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### **Another New Critter Joins the Arc**

A few years ago I went into a pet store to look at purchasing a fish. It was a simple, easy to care for pet. Then, a few months later, I went into the same pet store for fish food and came out with my cat Payton, my first “real” pet. Almost exactly six months later I walked into a pet store for cat food and walked out with my second cat, Dayton.

This weekend I went into a pet store for cat litter and as I walked in a handful of volunteers were stationed by the door. They had a variety of cats and dogs available for adoption and were packing up their animals, as it was nearly five in the afternoon. I glanced over and said hello as a small white and brown Shih Tzu-Terrier mixed breed dog came over and sat down beside me.

I bent over to pet the dog and inquired about his name. One of the young volunteers told me his name was Charlie. I asked how successful their adoptions were that Saturday and she told me that all but four of the nearly twenty dogs they brought in for adoption had been taken to new homes. Out of curiosity, I asked what shelter they were affiliated with. They told me they were volunteers that spent time going to high kill-rate shelters in Indiana and brought dogs to Indianapolis pet stores in hopes of getting the pets adopted.

I asked about Charlie’s story and was told that he was from the Jackson County Humane Society, which allegedly has a high rate of euthanasia among their animals. Many of you can already see where I’m going with this story. It’s difficult to have a small two-year-old dog sit down quietly next to your feet and look up at you as you’re being told that if he doesn’t get adopted soon, he’s likely going to be put down.

Needless to say, my trip to the pet store for a drum of cat litter turned into a trip for cat litter, a bag of dog food, a crate and some dog treats. I plopped down the surprisingly cheap \$80 for Charlie and I was handed his leash and vet records.

When I brought Charlie home, I was anxious to get him started on a potty break routine. Turns out, he already had one. We walked in the garage door and he went to the front door and barked. I put him on his leash and off we went. It took him all of just a few minutes and all 20 pounds of him *pulled me* back to the front door. That was almost too easy.

I had picked up some dog shampoo at the pet store and proceeded to give him a bath. Unlike the usual thrashing and wrestling with my cats, he hopped in quietly and stood still while I scrubbed away. That was too easy.

That night, he slept quietly at the foot of my bed and barely moved an inch. He never bothered my cats. Come Monday morning when it was time for me to go to work, I put him in his crate. This is where it got interesting. He immediately started thrashing around and barking loudly. I had to leave, so I went to the garage and got in my car. That evening, I came home and Charlie greeted me at the front door. Somehow, this smart little dog managed to beaver his metal cage to a point that he got the door open.

Surprisingly, nothing in the house was touched. No messes on the floor, no scratch marks, nothing. He proceeded to bark at the door to indicate his need to go outside soon after I arrived.

Frankly, I think I may have adopted another cat. This dog is almost eerily smart and well behaved. I've since taken the cage back since it proved useless and haven't had any problems in the home since.

Clearly I have to stop going to the pet store because my arc is full. But I wholeheartedly believe in supporting stray animals and your local animal shelters. You can contact the Washington County Humane Society at 883-4204 and you can help dogs like Charlie at the Jackson County Humane Society by calling 522-5200.