



... HE WAS CHRISTENED with water from a rusty coffee can, but he failed to notice. He was lying on the kitchen floor chewing a sock.

He is something less than three months old and much too insignificant for his long name: Silver Spade of Rocky Ridge. He knows only that, when he is called, it means one of two things. He has been naughty and will be spanked, or he looks hungry and will be fed.

Spade was one of nine brothers and sisters, most of them handsome. He was nothing in particular except a pointed nose, four oversize feet, and two gentle brown eyes. He was obviously the only dog in the world worth owning.

Spade was carsick all the way home. With anxious apology, he lost his lunch, his breakfast, and a couple of meals from day before yesterday. Even in illness, he was irresistible.

Spade's house was elaborate. It had a shingled roof, a thick bed of straw, and a large lawn. Spade sobbed. In the box on the back porch, he hiccupped his grief.

Upstairs by the bed he slept soundly. He snored in contentment. And he rose each morning at 4 o'clock for newspaper skating and blanket ripping.

In other ways he is, of course, a genius. While housebreaking himself, he has taken the term literally. Nothing not welded to the floor or built into the ceiling is safe from the white kernels of his teeth or the inquiry of his nose.

He has also taught himself to fetch. When a stick is thrown, he returns with a stone. When a stone is tossed, he brings grass. He adores food except the kind designed for him, and he chews petals and petticoats without partiality.

To Spade, nothing is sacred. "No" is a word which produces in him a belligerent bark calculated to burst the eardrum. He is not particularly suited for anything nor especially talented. He will grow into 70 or 80 pounds of dog delighted to sit on a lap or leap across the piano.

But he is spectacular at creating love and patience around him. By gnawing and grunting, by being petted and scolded, by merely eating and sleeping and licking the hands which care for him, he makes his owners kings of all they survey.

And slaves of Spade.

Patty Johnson



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