

Grim Fairy Tales

(as printed in AKC Gazette, Dec 97 Miniature Pinscher Breed Column, courtesy of: Faith Gordon)

Once upon a time there was a prominent breeder who had many champions and was looked up to by all her peers. The time came to breed two of her wonderful Min Pins and sell some of the puppies. One was sold as a pet, and the owner was supposed to get him neutered. But the new owner did not do so. He bought a female from a pet shop and bred the two dogs. After all, his dog had champions in his pedigree, and both dogs had AKC papers. Then he sold the litter to a dog broker, who sold them to pet shops. One puppy ended up in a shop in my area. A couple bought him and a female too. They said, "These dogs have AKC papers, so they must be good. Let's breed them and sell them to make some extra money." And they did.

I answered the couple's ad and went to see their puppies at their rundown home. I picked my way up the rotted steps into a hall with most of the plaster gouged out. Two Min Pins then bounced off of every piece of furniture in the crowded room greeted me. When I asked about genetics, and Legg-Calve-Perthes and von Willebrand's diseases, the couple babbled on about how the parents were healthy and had their shots. When I said pet shops sell dogs from puppy mills and backyard breeders, they responded that theirs came from "professional breeders."

I then saw the three of the original five pups that were still at home at 8 weeks. They looked and acted cute, but their eyes were runny. I asked if the pups had started their shots. "No" the couple replied, "We don't have the money and the buyers can do it." I didn't bother to ask about worming, sales contracts or health guarantees.

I asked if they knew about the standard (their male is rather large and coarse) or the limited registration option when selling a puppy. They just went on about how these were good dogs, the pet store said the breeder is a professional and the dogs have AKC papers. As I left I thought about the time spent caring for my Min Pins, the cost of finishing them before breeding, the time spent researching pedigrees and looking at win shots to make a good match, the blood tests, - airfare, stud fees, and veterinary visits for tails, shots, worming and checkups. I thought about the poor conditions in which these dogs were being raised. I thought about the puppy with champions behind it from the South, sold as a pet, is now in the Midwest producing puppies that are being sold in pet shops in the East. Some of those puppies are now producing puppies in my area.

I also thought about how many times the kennel names behind their male appear in my dogs' pedigrees.

Do you know where your puppies are? Do you follow up on spay/ neuter contracts and limited registrations? Don't let your puppies be exploited for spending money. The puppy you sell as a pet because it does not meet your expectations for the breed is exactly what puppy mills and backyard breeders want. They care about the pedigree, not whether the dog fits the standard. Until the puppy-buying public learns where dogs in pet shops come from and who sells to these shops, I think all dogs sold through pet shops should be sold on limited registration only. Our dogs' papers are only as good as the breeder who stands behind them.

That cute puppy under the Christmas tree may go to a shelter once the novelty wears off. If your loved one really wants a puppy, put a crate with a photo of the puppy under the tree, and bring home the puppy after the holiday stress has ended. A puppy should not be an impulse buy.