



My Husband and Other Animals

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This book is a compilation of the articles that have appeared in Janaki Lenin's eponymous column in 'The Hindu', and it's rather like having all your favourite dishes served in one meal – but which you can eat at leisure! For those who haven't realised that there is a whole living world out there, comprising any number of bedazzling and bewildering creatures, which basically are in charge of running the world, this book should serve as a revelation. The husband in question (referred to as 'the Dude') is Romulus Whitaker – India's famous 'snakeman' and reptile ustad – who remains a strong, succinct, background presence in the book. The other animals range from toads in teacups to Alsatian-eating leopards, with Janaki sharing living space with them – usually willingly (dog-eating leopards apart).

Issues relating to creepy crawlies – and ferocious crocodiles – are also dealt with, and the collection of subjects is as diverse as the creatures themselves, though it must be said that it's the cold-blooded lot (which have been given such terrible press) that take pride of place. Apart from just introducing you to these creatures, solid scientific data and information is also supplied (in completely digestible fashion). Lenin and Rom also make films about these creatures, and it would be wonderful to see a blockbuster starring spitting cobras, giant crocs and Komodo dragons take down redneck reptile wranglers! These pieces should certainly help readers view creatures like frogs, snakes, lizards, scorpions and even shrews(!) with less hysteria and more empathy.



Easy-going and informal, it is a must for anyone who faints at the sight of a lizard – and everyone interested in life in general. The only hassle I had, was the book's name, adapted from Gerald Durrell's classic *My Family and Other Animals*. That, and the foreword by his widow, Lee Durrell, and polite things said by various celebrities (before the book was properly in the public domain), while being very nice, take away from its intrinsic worth and could make cynics raise their eyebrows.

This book can stand on its own without those props.

Ranjit Lal has written fiction and non-fiction for both adults and children. His books include *The Crow Chronicles*, *The Life and Times of Altu Faltu*, *That Summer at Kalagarh*, *The Bossman Adventures* and *Bossman and the Thrown Away Family*. His most recent books for Pu?n were *The Caterpillar Who Went on a Diet and Other Stories* and *When Banshee Kissed Bimbo and Other Bird Stories*.