

No Name Dog

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He didn't have a name when we got him and after five weeks and we still hadn't named him. It was a hyper, little dog and we were still looking for some characteristic other than hyper or nuts or yappy for a fitting name. That he didn't have a name might have been why he such a strange little dog. But then, again, we should have known something was wrong with the dog when the man who gave it to us brought the it in the trunk of his car. The moment the trunk was opened, the dog jumped out becoming a white blur as it ran in wild gyrations in front of the house. When Papa asked the man the age of the dog, the man mumbled incoherently and quickly got in the his car and drove off.

And that was the way it was. The dog jumped and ran in jerky movements at full throttle and never stopped yapping. Perhaps he was asking for a name and we couldn't think of a good one because of his yapping. The yapping was so constant that after a few days it didn't bother us anymore. In fact, it was almost comforting, like having the TV on for the noise.

Then, one day it stopped. We knew immediately that something was wrong, but it was hours before we realized "No Name" was gone. We looked everywhere. We canvassed the neighborhood. We posted signs. We offered rewards. But still no "No Name." And that night it was so quiet, we couldn't sleep. We were relieved and

at the same time felt guilty. The dog had come and gone and we didn't even name him.

It was not until the next day in the afternoon that Mama found "No Name." He was in the chest freezer. He must've jumped in when Mama took out the meat for dinner and without seeing closed the lid trapping "No Name" inside. He frozen stiff as a board. Icy cycles had formed along his canines enlarging his fangs so that it looked like a miniature saber tooth tiger or a vampire dog--a fitting companion for Dracula. Dracula's lap dog. Actually this was the first time I had really taken a good look at him. He was a cute little white dog with a few brown spots, pointed ears and a stubby erect tail. I'm not too sure about the eyes, they were kinda glazed over.

I really did feel bad, but then Papa came by. "Oh," he said, "I can fix that, 'No Name' will be okay. Bring that dog to the work bench. So I took "No Name" out of the freezer and carefully took him to the garage. I didn't want to drop him because he might crack. By the time I got there, Papa had already cleared a spot on the bench and was getting a funnel and some rubber tubing. I carefully placed the dog on the bench. "Get me some gasoline," he said. I went to the gasoline can and got a small jar of it. "No," he said, "I need more, get at least a pint." When I got back with the pint of gasoline, Papa had already inserted the rubber tubing into the throat of "No Name" and had started pouring the small container of gasoline into the funnel that was connected to the tubing. "Hold the dog up so the gasoline will get into the dog."

I held him with both hands as Papa poured the pint of gasoline into the funnel. It was just a subtle thing at first, perhaps a tiny movement, like a single heart beat. Then I felt the dog warming up. There was some sporadic twitching which quickly turned violently. It was like holding a giant, ringing alarm clock. No growling, no snapping just short, quick incessant pantings and quivering muscle spasms and legs with bulging veins that would never cease moving. The dog never changed expression. It had a painted face with glazed, brown beady eyes and a slightly open mouth that looked like a mad grin. The strangest characteristic of the dog was that it didn't feel like a dog. It was hard -- like touching a piece of wood. I couldn't hold him anymore and I let him go.

If at first it was a blur, now it was a white streak. "No Name" found the boundary of our fenced backyard and started tracing a large rectangle along the perimeter of the yard. It looked like it wanted to be at all four corners at the same time. "It'll calm down after a while," Papa said. In a few minutes the pattern became a path and in a few hours it became a trench about 9 inches deep and twice as wide as the dog -- a perfectly rectangular trench with just slightly rounded corners. When the dog was on the far side, only its ears and its tail could be seen from the house.

"What a cute, little dog," the elderly lady visitor said. The lady was a large-boned, heavysset woman with a kindly face, who ambled slowly as she moved. "What's its name?"

"It doesn't have a name."

The lady stepped out into the back yard and called the dog. Almost like magic, as if some innate, mysterious and mystical force, radiating from this woman had struck a delicate chord and forced a response from the dog. The dog jumped out of its trench and came to her, or rather through her and through the open door and into the house. The lady slowly entered and closed the door. By the time the lady sat on the sofa, the dog had made several complete circuits of the house at full speed, bouncing off the walls when it made quick turns. The dog jumped on her lap and was quickly off again jumping from the sofa to the chair to the other chair to the floor through the dining room into the kitchen and back again.

"Active little fellow, isn't he?" she said calmly as the dog once more came by her, this time across the shoulders.

The attraction of the dog to this lady was undeniable. The dog kept making shorter and faster circuits, soon limiting his orbits to the living room and there was no doubt that the focal point was the lady. Yet, this attraction did not seem to generate from affection, but seemed more like a great, impersonal and universal force -- like gravity -- that was pulling this dog toward the lady and the dog seemed determined to resist this force by running faster, but the force was too great and each successive orbit was smaller requiring an even greater escape velocity -- a velocity it could not attain.

At first the lady raised her hands in attempts to catch the dog, but soon she was raising her hands and legs and rolling on the sofa in protection against the cyclical

contacts that were occurring in accelerating frequency with this insane dog with the incessant panting, panting, panting.

"For heavens' sake!" she yelled, "Get this thing off me!"

And just as she said that, "No Name," seemed to have gotten a seizure in mid air and all movement stopped. His legs seemed locked in place. Of course, he continued to fall and the momentum let him slide the linoleum floor past the family room, through the parlor, across the dining room, through the breakfast area all the way to the kitchen wall which he hit with a thump. "No Name" had run out of gas.