

Gifts

When she thinks of it, my dog is pretty pleased with herself. She's always made the right decisions and life has gone well for her. Since she's a dog, Maggie usually can't remember much from one day to the next. This may be why she appears so happy, meeting each morning with no expectations to be dashed, accepting life as it comes to her. For example, Maggie doesn't remember the family she gazed at longingly who came to the puppy farm wanting a dog. They chose one of her brothers because he ran to the front of the litter and began licking the faces of the visitors. Maggie didn't know why, but a deep craving inside drew her to owning a real human family. When the brother left the litter in the arms of a little girl, Maggie felt rejected. For about fifteen minutes. The very next day she was happy to choose an older couple who spoke of something called adoption. Maggie wasn't listening. She thought she was hiring two servants.

Maggie doesn't see much difference between herself and humans, except she can run faster. And she would never waste all that energy standing on two legs. It's nice to drop down on all fours and take it easy and enjoy life. Her nose is closer to her world. She looks ever so cool on all fours. And she can run faster.

Maggie is served only the food she likes and laps it up with gusto, feeling blessed to be fed so well by her servants. The dry dog food on special this week at the supermarket is the best she's ever had. Of course Maggie forgets what she eats from meal to meal and can't recall her last. There is a hazy memory, however, of the time she feasted on a hot juicy pork chop stolen from the kitchen counter.

Maggie does remember she cannot take telephone messages and so she never tries. A

classic lady, she waits patiently for doors to be opened for her.

She's proud of her special talent for keeping the ball when it's thrown to her. Most pets return the ball to whoever threw it so the game might continue, but this dog understands that a gift is a gift. And besides, keeping the ball leads to another game called tug-of-war, which feels good to her teeth. When the old man she chose as her servant tells her a turtle could play catch better, she takes it as a compliment. She takes anything said softly to her as a compliment. She wonders what a turtle could be, but is nevertheless impressed anyone can do it better than her.

The old man who waits on Maggie is pretty pleased with himself, too, just like his dog. He thinks he has always made the right decisions and done well. He can't run as fast as he used to but he believes he still looks pretty cool. He has many misconceptions. Like his dog, he has trouble appreciating someone has watched over him and coaxed his circumstances to bear fruit.

It's easy to see life as a series of accomplishments, more difficult to see it as a long line of gifts. The old man sometimes camps out in the center of his own universe, minimizing the Author of all that is good and not recalling the free gifts bestowed. Or forgetting everyone who ever helped him or was patient with his stupidity. Or encouraged him with their praise.

When he forgets these things, he might as well drop down on all fours, harking back to the distant past he came from. Before he first stood up on two legs long ago and began to act like he knew what he was doing. Or could figure it out if he had to. As if such were possible.

Maggie would never act like that. She may think highly of herself, but she knows her limits and knows to wait for help when she needs it. She's never tried to figure it all out. She may be smarter than we think.

David Griffin, copyright 2013

The Windswept Press
Murrells Inlet, South Carolina

dave@windsweptpress.com