Clarion Review

General

The K-9 Chronicles: Book One
Serpico Wolfgang Krugel as told to Alan Louis Krugel
Photos by John R. Stinson, illustrator
John R. Stinson, photographer
978-1-4259-7141-0
Three Stars (out of Five)

The narrator of *The K-9 Chronicles: Book One* is a sunny-natured drug-sniffing police dog for the Los Angeles Police Department. Born in Germany imported and thoroughly trained he becomes the partner of a narcotics detective named Doc. At first the string of successful raids are a lark. Praise and junk food treats flow freely including pseudo-cannibalism originating from a Pink's stand: "'hot dogs' was a name of something that humans ate. I wondered…whether or not it was food made out of us."

The bond with Doc becomes absolute—Serpico shields Doc from bullets in a botched raid requiring radical surgery. Into the story comes The Dog Whisperer a man named Cesar Millan who provides unconventional rehabilitation for injured canines. He works miracles but lacks air fresheners. Serpico's take on the Whisperer's facility is only too honest: "No matter what came out of my butt it smelled like a flower compared to this stinky place." Doc's friend Jake provides the hero a new home after he learns to balance hop on three legs and move beyond phantom limb signals.

Krugel successfully captures the innocent earthiness of dogs without importing needless vulgarity. Their loyalty and eagerness to please come through also the fact that their needs are easier to meet than those of people. Perceptions are humorous at times. The dogs' comprehension of the human milieu is not completely consistent. At first Serpico doesn't know what a building is but near the book's end he's discussing the 9/11 World Trade Center tragedy. Early on he mentions a bag later he wonders what a bag is. The uneven understanding threatens an otherwise credible point of view.

The basic events of the book are not fictional although we can safely assume the canine conversations are constructions. The overt narrator Serpico was actually taken in by the covert

one Alan Krugel whose life is shadowed by the character Jake. The most emotionally salient passages concern a car accident that took the life of Jake's wife and two of his children. It effectively ended a police career crippling his interpersonal skills but Jake found value again by providing a haven for dogs which would otherwise be put down. "There was more to life than pitying myself."

The K-9 Chronicles: Book One is the first in a projected series of five books telling the stories of former police dogs. Krugel redirects his questions on the value of life into a project which multiplies awareness of second chances. That which is too difficult to discuss directly ends up doing some good transplanted into the psyches of sympathetic animals—an intelligent strategy which stretches back a hundred years to the stories of Jack London. Dog lovers should see for themselves whether Serpico thinks like they believe their own canine does.