

Greeting Disorder

A dog story by famed TV writer MERRILL MARKOE

One afternoon, having arrived home in a bad mood after a long series of thankless chores, it occurred to me that it was time to confront my dogs about an issue between us that was building to insurmountable proportions. I called for the two largest ones, Lewis and Tex, to join me in my office. Since they never come when I call, the two others arrived. I locked them in there and cornered Lewis and Tex in the front room, where we finally thrashed the whole thing out.

Me: Okay, you two, LISTEN CAREFULLY. In the future it is neither necessary nor desirable for you to greet me every single time I walk in the door. Unless a minimum of two hours has passed, the previous greeting is still in effect. In other words, if I come IN the door, and you greet me, and then several minutes later I go OUT the door, only to return in a matter of seconds, you do NOT have to greet me again.

Lewis: Ha-ha. Good one.

Me: I am serious. Maybe it would be best at this point to discuss the PURPOSE of a greeting.

Tex: What is she talking about?

Me: A GREETING is what you give someone you have not seen IN A WHILE. A WHILE is a period of time of more than two hours. Try another example. I come in the door after a day of work ...

Tex: I would be so glad to see you that I would rush up and hurl myself at you. Then I would get up on my back legs, knocking you over, causing you to drop whatever you were carrying ...

Lewis: Listen to what you're saying,

bro. You know we're not supposed to get UP on her.

Me: Very good, Lewis. Thank you.

Lewis: Which is why the approach I take is to circle closely, using body blocks. Throwing my whole weight against her legs so that she falls over and drops everything. Same exact result. I never have to get UP on her at all.

Me: You're missing the point. All that is required from a greeting is a simple show of enthusiasm. Eyes filled with a certain amount of joy, a bit of tail-wagging. THAT'S IT.

Tex: What did she say?

Lewis: Just go with it. She likes to hear herself talk.

Me: Now that we've defined a greeting ...

Lewis: And by the way, I like to make mine last until she's down on her knees, if not flat on her back ...

Tex: I've seen your work, buddy. You're an artist.

Me: ... Let's try one more exercise to see if you are getting the point. Okay. Imagine this. I decide to take out the garbage. I walk to the door ...

Lewis: I'm right there with you.

Tex: I beat you there.

Lewis: The heck you do.

Me: I exit. About eight seconds later I come back *in* the door. What would be your response?

Tex: I'd be so thrilled to see you that I'd run up to you, hurl myself at you, then I'd get up on my back legs and ...

Lewis: Dolt. You don't listen. We just went through this a second ago. It's circle and hurl, circle and lean ... and hurl. Circle and hurl.

Me: STOP! Listen to me! The point was that you do not have to greet me again.

You just greeted me seconds before. I'm sorry if this seems confusing but I'd like you just to blindly accept this rule and obey it. DO NOT GREET ME EVERY TIME I COME IN THE DOOR.

Lewis: So you're asking us to be rude.

Tex: No, no, I hear you. Tell me if I've got it straight. You go OUT the door, and then you come RIGHT BACK IN. We do NOT get up on you. No. We circle and hurl, circle and lean and hurl ...

Lewis: There you go. Step on her feet and trip her. Tangle her up, and lean on her and at the same time circle ...

Tex: I can definitely do that.

Lewis: Where is she going?

Tex: Looks like the bedroom. Whoa. She closed the door. How long is she going to be gone?

Lewis: I don't know. All I know is suddenly we're very alone.

Tex: How long has it been since we saw her?

Lewis: I don't know. A month? A year?

Tex: Wait! The door is opening. Oh my God! She's back!

Lewis: Dear God, thank you! She's back. Welcome back!

Tex: Come let me get up on you and give you a nice big kiss. **LC**

A Closer Look

1 Has Markoe captured distinct personalities in Lewis and Tex?

2 What elements of a dog's point of view does Markoe incorporate? What elements of a dog's life might she have used, but chose not to?

3 What literary device is Markoe using in giving voice to Lewis and Tex?