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Buster the Ferrari

Walt Appel
Walker/Pedersen, illustrator
CreateSpace
Unknown $0.00 (pp)
978-1-4564-6846-0

Buster the Ferrari Basset is one more entry into today's crowded category of dog stories. However, this book has some qualities that differentiate it from the standard dog tale.

For one thing, Walt Appel's reminiscence is not just about the escapades of Buster, nicknamed "the Ferrari Basset" for his energy and speed, qualities atypical of the breed. It is also a love story. The author recounts how he met and married Christina, his Swedish wife. They lived with numerous dogs until Christina's untimely death due to a brain tumor.

Appel devotes the book's early chapters to the happy days of his marriage, including some details about Christina's Swedish traditions, which lends a unique slant to the story. The reader also learns a bit about the dogs (and one large cat named Tigger) that preceded Buster in the Appel household.

When all of the dogs are gone except for Shep, the Appel's Old English sheepdog mix, Walt and Christina decide to adopt another dog from BROOD (Basset Rescue Of Old Dominion). They learn that there is a "very energetic" one-year-old male named Buster available for adoption. Buster becomes part of the Appel household, despite Shep's protestations.

The remainder of the story revolves around Buster's shenanigans, and there are quite a few of them. Some of the most humorous happen when food is around. Buster is acutely aware of food left on a kitchen counter, and he is a master at snitching a scrap when the dining room table is left unguarded, even for a moment.

Appel is at his strongest when he describes Buster's antics; clearly, the dog rejects his breed's reputation for being laid-back and lumbering. Of course, through it all, the mischievous Buster is relentlessly endearing.

Walt Appel's knack for descriptive language makes the story engaging. The accompanying illustrations by two friends of Appel's are charming and lend a great deal of visual humor and style to the text. A number of color photographs are included to help bring the story to life.

The book does have a few shortcomings including verb tense issues, an abrupt end to the narrative, and typographical errors (on page 99 "If fact…" should be "In fact…"). Still, *Buster the Ferrari Basset* is an amusing story that any "dog person" will surely enjoy.

BARRY SILVERSTEIN (August 2, 2011)

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