Rusty's Nose Knows for Sure

My special adoptee from a humane society, Rusty, is the inspiration for the story "Rusty's Nose Knows for Sure." His intelligence and curiosity were evident from the time he entered my world. Just as occurs in his story, it was discovered that he could unlatch and open gates, much to my dismay and that of his kennel attendants. (By the way, "Mommy Dog" is the nickname that Rusty gave me.)

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RUSTY'S NOSE KNOWS FOR SURE

a short story
by
Judith K. Berg

"Hey, doll, you look sad," expressed Rusty as he sniffed his new encounter.

"Yes, that I am," responded Poodle. "Something strange is occurring in the home of my guardians."

"Maybe I can help you," barked Rusty.

"What can you do, you're just a dog," woofed Rusty's new companion back to him.

"Well, if you want to get technical, doll, so are you," he responded. She shook her head in agreement.

"You do know that I am a French Poodle," she whimpered.

"Oui oui, I can sure tell that," responded Rusty, as he walked to a nearby tree and lifted his leg. "Oh, excuse me, but you know… power of suggestion," he continued. Poodle turned her head in embarrassment. "Ok, now let's lie over there on the grass and discuss your problem," Rusty stated with his masculine rolling bark. The two walked to a nice shaded grassy area and lay down.

"Well, I have – or had – two guardians," began Poodle. "Yesterday I heard loud human voices coming from one of the rooms. Then there was a crash, like the one when I was very small and tripped over an electric cord sending a lamp falling to the floor."

"Oh, yeah, I did things like that when I was just a pup too," reassured Rusty.

"Well, anyway," she continued "this was followed by a silence that even with my sensitive hearing no sounds could be detected. I immediately ran into an adjacent room just to make sure innocent me didn't get blamed this time. I peeked around the corner as the door opened. One of my guardians came out, closed the door again, and left the house. I began to tremble as my sixth sense told me something was very wrong. After that there was total silence."

Tears welled up in Poodle's eyes, so Rusty placed one of his front paws on hers. She reached over and licked his nose. Both dogs looked at each other, conveying what one would imagine to be the only possible emotion of the moment.

Poodle continued her story. "I waited for awhile then walked to the closed door and began to sniff. I detected a strange odor but could hear no sounds. I sat

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at the door, but no one came out and no one went in. I lay down next to the door until dawn today. Neither of my guardians appeared but the strange odor became stronger. Finally, I walked to my doggy door and into the back yard. I began to bark hoping to attract attention, but no one came. So, I took a flying leap over the fence and walked to the park. My guardians often brought me here for walks. I hoped that maybe at least one of them might appear, but that has not been the case. That's my story and that's why I am here," Poodle sniffed as again doggy tears filled her eyes.

This time Rusty placed his front leg over her neck. This gesture appeared to give her comfort. Both dogs then lay in silence, as humans walked by smiling at the scene of two dogs lying together in a romantic pose. Neither of Poodle's guardians appeared.

"Whooo! Hooo!" emerged the slow deliberate call from a large nearby tree.

The two dogs stood with ears-up in their alert postures. Rusty looked at his trembling partner.

"Don't worry," Rusty assured Poodle. "Owl is delivering a message to me. According to some Native American Legends, owl lets the intended receiver know that no one can deceive him about what they are really up to."

"Oh, Rusty you are so smart," barked Poodle.

"Thanks, doll," woofed Rusty, "But actually I learned about owl medicine from one of my companions during a hike in the woods. Hey, let's go to your house and see if we can make scents of anything," barked Rusty.

Poodle agreed, so both dogs walked to her house. They tried to peek in the window of the room where the incident had occurred, but it was too high for them to reach. Instead they each took a flying leap into Poodle's back yard then into the house through her doggy door.

Rusty walked over to a large grandfather clock, lifted his leg at its base, and marked time.

"Sorry, doll, but this could become an important territorial scenting. You'll understand, as time goes by," Rusty barked.

"I understand," whined Poodle, "but my companions may not be as tolerant."

"Well, doll, now we must begin our detective work." Rusty stated, patently ignoring her complaint.

"What about your companions, won't they be worried about you?" responded Poodle. "Or are you a street dog since you were alone in the park."

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"Actually, I broke out of the kennel where my companions left me for a few days." Rusty woofed. "I have this talent of opening latches that the kennel people didn't know about. So, I opened my kennel door when they walked outside for lunch. They nicely left the door to the building open and I snuck out when no one was looking. The park is near by so I decided to take myself for a walk. They'll frantically look for me, but I'll worry about that later."

A loud 'Knock Knock' at the door broke up their conversation. Both dogs responded by slinking slowly towards the front door. Poodle jumped up on the sofa to peer out a window where she could see who was standing on the porch. Then she jumped back down in an excited state.

"Woof! Woof!" expressed the animated poodle. "It's a friend of my guardians."

The man on the other side opened the unlocked door and entered. He gave the greeting poodle some doggy pats, but looked surprised to see Rusty.

"Hey, what have you been up to, ma cherie?" He spoke laughingly to her. Poodle remained happy to see him then began nudging him towards the closed door which led to the room of the unknown. Rusty remained some distance behind them. His sixth sense detected something unsettling.

"Are your parents home?" the man asked Poodle, immediately calling out their names. There was no human response. Poodle, however, continued nudging him as he stood in front of the closed door. Finally he said, "Ok, I think I understand your message." Slowly he opened the door, while again calling out his friends' names.

Poodle and the man walked into the room. Rusty quickly followed. Outside the closed window, a dark cloud passed across the sky sending darkness into the room. Strong winds began to blow, thrashing tree branches against the house like a code of some as yet unknown message. Eerie feelings came across Rusty.

"Whooo! Hooo!" called the owl. Maybe Rusty's scents about the man were being reinforced. The darkened room smelled of death, and, on the floor was a body. "Whooo! Hooo!" again resounded throughout the scene.

Poodle walked to the body and nudged against it while scenting and whimpering. The man bent over and felt for a pulse, but there was none. Rusty walked to Poodle and tried to guide his new friend away from her terror.

The man spoke. "I'm so sorry Poodle, you have lost a guardian and I have lost a friend." Then he rose, walked to the phone and called the police. "The police will arrive soon," he spoke to Poodle while giving her a couple of pats. Then Rusty saw the man pick up something from the floor near the body and stick it into his pocket.

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"Umm," thought Rusty. I wonder what that was. Maybe it was a piece of evidence? He decided to keep his thoughts to himself for now.

The man walked to and stood in front of the window. He looked outside as if watching for the police car. Then Rusty saw him move the latch which locked the window.

"Umm," thought Rusty. That was another interesting behavior. I happen to know a lot about latches.

When the police arrived the man led them into the room. They cordoned off the area while photographing the scene and searching for clues. Two officers began talking to the man as they walked him into an adjacent room.

Rusty walked to the policeman who appeared to be in charge of the investigation and tugged on his pant leg.

"Hey, cut it out fellow!" he said while patting Rusty's head. But Rusty did not stop. "I think you are trying to tell me something, but I don't know doggy language," he responded to Rusty.

"Any of you guys know dog language?" He yelled out for all to hear.

A young policeman entered the room. "I do," he said. The new arrival bent down and began talking to Rusty who responded by wagging his tail.

First, Rusty walked to the window and began scenting the latch. The young policeman responded by looking at the locked window. Then he asked a fellow officer to test this latch for fingerprints and to take a swab for a DNA trace on a small patch of blood he saw on the lower casing. He turned to his special new partner, patted him on the head, and said, "Good boy."

The chief investigator then asked one of his officers to go outside and also check this window for fingerprints and blood plus to look for any other possible evidence in the area.

Second, Rusty walked into the room where the supposed family friend was sitting. The young policeman followed, as did the chief investigator. Rusty stood in front of the sitting man then bent down in his stalking posture and began growling.

"Keep that mean dog away from me," responded the man. Rusty continued his behavior.

The young cop told the man to stand up. Then he said to Rusty, "Ok, fella, show me what you are trying to communicate."

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Rusty walked up to the man, scenting and pulling on the pocket where he saw the man put something from the crime scene. The man responded by striking Rusty with his fist.

"Yowl" expressed Rusty as he backed away. Two other officers in the room grabbed the man. The young cop put on some plastic gloves, reached into his pocket, and removed the evidence. It was a lottery ticket. He looked at the ticket. "I play the lottery and these numbers look like those of the recent mega-bucks winner." He spoke in an enthusiastic state and continued. "Ah ha, a potential scenario begins to develop." Then he placed the lottery ticket into a bag.

The man was taken away in the police car.

"Rusty, if you didn't let us know about that potential piece of evidence and about the window latch, we may never have solved this crime," spoke the chief investigator to Rusty. "You are a hero." He continued while patting his ace detective. "Hey, maybe we should hire you." Rusty stood wagging his tail as Poodle came to lick his face. Everyone laughed at the romantic scene.

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"Rusty, Rusty, please wake up," cried out Mommy Dog.

Rusty's eyes opened with the shaking of his body.

"You must have really been in a deep state of sleep. You were barking then growling and just now wagging your tail," explained Mommy Dog. "Gosh, that must have been quite a dream."

"Woof! Woof!" expressed Rusty to his parent. However, to himself he thought about his experience as an ace detective solving a crime and his poodle girlfriend. Was it only a dream or did it really occur?

Rusty followed his companion up the stairs and into the living room. Next to the grandfather clock was a dark spot with a distinctive odor.

"Bad dog," expressed his companion. Rusty looked at what he did. Then with bowed head in submission, he walked from the room to lie in front of his favorite window where he could see anyone passing by the house. Outside he saw a poodle walking by with her guardian. The poodle squatted and urinated. Then she looked towards Rusty in the window.

Rusty emitted his play bark. It was Poodle of his detective experience. The person walking her was not the victim but may be the other guardian. The two dogs jumped and bowed in joyful glee.

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Rusty's companion walked to the window to check out what was occurring. Then she waved at the other human while the two dogs continued their play barks. Poodle and her guardian walked away.

Rusty turned to his Mommy Dog who bent down and gave him a big hug. "You had a very restless night, Rusty," she spoke to him. "I awoke hearing your movements and your vocal sounds and wished I could enter your dream world to know what was happening." Then she continued, "Maybe with that sensitive nose of yours, you were solving a crime." Rusty licked her face. "Well, I guess only you know for sure," she responded. The two walked outside into their backyard for some play.

"Oh, by the way," expressed Rusty's companion, "Daddy Dog and I must go away for a few days so you will have to stay in a kennel." Rusty emitted his play bark. "Gee, here I'm feeling so bad about leaving you and you actually seem happy," responded his confused Mommy Dog.

"Whooo! Hooo!" emerged forth from the top of a large tree. "Woof! Woof!" responded Rusty. Then he thought to himself, I wonder if I will solve another crime.

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