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Classifieds

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Reacher is less than two years old, and he is a handful. Peter would stop and talk to Anita while she was trying (with limited success) to curb Reacher's more enthusiastic impulses.

never doubted his ability to do so if the need arose.

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In Anita's neighborhood, there also lived a feral dog who did not have a name or a home. Peter would regularly see him as well. Peter thought he was part lab and part herding dog and probably a lot of something else. The dog stayed in the neighborhood, so Peter figured folks must have left food for him. Most days, he stayed in a shady spot in the dirt under a tree.

The dog was not aggressive, but he was very wary of people. He never made eye contact with Peter and would back off if Peter got too close when he walked by. People who lived in the area said he'd been there, under the tree, quietly staying out of the way, for a couple of years.

But then Reacher met him. Belgian Malinois are apparently known for the strong bond they form with other dogs (presumably that's an asset in the search-and-rescue biz), and Reacher took an interest in this stray dog in his neighborhood.

I wasn't there, and neither was Peter, but according to Anita, Reacher tried to make friends with this dog. It was a slow process, but Reacher was determined and, eventually, the feral dog started cautiously following Reacher. One day, he followed Reacher home and walked right into the outdoor courtyard and stayed for a little while. Anita gave him some food. This continued and, finally, the dog (who Anita started calling Duke) followed Reacher all the way into Anita's house. And he stayed.

Duke was still very shy around people, but he trusted Reacher and soon he started to trust Anita and her husband. Duke started letting them pet him and make eye contact. Anita took him to the vet to be fixed. The vet said he thought Duke was about five years old. Duke was bathed. He had his teeth cleaned. He started sleeping on a couch. And now Duke is Anita's second dog and lives with Reacher.

Peter now sees Reacher and Duke and Anita on their walks together. Duke is very submissive and laid-back. Reacher is as exuberant as ever. "I think I could pet Duke now, if I wanted to," Peter told me.

Duke has bonded with Anita, and he is obviously Reacher's best friend. And none of it would have happened without Reacher.

I love this story so much. It seems to me that everyone made a lot of assumptions about Duke—the kind of assumptions I make every day—and all of those assumptions turned out to be wrong. It took someone like Reacher to see that Duke was just waiting for a friend.

Till next time,

Carrie

С

Week of December 2, 2024