

Wascal the Wonderdog

A Story by

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“But you just went outside!” I said to my dog Wascal in exasperation. She scratched the front door again, her signal that she needed “to go.” I am a commercial artist and was working on an assignment so I needed peace and quiet. I sighed with irritation at this latest interruption.

Not 20 minutes before, I’d stopped in the middle of my work to walk her out to a vacant lot. Wascal had taken her sweet time doing her business, sniffing at every blade of grass before selecting the ideal spot.

As we walked back to the house, I noticed the sun shining on some cumulus clouds building into magnificent pillars in the late afternoon sky. Normally, I’d have run for my art supplies and tried to capture the beautiful scene in paint, but I had a set of furniture illustrations due the next day. Looking at the clouds, I thought: just my rotten luck to have to unplug my computer for a damned electrical storm.

Inside, back at my desk, I faced a long night of repetitive toil that would leave me bleary-eyed for tomorrow’s presentation. And if the threatened storm blew in, I might not finish the drawings. I tried not to think about it.

As soon as I started working again, Wascal began to pester me, making it difficult to concentrate. Clenching my teeth in frustration, I finally gave her a chewy treat. She then proceeded to gnaw right next to me as I tried to work. The wet rawhide smell drifted upwards, aggravating my anxious stomach.

I shouted at her, “I have a deadline! Go in the other room to chew that thing.” Wascal looked up in hurt surprise. Picking up her soggy chew strip, she sulked into the other room. A pang of regret flashed through my heart.

“I’m sorry,” I called to her, “but I have to finish these drawings.” Wascal reappeared

in the doorway, tail wagging, the gelatinous glob of rawhide in her smiling mouth. I got up, patted her head and said, “After I finish my work, we’ll go for a walk.”

Technically, this was not a lie; but it was somewhat dishonest because I knew it might not happen for several hours. I thought the matter was settled; but less than five minutes later, Wascal was scratching the front door with great determination.

“Not again!” I complained. “This is ridiculous! Wascal, I have to get my work done. I’m not taking you outside every time you get bored.” I tried to ignore her, but it was impossible. First she used the “head in my lap” routine, looking up at me with poignant, loving brown eyes. When this didn’t work, she tried climbing up my torso with her front paws. Her toenails snagged my shirt as she licked my face.

“I love you, let’s go outside now,” she told me in dog-telepathy.

“I love you too, but I’m busy,” I replied in people-speak. “Leave me alone now,” I said as I placed her paws back on the floor. She sat patiently by my side for a minute, staring at me intently, trying to send her message. Then she went back to the front door to scratch with even more passion.

“No!” I shouted.

She began her “Lassie-whine.” As I pressed the button to save my latest drawing, my computer froze up. I realized with stunned shock that I’d just lost the last 30 minutes of work.

“Aaargh!” I screamed. Wascal came over to put her head in my lap again. “Can we go outside now?” she pleaded telepathically. In disgust, I pushed away from my work-table.

I snatched Wascal’s leash off the hook and fastened it roughly to her collar. “Let’s go!” I snapped.

I opened the door to find a gloriously vivid rainbow, stretching all the way across the eastern sky! Wascal, instead of dashing outside, sat wagging her tail, looking

proudly up, as if she had personally contracted the rainbow from God’s Own Workshop. I stood enraptured by the sight. To heck with the furniture drawings!

I rushed to gather my art supplies and set up a folding chair outside so I could sketch the scene before it faded. Wascal happily lounged in the grass next to my chair. With quick, excited strokes I captured the spectacular image on paper, my heart expanding with joy as I worked.

Half an hour later, the rainbow had turned to gray. But I had managed to capture the essential elements, and the image was burned into my memory. I could easily complete the rainbow painting the next day.

I took the sketch and my beloved doggie back inside and switched my computer on. Wascal curled up at my feet and slept contentedly as the furniture renderings seemed to draw themselves.

In less than five hours, I finished the whole project. As I set the machine to print, Wascal woke up and fetched her leash for the promised walk.

She had earned it.

THE END