

## Helping Out

*Murphy the Dog writes of how helpful she is to her “servants,” the old couple who adopted her.*

Humans have strange customs. Many normal events disturb them, including most of their bodily functions. For example, they act embarrassed about their flatulence. I don't know why. It's the most natural of mammal functions. And it makes it easier for me to find them in the dark.

They are also what some might call “transaction oriented.” They count up what was done for you and expect you to return the favor one way or another.

Well, maybe that's not such a bad idea. If I added up all I do around the house for the old man and woman, I could present the list and they would surely realize how good I am to them. I think it would be an important lesson for my aging servants to be apprised of all I do to help them.

I'm not sure I know why each of the chores I work on are helpful. I just have a sense they are. Call it instinct. For example, it feels important to bark constantly while the vacuum cleaner is running. The machine makes a scary high pitched sound, and I guess I'm trying to out-shout it. Also in this category of what I do selflessly for my old servants is to lick the bottom of the shower almost dry. Herself doesn't seem to mind. Himself does. You'd think he'd appreciate my efforts, but all he has to say when he catches me is, “If I get Athlete's Foot, I'll know who to blame.” If he gets Athlete's Foot, it'll be the first time in twenty years anything athletic has been associated with him.

Among all the chores I perform, the one

most helpful ... or so it seems to me ... is to bring home a dead squirrel for supper. They haven't cooked one up yet but I continue to pull the little critters through the back door and into the kitchen in the hope they will eventually want to try one. Their diet is quite unimaginative. Mine would be too if it weren't for the great outdoors.

I also defend our home from a variety of truly dangerous characters such as the mail lady, the UPS man (Brown, he's called) and those weasel-y little future real estate mavens, the Girl Scouts. I won't admit I like their cookies. Because when they see me they want to pick me up and squeeze the daylights out of me. That hurts, I tell you. Little girls ... all they do is compete with each other. Who gets to hug me first? Who promises me the most cookies when they are finally shipped in? And there's always a girl who really, really, really would like to have a dog like me and would make plans to rescue me from my old servants in the middle of the night, but her current life plan does not allow any emotional commitments, let alone misdemeanor charges.

We haven't exhausted my list of talents. If I've known you for more than five minutes, I'm really good at just following you around so I can be there in case you need me. I'll always walk in front of you and you'll complain about tripping over me, but in my culture the helper always walks ahead to make the path safe.

My all time favorite ... cleaning up dishes and pots and pans. Himself always wants to whisk them away into the dishwasher before I can get my tongue on any of them. He says he's worried about my germs. I wonder why he's not worried when he licks the remaining ice cream out of the empty dish. He should let me do it. I'm the dog, after all.

When I learn to drive, you can be sure I won't be taking him out for ice cream.

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