

MISSION IMPAWSSIBLE

BRYAN DAVIS

NOT SO FAMOUS DOG TALES - BOOK #2

Books by Bryan Davis

Not-So-Famous Dog Tales

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CHAPTER I

The Intelligence Test

“You lost the Slurpee contest,” Buffy the golden retriever said as she sat in front of the 7-Eleven cash-register counter. “When Bruno and his human came in, I tried to get Bruno to talk about it, but he refused. He didn’t want to shame you, I suppose, but I saw it all.”

Facing Buffy, Steve set his elbows on the counter, smiling at her. She always used longer sentences than most dogs did, especially when trying to sound intelligent. “True, Buffy.” He spoke human, able to understand the barks and yips of *dog* perfectly though unable to speak the language. “I lost to Bruno. But I had no idea he was going to trick me into getting a brain freeze.”

Buffy thumped her tail on the floor, a sign of being annoyed, though not angry. “That’s the very issue. I have a huge problem, and I need a partner who is not easily fooled, a highly

intelligent human who understands *dog*. Getting tricked by Bruno isn't a good sign."

Listening to the conversation, Sherlock, a border collie, chuckled as he sat reading a magazine open on the floor, turning pages with a paw, while Anastasia, a Russian wolfhound, browsed the pet treats aisle.

"I fell for Bruno's trick," Steve said, looking at Buffy again, "because it was a game. With something more important, I wouldn't get tricked so easily."

Buffy tilted her head and gazed at him with her lovely dark brown eyes, a perfect color complement to her long, golden coat. "That's a fair answer. But I would like to conduct an intelligence test. I invited Sherlock to be the judge because he is the smartest dog I know."

"Okay." Steve waved toward Sherlock. "Let's do it."

When Sherlock walked over and sat next to Buffy, he barked, "You may begin."

"Very well." Buffy looked at Steve. "Which of the following groups doesn't belong with the others: crows, dolphins, chimpanzees, or cats?"

"Crows," Steve said right away. "They're birds, and the other three are mammals."

Buffy winced. “No, no, no. The answer is obviously cats.”

Steve lifted his brow. “Cats? Why?”

“Because the other three species are smart, and cats are stupid.”

“Buffy,” Sherlock said, giving her a scolding look, “that’s rather prejudicial, isn’t it?”

She blinked at him. “Prejudicial? What does that mean?”

“Judging others without knowledge. Some cats are stupid, of course, but others are rather smart. I have met a few myself.”

“I am eleven human years old, and I have never met a smart cat.” Buffy looked at Steve again. “Next question. If it takes four minutes for a beagle to pick up a cat’s scent, how long would it take for a poodle to pick it up? Two minutes, five minutes, seven minutes, or ten minutes?”

Steve gave her an exaggerated nod. “Oh, I understand now. I have to think like a dog to get these questions right.”

“Correct,” Sherlock said, adding a flick of his tail. “This question is definitely more difficult for humans than it is for dogs.”



Steve tapped his chin with a finger as he whispered, “Think like a dog. Think like a dog.” Then he raised his finger high. “It’s a trick question, right? No dog can pick up a cat’s scent, because cats have no sense.”

Buffy let out a pleased yip. “Well, I like that!” She looked at Sherlock. “Is his answer acceptable?”

“Well, he’s right that it’s a trick question, but dogs would explain it like this—why would anyone send a poodle to track a cat when a beagle has already picked up the scent? Still, his answer is quite clever, a sign of high intelligence, though it reflects an unfounded hostility toward felines.”

Buffy shook her head. “I have no idea what all that means.”

“It means,” Steve said, “that not all cats are as bad as you think, and it also means that I passed the test.”

Buffy’s tail wagged like a windshield wiper in a thunderstorm. “Oh. Well, if Sherlock thinks so, then I suppose you did pass.”

Steve again set his elbows on the countertop. “Then how can I help you with your problem?”

Before Buffy could answer, Chance, an elderly beagle, walked in through the gap at the front door, as was his custom early in the morning. Steve glanced at the clock on the wall—5:48 a.m. Time for Chance to shoo the dogs out before Marla, the dayshift manager and dog hater, arrived.

Chance lifted his head and began a long mournful howl, telling a tale about a fireworks display that boomed and crackled for hours, driving nearly every dog in the neighborhood to the point of insanity. Although the dogs barked and whined, the humans didn't seem to care. The noise went on and on into the night.

After Anastasia grabbed a bag of beef nuggets in her teeth and rushed out the door, Sherlock ambled that way as he looked back at Buffy. "A pleasure to be of service. Call on me anytime."

The moment he left, Buffy let out a sigh of relief. "I like Sherlock, but when I'm around him, I'm always worried I might say something really dumb."

Steve smiled. Buffy seemed to have no idea that she had said some dumb things and that Sherlock had noticed. But she was kind and caring for the most part, so helping her solve a

problem would probably be a good idea. "Trust me. I understand. I'm married to a very smart woman, but if I ever say anything dumb, she never mentions it."

As Chase continued howling, Steve pinched a cooling hotdog from the rollers and tossed it toward him. He caught it and ambled out the door's gap, leaving Steve and Buffy alone in the store.

Steve scooped up Sherlock's magazine and laid it on its shelf, then grabbed a broom from a closet and began sweeping. He had mopped the floor earlier after Bruno visited with Major Weatherley, and the dogs who had come in since then hadn't dropped much hair. It wouldn't take long to finish. "So can I help you solve your problem?"

Buffy's tail whipped so hard, it created a breeze. "Yes. I think you can."

"Great." After putting the broom away, Steve closed the front door fully, crouched in front of Buffy, and scratched behind her ear. "Tell me your story."

She closed her eyes as she enjoyed the scratching. "Well, I mentioned certain animals in the test because some of them are involved."

Steve scrunched his brow. “Chimpanzees? Dolphins?”

Buffy opened her eyes. “No. Cats and crows. Well, maybe dolphins. I’m not sure. Anyway, I met this young boy who appeared to be in trouble because he—”

The sound of a motor interrupted as Marla’s pink minivan zoomed into the parking lot. Since Steve had stopped putting his Dogs Welcome sign on the front door, she wouldn’t see that, but she would definitely see Buffy. He pointed toward the rear of the store. “Go. I left the back door open a crack. I’ll meet you outside, and you can tell me more.”