



Doug was up and getting ready for work.

“I had a dream ... a very vivid dream. We had a big black dog,” I mumbled, craftily omitting the details of her extra colors. I knew that Doug would just tease that this was a sign that we ought to get a German Shepherd. In his witty bantering, he would seize the opportunity to challenge my fear had I left the door wide open for him. Doug was on the lookout for a good fit for us, since he was a volunteer Dog Walker with the Calgary Humane Society, and he would have no qualms about owning another German Shepherd. So ... yes ... the dog in my dream was *black*, and that’s all that Doug needed to know. Well, she was *mostly* black anyway.

“That dog might be Bailey,” Doug said. “Who is Bailey?” I asked. So many dog names had been brought home with Doug over the past few months in the stories he shared, that my mind drew a blank. “It’s that black, chubby one that I was telling you about awhile back. She’s very sweet. She just seems to be visually impaired.

I've noticed that she bumps into things when I take her for walks. In fact, I think she might be blind."

Hmmm, a blind dog for our very first dog? For starters, I was not a dog person at all. I was a cat person by way of experience, so my first dog had to be one that did not bring much challenge.

"She's very good on a leash, obedient, and well-mannered," Doug continued. His empathetic tone told me that he was simply feeling sorry for her, and I understood that. But, if compassion alone is a big enough reason to bring homeless animals into our lives, we could fill up our little home with every dog, cat, gerbil, parrot, or rabbit that made its way to an animal shelter. Heck, we could *be* a shelter!

"I even considered adopting her a few weeks back," he said, "but there were just too many things to consider."

"*Good thinking,*" I almost said out loud. There was Buddy, the cat, for instance. We adopted him from the Humane Society four months earlier, and since our quarters was *his* territory, the new dog had to be one that

was accepting of cats. And, how do you train a blind dog to not stumble down stairwells? We had LOTS of stairs. Would she hit her head on door facings and furniture? She might have issues with being left at home when we go out somewhere. Would she step on the cat? These were the ramblings of my dominant thoughts, though I secretly wondered if I was being a chicken. Nevertheless, we *agreed* that we would have to be in *agreement* on the dog we chose.

We would keep alert to other black dogs that fit the image of the dog in my dream. There was no rush, afterall. We would leave things in the hands of destiny for now.

Some things just have to fit

What happened On July 18, 2006, just a few days after my dream, sent shivers up my spine! I received an email from Doug at work. He was distraught and forwarding me an email from Jeanette, Volunteer Co-ordinator (at the time) for the Calgary Humane Society. She was

sending a notice to all staff and dog volunteers, in hopes of finding a happy ending to a potentially sad situation.

“.... I know that many of you are very fond of Bailey, so I am writing to let you know that Bailey, because of the reasons below, will be given until July 23rd to be adopted She was originally surrendered to us for responsibility reasons; the owners were just unable to care for her anymore. We had been noticing that her vision was not the greatest. We sent her out to C.A.R.E. center [Calgary Animal Referral and Emergency] to have her eyes more closely examined, and found that she is almost completely blind in both eyes and needs more care daily than we can give her. Bailey is a very nice dog and walks very nice on her leash right beside you. She is very good at following your voice. Because she is blind and a somewhat older girl, her adoptability just went way down So if any of you know anyone who may want to adopt Bailey, now is the time to get them to visit”

Doug's heart was breaking, and he felt compelled to welcome Bailey into our lives. As he weighed the pros and cons in an email to me, he desperately sought my input:

“I'm trying to hold back tears at the moment ... to think things through. Please take some time and think this through also, and give me your thoughts & feelings on it. Don't just react to the emotions of the moment because that can potentially just lead to problems down the road....”

The answer was clear and my dream revealed. We would work it out. Everything would work out. We were to become Bailey's new *parents*, and there was no question about that for me. Bailey somehow nudged her way into my dream, and now I knew why. Yes, this *was* a sign. Sometimes you just know. I replied:

“This is very hard on the heartstrings ... but sometimes that's what an animal needs ... I don't think I'm acting on the emotion of the moment, as it's for the love & care of an

animal that needs & deserves it. Does it fit our lifestyle? Some things have to fit and besides, remember my dream!"

One more reply from Doug, “*Now I am tearful ... you are MY girl!*”

The decision-making process in *our* world (particularly in mine) operates from an intuitive approach. Rather than having all *ducks in a row* and details worked out to a “T”, final choices are usually made from a moment of enlightenment that generates an inner knowing, that propels us to action. This was a spontaneous decision, and some might say an irrational or illogical one. That’s not how we saw it. Not one little bit. It was not just a dream about a dog, followed by the news of a dog in need, but also a compelling gut feeling that went with it. I have come to believe that when we are given such obvious synchronicity, we need to allow our hearts to listen. It doesn’t mean that things will transpire without challenge. Indeed, challenge is almost a guarantee, no matter which paths we take in life.

There is a difference between jumping foolishly into

something that inevitably brings *real* regrets later, versus seizing an opportunity while the iron is hot. How, then, can we decipher which choices to hold and which ones to fold? All I know for sure is that when *purposeful* spontaneous choices are made, you have the strength and confidence to follow through. Doubt pours in, but you are able to combat it. Fear rides in, but it too dissipates with a mighty conviction of truth that you cannot deny. A warm glow of assurance wells up from your inner core, and you feel equipped in every way to chew what you just chose to bite into.

That is how I felt about our decision to adopt a 95-lb blind dog while living in a two storey, top level townhouse with no yard and plenty of stairs. *Love* is a many-faceted concept ... but this was indeed one of love's most defining moments. It had the power to transform my heart from skepticism to total assurance about adopting a blind dog for my very first dog.

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