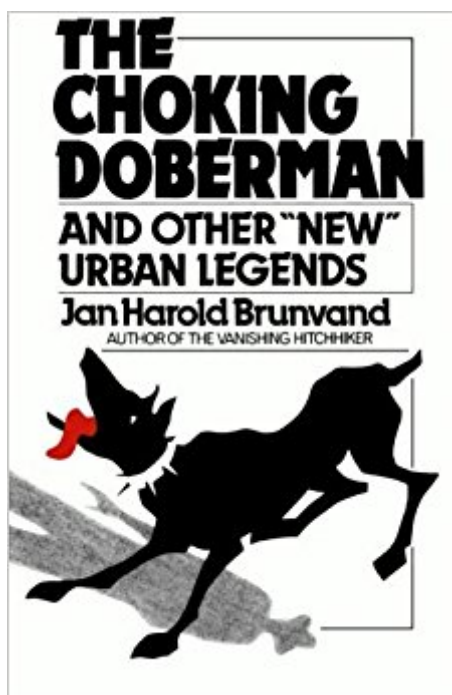


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# The Choking Doberman: And Other Urban Legends



## Synopsis

"A wonderfully entertaining book of American folklore and humor." — Elaine Kendall, Los Angeles Times Book Review Professor Jan Harold Brunvand expands his examination of the phenomenon of urban legends, those improbable, believable stories that always happen to a "friend of a friend."

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

"This is a fascinating book, but I still say all those stories actually happened to the mother of a friend of mine's doctor's wife." This is a fascinating book, but I still say all those stories actually happened to the mother of a friend of mine's doctor's wife. --Roy Blount Jr."

Jan Harold Brunvand lives in Salt Lake City, where he is professor emeritus at the University of Utah. He is the author of numerous books, including *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*; *The Choking Doberman*; *The Baby Train*; *Too Good to Be True*; and *Be Afraid, Be Very Afraid*.

When the author claims that no girl was ever date raped from a spiked drink EVER, I the average modern reader may agree that old folklorists are probably as naive as storytelling teenagers. It is certainly annoying that people will believe even the most obvious yarns, and most of the stories here are obviously just legend. But a scholar should perhaps not categorically deny that no such stories could have any sort of true origin. We don't know if there was once a killer in someone's back seat, or in their medieval wagon of hay. Probably there wasn't but we don't know. I came to this

book looking for a specific tale that my friends claim happened to a friend and found it.\* Very satisfying. But after reading this and the previous book I am perhaps no longer the world's biggest skeptic after all.\* elevator scene, Norwegian girl goes abroad for the first time to NYC, enters an elevator with what will later prove to be Eddie Murphy and two big friends or bodyguards with sunglasses. No dog in this version. "Hit the floor" in reference to floor buttons, at which point she ducks.

Very much enjoy anything along this line of story and hearing stories or "legends" from specific areas of the country makes it more fun to talk through with family. It is amazing how some of the stories grow and change and get to look nothing like the actual truth...fun fun.

Jan Harold Brunvand wrote this book as a follow-up to his best-selling *The Vanishing Hitchhiker*. Unlike the previous volume, it is less about teaching us about the common forms of these stories and the motivations and mental processes that shape them. This book just tells interesting, and mostly untrue stories that were circulating in the early eighties. The book begins with "The Choking Doberman" about a dog owner realizing she has narrowly escaped an attack when she discovers the would-be attacker's severed fingers stuck in her dog's throat. The several variations of this story have recurring elements in common--including our sympathy for the dog. (Moral: Always chew your food.) Other stories are organized into familiar categories of vehicles, horror, contaminations, sex, and the media. A few favorites:- Carpet installers "hammer down" a lump under a new carpet. Nobody can find the canary...- A medical student is assigned his late aunt's cadaver to dissect in anatomy class.- A man leaves a urine specimen in a whiskey bottle in his car. Somebody steals it.- A police officer giving a lecture to middle-school students passes around a plate with a joint on it "so you will know what one looks like." It comes back with half a dozen joints.- Various illnesses are caused by computer "cable lice" whose bites are too small to be seen. The stories are entertaining and their debunking is instructive. The book does show it's age in that many of the stories seem no longer to be in circulation. Interested readers may want to read the next book in this series, *The Mexican Pet: More "New" Urban Legends and Some Old Favorites*. For a more serious and methods-oriented discussion of folklore, see the most recent version of Brunvand's text, *The Study of American Folklore: An Introduction*.

The Choking Doberman, the second in a series of books examining urban legend and folklore, is a rare find not only for its attention to the friend-of-a-friend stories that we've all heard, but also for its

perhaps unintended window into the evolution of modern legends. Written in 1986, the myths and legends regarding computers and other modern inventions reviewed in the book, as well as the means by which such stories were disseminated, reflect the growing influence of information technology -- old legends about "cable lice" proliferating in phone or power cables have given way to doomsday viruses and other computer-age legends. I also was amused to discover so many legends being integrated into movies and television, such as the "baby on the car roof" (Raising Arizona), the woman who punishes her philandering husband with superglue (Reservoir Dogs), etc. Just goes to show that a good story always deserves a retelling.

I read this book first for a college course, and bought a copy when one of my kids came home with a story beginning "My friend has this friend who..." It's great for teaching your kids (8 and up!) not to be gullible, and to appreciate folklore for what it is. A good "feel" for these kinds of stories can help identify slick sales pitches as well as the urban folklore that circulates in school and camp. Also a thoroughly enjoyable read for adults

I bought this book because the title was too strange to pass up. I found it to be thought-provoking and very well written. Although it's not a scary-story book, and the author proved all the legends weren't true, I didn't get any sleep the night after I read it! If you like spooky books, I highly recommend "The Choking Doberman."

The Choking Doberman (1984) is folklorist Jan Harold Brunvand's follow-up to The Vanishing Hitchhiker. Unlike that previous work, however, The Choking Doberman is less didactic and more just plain fun, with newer stories, a wider variety of legends, and less academic analysis. Highly recommended for general audiences.

My family and I have read the whole series and shared and laughed at these stories many times. They make a great share-read on family trips!

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