



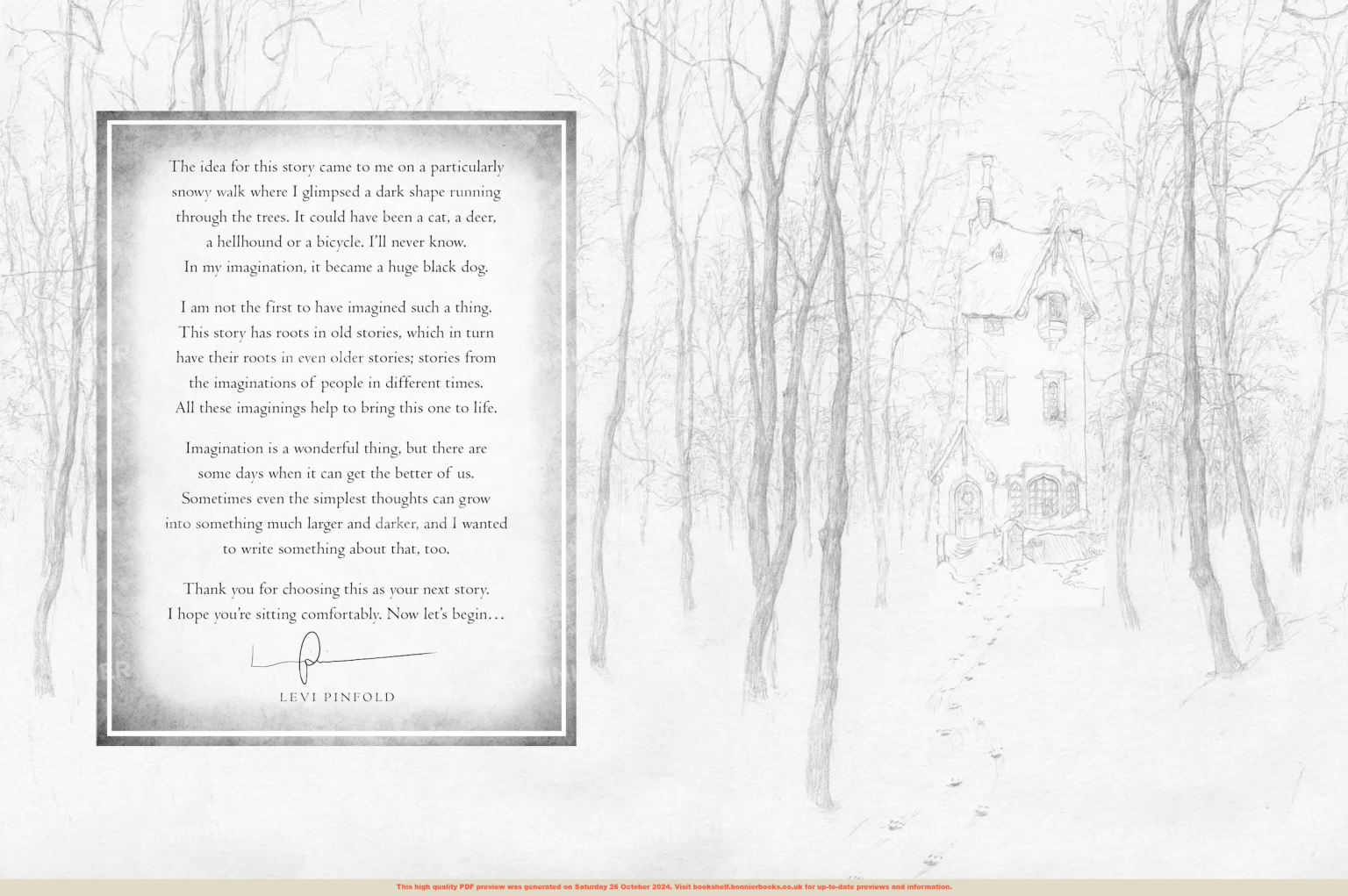
# BLACK DOG

Levi Pinfold



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The idea for this story came to me on a particularly snowy walk where I glimpsed a dark shape running through the trees. It could have been a cat, a deer,

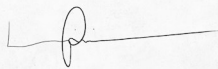
a hellhound or a bicycle. I'll never know.

In my imagination, it became a huge black dog.

I am not the first to have imagined such a thing. This story has roots in old stories, which in turn have their roots in even older stories; stories from the imaginations of people in different times. All these imaginings help to bring this one to life.

Imagination is a wonderful thing, but there are some days when it can get the better of us. Sometimes even the simplest thoughts can grow into something much larger and darker, and I wanted to write something about that, too.

Thank you for choosing this as your next story. I hope you're sitting comfortably. Now let's begin...



LEVI PINFOLD

For my family  
and families in general  
— Levi Pinfold

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One day, a black dog came to visit the Hope family. Mr Hope was the first to see it.

"My goodness!" he cried, dropping his toast. He didn't waste any time in phoning the police.

"There's a black dog the size of a tiger outside my house!" he told the policeman.

The policeman laughed.

"What should I do?" asked Mr Hope.

"Don't go outside," said the policeman, and put down the phone.







Mrs Hope was next to get up.

"My goodness!" she cried, dropping her mug of tea. She didn't waste any time in calling for Mr Hope.

"Did you know there's a black dog the size of an elephant outside?" she yelled.

"Yes," said Mr Hope.

"What should we do?" asked Mrs Hope.

"Turn out the lights so it doesn't know we're here!"







Adeline Hope was next to get up.

"My goodness!" she cried, dropping her toothbrush. She didn't waste any time in calling for her parents.

"Did you know there's a black dog the size of a Tyrannosaurus rex outside?"

"Yes," said Mr and Mrs Hope together.

"What should we do?" asked Adeline.

"Close the curtains so it can't see us."







Maurice Hope was next to get up.

"My goodness!" he cried, dropping his teddy. He didn't waste any time in calling for the family.

"Did you know there's a black dog the size of a Big Jeffy outside?"

"What's a Big Jeffy?" asked Adeline Hope.

"Never mind that! What should we do?" demanded Maurice Hope.

"Hide under the covers!" they wailed.







It was then that the youngest member of the Hope family, called Small (for short),

noticed that there was something going on.

"What are you lot doing under there?"

"We're hiding from the Black Dog!" they whispered.

"Oh, you are such sillies," said Small, opening the front door.

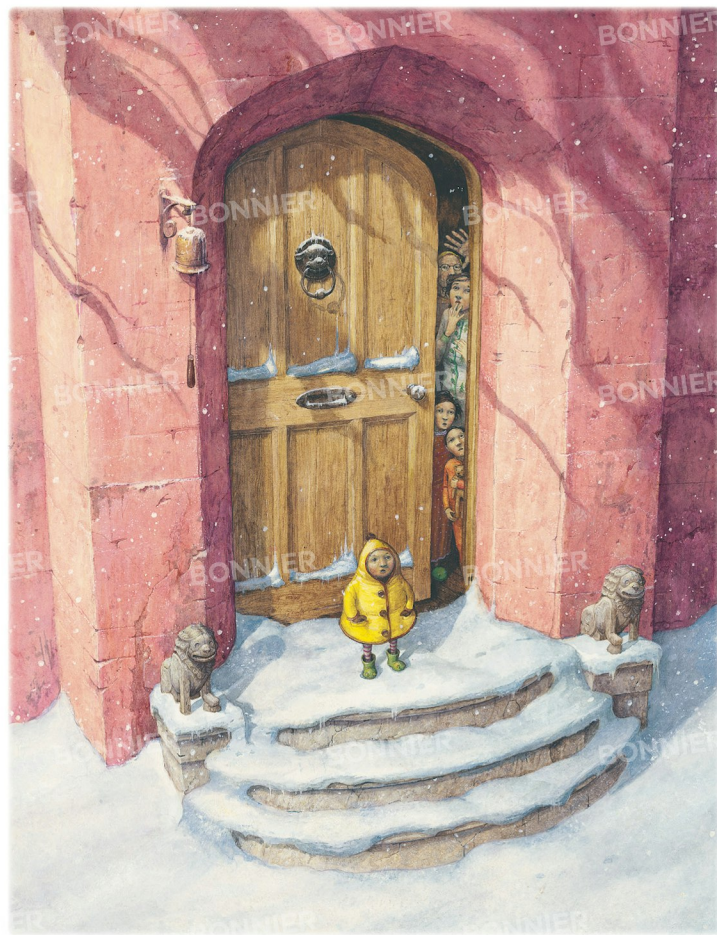
"Don't go out there!" gasped her family.

"The hound will eat you up!"

"It'll munch your head!"

"It'll crunch your bones!"

But Small had gone anyway.



Outside, the Black Dog leaned down towards her and BREATHED.

"Crikey, you ARE big!" said Small. "What are you doing here, you guffin?"

The Black Dog SNUFFED at her.

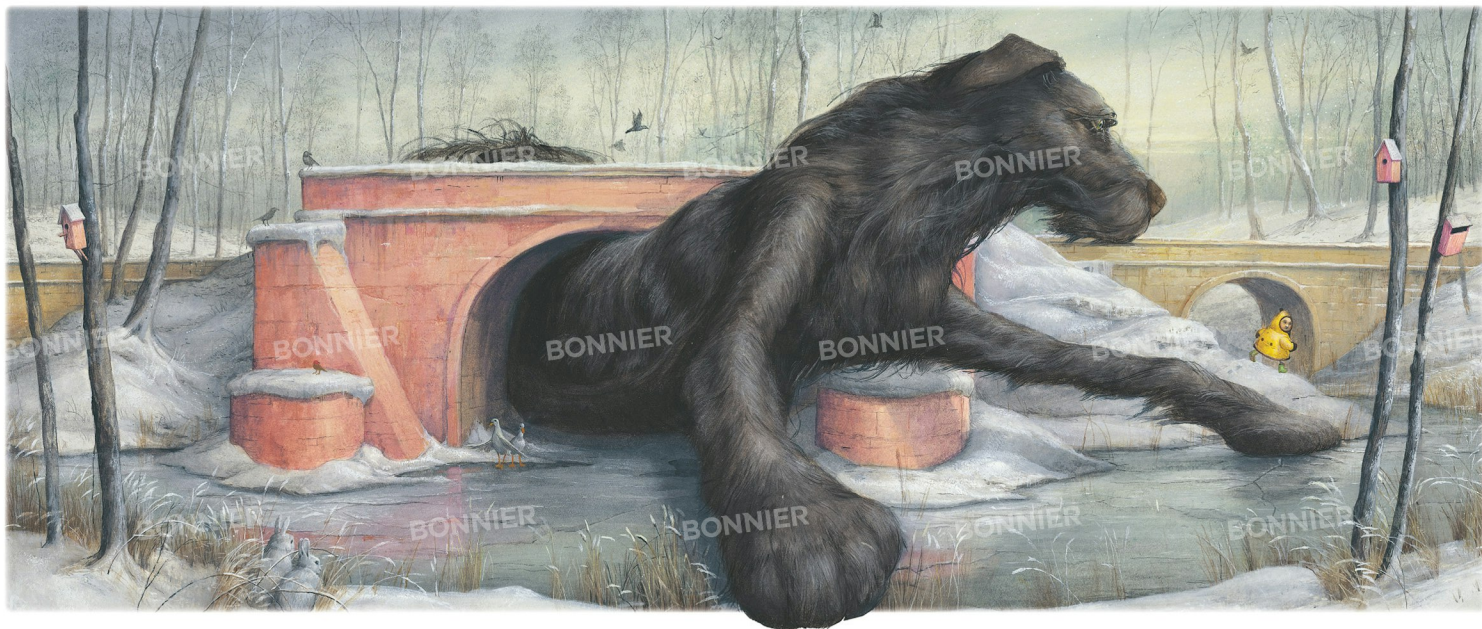






"All right then," she said. "If you're going to eat me, you'll have to catch me first." And with that she scurried into the lowering trees. As she ran, she made up a song:

"You can't follow where I go,  
unless you shrink, or don't you know?"  
The Black Dog followed...



As Small hurried towards the frozen pond,  
under the little bridge and over the ice, she sang:

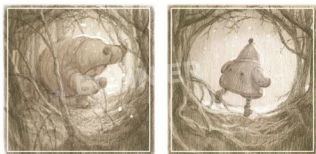
“You’re ginormous, ice is thin,  
spread your weight or you’ll fall in.”  
And the Black Dog followed...





Next she scuttled through the playground, down the slide and around the roundabout, singing:

“You’re all BIG, I’m all small,  
you’ll fit through if you’re less tall.”  
And still the Black Dog followed...



Finally, Small had run all the way back to the house.

"You'll find out why they all hide, if you follow me inside."

And with that, Small tumbled into her warm home through the cat flap. She really was that small.

And so, by now, was the Black Dog.







Inside, Small grabbed a washing basket and, as the Black Dog scrabbled in behind her, she covered him with a loud “HA!”

Just then, the rest of the Hope family popped up from behind their barricade.

“You haven’t been munched!” cried Mrs Hope.

“You haven’t been crunched!” cheered Mr Hope.

“You haven’t been eaten!” yelled Maurice Hope (missing a poetic opportunity).

“But where’s the Black Dog?” asked Adeline.

Without a word, Small lifted the basket.





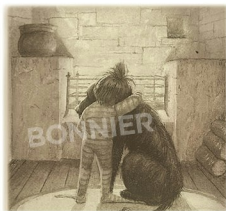
The rest of the Hope family were extremely pleased to see that the Black Dog was neither so huge, nor so scary, as they had feared.

“He doesn’t seem fierce at all now I really look at him,” said Mr Hope. The rest of the family agreed.

“We were silly,” said Adeline. “Only Small knew the right thing to do.” Everyone was quiet for a while, thinking how brave Small had been.

“You’ve got a lot of courage, facing up to a big, fearsome thing like that,” said Mrs Hope.





“There was nothing to be scared of, you know,” replied Small Hope as she went to sit by the fire.

And the Black Dog followed.

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