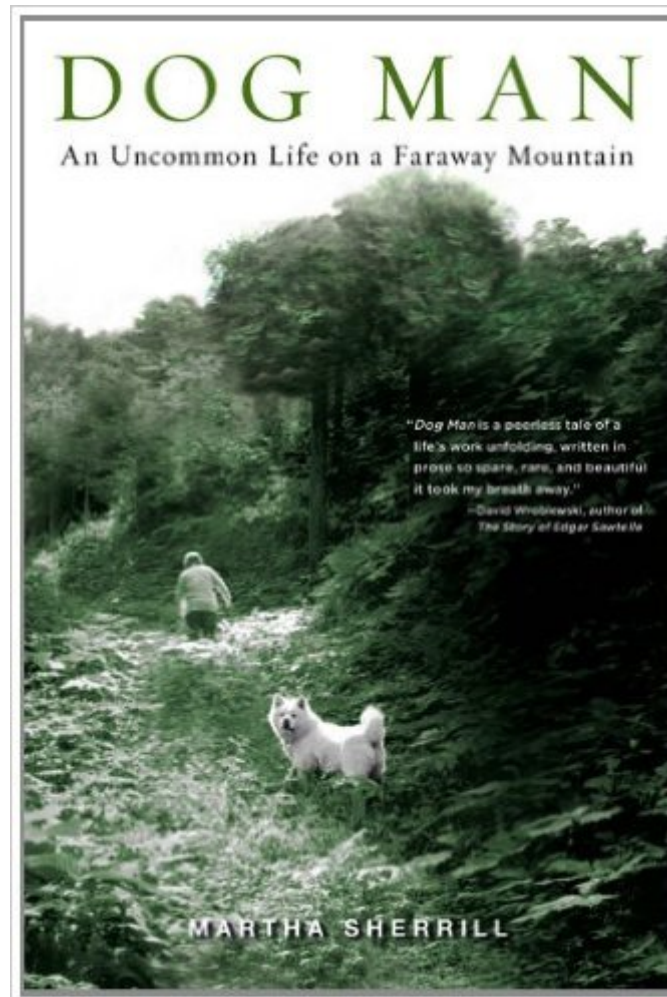


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Dog Man: An Uncommon Life On A Faraway Mountain



Synopsis

Dog Man: An Uncommon Life on a Faraway Mountain is a stunning portrait of the Japanese rebel who single-handedly rescued the 4,000-year-old Akita dog breed. At the end of World War II, there were only 16 Akita dogs left in Japan. Morie Sawataishi became obsessed with preventing the extinction of the 4,000-year-old Japanese dog breed. He defied convention, broke the law, gave up a prestigious job, and chose instead to take his urbanite wife to Japan's forbidding snow country to start a family, and devote himself entirely to saving the Akita. Martha Sherrill blends archival research, on-site reportage, and her talent for narrative to reveal Sawataishi's world, providing a profound look at what it takes to be an individual in a culture where rebels are rare, while expertly portraying a side of Japan that is rarely seen by outsiders.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Dog Man: An Uncommon Life On a Faraway Mountain by Martha Sherrill The Penguin Press New York 2008 (Hardbound, ISBN 978-1-59420-124-0, \$25.95) Reviewed by Jim Stenbridge Morie (Mor-ee-ay) Sawataishi is living an honorable life, some would say a spare existence, in the far north forests of Japan. Aside from episodes involving his pre-World-War-II stint with the Japanese navy in Manchuria, and his hydro-electric dam project management with the Japanese giant Mitsubishi, the chapters of Morie's life can be seen in the succession of his dogs. We follow Morie's life on the edge of the forest, spare of luxuries, but rich in close symbiosis with a beautiful, if rugged, part of the world. Morie, during the strife of the World War, decided that it was his destiny to save and propagate the iconic Japanese dog breed, the Akita. But the few Akitas remaining in those early

days were ill-defined. Their desirable traits had yet to be agreed-upon, so there was much competition among breeders. Long face? Round face? Long legs? Short? Loose skin? Tight skin? Red with white markings? All white? For Morie, whose life away from work is all wilderness, primitive living, and hunting, what's desirable in an Akita is kishf, an almost indefinable boldness, courage, loyalty, and presence. But kishf is found only rarely, especially these days, Morie would say, when dogs are bred to look pretty or, worse, to just make money from sale of the puppies. From "No-Name" and "Three Good Lucks" through "Samarai Tiger" and "Shiro", we meet Morie's Akitas with kishf, and follow Morie's efforts to define and develop the breed. Morie and his dogs were heroes every morning, and heroes again every night. With each walk into the wild, they were bold and resourceful.

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