



TERRORIZED BY A LURCHER

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Several years ago, 3 of my beloved dogs died in one year. They were all 17 years old, and I was crushed. More accurately, I was devastated. So much so that I suffered broken heart syndrome and ended up in the hospital with heart failure. Losing them all was just more than I could bear.

When I got out of the hospital, I couldn't stand being in my house without them. Being there without them was sheer agony. I was going to end up in hospital again if I didn't distract myself from my grief...so I adopted a 7-month-old rescue puppy - not to replace my beloved dogs, just to distract myself from my pain. The puppy's first owner had nearly starved him to death. He was emaciated when I got him and I thought restoring him to health would be therapeutic for both him and me.

I named him Sherlock, after Sherlock Holmes. He is a Lurcher. If you haven't heard of Lurchers, they are dogs who were bred by poachers to steal things and oh my goodness, do they ever! Sherlock is the consummate thief so a better name for him may have been Fagan.

Technically Lurchers are a cross between a greyhound and a herding dog. However, the term is also used to describe dogs with an irresistible drive to steal, regardless of their breeding. I use the term here to describe Sherlock's character and not his breeding.

Sherlock is part standard poodle and part border collie - 2 of the smartest breeds - which means that his IQ easily exceeds mine. He is off-handedly handsome with a dash of mischievousness thrown in for good measure. In the dog world he is the functional equivalent of Elvis Presley.

The first night that I had Sherlock I got into bed and sat on my stapler. He had stolen it from my desk and hidden it under my comforter. Thereafter Sherlock became obsessed with the bathroom. For some reason he decided that its contents were misplaced and belonged in my living room. Thereafter he dedicated himself to rectifying the problem as he saw it. Every day he industriously moved as many bathroom articles as he could into my living room. He was forever running by me with the shower mat and the metal drain cover for the shower. It aggravated him to no end that I returned everything to the bathroom. He so adamantly believed they were misplaced that he would try stealing them from me directly. On one especially notable occasion he tried to swipe the shower mat from underneath me *while I was showering!* He actually got right into the shower with me, body slammed me into the side of the shower like we were hockey players, and then tried

to rip it away from me. I must say however that I do have my pride and in that instance I clung to the shower mat with all my might and was victorious in keeping it in the shower. Since then we have had several donnybrooks in the shower as I fought to retain my shower accessories.

As I was doing things around my house it was not unusual for Sherlock to run past me with things like a 12-pack of toilet paper, the toilet plunger, my hair dryer, various hair products, slippers, etc.

He eventually tired of the bathroom contents and moved on to the kitchen. His obsession there was to move everything from the kitchen to my bed. One night I found an apple and then the next night 7 apples in my bed. At different times I have found potatoes, boxes of pasta, tomatoes, and his favorites – carrots. Most recently I arrived home from shopping and set my grocery bags on the floor *briefly* as I was putting things away. I went to bed not long afterwards and discovered that he had stolen a bag of frozen peas, ripped the bag open, and thrown the peas all over my bed like confetti. Other foodstuffs that he has pilfered which ended up in my bed include a frozen pizza, a bottle of catsup, a bag of celery, cantaloupes, cucumbers, bottles of salad dressings, crackers, etc.

All of that is to say nothing of non-perishable items such as hammers, screw drivers, wrenches, fingernail clippers, makeup, sundry shoes, clothing, earrings, makeup, as well as a box of new security cameras waiting to be installed and anything else he can get his mouth on.

Sherlock is also a masterful pickpocket. He is so stealthy that he has occasionally fleeced me personally, making off with my wallet, cash, and car keys without my noticing.

Nowadays Sherlock spends much less time during the day rearranging my home, choosing instead to operate nocturnally. That way he can operate unhindered by me which allows him to get a lot more accomplished.

At night I hear him running around, carrying things, dropping things, dragging things, destroying things, playing with things, knocking things over, things falling off the kitchen counter, things falling off my bathroom vanity, etc. One night he was on a binder and got carried away. He attempted to pull my comforter right off me and only when I put up a fight did he relent. He did, however, grab a shoe on his way out of my bedroom.

For me Sherlock's nocturnal activities are a pain because every morning my home looks like a bomb went off. It always takes me ½ to 1 full hour to restore it to its normal state.

On one occasion Sherlock's nightly antics nearly caused me to be arrested or involuntarily committed, and lest you think I am joking, I most assuredly am not. It is one of the biggest embarrassments of my life. That particular morning, I got up and went into my living room. No surprise...it looked like it does every morning - like a giant had picked my home

up, turned it upside down, shook it, and then put it back down. Since I was working on a project with a looming deadline, I didn't have time for the usual morning clean up – I just had to get right to work. After about 1 1/2 hours of intense work and concentration, something hit the back of my head and dirt flew all over my desk. Startled, I swung around to see Sherlock standing perfectly still in the middle of the living room. As I took in the situation I was dumbfounded. He had taken all my houseplants (I have a lot) out of their pots and shaken the dirt off their roots. In his mind I am sure he viewed his actions as a liberation of the plants so that they were now "free-range!" My entire living room was strewn with dirt and de-potted house plants, in addition to the usual shower mat, and other bathroom contents.

My darling old dog, Audrey, who is hard of hearing and losing her eyesight was sound asleep on the sofa, was covered in dirt as was everything else in the living room. I was so exasperated that instead of cleaning up immediately I decided to preserve my sanity and get out of the house to do some errands. When I returned home UPS had left a package at my front door. I brought it in and got back to work, ignoring the insane mess until later when I would have the time and energy to undertake the massive cleanup.

After about 10 minutes my dogs started barking hysterically indicating that someone was at the door. I went to the front door to see who it was and there was a police car parked in my driveway. It was parked so as to block any escape I may try to make in my car. That is standard procedure when the police believe they will be taking someone into custody – by arrest or involuntary commitment. At that point I realized that they had come for me and that I was in serious trouble. Since I lead a quiet, law-abiding life I couldn't fathom what I had done to warrant being taken into custody for any reason.

I didn't see anyone at the front door but just then I heard pounding on my side door. I went to the side door but nobody was there. Then I heard pounding on the living room window. I went to that window but nobody was there. Then I heard pounding on my bedroom window. My bedroom was dark and there was light from a flashlight dancing about the room. Very odd because it was late morning. I threw back the curtain and there was a police officer. He yelled "*Are you Cathy Wolfe? Are you OK?*" I told him I was fine and asked what this was all about. He said that the UPS driver who delivered the package had looked in my front door and was alarmed by the state of my living room. He was afraid that there had either been a violent altercation and it was a crime scene, or the resident was suffering from some sort of mental or physical condition that was so serious that they were unable to care for themselves. He was so worried that he called the police to do a *welfare check!* The officer was very courteous and chatted me up to determine if I was mentally competent. Fortunately, he concluded that I was, albeit odd, and then went on his way.

That incident confirmed my belief that if you are going to own a Lurcher you need to leave your pride at the door because if you don't your Lurcher will steal it.