




LOST SOULS: FOUND!

*Inspiring Stories
About Beagles*



**Kyla Duffy and
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No Wussy Dog



There really are two distinct classifications—cat people and dog people—and while a dog person like me might love and appreciate the occasional cat, dogs will always hold very special places in our hearts.

I love a dog's unbridled passion whenever I walk in the door, whether I have been gone for five minutes or five hours. I love the way a dog will follow me from room to room for no other reason than to be close to me. I love the way something as simple as tossing a toy across the room can turn into an

unending game. (Toss a toy for a cat, and he'll just look at you thinking, "You moron. You threw it. You go pick it up.")

After living pet-less in New York for nine years, my husband Steven and I moved to Arizona and bought a house. Now it was time to get a dog. Steven argued adamantly against it. He never had a pet and couldn't understand why anyone would want one. They were messy; required lots of attention; had accidents; needed to be walked, fed, bathed, and taken to the vet at regular intervals; and had a much shorter lifespan than humans. He had seen what my parents and I went through during Angel's final days, agonizing over the decision to put my 15-year-old dog to sleep. When Mom and Dad delivered Angel's cremated remains to me in an urn (which I promptly placed on one of the bookshelves in the living room), Steven just shook his head and chalked it up to yet another reason not to get a pet.

But my persistence finally paid off, and Steven relented to adopt a dog under two very strict conditions: "First of all, I don't want no wussy dog!" he stated firmly. "No little fluffy thing that you carry around in your purse. Nope. No way."

"But honey, I don't even carry a purse," I reminded him. He just held up his hand for my silence.

"And second, let's just remember this was your idea, which makes it your dog. You get to do all that crazy dog stuff that dog people do. Don't expect me to go out picking up poop. Nope. Not happening."

I just smiled and kissed him and nodded. "Whatever you say, honey."

We agreed right away that we wanted a rescue dog. Why perpetuate the cycle of overpopulation when there are

millions of wonderful dogs who have been abandoned and are just waiting for a family?

We discussed breeds, temperaments, and size, and decided that our house and yard would be best for a medium-sized dog, one that would adhere to Steven's "no wussy dog" rule but would be small enough that it wouldn't overtake the house and make it feel crowded. When Steven off-handedly remarked that he always thought a Beagle would be a pretty cool dog, I jumped at the suggestion. I'd gotten so used to him just shrugging his shoulders and saying, "Eh, whatever you want." Now that he expressed interest in a Beagle, I finally had something to set my sights on. With a few clicks of the mouse, I was on Arizona Beagle Rescue's (AZBR) website oohing and aahing over photos.

Overall, a Beagle seemed to be just the dog Steven and I were looking for: medium-size, loving, playful, energetic, extremely loyal, and intelligent. We were a little concerned about their known counter-surfing behavior and how most experts recommend never letting Beagles off-leash because they have a tendency to run off if they catch a scent to follow, but the positive aspects of the breed far outweighed the negative.

Once our application was approved, I scheduled a home visit with one of AZBR's volunteers, so they could come and check out the living conditions and make sure our yard was secure enough to keep a curious Beagle from escaping. Steven just shook his head in disbelief.

"Are you kidding me?" he laughed. "Any idiot can bring an innocent child into this world, and we have to have a home visit? For a dog?"

We passed the inspection with flying colors and received a congratulatory email the very next day. Then it was time to wait for the adoptions coordinator to contact us with potential matches. As the days and weeks passed, Steven and I prepared ourselves for our new arrival like expectant parents. We purchased a crate and a comfortable dog bed. We picked out various chew toys and a red AC/DC guitar with a squeaker inside. We bought treats shaped like little bones. We made lists of possible names and made fun of each other's choices. We had everything. All we needed was a dog.

After a month of waiting, an email finally arrived asking if we would like to meet Electra, a newly-rescued, eight-month-old Beagle/Basset mix. I logged onto the AZBR website immediately. There were two blurry photos. No description. No details. Nothing. Nevertheless, I contacted Electra's foster mom and made arrangements to meet the Saturday before Thanksgiving.

The usual AZBR protocol is for the prospective adopters to make arrangements to meet at the foster's house. Adopters do not notify the foster directly about their intentions to adopt or not. Instead, they return home and contact the adoptions coordinator. This system saves any embarrassment or hard feelings should the potential adopters decide not to take the dog for any reason. But the day before we were supposed to go for the visit, Electra's foster mom called me again with a small amendment to the usual plans.

"Here's the deal," she explained. "I'm leaving first thing Tuesday morning for Thanksgiving and a conference for work. I'm going to be gone three weeks. I called the rescue

and worked it out, so if you decide you like Electra, I'll have all the paperwork here for you to sign, and you can take her home that day."

"Wow, sure. That sounds great," I said, wondering if perhaps things were suddenly running so smoothly because we had found the dog who was meant for us. I tried not to get my hopes up, but my pounding heart betrayed me.

We arrived at the foster mom's house and rang the bell. A cacophony of barks and howls greeted us through the screen door. There were three Beagles bouncing and falling over each other when we entered.

"There," the foster mom said, pointing to a dog standing so silently on the other side of the room that I hadn't even noticed her. "That's Electra."

She stood, waiting patiently for her turn to greet us. I leaned over and held out my hand. Electra lowered her head and trotted over. She didn't even stop to sniff my outstretched hand. Instead, she reared up on her hind legs, put her paws on my thighs and turned her droopy hound dog face up to mine. I rubbed her long floppy ears and ran my hands along her smooth black sides. I knew from the second I saw her, from the moment I touched her, Electra was just who we had been looking for.



Lori Romano

