



Milk Teeth: A Memoir of a Woman and Her Dog

Professor Robbie Pfeufer Kahn

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Dogs are the most popular pet in the United States and a beloved family member to many. As with a human baby, a puppy's innocent "wild" behavior can provoke unkind treatment. The source of this unfortunate but common reaction often lies in the past—the family history of the caretaker.

Written as a year-long journal, *Milk Teeth* chronicles sociologist Robbie Pfeufer Kahn's struggle to achieve a loving relationship with her black Labrador puppy, Laska. Mirthful, mischievous, intelligent, and strong-willed, Laska challenges her owner's attempts at leadership and affection. The puppy refuses pats, jumps up, and mouths with needle-sharp teeth. To her dismay, Kahn reacts with fear and anger, sometimes treating Laska roughly. Strangely, these encounters produce flashbacks from Kahn's diminished childhood and—with the help of dog trainers, psychotherapy, and literature and theory from a variety of disciplines—light the way toward understanding her responses to the puppy. In time, Laska's sharp white teeth no longer serve as a metaphor for her character and she matures into a spirited, friendly dog. Kahn even reconciles with her parents from whom she has been estranged. Using her teaching, friendships, spiritual community, the natural world, and her grown son to keep herself rooted in the present, Kahn is able to explore her past.

Poignant, raw, and at times humorous, Kahn's narrative invites readers to become aware of unconscious cruelty and its sources, to cultivate kindness, and to apply these insights not only to themselves and other humans, but also to the animals who share our lives.

- Presents the darker side of the human/animal bond
- Speaks from both the victim and perpetrator perspectives
- Demonstrates the importance of social support during psychological crisis
- Includes journal entries

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