

City Dogs Outtakes

By Glenda Goertzen

When writing a book, authors often put more story into it than is strictly necessary. Other times we change our minds about the direction the plot is taking, and have to rewrite sections we've already written. This results in large chunks of story that must be taken out of the book.

*The following two excerpts were removed from the final draft of **City Dogs**, and I would love to share them with my readers. Enjoy!*

The School

This section was originally included in Chapter 5, where Pierre, Dare and several other small dogs have escaped the dog thieves and are searching the city for the animal shelter. I had worked out a complicated plot involving a stay at the animal shelter and an escape from Pierre's former owners. However it seemed to be slowing down the story, so in the final draft I decided not to allow Pierre and Dare to be captured, but sent them directly into a blizzard via dog sled.

Pierre sighed. "Forget the animal shelter. Let's just find some warm place to rest for a while."

"Where?" the dogs demanded.

Pierre was so cold he could hardly think. His ears were ringing with the cold. No, it wasn't the cold, it was a bell!

"A kennel for human pups!" he said. "Come on, everyone. We're going to school."

The children had just been released from the school for a brief stretch of exercise. Most were sledding down a hill in the middle of the yard or kicking a black and white ball around in the snow.

"We must be very gentle," Pierre said. "They'll be frightened by the sight of so many dogs. All right, here's what we'll do—"

A vigorous kick smashed the ball against the school yard fence, scaring the dogs half to death. The children saw the dogs and stampeded toward them. Most of the dogs fled in terror, and Pierre never saw them again. Only Beth's little dogs remained, and they only stayed because they were too tired to run.

Pierre sprang into action. He danced circles on his hind legs. He somersaulted through the air. He tossed bits of snow in the air and caught them. He hopped over the other dogs as if they

were hurdles in an agility trial.

“Show off,” Dare said as he bounced over her.

His performance earned the dogs an invitation into the school yard. They spent the next few minutes playing ball and sledding down the hill with the children. Dare remained on the sidelines, content to be cuddled and kissed by the youngest ones.

The bell rang again.

“Stick close to the children,” Pierre advised as they followed the little humans back to the brick building.

“You don’t suppose they’ll let us in, do you?” Dare said.

The children did let them in, but in a way that made it obvious they were committing some sort of crime. Looking around to make sure no adults were nearby, they whisked the dogs into the building and then into a large room where thousands of books lined hundreds of shelves. After making sure it was empty of humans, they dashed over to a small, dark room full of papers and pencils and other supplies. They shoved the dogs inside, closed the door and hurried away, their footsteps fading into silence.

“Great idea, poodle!” the cocker spaniel snapped. “We’re prisoners again.”

“They probably just want to hide us until they go out again,” Dare yawned, unconcerned with their captivity. She lay down and took a nap. The other dogs, exhausted by the long journey through the city, followed her example.

Pierre snapped awake as the door creaked open. A man came into the room and rummaged through the shelves, gathering red and green paper.

While the man had his back to the door, the dogs crept through it and into the large room with the books. By the time he came out of the storage room, the dogs had found hiding places in the empty spaces of the lower bookshelves. When the man had gone, they went to the entrance of the book room. Ahead of them stretched a long, empty hallway with a polished tile floor.

“We should have turned ourselves in to him,” Pierre said. “I’ll bet he’d send us to the animal shelter.”

“First let’s explore,” Dare said. “We might never get another chance to see the inside of a school.”

Pierre moved carefully into the hall. He nearly leaped out of his fur when the clickety-click of hundreds of toenails erupted behind him. They sounded like a hailstorm. At this rate they

would be captured before they reached the end of the hall.

But all the humans seemed to have disappeared. There was no one to capture them.

“Where are the kennels?” Pierre wondered.

“What kennels?” the dachshund asked.

“Shouldn’t the little humans be in kennels?” He couldn’t imagine the adults would allow those wild creatures to run loose indoors.

“Here’s a sort of kennel.” Dare paused at an open door. Inside the room children sat at rows of small desks. At the front of the room an adult made marks on the wall with a little white stick. He attached great importance to these white marks, judging by the way he spoke and waved his hands at the wall. The children didn’t seem to share his enthusiasm.

“What’s that awful sound?” Pierre followed a wailing, banging noise to a room down the hall. The noise ended as Pierre arrived. By laying his head against the floor he could see beneath the closed door. He was delighted to see a room full of children holding musical instruments. Pierre had once watched a band of musicians perform in the Silvertree Park. He waited to hear those beautiful sounds repeated, but when these young musicians picked up their instruments and played, it sounded like a train wreck. The dogs howled. Some of the children stopped playing and examined their instruments suspiciously.

“Listen!” Dare said.

“No!” the dogs howled.

“No, not the music—I hear the sound of a bouncing ball. Come on!”

In an enormous room at the far end of the hall, children were throwing an orange ball into a tall basket. The room echoed with excited yelps, the squeak of shoes and the whap of the ball hitting the shiny floor.

“Let’s join them,” Pierre said. He was anxious to get caught before the dogs got into any trouble.

“Not just yet. I smell food,” Dare said, and went down another hallway. Pierre growled in exasperation.

The other dogs caught up to her in a room full of tables with a kitchen at the far end. A woman in a white uniform stirred a pot of soup while another flipped squares of crunchy golden fish on a wide stove.

Dare licked her muzzle and stared at the fish the way Mouse would stare at a particularly

juicy beetle.

“Get me some of that, will you Pierre?”

“Are you crazy? I can’t just—oh, all right,” he said quickly, as Dare growled at him. Lately Dare had gotten a little scary about food.

“Get some for the rest of us, too,” the dogs begged. None of them had eaten since Skid fed them yesterday morning.

Pierre went over to the kitchen entrance. Everything in the kitchen—fridge, stove, counters, cupboards and even some of the walls—was gleaming metal. One of the women busied herself with deep metal trays full of food while the other scooped the fish off the stove and into another tray.

He went back to the other dogs. “We need to get them out of the kitchen.”

A wheeled rack holding trays stood against one wall. The dogs wrestled with it and tipped it over. It fell to the floor with a tremendous crash. The plastic trays slid across the floor.

The two women came running. When they saw the mess they ran to the hallway, no doubt thinking some child had pulled a prank. The dogs, who had been hiding under a long metal shelf where the children must pick up their food, slipped into the kitchen.

*There follows a scene where Pierre accidentally sets the kitchen on fire. I removed it because I've used it in the third Prairie Dogs novel, **Miracle Dogs**.*

“The humans are coming!” the papillion said.

The dogs scrambled for hiding places—pots, pans, mixing bowls, salad bowls (one was full of salad, but that didn’t stop the bichon from burrowing into it). Dare hid in a mop bucket and Pierre climbed into a container of dishwashing powder that turned his black fur white.

The women ran into the kitchen. Pierre expected them to scream in terror, but they remained pretty calm, much calmer than Pierre. One woman turned off the stove while the other grabbed a red tank with a hose attached to it. She used the hose to spray foamy white stuff over the fire until it went out. She scolded the other woman as she wiped up the spilled oil, no doubt for putting the oil too close to the stove.

The soapy smell of the dishwashing powder tickled Pierre’s nose. He was going to sneeze. He licked his nose frantically, but it was no use. He gave a tremendous sneeze, blowing a

cloud of powder out of the bucket.

Just as he sneezed, a terrible noise split the air. It was like the world's loudest alarm clock. The dogs whined and tried to cover their ears. The two women hustled out the kitchen. The dogs could hear hundreds of pairs of feet marching down the hall and hundreds of excited young voices. Everyone was evacuating the school. Within minutes the building was empty. The alarm finally stopped.

"Now that's what I call a clever dog!" the Maltese yipped.

"Starting a fire so we'd get the whole school to ourselves!" The cocker spaniel looked at him with great admiration. "We're sorry we ever doubted you."

"Hurry up with the food, poodle," the Boston terrier said briskly. "Those humans won't be gone forever."

Pierre jumped onto the counter and nosed aside the lids of the food trays. He tossed down squares of fish and anything else that looked tasty. The little dogs scrambled around snapping it up. One of the pugs had jumped into a mixing bowl full of dough and was stuck, so had to beg his twin to bring him some fish.

Pierre watched with pride as the dogs ate and ate. Dare was right, they didn't need humans! With Pierre and Dare to look after them, the little dogs would do just fine.

"We'd better go now," he said, but the dogs continued to eat.

"Don't overeat," Dare warned, but the dogs ignored her.

When the firefighters arrived, they found Pierre and Dare surrounded by fifteen round-bellied little dogs stretched out on the kitchen floor, too stuffed to move.

The Rescue

*In the first draft of **City Dogs**, instead of leaving the TV station to look for food, Pierre led a rescue party of dogs and farm animals to free several kidnapped dogs still held captive by the dog thieves, Beth and Skid. My editor reminded me that the title of the book was **City Dogs**, not **Farm Dogs**, so I exchanged the rescue mission for a raid on a dog food factory in the city. The following is the original version of that chapter.*

The dogs entered the pasture and went up to the cows. The cows quickly moved away. Telling the other dogs to stay where they were, Mew followed the cows and spoke to them. They stopped and gazed at her with curious gentle eyes. When she finished speaking the cows put their

heads together and held a brief meeting. Pierre resisted the urge to jump up and nip their swishing tails.

Finally the cows came back to the dogs.

“We think what you’re doing is very brave and we want to help,” the lead cow announced.

Pierre sighed with relief. “That’s very kind of you—uh, what’s your name?”

“The farmer calls me Betsy, but I prefer to be called...Winghoof.”

The cows pushed down the barbed wire fence and escaped the pasture. Pierre wondered why more cows didn’t make a break for freedom if it was that easy.

As they passed close to the barn a horse put her head over the fence to watch them.

“Where are you going?” she asked.

“To town,” Winghoof said. “We have an errand to run.”

The dogs tried to lead the cows, but the cows, who were rather absentminded, nearly trampled them. The dogs moved behind the cows and barked instructions at them, but the cows tended to scatter in all directions at the sound of a bark.

“Where’s a border collie when you need one?” Pierre groaned.

A large, shaggy leg slammed into the snow next to Ratter, nearly crushing his foot. He yelped in shock.

“Sorry!” said the horse. “I didn’t see you down there—a white dog against the white snow. May I tag along?”

“Sure,” Pierre said, looking up at the towering creature. “But walk in front of us, if you don’t mind.”

“I have a better idea. Why don’t you ride me? You’ll make much better time.”

The mare folded her legs and lay down in the wet snow. The dogs looked at each other, gulped, and climbed onto her shaggy back. She lunged to her feet, nearly throwing the dogs off, and lumbered toward the city. Pierre struggled to keep his balance.

“This is just like riding the buffalo!” Mew said. “Remember, Pierre? We rode a buffalo on Calloway’s farm when I was just a pup. You thought it was a woolly cow. Remember?”

“I remember,” Pierre said. “I didn’t like it then and I don’t like it now! Mouse, don’t you dare faint. It’s a long way to the ground.”

“Actually, this is kind of fun!” Mouse climbed the mare’s thick mane and crouched

between her ears, where he had a better view.

With the horse to lead the way, the cows stopped scattering and followed along in an orderly fashion. Mew sat on the mare's rump and talked to the cows about her puppyhood days on the farm.

"Humans come from all over the world to stay at our farm and help with the chores," one of the cows said. "They think it's a real treat to work on an honest to goodness farm."

"We're all organic, you know," Winghoof boasted. "Our humans don't use any of those nasty chemicals on our grain and they don't give us medicines we don't need. You won't find better milk than ours."

"I stole a beef steak from a restaurant once," Ratter said. "It was delicious. I bet it was organic."

"Never talk about eating farm animals in front of them," Mew scolded him. "That's a rule."

"I hope you don't mind, but I opened a few gates," the mare said as they approached the highway that led to the city. "The others were feeling left out."

"The others?" Pierre looked over his shoulder. Behind the cows came a convoy of pigs, sheep and goats with chickens and turkeys perched on their backs.

"Oh no!" he cried.

"Isn't that what you wanted?" Mew said. "A lot of animals?"

"All I wanted was a few cows, not a circus!"

The farm animals weren't their only followers. Vehicles slowed down and trailed after them as they reached the city. Thankfully, no one tried to stop them or capture them. Pierre had no idea what the animals would have done if anyone had tried to interfere.

"There's Beth's store," Pierre said.

By the time they reached the parking lot, a huge crowd of curious humans was following them. The mare parked herself next to a small car with Beth's scent on it. The cows and the other animals milled around the parking lot. The humans formed a noisy ring around them. Pierre saw Beth and Skid appear at the front window of the store. Their mouths dropped open in shock. Pierre wagged his tail, which must have tickled the mare's back, for she flicked her own tail at Pierre to make him stop. Mew batted at the long tail with her paws and nearly fell off.

"What are we waiting for?" Winghoof asked.

“For humans with cameras. They’ll go into the store to ask Beth what’s happening, and then we can sneak inside and rescue the dogs.” Pierre was proud of himself. For once one of his plans was proceeding smoothly.

“Why wait?” Winghoof said. She ambled over to Beth’s car and called the other cows to her. They put their heads and shoulders against it and began to shove the small vehicle across the icy parking lot.

“What are you doing?” Pierre asked, alarmed.

“Getting you inside,” Winghoof said.

The herd picked up speed as they shoved the car closer to the store. Pierre realized what they were doing, and cried, “No, stop!”

Too late. With a final burst of speed, the cows propelled the little car right through the plate glass window.

“Well, what are you waiting for?” Winghoof said as the dogs stared in shock. “In you go!”

The mare walked over to Beth’s car and shook herself, throwing the dogs onto the car’s roof. They slid down the windshield and skidded off the hood, landing on their feet inside the store. Beth and Skid had hidden behind the counter and were shouting hysterically. The farm animals followed the dogs through the broken window and wandered among the shelves, helping themselves to packages of food. The dogs ran for the basement stairs, wondering if the floor would hold the weight of all those animals, or if it would come crashing down on their heads before they could free the imprisoned dogs in the basement.

Ratter set to work opening the doors to the cages that held the stolen dogs. Pierre followed his example. When the last door had been sprung he led the dogs up the stairs. Several humans were trying to drive the stubborn cows out of the store. Beth’s little dogs took one look at the milling herd and scrambled back down the stairs, running headfirst into those still on their way up. They all tumbled into a tangled heap at the bottom of the stairs.

“It’s all right!” Pierre said. “They’re with me. They won’t hurt you.”

By the time Pierre convinced the dogs to climb the stairs again, the store was empty. The humans had finally convinced the animals to leave. Beth and Skid were gone, and someone had backed Beth’s car out of the window. The dogs picked their way through the rubble of the ruined store and looked out the broken window.

“Oh,” Pierre said weakly.

The cattle raid had attracted a good deal more attention than they had bargained for. TV humans, a fire truck, an ambulance and several police cars surrounded the parking lot, which was packed with farm animals. The crowd had reached an immense size.

“Wow,” the French bulldog said. “Did all these people come just to rescue us?”

“Well, we *are* very valuable,” Cupcake said.

“You!”

The dogs jumped back. Beth had suddenly appeared in the window.

“I knew you were trouble the moment Skid brought you in here!” Beth advanced on Pierre. “I’m going to wring your curly little neck!”

“Get the dogs outside!” he told his friends. “I’ll distract her!”

Beth grinned as she closed in on Pierre, probably thinking he would be an easy catch.

The former agility champion proved her wrong.

He raced around the store with the angry human puffing after him. Beth cursed and smashed into things as he evaded her clutching hands. He sprang onto a stack of Crunchy Nibbles bags. Beth lunged across the bags, grabbing at him. He skipped over her head, scrambled down her wide back and to the floor, giving her a bite on the rump in passing. As Beth screeched and struggled upright she knocked one of the bags to the floor. It exploded in a shower of Crunchy Nibbles. When she tried to run after Pierre, she slipped on the hard little nuggets and crashed to the floor, dragging a rack of squeaky toys down with her. He could hear her squeaking madly as she struggled to her feet.

Skid appeared unexpectedly in front of him. Pierre made a wrong turn and found himself trapped in a back room. It was full of TVs and other plug-into-the wall things.

“I’ve got you now, poodle,” Beth gloated as she and Skid advanced on him.

“Give that back, you little—What’s going on here?”

Beth flinched at the stern voice behind her. A tall man in a uniform loomed in the doorway. Mew and Mouse stood at his feet. Mew’s head hung low with the weight of a handgun in her mouth. She must have stolen it from the man behind her. She barked at Beth, and everyone gasped and ducked.

The man carefully took the gun from Mew and repeated his question.

Beth recovered quickly. “Nothing’s going on, officer. I’m the owner of this store.”

The officer looked around. “Can you explain how you came by this collection of electronics?”

Skid shuffled his feet. “Uh—”

“And where did you get all these little dogs?” he said. “The SPCA warned us to look for a thief who steals small dogs.”

Beth gulped. “Well—”

“I think you two had better come with me and answer a few questions,” the man said.

“Skid did it!” Beth cried as the man led her and Skid outside. “He stole all that stuff. I didn’t even know it was there!”

“What?” an outraged Skid cried. “You paid me to steal that stuff! And the dogs!”

“This is all that black poodle’s fault!” Beth raved. “He’s no ordinary dog, he’s a devil! I know about these things, I’ve read *Faust!*”

The dogs were waiting for Pierre around the corner of the building. Sprout had jumped into the open door of a police car to escape the cold. When the officer went to put Beth and Skid in the back of the car, the hairless pink dog in the driver’s seat gave him a terrible scare.