



One Dog at a Time: Saving the Strays of Helmand - An Inspiring True Story

Pen Farthing

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In a remote outpost of Now Zad, in the Helmand Province of Afghanistan, Pen Farthing and his troop of young Royal Marines survive frequent engagements with the Taliban and forge links with the local community. Pen's tour of duty will change his life forever, but for entirely unexpected reasons ...

Appalled by the horrors of a local dog fight, he intervenes to free the victims. One of these dogs finds his way into the Marine compound - and into Pen's heart. Soon other strays are being drawn to the sanctuary provided by Pen's makeshift pound, including one young mum who crawls under the compound fence carrying her newborn pups to safety.

But as his tour of duty draws to an end, Pen cannot leave the dogs of Now Zad to their own fates. he begins hatching plans to help them escape to a better life.

This is Pen's gripping account of his time in Now Zad, the friends he made there and the remarkable journey they - and he - undertook. Above all, it is the story of one man's courage and humanity and his fight to make a difference in the most hostile and dangerous environment - one dog at a time.

One Dog at a Time: Saving the Strays of Helmand - An Inspiring True Story Details

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From Reader Review One Dog at a Time: Saving the Strays of Helmand - An Inspiring True Story for online ebook

Lisa says

I went into this naively thinking it would be an uplifting story about rescuing dogs.

I am an idiot. An idiot who cried a lot.

To be clear, it was totally worth reading. It's almost refreshing to read a story about rescuing dogs where they don't all get a happy ending because as much as it fucking sucks, that's how it works in the real world.

I hate the real world. :(

Kath says

This man is a hero in the true sense of the word. He sacrifices his own comfort and material assets in order to make the world a better place for both animals and people.

The book is written without a hint of ego and is interesting and emotional because of his description of life as a soldier in Afghanistan as well as his attempts to improve relations and conditions there. I salute him.

Christopher Rex says

The story gets 5-stars, the writing gets 3-stars. If there is anything worth saving in Afghanistan, it is the dogs. The British Marine who authored this book tries to do just that. Amidst the boredom, chaos and utter uselessness of our mission in Afghanistan he becomes an unlikely hero to abused, mistreated and suffering stray dogs who randomly wander into his life. He can't save them all, but the dogs seem to give him some purpose for his being there and he soon begins a mission to save at least a few. Saving strays is hard enough in a "normal" country, let alone a war-torn country w/ no real love of animals at all (some things they do are downright pathetic and sadistic, actually). The story is brisk, easy-to-read, uplifting and heartbreakingly sad all at once. We should leave Afghanistan, for sure, but if we are going to stay we should at least try to save something worth saving - the dogs.

As Ghandi once said: "The greatness of a nation and its moral progress can be judged by the way its animals are treated"

If this is true, it doesn't bode well for Afghanistan, but then again, what does?

For more on how you can help: <http://www.nowzad.com/>

M.L. Sparrow says

For more reviews, check out my blog at <http://mlsparrow.wix.com/mlsparrow>

This is a very touching true story and I applaud Pen Farthing for his amazing efforts to save these dogs. As is mentioned in some reviews of this book, the writing style is very simple but that didn't bother me, I wasn't expecting a work of great poetry when I brought this book. I was expecting an uplifting story about saving dogs, which is what I got, although there were definitely some sad parts in this book and it broke my heart that not every dog got a happy ending. I loved the ending of this book and I'm so glad Nowzad ended up with Pen! I'm looking forward to reading the next book and hearing about all the others dogs the charity the author started helped.

I am planning on grabbing the paperback copy (I read this on i.books), because I believe the paperback versions has pictures in it and I really want to see if the images I have in my head of the dogs are correct!

Eva Leger says

I've been pondering what makes a hero while reading this book. We hear about ball players and rappers and the like being heros. A lot of them do good, I know, but does that make them a hero? In my eyes it doesn't. I want my daughter to look up to *Pen Farthing*. I want him, and others like him, to be her heros. It doesn't matter what side of the war you're on, whether you believe troops should be activated or not, aside from the military standpoint totally, Farthing is still a hero in my eyes.

So many men before him, and after him, have walked by stray animals without a care in the world. We sit in our warm homes, going to the frig whenever we want to eat or drink, without ever thinking of those doing without.

Farthing was stationed in Afghanistan, in one of the most dangerous places in the world today, in some of the most horrendous conditions, and he still found it within himself to help these dogs. By helping those dogs he helped the local people, he helped the country, and he's helped the world.

I don't think you can be a dog lover and not cry at points while reading this. I laughed more than a few times as well, it's a beautiful, beautiful story.

I do wish there had been more photos. There are some snapshots included on the inside front and back cover but I found this in the library so the dust jacket was glued to the covers and I only was able to see the one half of each page. I saw almost every dog that was imitatively talked about in the story with the exception of Dushka and Patches I think.

As a true dog lover it was easy to follow along and know just what Farthing's heart was feeling at certain times. I can't imagine being faced with the choice of who to save and who to leave behind. To even think and type the words it pains me. I can't imagine it. I can't imagine some of the feelings he's had to live with... even though he did all he could. Not everything ended happily-ever-after. He must think about RPG and AK every day.

I know I'm not exactly flowing along with this review but I can't help it. I'm going by what I'm thinking and I'm not putting it into any sort of easy order.

Farthing's writing is... I'm not sure what it is. It's not the best and it's not the worst. If you pick this up looking for some of the best writing you've ever read you'll probably be disappointed. At the same time though he writes better than I think most people in his situation (not being an author by trade) would.

The little stories and anecdotes, the telling of how each dog came into his life, it's all just so beautiful. I don't know why we have to have places and people like these in this world. A huge part of me thinks we should remove all the animals and young children (the ones not old enough to be affected by their parents and elders insane thoughts) and just blow the place off the map. It bothers me that Farthing and his fellow soldiers actually had to halt what they were doing to *wait while the Taliban recharged enough to counter another attack.*

Farthing's wife Lisa should also be mentioned because she's just as much a hero as he. Lisa did much on her end of things to help Pen save these dogs. Together they're helping to make this world a better place. Something that so many people wish for but make no move to actually do.

Pen Farthing was wrong about one thing - there are people who would take an Afghan fighting dog. People like me. Nowzad is absolutely beautiful. If you don't know what you're looking at and what to look for he looks frightening. But if you know what to look for you see inside him, you see him smiling, and you see his eyes. There are people out here who will take a chance for dogs like Nowzad. I know that because I'm one of them.

I hope, wherever they are, that RPG and AK, and all of the rest of the animals in that awful place and all of the other places like it, find a way to live a happy life. I wish I had the money Oprah or Britney has. Instead of buying Bentley's and diamonds a lot of good could be done. :(

If anyone out there is wanting to help Pen & Lisa Farthing have started Nowzad Dogs, a charity which does a number of different things. Among other things they're giving help to soldiers who find themselves in the same spot as Farthing did, with a dog, wanting to help, and not getting any help from others. They're aiding the Afghan rescue that helped Lisa and Pen get the dogs out of Now Zad and have goals to open shelters in Afghanistan and Iraq which will sponsor free neutering and spaying of strays, re-homing for the strays, education programs for the children, etc. A lot more important than buying that new book or CD right?

My five year old daughter saves her change and allowance for a farm for when she gets older and she's well on her way believe it or not. But she also takes half of it, each time we cash it in, to donate to a different charity or to help in some way. This is going to be where that money goes now and I'm going to do the same with what I can. People always say "every little bit counts" and it's true. If everyone on GR donated \$5.00 imagine how much Nowzad Dogs would be able to do.

www.nowzaddogs.com

Janit Jones says

This is my new favorite book. I can't count the number of times I hugged it to my chest and whispered "I love you" to it. It's heart breaking but also inspiring. Pen Farthing is an incredible person for everything he has done.

Joanna says

One of those books you know you will be touched by and crying and yet you read it... I know it's not much of a review but I think I am to upset to write anything else now. Wonderful man and his friends with big hearts and compassion, trying to help dogs in almost impossible to provide any help circumstances... The world needs more Farthings!

Julianna says

Reviewed for THC Reviews

"4.5 stars" *One Dog at a Time* is part war story, part dog story that is by turns both heartwarming and heartbreaking. The author was a Royal Marine deployed to a remote village in Afghanistan. He is obviously a dog lover, but he didn't set out to become a caretaker for the strays of Afghanistan. They simply found and befriended him along the way. In many ways, I think that caring for the dogs became something of an escape for Pen (and many other soldiers and marines on the front) from the rigors of fighting. It helps to give them a sense of normalcy and a little companionship in the midst of a war zone.

The resilience of these animals and their intuitive sixth sense about which humans can be trusted is utterly amazing. Nowzad, the first dog Pen rescued had been used as a fighting dog by the first group of Afghan National Police (ANP) who shared their compound. It absolutely broke my heart to learn how the dogs ears and tails are lopped off without anesthetic all for the sake of them fighting for sport. I was astounded by how quickly Nowzad began to warm up to Pen after the abuse he'd suffered and probably never having had much positive contact with humans. When the shelling started, he somehow managed to jump a high fence, looking for Pen. In spite of becoming best buds with Pen, Nowzad could understandably still be somewhat unpredictable around other people. I could really sense Pen's frustration over not having enough time to work with Nowzad to unlearn his fighting training. More than once I thought Nowzad might come to a heartbreaking end, because of his history of fighting and seemingly not being able to trust anyone but Pen. Somehow the author was able to look past all this and see the potential in him and give him a chance at a better life.

The other dogs, twenty-one in all, somehow found Pen. More than once, he was sure his comrades wouldn't believe that he hadn't purposely brought them into the compound. The dogs just seemed to instinctively know that there was someone inside those walls who would help them. The second dog, RPG, followed Pen to his duty post in the wee hours of the morning, running around him in circles, just wanting someone to play with him. Then there was Jena, the pregnant mom who was being used as a breeder by the ANP. Later even more dogs joined the group including Tali, another momma dog with six puppies and AK, a female dog who'd been bitten by a snake. Then there were Dushka and Patches, two dogs who stayed outside the compound but who often accompanied the marines during their patrols. The way Dushka, another fighting dog, followed their cues, moving when they moved and crouching when they crouched was just too cute. It's amazing how these dogs who were essentially wild street dogs with little experience around humans can pick up on these things so easily. It shows what intelligent creatures they really are and that they have emotions too.

Some of the military operations passages moved a little slowly for me, not that the author goes into great detail with these parts but simply because military stuff isn't a primary reading interest for me. However, I was intrigued by the times where they experienced some interactions with the Afghan people. The little children who begged for pens and candy from the marines was equally as heartbreaking as the dog stories. The second group of ANP who came to share their compound were much better than the first. Pen and some of his men were actually able to make friends with them, and even though they still found Pen and "his dogs" to be funny, they helped out with them in more ways than one. It was also interesting to see how the marines spent Christmas day.

I was quite saddened to learn that not all the dogs found happy endings, but as the title suggests, perhaps it's enough to save just one dog at a time. I really admire the author's compassionate heart for the animals and his tenacity in trying to give them a better life. Pen has now started a charity, Nowzad Dogs, to help rescue

more strays from Afghanistan and Iraq, and is also helping his fellow service members to bring home the dogs that they have befriended too. Overall, I really enjoyed *One Dog at a Time* and look forward to reading the sequel, *No Place Like Home* which details the author's efforts to assist more dogs in finding forever homes.

Dan says

What I learned from this book? Well I learned a lot more about the problems facing the people of Afghanistan, a little more about their culture, a lot more about what our troops in Afghanistan face on an almost daily basis, and a great deal about our love for dogs and the lengths we will go to to help them. This book made me smile, it made me angry and it also made me cry.

Laura says

Where oh where was this man's editor? This is such a cool story, but the writing is so painful it was hard to get through. The tone is clearly targeted at a young audience, and yet there's so much military jargon tossed in, and so little overall description, it could still be hard to follow exactly what was happening at times. There's some really interesting insights into the day to day life of a British marine in Afghanistan, along with some particularly sharp cultural contrasts in perception of animals. The ending is harsher than I'd expected with the light voice of the narrator throughout, and I wish the book had spent a more time on the ethics and consequences of the decision to adopt strays on a foreign military base. It's a serious missed opportunity, but the light childish tone did not really lend itself to that kind of discussion.

I did a little Googling and discovered that Nowzad is currently a very active organization supporting animal welfare in war zones, which is pretty cool considering its whimsical beginnings as chronicled here.

Julie says

I put off reading this book as I knew it would take me on an emotional rollercoaster. I have seen the Dog charity Nowzad advertised in Dog magazines asking for help to rescue the dogs in Afganistan, this is the story of how this charity came to be. A British soldier is sent to Fight he leaves his loving wife behind and his 2 dogs, This is also the story of the situation our troops find themselves in, a no win situation, the people of Afganistan need help but are scared to accept foreign help as it will spell sure death from the Taliban. The living conditions the soldiers have to contend with and the comradeship that these men share as they put their lives on the line each day.Pen Farthing comes across a dog being abused by the Afgans, dog fighting is a national sport there and intervenes, he takes the dog (who he later names Nowzad) back to base and has no idea what to do with it, except feed it and show it affection. Soon he has a band of dogs who seem to know they will be safe with him and manage to work their way into the compound, all of which will face certain death as strays on the street. Obviously when he finishes his tour he worried what will happen to the dogs and the race against time starts to find a charity who will help. His wife at home finds a charity in Afganistan but it is 700 miles from the base. He is not allowed to use military transport, the locals are too scared to work for the Foreigners, this is his heart wrenching story of the race against time to save his band of dogs. You would have to be very hard hearted not to shed a tear at this tale, for the comrades , young men who are killed in the constant attacks, the hard lives of the Afgans , who have a life expectency of 43 years only, that

is how hard life is. Whatever your political views, this book is about a remarkable man who has tried to help the innocent animals in a war, when every obstacle has been placed in his way and most people would just give up, he has carried on and now has the charity to help other soldiers who find themselves in a similar position, who befriend dogs and don't want to leave them to their fate.

Dave says

I rarely am emotionally moved to tears by a book. I can't remember the last time I had to stop just to collect myself. This story is as heartbreakingly sad as it is heartwarming. God Bless you Sgt Farthing, the love and compassion you hold in your heart is only surpassed by the bravery of your spirit.

Kathy Collins says

This was an interesting story incorporating how life for the British troops in Afghanistan worked while incorporating the dog rescue efforts of one soldier, the author of this book. I found it both interesting and informative.

Madelaine says

Both a fascinating description of what it was like to be deployed in Helmand and how British Servicemen react to the conditions and also a heartwarming tale of animal rescue.

Kirsti says

Books that make you literally weep into their pages uncontrollably. Yeah, this is that kind of book. There was one moment I completely lost it, and I'm sure when you read this book you'll see what I mean. I was so invested in this story that it sneaked up on me unexpectedly.

I've read many animal books, as you might know if you follow my reviews. I've even read animal books about Afghanistan and other war torn countries. But this book was special. It was so personal, so improbable. A dog so many people would instantly overlook as too far gone is the hero of this story in the form of Nowzad, a fighting dog. With growls and snaps he wins over first Pen, and then the reader also. I wanted all the dogs so desperately to get their happy ending, Nowzad especially. I feel Pen Farthing's pain at the loss of the dogs he couldn't save.

This book is an outstanding example of the animal memoir genre, and I'm so glad my library finally has a copy. I read this book with my three dogs curled up around me, as I often do when I read animal books. They make it easier when there are sad parts, so I can look into their eyes whenever I need to. We had the sun, a pack of cheese nibbles and a can of raspberry soft drink. Most importantly, we had each other, which is more than so many dogs out there. I wish this author all the best with his current and future rescues.

