

On the Positive Side

Christmas Eve mess almost leaves Snooter out in the cold

By Annabelle Simpson and Win Jacobs For the Sun-News

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Many of the Sun-News' younger readers know Snooter from Miss Jean's humane education readings at Coas Bookstore and in various elementary schools, as well as the Snooter Club at the Boys' and Girls' Club. The original story tells how Snooter, a little Chihuahua pup, was rescued (by purchase) from a scruffy old man and brought to a happy home. Spayed when she was old enough, Snooter looked forward to a long and healthy life.

But what neither Snooter nor the youngsters knew at the time was that the happy home was in fact a foster home, not her forever home. There came the day when a family came by to check out the dogs available for adoption at that home, and 8-year-old Becky zeroed in on Snooter, saying, "Daddy, Daddy, this is the one I want!"

She loved the wriggling little body and the kisses all over her face - Snooter was very enthusiastic! Becky cuddled her and crooned to her all the way to the new home, a long ride out into the country.

And for quite a while, all was well. But then came Christmas Eve.

Thud! The storm door slammed, almost but not quite catching the puppy's tail. "Get out of here and don't come back! Filthy mess!"

On the couch in front of the fireplace, Snooter had been snuggled up with her Becky, so comfortable and happy she didn't even realize she needed to go outside for a minute. Whoops! She was a little damp on the bottom. Suddenly, a hard hand was grabbing the loose skin at her neck and suddenly she was flying through the air and into the cold dark night.

Didn't Becky's daddy realize Snooter hadn't meant to piddle? Never did he drop bits of food from his plate to the floor, the way Becky and her brother did. Sometimes he barked commands that no one had yet taught Snooter - Stop! Shoo! Dammit! Snooter, in other words, knew Daddy didn't love her - but why this night did he have to turn so ugly?

Sadly, Snooter sank down on her haunches to wait for the door to open and let her back in. The concrete steps were cold. Hollering sounded inside the house, and she could hear Becky crying "But Daddy" Still the door didn't open, and still Snooter could only shiver.

Finally, she jumped off the concrete step and headed for the lean-to where EO the donkey and Big Red the old goat were kept. There was straw on the dirt floor, under the roof. Straw might be prickly, especially compared with her blanket in Becky's room, but it would be warmer than the concrete. Oh, she was so cold her paws ached.

But when she put her little nose under the beginning of the straw, Big Red did his best to butt her backward. EO brayed his loudest and meanest. Were they telling her there was no room under their roof? Come on, guys!

Snooter was scared now. There had been talk at the supper table of Daddy's losing his job, how money was going to be tight. It crossed Snooter's doggy mind that dog food might be an extravagance. Was that why Becky's dad had turned ugly? Just didn't want even to pretend the dog he'd never loved was still welcome in his house?

Oh, dear. Snooter's brain whirled her dizzy. She barked and barked. Then, she heard a familiar voice. "Snooter, come, Snooter!" Becky and her dad knelt down, Becky scooped Snooter up in her arms and her dad kept patting Snooter's head.

"I'm sorry, Snooter," said the man. "I got scared and angry when they fired me this afternoon. But I shouldn't have taken it out on you, or broken my promise to Becky, that she could keep you. I may not like dogs all that much, but you're special. You're ours!"

"Woof!" barked Snooter - "Merry Christmas!" in dogspeak

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