

WORD OF DOG

MEGAN ANDERSON



FREMANTLE PRESS

For all the thinking dogs



Introduction

In more than two decades as a journalist, I've learned a couple of things about how to get the best from an interview: pose good questions, then shut up and listen.

Once they're on a roll, people can be refreshingly candid about life and how they feel about it. They'll reveal their quirks and foibles, the worries that keep them up at night, their deepest passions, the choices they regret, the hopes they hold onto, the most embarrassing things in their fridge. When it's authentic and unscripted, it's gold.

The journalistic style in this book is an homage to the fading art of listening and the power of the direct quote. Everyone has something to say. Sometimes it's deep, often it's trivial, occasionally it's awkward. The snatches of dialogue in the book are mostly celebrations of the ordinary: an unsanitised take on what it is to be alive.

I owe thanks to the unsuspecting friends (and a few eavesdropped-upon strangers) from whom I filched one-liners or seeds of ideas for this work. I'd never have dreamed up a bottle of red and a basket of ironing on my own. Probably not patchouli-phobic shop assistants, either.

And why dogs? When I was making a career shift into art land, they struck me as a great choice to bring along for the ride: layered enough to be stimulating company, genuine enough to keep things real, and playful enough to make this not feel like work at all.

They're certainly too transparent to fake a nonchalant pose, so they're seldom seen sitting nicely in my artwork. More often they're captured mid-apology, or mid-question, or shooting a withering glance sideways, or tripping over their ears — whatever is happening for them in the moment. They're all about the truth.

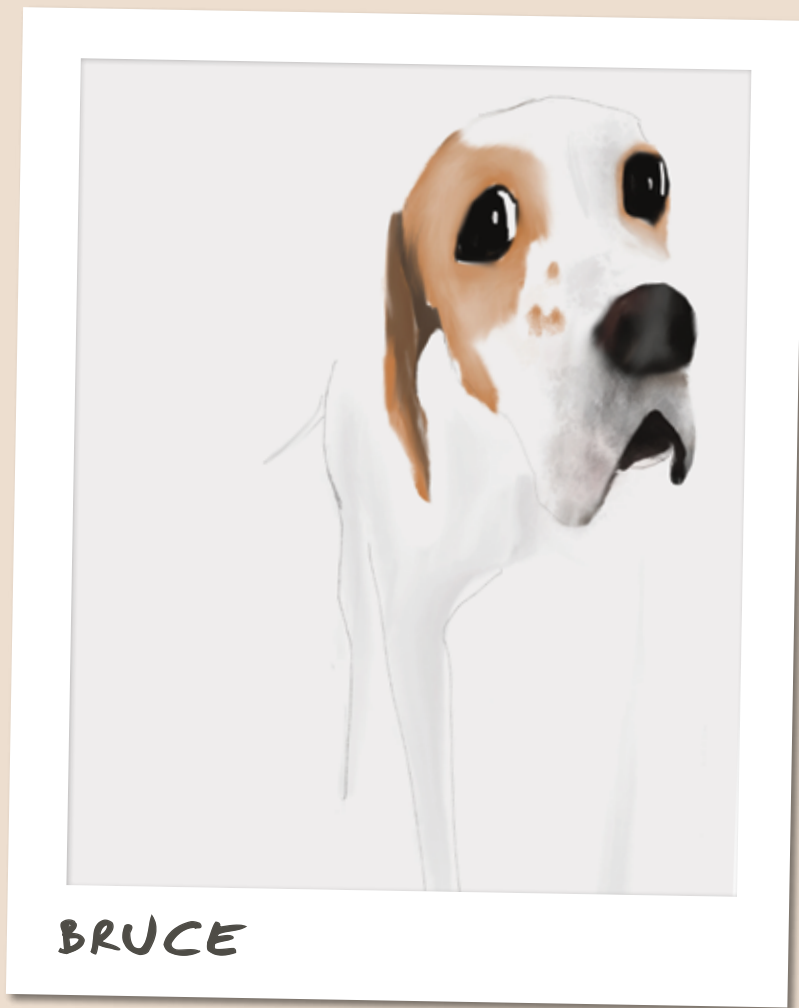
In this book, dogs play the part of whimsical, disarming, slightly absurd bearers of the human condition. They really are the best people.

“ I took up Uber driving when I lost my job on the mine. I used to drive a Cat 793F haul truck, with wheels the size of houses. I drive a second-hand Pulsar now. I work at night mostly, so my passengers are well lubricated a lot of the time. They can be entertaining, but just as often they pass out in the back. When that happens I sometimes take a detour around the river to gawp at the penthouses and watch the lights twinkling. I crank up the classical music and pretend I'm a Russian oligarch in an Aston Martin DB5. The night sky really excites my imagination. ”





“ I used to get my gear off at the back beaches a bit. I really got a taste for it in the summer of '09 when I was in peak shape and had discovered spray tans. I'm a fully-fledged nudist now. The core crew from the beach formed an incorporated body to give the whole thing some legitimacy, and we do a lot of activities together. Lawn bowls is one of my favourites: it's so nice to feel the soft grass under your feet. We sit around wearing smiles and nothing else — except sunscreen, obviously. It's really liberating. There's a bit of etiquette around where to plant your eyes, but nobody is very uptight about it. I'm not ripped anymore, but I don't care because it's not about posing anyway. It's about letting go of all your caked-on anxieties and inhibitions. I've had some of the most real and refreshing conversations of my life while in the nuddy. I've also learned a lot about finances — I'm the treasurer. ”



BRUCE

RESTING HEART RATE: 88 bpm

FOND OF: Belting out a bit of Farnsey
in the shower

BOTHERED BY: Close talkers

ONE GREAT WORD: Squeegee

SPARKLING OR STILL: Tap water is fine



“Some say everything happens for a reason, but I think everything happens for no reason at all. Life is a series of random collisions of atoms and opinions and cyclists and coffee and chance meetings and close calls and break-ups and black cats and stray feathers and great pizza and disappointing handshakes, among other things. None of it has anything to do with anything. That's my world view.”