



# The Dogs of Avalon: The Race to Save Animals in Peril

*Laura Schenone*

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## **The Dogs of Avalon: The Race to Save Animals in Peril** Laura Schenone

Greyhounds, bred to be the fastest racing dogs on earth, are streaks of lightning. Beautiful, astonishing creatures, tens of thousands of them have been abandoned and destroyed every year once they can no longer compete and win.

*The Dogs of Avalon* introduces us to the strong-willed Marion Fitzgibbon, born in rural Ireland, where animals are valued only for their utility. But Fitzgibbon believes that suffering is felt by all creatures, and she champions the cause of strays, baffling those around her—including her family—as she and a group of local women rescue any animal in need and taking on increasingly risky missions.

When Fitzgibbon becomes head of the Irish Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals and focuses on the cause of the greyhound, she faces an entrenched racing industry protected by money and power. She joins forces with an American greyhound activist, a foxhunter's wife, a British lady, and an influential German animal rescuer to create an international network to find these animals homes, confront the racing industry, and provide safe havens where animals can live in peace.

*The Dogs of Avalon* brings forward the people on the other side of the tracks—Irish Travellers (a people whose Celtic history goes back centuries), dogmen who hope to win big—together with a host of animals on two continents—circus tigers in Ireland, wild monkeys in the Yucatan, dolphins in a marine animal park in Florida, and one very special Irish sight hound in New Jersey named Lily.

In this potent David and Goliath story, Schenone's journey helps us understand our deep connection to animals and gives us inspiration in the form of the unforgettable Fitzgibbon, who grapples with compassion and activism and shows the difference we are all capable of making in the world.

## **The Dogs of Avalon: The Race to Save Animals in Peril Details**

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Author : Laura Schenone

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## From Reader Review The Dogs of Avalon: The Race to Save Animals in Peril for online ebook

### Racheal says

The Dogs of Avalon is an important book that brings to light the cruelty of greyhound racing. The main focus of the book is on the greyhounds of Ireland and the animal advocates that work to rescue them.

I learned many things about Greyhounds and Greyhound racing that I had no idea about. According to the book, "Ireland is like no place else because the government gives the business so much money." The Irish government established a Horse and Greyhound Racing Fund that guaranteed a subsidy to the business. When Greyhounds retire they don't get to live out their lives comfortably. Some Greyhounds are sold to lower-grade tracks in England, Scotland, and Spain. Some Greyhounds are sold to university research laboratories. Many dogs are destroyed.

Animal advocates are making a difference. Many Greyhounds and other animals have been rescued. Many Greyhound tracks have closed. Great progress has been made but many more animals need rescuing from abuse. To help Greyhounds I would recommend reading this book and checking out the rescue organizations and advocates that are featured in the book, such as Grey2K USA Worldwide.

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### Crittermom says

The Dogs of Avalon is an incredible book, but not an easy one to read. The subject matter is emotionally charged and has a profound effect on the reader. On the one hand, you see how much good a handful of people manage to do with limited resources. On the other hand, you see how monumental the problem is. So long as animals are valued only for their utility or the money they represent, there cannot be true justice for animals. One thing that I liked about this book is that it does have a degree of empathy for those who get themselves into bad situations (eg a person adopting a tiger because the roadside zoo tells them it will otherwise be put down or the greyhound raiser who loves his dogs but doesn't consider the "wastage"). Some people mean well, but don't consider the impact their actions have or the larger situation, particularly when they themselves have little economic means. Marion Fitzgibbon has been a champion for so many who are unable to speak for themselves. She has risked her life and endangered her health not just for animals, but for people marginalized by the majority. Her efforts, particularly in the area of greyhound rescue are astounding. I never realized how important greyhound breeding was to the depressed Irish economy. Nor did I realize that greyhounds were feared and not viewed as "pets". Having shared my life with several retired racers (all of whom were exceedingly gentle and even tempered), it is a mind-boggling view.

Reading The Dogs of Avalon left me impressed by the human spirit, and inspired to become more active in our own animal rescue community. Successes are wonderful, but there is always far more that needs to be done. Often we overlook the sheer importance of animal welfare, forgetting that without compassion and empathy, we cannot truly be considered human. Bravo Laura Schenone - The Dogs of Avalon is a wonderful book.

5 / 5

I received a copy of The Dogs of Avalon from the publisher in exchange for an honest review.

--Crittermom

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### **ReadaBook says**

In the last few years of my mother's life, she wanted to adopt a greyhound. She lived in Massachusetts, and while reading *The Dogs of Avalon*, I wondered whether my well-read mother had become aware of the plight of greyhounds in Ireland (and the U.S.), and wanted to do what she could to help save just one. So reading this book was an emotional journey on several levels.

Ms. Schenone's book is an eye-opener (for me, anyway) about the horrors of the greyhound racing industry in Ireland and elsewhere - and also about the passion and energy of several women, and some men, to save greyhounds and change the racing industry. Not only did Ms. Schenone thoroughly research and objectively (for the most part) report on what she learned, she shed light on the on-going struggle of animal rescuers to not stop rescuing while dealing with unimaginable horrors.

This was difficult to read at times: I cried so many times I lost count. It is informative without being preachy. I suspect that anyone actively involved in animal rescue will see themselves in several parts of this book. And anyone considering converting to a vegetarian diet may well find this book to be the final push to do so. Highly recommend.

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### **Mamie says**

I fell in love with Laura Schenone's writing when I read her book about the lost ravioli recipes of Hoboken. Her writing in that book was deeply personal yet I could see my family in her family and appreciate my culture through her interpretation and I was very touched by the entire book. In this book, Ms. Schenone took me to a context and a culture unfamiliar to me, that of gambling and dog racing. Again, her writing touched me in a very profound way, opening up a part of the world to me that needs healing and thoughtful action. This book was, at times, very hard to read because it causes the reader to confront challenging truths about how we survive, both physically and emotionally, by using animals. The writer does not, however, ask us to face anything she has not only faced, and the reader is able to struggle and think alongside Schenone.

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### **Bobby says**

*The Dogs of Avalon* is an inspiring read, proof that one can make a significant impact even when challenged in terms of numbers, finances, and a general state of "against all odds." The book is also illuminating about the plight of the greyhound - as well as the greyhound's unique relationship to Ireland - to those of us unfamiliar with the details. Schenone manages to make *The Dogs of Avalon* simultaneously inspirational, historical, personal, and a very enjoyable read.

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### **Rachel Carr says**

I received this book from a goodreads giveaway.

Overall, I really enjoyed this book. There were parts that were difficult to read as the topics/descriptions were upsetting and saddening. But the book had so many hopeful stories and good outcomes that I was able

to keep reading and not be too depressed. It was interesting to learn some of the history behind the greyhound breed and how greyhound racing evolved, but very sad to learn more about the abuse of the dogs and over population from breeding for racing. That wasn't new information for me, but something I wouldn't necessarily seek out since it is very depressing. But I did enjoy reading about people working hard for these dogs and other animals in need.

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### **Suzanne says**

I read this on a recommendation from a friend, and was surprised by how gripping it was. The author has a lovely and engaging style, and her tale of the animal welfare movement (mostly in Ireland) and the people who interact with the movement and the dogs is fascinating. I would never have happened across this book, and am so glad I did.

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### **J.S. Green says**

I have an elderly friend who is absolutely crazy about helping animals. I'm told that even a few years ago she frequently had multiple animals (many of them wild) living in her home and would frequently wander into the hills to feed coyotes and feral cats. I like animals too, but never to the degree she does - it's simply something I never understood. But after reading this book, I think I understand it a little better.

I was surprised at how much this book sucked me in. While the main focus is on greyhounds in Ireland, it wanders pretty much all over the place. From circus tigers and bears living in a backyard to pet spider monkeys to horses and donkeys and other farm animals; from old ladies rescuing strays off the street to Irish gypsies to dog racers - it's got a wide range. Some of the stories are heartbreaking, and others highly uplifting. And it's important to note that the author isn't a crazy animal lover and activist; she's a journalist writing about the industry and animal welfare in general and she even gives a chance for the dog breeders to have their say.

I have to say I enjoyed the book more than I anticipated. It's a very thought-provoking book. (I rec'd an advance copy from the publisher.)

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### **Christine says**

This book is amazing. If you love dogs, especially sighthounds... you must read

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### **Erin says**

Laura Schenone's tale of animal rescue is at turns heartwarming and heartbreaking. Beautiful prose, thorough research, and compelling stories make this book a must-read for animal lovers, particularly those engaged in animal rescue efforts and those who believe that our treatment of animals reflects our level of humanity.

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## Chelsea says

Meet my new favorite nonfiction book - **I loved this book so much that I can't seem to find a way to review this book that sums up why it was so important to me.**

I stumbled upon this book on the first day I got my Edelweiss account, and I am so glad I took a chance on this book that I had never heard of with a vague blurb that doesn't do a great job of summing up how awesome this book is.

This book is split into two parts. The first is about Laura, a woman living in the United States who adopts a rescued Lurcher (type of Greyhound) and begins to discover the history of these dogs. The rest of the book follows Marion Fitzgibbon, head of the Ireland SPCA who relentlessly fought for the animals in Ireland. Basically, she's my new idol.

Seriously, what an amazing person. Animal rescue is heartbreaking. I am fortunate enough to live in a time when animals are starting to get more rights and less are being put down, though there is still so, so much work to do. I never knew about the animal conditions in Ireland, and Marion's determination deserves so much respect.

I kind of consider this novel a history of animal rights movements (it's so well researched!). **I was constantly astounded at the things this book managed to include, things I never heard talked about. This novel is so eye-opening, and if I could give this book to everyone, I would in a second.**

While you might think from the cover and blurb that this book is about dogs, maybe other domestic animals, this book also talks about wildlife and agricultural animals

Some other things this book covers: black dog syndrome, circus and zoo abuse, animal agriculture, the horrors of animal control/dog wardens, positive reinforcement training, foxhunting, and much more. If you're unfamiliar with these things, this book would be a great introduction.

**I also need to thank this novel for educating me about Greyhounds.** I've fostered many types of dogs, but never a Greyhound. I knew vaguely of the horrors of Greyhound racing, but I have to admit I was completely ignorant on how deep the abuse of these dogs went.

I instantly felt for them. As someone who works primarily with bully breed dogs, I never imagined the parallels between bullies and Greyhounds in terms of their image, discrimination, and constant mistreatment. The humane society, being the humane society, said that greyhounds weren't suitable for pets, which they have also said about bully breeds (if you're interested in learning about bully breeds, I highly, highly, recommend the documentary *The Champions* on Netflix).

All of this being said, it's not a perfect book. When I'm reading something that's so close to home, there are always going to be a few things that I wanted more of. First, I would have liked a little more follow through on the vegetarian/vegan aspect. I also wasn't super happy with the way "pit bulls" were discussed - there's one line where someone comments about them needing to be put down for being bred to kill, which is not true, and this line is not challenged in the book. Once again, *The Champions* totally debunks the "bred to kill" myth, showing the complete truth about dogs bred for dog fighting.

**Despite that, this is the book that comes the closest to encompassing my feelings on animal rights.** This book made me feel so much. Sometimes it would break my heart, and sometimes there would be a happy ending showing how trying to help these animals is worth it.

**I felt a sadness I rarely feel with books when I turned that final page. I truly didn't want it to end - the sign of a great book.**

It honestly kills me that no one is reading this book. None of the major book stores around me are carrying this book. **It should be getting so much more attention! I truly think that if you pick up this book you will not regret it. I think this book could be life changing for some. I guarantee you'll at least come away from this book with a new attitude on the animals around you.**

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### **Sharon says**

I'm proud of myself- made it through the whole book without adopting another greyhound.

Schenone discusses the fight to save racers in Ireland. The founding and efforts of Limerick Animal Welfare, the ISPCA, and Pro Animale, the principal players in the fight, are highlighted. She explains the governmental influence in racing in Ireland and the down-market trade into Spain. Her own adoption of a lurcher provides a framework for parts of the story.

While not a tear-jerker, there are emotional and difficult parts here. The pervasive disregard for animals (and humans!) is painful. Schenone does a good job of avoiding sensationalism but providing truth as remembered by the people who were there. As economic factors change in Ireland, so does the attitude toward animals and poorer people, but change is always slow.

Recommended if you love animals, greyhounds or well-told true stories. Beware, though; you may want to adopt another greyhound by the end.

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### **Glitter Glidden says**

This true story is interesting all the way through, and its topic is pertinent. I'm glad to see things improving, but this book also motivated me to first gain more awareness of the world around me. A nature enthusiast, I try to be outside as much as possible, but my focus has been on the soil, water, and plants. With a love for dogs, this book touched my heart. My husband's service dog is a rescue who was returned to the kennel several times. She loves to work, and her job consists mostly of asking to be pet and loved. This particular book opened my eyes to other animals in need, the brutal histories, and made me more understanding.

My only criticisms: For a book that advocates for others, being PC should've been an utmost importance. "Indians" buying casinos? And this is a bit offensive: " Foodies—the stupid name for this culture of people who place great importance on growing, cooking, and eating well— were a tribe of which I was a card- carrying member." What makes it stupid? I consider myself a 'foodie,' married to a chef, and we strive to live off our fruit and vegetable garden. My enjoyment of food, particularly its source and resulting unique tastes, is not 'stupid.'

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### **Angela says**

Five stars for this important book, a piece of deeply credible journalism, absent the overwhelming ego that is so rampant in investigative writing today. Let me say that it took a while to read this only because of my own schedule. It is not slow or ponderous in any way. In fact, the narrative is well-paced and conversational, even when Schenone presents well-researched details. Much of it centers on the greyhound racing "industry" in

Ireland, but that becomes a pivot point for other equally upsetting stories of animal abuse. It is not an easy book to read, from an emotional standpoint; but I believe that it is an important book. And while it lays out for the world the worst of human behavior (Schenone correctly associates animal neglect and cruelty with human neglect and cruelty), it also presents us with valiant people working hard to save the helpless among us and explores their motivation. In that sense, it is a tribute to the many people we all know who go out of their way, upset their lives, and use their personal resources to rescue animals. Expect to be both horrified and gratified, and, if you are the reflective sort, to be left with many questions. The author is more than honest about her own.

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### **Christina Kline says**

Why focus on animals when there's so much human suffering in the world? This is the question Laura Schenone sets out to answer as she embarks on a journey to meet some of the intrepid, often idiosyncratic humans fighting to transform the lives of animals around the globe. A self-confessed non-animal lover when her journey begins, Schenone writes with sensitivity and genuine curiosity about the world of greyhounds — inspired by her own beloved gray-eyed rescue dog, Lily. In the process, she undertakes a wide-ranging discussion of the moral, political, and philosophical implications of animal welfare. As she delves deeper, advocacy changes her. An extraordinary story, told with compassion and grace.

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