could not have escaped without her, her vigilance protected the carelessness which comes from fatigue, and her gaiety kept me from despair.

"Then one morning she seemed restless, ill at ease. She would not eat, and shuddered as if with a chill, yet her temperature was normal.

"'What is the matter?' I asked, and only her eyes, anxious and pleading were my answer. She looked just as she did that day in my office when Eugene left her.

"All that day she was wretched, and that night instead of lying by my cot, she wanted to climb in with me. I felt through her an extra added sense of danger and desolation though God knows I thought I could feel no more! I got impatient—"Get down, Kicsi, nothing is wrong!" I spoke sharply and she subsided with a pitiful heavy sigh by my bed.

"The next day she tried to apologize for her malaise. She made little efforts to play, and she wanted greatly to have me pet her. I did, and I wrote all this down in my diary.

"Two weeks later, I ran into a friend from the hospital, and he was attracted by Kicsi. 'So good of you to take her,' he said. 'You know her poor owner was shot with others on Wednesday morning two weeks ago!'

"I looked at my diary. Kicsi had known! How stupid we humans are who must always have words to communicate!"

Well, now they are both in America, and Kicsi is part owner of a mistress and two little boys. Like the latter, she loves ice cream. They go to the Dairy Queen together, and Kicsi sits in line, and when she gets to the counter she puts her paws on it, and barks.

One day a little girl neighbor of theirs put a purse over Kicsi's shoulder and said, "This is your pocketbook—for ice cream. You don't have to ask Billy and Joe any more for money!"

"Well," continued Dr. X, "believe it or not, Kicsi would not let us take it off until late that afternoon. It was very heavy, and the strap was too long, but it had to stay around her neck! Since then I've shortened the strap, and she carries it as proud as a peacock. Seems incredible, but it's true!"

"Did she know any English when she left Europe?" I asked.

"No, and now as you can see, she understands too much!" laughed the doctor.

I looked down at Kicsi, the grey, noble little dog—her beautiful eyes glowed through their fringes at me! I patted her. She gave me an amiable little lick.

"You don't need to learn a language, Kicsi, you understand the human heart! And Dr. X, I'm so glad you have her, and she has you and your family!"

"Yes," Dr. X replied, "For me it was a great gift, but for Eugene, perhaps it will be an opportunity to send a message from all the people who cannot say with words what they feel.

Once again I patted Kicsi, shaggy, shining symbol of the brave spirit and loving faith there still is everywhere in the world.

Their Own Language

by Rudy Robinson

IN HER mysterious ways of making all living things equal, through the law of compensation, nature having left the dog devoid of speech, has endowed him with a crystal ball.

In Tokyo, on the night before the disastrous earthquake of 1923, dogs could be heard howling all over the city. Their commotion was so alarming that police were dispatched in squads throughout the entire city in an effort to subdue the horrible canine uproar. The next day the city was levelled by one of the worst earthquakes in all recorded history.

In 1940, at the St. Bernard Monastery in the Swiss Alps, famed for the dogs which bear its name, not one of the some 60 dogs housed there could be induced to leave their sleeping quarters and go out for their daily exercise period. The mystified monks tried every means at their command to coax the trembling animals outside the building, but to no avail. Within a few hours that entire section of the mountain was hit by a devastating avalanche.

In sober contemplation of the above, indeed I would give several dollars if just one of my dogs could talk! Especially before an election.