

Rosie's Friend

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I washed and changed, grabbed my book, and heading downstairs, sat down in the lounge, ready to wash away the day's problems with a little light humour. I heard you come in from the kitchen, and looked up from my just-opened book as you stood opposite me. "Hi Rosie."

You put your head on one side and looked at me. "EhhUrghh!"

"What's wrong?" I said softly, and held out my hand. You moved forward and licked it, then looked up at me again. Your tail was down, and your back end was shaking perceptibly. I looked at my watch. "Christ Rosie! I'm so sorry."

I jumped up, but you beat me to it, and by the time I grabbed my jacket you were waiting by the back door. I took your lead off the hook. "Waleergh!" you said, and this time your tail went up.

I hooked the lead on your collar and we left. You strained at the lead and I broke into a quick trot. We reached the edge of the woods and I removed the lead. You ran over between the trees and squatted, and as I walked towards you I could see the warm water vapour rising up around you into the cool early evening air.

You got up and looked at me, head to one side. "Go on then." I said motioning up the rough path with my hand. You sprinted away, sometimes on the path, sometimes in the trees, where I could only hear you crashing about. Every now and again, you

rejoined the path and waited a while for me, only to sprint off again. After 5 minutes I was lost, but I trusted you, and it was nearly 20 minutes later when we emerged again from the woods, out onto a road about 500 yards from the house.

You waited, and I put the lead back on your collar. "Good Girl!" I patted your head, and we walked back to the house. Inside, I gave you a clean dish of water, and myself a glass, then sat back down in the lounge. You joined me and rested your head on my foot.

You heard her come in before I did, and I joined you both in the kitchen where she fussed over you. She looked around the kitchen, then at me, her face troubled. "You had to clean up the mess Joe. I'm so terribly sorry."

I smiled at her. "There was no mess Joan. Everything's fine." She looked at me, then at you, then looked at the stairs. "Christ! The bedroom, she's done it in the bedroom."

She moved to go upstairs, but I took her arm gently, and stopped her. Her face was anxious and tired, and apparently embarrassed. "Joan." I said softly. "Calm down. There is no mess anywhere. Rosie told me she wanted a pee, and we went to the woods you took us to last night, then we had a nice walk." Relief made her weak. I walked her to a chair, and sat her down, then I peeled her coat carefully off her shoulders. "Sit quietly. Get you breath back, and I'll make you a pot of tea." I said gently.

I sat down opposite her while the kettle boiled. "I'm so sorry." she said. "You shouldn't have to.." I stopped her. "Your beautiful dog is a pleasure to be with. Please don't apologise."

"I'm so late. We had a crisis at work."

I nodded, and reached for the jotter and pencil from the worktop. I wrote down my desk telephone number, and passed the pad to her. "That's my number at work. Any time you wish, you can ring if you know you are going to be late. But also bear in mind I will be back here anyway, just after 5:00pm, and I will take Rosie out if you are detained unexpectedly."

I made the tea. She had relaxed a little, sufficient to recover a little of her previous evening's shyness with me, but she looked drawn and weary. I'd only been here a little over 24 hours, and didn't want to pry, so I kept my questions to myself. Maybe she would talk when she needed to.

She put down her cup after taking a sip. "You know those kids have been here nearly a year, and never once offered to walk Rosie, despite her originally making a fuss of them?"

I smiled. "Some people just don't like dogs."
She shook her head. "It isn't just that Joe. They are weird, especially the boy. Rosie doesn't like him at all."
I laughed. "They look pretty harmless to me."

For the first time since we had met, her eyes swept over all of me very slowly, then returned to my face. "I would imagine almost anyone would look harmless beside you."

I thought I detected a challenge in her pale blue eyes. I changed the subject. "How do you feel now?"

She smiled. "Thank you. I feel a lot better. Have you eaten?"

I nodded.

"What about I have a snack, then make myself presentable and take you to my local and buy you a pint?"

She was being brave. She didn't want to talk yet, but she didn't want to be alone.

"That would be lovely. " I said. "Give me a shout when you're ready."

I left her, and headed back into the lounge. You waited until she

went upstairs to wash, then joined me in the lounge.

She must have heard us as she came down the stairs.

“That was quite a conversation you were having with Rosie.” she said, entering the lounge.

I laughed. “She's very clever.”

She nodded and looked down at you, smiling. “How do you get her to talk to you?”

I looked up at her and grinned, but said nothing. She looked very pretty. The anxiety was still there, but subdued, and I got up and put on my jacket. We said goodbye to you and walked outside to her car.

The pub was warm and comfortable and we sat between the window and fireplace. She asked me to tell her about myself. I wondered if this was to stop her from pouring out her worries to someone who was still virtually a stranger.

She relaxed as I spoke, and although I did most of the talking, I managed to coax several smiles and responses.

I sat down after fetching more drinks.

“Talk to me again, Joe.” she said simply, looking at me.

I smiled. “You want my life history?” I picked up my glass.

“It really doesn't matter. Your voice is like a caress.”

I was startled. I put the glass down and looked at her.

She put her hand across the table, and touched mine. “Please.”

“OK.” I said softly. It wasn't a problem. I had lots of stories. I told her of the last days of my Mum's life, and what happened after. I hoped she would laugh, and she did. Then she apologised.

“I'm so sorry, but I can't help it. It's what you have told me, it's like a Greek Tragedy!”

I smiled. “Don't apologise, I tell the story that way because it makes me feel better about what happened. I had hoped that it would amuse you.”

She squeezed my hand and smiled, but her eyes were sad as they looked directly into mine.

We held hands and looked at each other.

I spoke softly. “I won't press you, but something is bothering you. If you want to talk about it, either now or in the future, I will listen.”

She took a sip of her drink. “I think I understand why my dog likes to be close to you.” she said softly.

I smiled. “You would like me to tell you another story?”

She squeezed my hand. “Yes. Yes, I would.”

She switched off the engine, but made no move to get out of the car. I had undone my seatbelt, and turned to look at her. She had turned to face me.

“Joan?” I said.

“I don't want to get out.”

“Oh.” I said. “OK.” I offered my upturned hand, and she took it.

“I don't know what to say.” she said shakily.

“Then don't say anything.” I replied gently.

There was a pause then she asked quietly.

“Will you hold me?”

I lifted my right arm and she put her head down on my chest, and I wrapped my arms around her.

A slight shudder ran through her and she moaned softly.

As we embraced, she turned her head slightly and kissed my neck. I reached up with my left hand and caressed her head.

Waves of tension ran through her body, then suddenly she raised her head and looked into my eyes.

“I haven't any right to expect..” she paused.

“It's fine.” I said. “I want you too.”

“But I am so much older..”

“Ssh.” I said softly, and I leaned toward her and our lips came together. I felt her whole body shake with passion as we kissed, and her breathing became short and heavy.

I broke away. “Joan. If I promise we can continue this after, can we take Rosie for her walk first?” I said.

“Oh God!” she said. “How bloody selfish of me. Of course Joe, let's do that.”

You greeted us both as we came in through the kitchen door, and Joan made a great fuss of you. I grabbed your lead, clicked it into place on your collar, and we set out for the woods.

Released, you bounded off into the darkness, whilst Joan and I walked along the barely-distinguishable path in the weak moonlight. She had linked her left arm through my right, and also

held on to it with her right arm, her head rested on my shoulder.

We didn't speak, but every now and then she squeezed my arm a little tighter, and pulled me closer. We walked slowly, listening to you crashing through the undergrowth, to appear suddenly on the path ahead, only to disappear like a silver ghost once more.

You brought us out onto the road again, and sat waiting for the lead to be clipped on. Inside the house, I gave you some clean water then turned to Joan. She put her arms around my neck and kissed me. I felt myself grow rapidly, and she felt it too, thrusting her hips firmly into me.

We stood and enjoyed each other's lips, then she took my right hand and held it down towards herself. "Please touch me." she said softly.

I lifted her skirt, and ran my hand up the velvet that was the inside of her right thigh. She was wearing French knickers and I slipped my hand inside of them and gently held her firm silkiness in my hand. She was already wet, and she gasped as I ran my middle finger slowly across the lips, and up onto her clitoris, before penetrating her gently to massage her internally.

She moaned, thrusting herself forward, and feeling her knees begin to buckle, I whispered in her ear. "Upstairs?" She nodded, and I put my hand under her knees, and lifted her into my arms.

She kissed my face as we climbed the stairs, and mumbled "My room Joe." as we reached the top.

Something had woken me. I looked across the silvery pillow at her pretty face, and could see she was still asleep. I lay and listened. I heard it again. This time I slipped out of her bed and pulled my jeans on. I opened the door carefully and looked out onto the landing. You were standing there facing his door, your lips back, teeth bared, a low growl from your throat. You turned and looked at me, and I tapped my thigh twice and mouthed the words. "Here Rosie."

You came into the bedroom, and I closed the door and bent down, speaking softly. "It's alright. I know. I will look."

"Mmmurgh!" you said softly.

"Joe?"

I looked at Joan. She was half sat up, looking at us both.

I whispered. "Quietly, Joan. There's something going on next door that has Rosie very upset. I was about to go and find out what."

"Oh God!" she said softly. "I knew I should have spoken earlier."

"Well whatever it is, it will have to wait. Stay in here with Rosie until I call you."

She nodded, clearly too afraid to argue.

I stood outside his door and listened. The low incantation, interposed with pauses and low moans of pain were clear enough, as were the slight smell of burning. I knocked on the door. There was a brief silence then a cold "Go away!"

I opened the door and walked in. The burning smell was candles - lots of them, some balanced precariously on the head of the bed on which she lay, bound and completely naked. Several lines of blood trickled down from sharply defined cuts on either sides of her breasts. He had turned to face me, a nasty knife in his right hand.

"Get out!" he hissed. "How dare you walk in here uninvited. What gives you the right.."

I interrupted. "My right to a peaceful night's sleep, with no fears

of being incinerated in my bed.” I said softly. I leant over and started blowing out the nearest candles.

“I’m warning you!” he said, taking a step towards me, the knife now held menacingly forward.

I stood my ground, and stared straight into his face.

“There are things here you couldn’t possibly understand.” he sneered.

“What?” I said, then gesturing to the powder still littering the top of the chest of drawers, “That you have drugged her, and are now abusing her? I think I understand perfectly well.”

His eyes blazed, and he lunged. I stepped to one side and towards him, grabbing his wrist and upper arm, and swinging him sideways into the wall. I transferred my right hand to his neck and pushed him upwards until his feet left the ground.

“Drop it.” I said softly. He did. I kicked the knife under the bed. My face close to him, I said quietly. “You have a choice. Despite your struggling, shortly you will be unconscious. Now what is it to be? Will you sit quietly, or resist until you pass out?”

He blinked at me and I caught the brief nod of his head, I released him, and clutching his throat and coughing, he made his way to the chair. I turned to the girl on the bed. Her eyes opened and closed slowly, and her breathing was uneven. I shouted for Joan, and began untying the girl.

I caught a brief flash of light to my side, and a low growl. I turned, but you had already jumped, pushing him backwards, toppling the chair behind him, and he ended up with his back to the wall. I saw the desperation in his eyes, but too late another small-bladed knife, as he thrust it upwards and into your shoulder. You yelped in pain, but did not back off. Joan screamed.

I did what I should have done earlier, and his head rocked sideways as I hit him as hard as I could on the jaw. This time he fell unconscious to the ground. Only then did you turn to lick the blood around the hilt of the knife still sticking in your shoulder.

Joan ran to you and reached for the knife.

“No! Leave it Joan. Call an emergency vet, then an ambulance, then the police.”

She stopped in surprise at my sharp tone. “But..”

“Rosie may lose even more blood if you remove the blade.” I said softly, taking her shoulders. “Go and 'phone. I'll take care of her.”

I turned to you, now half-sitting, half-lying, a steady trickle of blood falling from your shoulder, which you tried to lick away. I removed a pillow from the bed, ripping off the pillow-case and rolled it loosely before placing it in a doughnut around the knife, and applying gentle pressure. You licked my hand, then looked in my eyes. “Euurgh!”

I nodded and smiled. “Yes, I know. But you will be OK. Just lie still for me.”

I looked across at his prone figure and checked his breathing. He showed no signs of coming round, and I was glad. I turned to the girl on the bed. She was still completely oblivious of events around her, and for one mad moment, I was jealous.

I turned back to you and stroked your head. Although there was slight seepage of blood around my hand, the bleeding from your shoulder was slowing. I tickled your paw, and you lifted it, so I was happy there didn't seem to be any serious damage, but what did I know? I was still worried.

Joan appeared in the doorway, a little out of breath. “They are on their way.”

Tears were rolling down her cheeks, and I said. “Come here. Come and sit with her, and I'll make us some tea.”

She sat down beside me. I showed her how to apply pressure to your wound, then got up and kissed her neck before checking he was still out of it, tying his hands behind his back with the curtain cord, before going downstairs and filling the kettle.

I had passed you a steaming mug of tea, when the first ring on the doorbell occurred. It was the police - a sergeant and attendant

constable. I took them straight upstairs, talking as we went, then let them take in the whole scene. The constable checked and cuffed the still-unconscious abuser, and the sergeant briefly examined the still-drugged girl on the bed, before turning to me and listening quietly while I told him of the night's events.

The doorbell rang again, a young man pronounced he was a vet, and I took him upstairs, where Joan showed him your injury. He shook his head, taking in the scene around him, then together we lifted you carefully, and took you into the bathroom. I left Joan with you and the vet as the doorbell rang again. Finally, an ambulance. The paramedics followed me upstairs as I explained again what had happened.

It was four-thirty. We each had a mug of tea in our hands and looked across the kitchen table at each other. You lay in your basket, your eyes watching both of us in turn, a shaved portion of skin on your shoulder, and a small elastoplast over the two neat sutures.

Upstairs, their bedroom had been sealed with 'Police. - Do Not Pass' tape, and they had both been taken to Hospital under police guard.

I had expected Joan to be upset. Instead, she was strangely at ease, as if a great weight had been lifted from her. Appearing to read my thoughts, she said "It was just a question of time."

"You feared this would happen?"

She nodded. "Thank God you were here."

"Thank Rosie - that bastard would have knifed me."

She looked across at you, and you raised your tail and wagged it gently.

We lapsed into companionable silence for a while, then Joan touched my hand across the table. "How long will this job take you?"

"They estimate four years." I replied quietly.

She was looking at me intently. "Is there anyone.."

"No." I interrupted, and squeezed her hand. "I am on my own."

"Will you stay with me and be my lover?"

I nodded. "I'd love to."

She got up and walked around the table to me, bent and kissed my cheek.

"Come upstairs and cuddle me?"

I laughed "Yes Please."

You followed us upstairs, settling yourself on the small rug at the base of her bed, and slept while we made love.