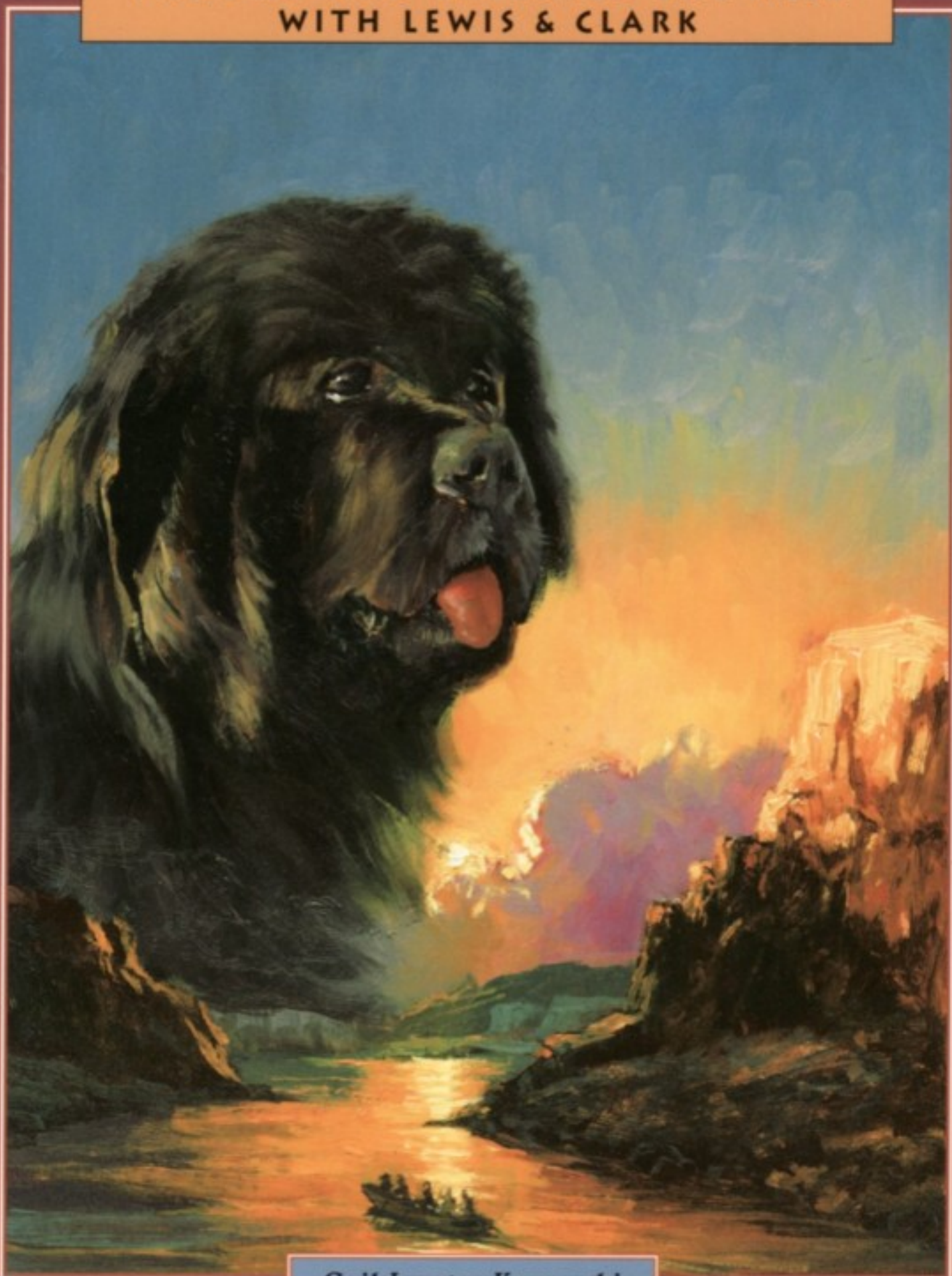


SEAMAN

THE DOG WHO EXPLORED THE WEST
WITH LEWIS & CLARK



Gail Langer Karwoski

CHAPTER ONE



A DUCK, A DOG, AND A DEAL

Pittsburgh—August, 1803

The huge black dog trotted cheerfully beside his owner. His long fur ruffled in the summer breeze blowing off the river. He held his head high to sniff the air. A hunter was standing on the riverbank ahead, just at the point where two rivers flowed together to form the Ohio River. The hunter's smell was unfamiliar—starched cotton shirt, new leather boots. The dog watched the stranger closely.

As soon as his owner stopped walking, the dog sat down. "Good job," his owner said, smiling. "When I stop walking, you sit." He stroked the dog's fur. "Nobody has to teach you manners, do they? They come natural to you."

The dog studied his owner's face, waiting for a command. But his owner was looking at the hunter on the riverbank. The dog followed his owner's gaze. The hunter raised his long rifle and aimed at a flock of ducks on the water.

Crack! The hunter fired and the ducks squawked and flew in a panic downriver. One duck floated limp on the water.

The dog's owner chuckled. "Let's have a little fun with that city fellow," he said as he slipped the rope off the dog's collar. "Get it!" he said.

Instantly, the dog bounded toward the water. He leaped into the river and swam to the limp duck. Picking up the duck in his mouth, the dog wheeled around and swam back toward the shore.

Grinning, his owner admired the dog's performance. The dog's spread forepaws stroked through the water like paddles. This dog was a natural swimmer. He moved with the grace of a finned creature.

When the dog climbed onto the riverbank, he shook off and trotted back, duck in mouth. Sitting in front of his owner, he waited for him to take the duck.

The hunter watched, astonished. He strode over to the dog's owner, his cheeks red with anger. "What is the meaning of this, sir?" he demanded. "Why did you send your dog to snatch the duck I just shot?"

The dog's owner put his hands on his hips and laughed. Of course, he never intended to keep the duck. He was just having himself a little joke, that's all. But that hunter looked plenty angry! It was a good thing his fancy rifle could only shoot one slug at a time before it had to be reloaded.

"Thought we'd save you a dunk in the river to get your bird!" he chuckled. He looked at his dog and said, "Give the man his duck."

The dog hesitated.

"That's right," the man said, pointing at the hunter. "Give. To him."

Obediently, the dog walked over, sat in front of the hunter, and waited for the duck to be taken from his mouth.

The hunter hesitated, suspicious. This dog's huge mound of a head was as high as a man's hip. Those powerful jaws could deliver a nasty bite.

"My name's Hanson. James Hanson," said the dog's owner, holding out his hand to introduce himself. "Ain't you the fellow who's come from Philadelphia to pick up a keelboat?"

The hunter's face relaxed, and he shook Hanson's hand. "I'm Meriwether Lewis. And yes, I've come to pick up the keelboat I

ordered from the shipyard here in Pittsburgh." Lewis shook his head and grinned. "I have to admit you had me going there for a minute, Mr. Hanson."

Lewis reached for the duck, and the dog gently released it. Turning it over, Lewis examined its feathers. "Seems your dog has a very soft mouth. Except for the spot where my slug entered, the duck isn't damaged at all. I commend you for your skill as a trainer, Mr. Hanson."

Hanson chuckled. "Aye, he has a soft mouth, that's for sure." He patted the dog. "But I can't take much credit for his training. He watched his mama work, that's how he learned. He took to the water right away, when he was still a fuzzy little pup, and he started retrieving by himself. 'Course I did train his mama. Always say she's the finest working dog on the Ohio River."

Lewis held out his hand to let the dog smell him. The dog sniffed the hunter's fingers, and he recognized the familiar scents of gunpowder and river water.

Lewis gently stroked the dog's head. The fur was dense and soft as velvet. "He's a handsome animal, Mr. Hanson. Is he a Newfoundland?"

"He's a Newfoundland, all right. Best dog a man can have on the water!" Hanson declared proudly.

Brushing his sandy hair from his eyes, Lewis studied the dog. Standing stiffly, with his legs ever so slightly bowed, Lewis held his chin in his hand. The way he stood, so straight, reminded Hanson of a soldier.

Finally, Lewis spoke. "Is this a young dog, Mr. Hanson?"

"He's about a year old," Hanson answered. "But if you're asking if this dog's for sale, I'm afraid I can't oblige you. He's been promised to a fellow who's having a ship built here in Pittsburgh. A seagoing ship!" Hanson smiled. "I figure a dog that works this good on the river deserves the chance to work a seagoing ship."

The dog looked back and forth at the men's faces as they talked. He panted quietly, the tip of his pink tongue sticking out.



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ISBN 13: 978-1-56145-190-6
 ISBN 10: 1-56145-190-8



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