

## Lost dog reunited with owner

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I was just coming home after a delightful visit to the dentist. Well, it was as easy as such things can be, though of course not really delightful—just a cleaning. I was looking forward to getting back into my research and writing on his current intellectual obsession, writing a philosophy paper on truth in science. I was driving by the elementary school a half-kilometer from my home, just before the Frog Pond park. The snow was mostly cleared from the roadways, but was piled fairly high along the sides, typically blocking access to or from the sidewalks except at the major intersections. The late morning sky was clear.

Then I saw the dog.

She was an unusually attractive dog, not just in her unknown breed and jet black color, but mostly in her enthusiastic cheerfulness. Her mouth was open, and her large, red tongue was out flopping up and down as she loped down the street. The street, not the sidewalk. She was on the opposite side, going in the opposite direction of his car.

After my first thought of ‘what a cute dog’, I almost immediately realized that she—at least I thought it was female—was lost. Also, that she was in danger of getting hit by a car. She had a collar, and was obviously seeking her owner, but was just running straight down the road. Uncharacteristically, I lowered my window to do something about it.

It was uncharacteristic, because I was not a really enthusiastic dog person. Oh, I liked them, I even loved them, but was very conscious of the fact that they were animals who roamed in the woods gathering dirt, shit, poison ivy oil, insects or whatever might be around. I just didn’t feel at ease goo-gooing and cooing at a dog while petting her fur, thus transferring whatever she picked up to my own precious ecosystem. Additionally, there was the fact that my children—although grown and away now, they visit now and again—were allergic to dog dander. No dog has ever been in my house or car since I owned them.

In addition to my aversion to inevitable yet unclassifiable buggies that might transfer to my home, hearth and body, was my attitude of wanting to help. I always wanted to help. My heart was always open and giving when someone asked—for anything. Yet, I frequently hesitated in the face of spontaneous need not directly requested. It was not uncommon that I passed by someone in need and later chided myself with ‘Damn! I should have helped’.

That needed to stop.

Hence, I was rather surprised yet pleased that I was bothering. The situation called for it, and I simply dropped my concerns and decided to help. I called out. “Hey, girl,” and whistled a friendly ‘come here’. She responded immediately. She stopped running down the road, turned towards my car as I pulled into a side road on my right and stopped. By the time I got out of the car, she was right there, smiling and licking my hand, as I reached down to pet her, come what may. I rubbed her head, and massaged her ears just as I learned from the movie *The Truth About Cats and Dogs*. If you can get to

their ears, they taught, it will sooth even a savage beast. Although, this one needed no soothing and was far from savage.

There was a tag on the collar. It said 'Charlie' and a phone number. Well, probably not female. "Hey, Charlie", I said sweetly, petting some more.

While I was doing this, other cars were stopping nearby, and then weaving around my car, since I was somewhat blocking entry to the side road. Then, all of a sudden, I noticed that someone was standing beside me. I looked up to a woman in the uniform of the city Animal Control agency. Behind her, on the other side of the road, was a man in similar uniform next to their van.

How odd, I thought, that they just happened to come along at this time. My natural paranoia towards government officials, especially in uniform, arose quickly from my gut to my throat. These were officials with the ability to abuse power and justify it. My hippie flared up, competing with my awareness of them as normal human beings when treated as such. All this flashed through my mind in a bare moment.

"Need any help?" the woman asked. "We have another dog in the back, so it would be hard to put them together." "No, its okay. I've got it." I sensed some suspicion in her tone, as is reasonable, not knowing what was in my mind. Mine was not the only paranoia. I pushed all those reactions down, and opened the back door of my car. The dog hopped right in, as if it were Charlie's own car. Thoughts of the dander, dog fur, various other stray organics infesting my car arose in my mind, but I also pushed them down. I fumbled with my phone to call Charlie's number, while the animal control agent looked on, I imagined trying to assure herself that I was doing the right thing. Here we were mutually suspicious and both simply trying to help the dog in our own way.

A woman answered, "Hello?" "I have Charlie." "Oh, wonderful." "Where are you?"

She hesitated. "I don't know."

"Well, I'm just down from the Frog Pond parking lot."

"Great," she responded. "I'll meet you there."

I disconnected, said thanks to the agent, and got in the car.

Charlie sat on his haunches in the back seat floor, leaning forward into the front, just at Robert's elbow. It was clearly his normal position in a car. He seemed right at home.

We drove the 30 seconds down to the parking lot, which was barely plowed, and stopped, not turning off the engine since it was pretty chilly. Charlie was transfixed on the entrance to the park walk around the pond. He clearly had been here many times before.

Time dragged. I guess she was not that close. I turned around to get a better parking position, facing outwards to the road, simply to see what Charlie would do. Charlie turned around, still directing his gaze intently to the walk entrance. That confirmed his familiarity and expectation. In 10 minutes, she strode out. I expected Charlie to get all excited, but he was nonchalant about it all. She came towards the car, I got out and opened the passenger door. Charlie and owner were reunited. I had expected Charlie to get all excited, running and jumping all over her, but that didn't happen. She thanked me briefly, grabbed Charlie's collar and directed him to her car, and he jumped in. Somewhat anticlimactic.

I got back in and drove home. I felt good about my actions. I had stepped out of my comfort zone once again on this new journey for me. This situation was unusual, and slightly bizarre with the animal control folks and all, yet it seemed quite normal. Strange, yet nonetheless ordinary.