

Clarion Review

Juvenile Fiction

Buddy's Tail

K. Anne Russell

CreateSpace

978-1-4564-1195-4

Four Stars (out of Five)

Buddy's Tail takes readers on a delightful adventure from a dog's point of view. Believing that all dogs are good, MacKenzie, a border collie, narrates her story of love and companionship.

MacKenzie and her friend Javier, a Chihuahua, take care of Buddy, a standard poodle, who is mistreated by his human owners. Buddy appreciates the food and the friendship that brightens his neglected life. When MacKenzie and Javier tell Buddy his people are cruel to him, Buddy makes excuses for them: "They're just forgetful...They'll be home soon and will fill my dish...I am thankful for the home I have and loyal to my humans."

When the owners try to sell their house, Buddy meets a lady who gives him love and attention. He tells his friends, "She rubbed under my ears. Stroked my cheeks. I don't think I've ever felt anything so good." However, he is sold to someone else, and after a series of unsuccessful new homes, he's returned to his old home. Eventually, Buddy dies of hunger and thirst. The focus quickly shifts from Buddy's death to "Haven" (dog heaven). The unanswered questions surrounding Buddy's death and the move may leave some children with a sense of sadness.

Sonny, the good shepherd in charge of "Haven," allows Buddy to return to earth for a short period of time to live with the lady of his dreams.

MacKenzie's friendship and support is a constant comfort at every point in Buddy's earthly and heavenly lives. The dogs form lifetime friendships that continue in the next world.

Author K. Anne Russell has crafted a charming tale of good characters who value life and each other. At one point, Buddy tells his friend, "But MacKenzie, you're not responsible for righting every wrong...Sometimes, I think you're carrying the whole world on your shoulders, a[t] least the canine part of it...You're my guardian angel."

Russell's canine characters not only possess the best of human characteristics and show

genuine kindness to each other, but also have distinctive personalities. The well-developed plot is written to delight both adults and children. The story offers lessons about relationships and taking care of each other without preaching. When Buddy breaks the rules of Haven, MacKenzie defends him before the Communal Tribunal and tries to convince the judges that goodness should outweigh the breaking of a rule when all the consequences are positive.

Although *Buddy's Tail* carries some serious themes for children regarding the death of a pet, it will serve as a valuable aid in teaching children about friendship, death, and the relationships between animals and humans. *Buddy's Tail* is a good book for those looking for a reason to renew their faith in the world.

Pat McGrath Avery