We Are Family

Our grandson reached the ripe old age of 19 on Monday and we decided against going out for dinner and to get the dinner brought to us. Just a carryout from a local Italian restaurant we use regularly but a bit of a family tradition with us.

It was a warm evening with little air circulating and we were able to sit outside and enjoy one of those still, rain-free summer evenings that seem to be getting rarer by the day in Scotland. My son had brought along Lola. It was her first visit to our place. She was small and dainty but we could already tell she was a bit if an extrovert and not one to sit still for more than a few minutes. One if those types who fidgets and get up and moves from person to person to listen and see what she can gleam from everyone.

As the evening progressed and the sky showed the first signs of darkening, as it does at the tail-end of summer, we could hear music and laughter as well as some shouting from the wooded area behind our house. This seemed to be getting louder and louder and Lola, new guest or not, was having no of it. Getting up with a start she quickly set off in the direction of our back fence, breaking into a run as the music and raucous behaviour from the trees beyond obviously started to get to her. Several of us rose from our peaceful table setting and rushed to catch up with her, my son in particular breaking into a sweat and shouting on her to stop and come back.

All to know avail, however, as Lola darted through the clump of trees at our back of the garden, through a gap in the fence and disappeared into the woods. We had no sight of her but could her presence causing a noisy commotion, with much shouting, squealing and running and breaking of branches, as the invisible crowds seemed to scatter in all directions, still hidden from us by the trees

My son was first to arrive at the back fence but standing over 6 feet with a build to match there was no way he was going through the same gap in the fence. With the squealing and shouting now making him more than anxious to find out what Lola was doing to the assembled revellers and (judging by the smell) pot smokers hidden from us by the trees, he took a a run and scaled the fence dropping over into a thick clump of tall bushes full of thorns, his swearing turning the air blue as he tried to untangle himself and move on into the dark woods.

I looked around to see grandson and daughter-in-law squeezing through the gap in the fence that Lola had seemed to glide through just a few moments earlier, shouting out to Lola and to whoever else was in the trees to take it easy and calm down.

A few moments later my son somehow squeezed through the gap in the fence, carrying Lola, with my grandson and daughter-in-law climbing through behind her, trying to hold her back from making another attempt to get to the revellers.

My son put her down, patting her on the head and rubbing under her chin to try to pacify her and it seemed to work. She run ahead and darted from left to right, picking up the small rubber balls that he had brought along with her to play with.

No need to panic if you have read this so far. Lola is a dog, a new addition to the family to replace Sammy, the 12 year-old German shepherd that died a few months ago. Much smaller but also much harder to get hold of when she decides to make a break for it in response to any noise or would-be intruders.

The gap in the fence is no more. Unfortunately, neither is the warm summer nights. This is Scotland after all.

Tom Kelly

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