

CHAPTER 4

A BONNY DOG

Becky was a delightful and independent dog who initiated most of what constituted our relationship. Due to her first owner's long term illness, she had developed what might be called, "reactive attachment disorder" with people. It was understandable that she formed a tight, almost dependent relationship with Mandy. Scotties need to feel they are in some kind of mutually respectful relationship, and she was not looking for it in a human being. My guess is that nobody in her former household actually talked to her as a conversational partner. Becky had learned to turn a deaf ear to people talk. A dog with a soul so deep, a heart so large, a mind so sharp, is capable of unpredictable or unexpected behavior. Her choosing to make Mandy her best friend was a surprise, even though I was aware that she did not really *listen* to me. Contributing to this problem, along with the natural inclination to ignore calls she did not want to comply with, was the fact that she was slowly losing her hearing. I thought she was completely deaf before she actually was because of her habit of not paying attention to what I said to her. One extraordinary day, Becky realized that I *was* talking to her specifically. Recognition of this revelation came over her, and her ears pricked toward me. From then on, she watched my mouth and seemed to focus on the sound of my voice instead of simply turning her head away as if a human voice had no relevance to her. Those ear pricks and attentive moves were such a blessing to me: I knew I had made contact with Becky before she went totally deaf. I talk to my dogs constantly, share my thoughts and feelings with them, and integrate them deeply into