

CHAPTER 5

PARADISE LOST

In 2009, at age twelve, our Mandy developed bladder cancer, still a plague among Scottish Terriers. I thought we had dodged this bullet since it usually occurs earlier. Except for periodic bladder infections, treatment kept the cancer at bay reasonably well for the next two years. Mandy succumbed to the disease three days after her fourteenth birthday. Her loss was devastating to both myself and to Becky. Oddly, during those two years, Becky had become a Mandy devotee, and was totally dependent upon her for their daily life activities. They were almost inseparable, and Becky was now a dog's dog. No explanation for this development, unless Becky knew that Mandy was terminally ill.

There were two phases of life for Becky—With Mandy and Without Mandy, who was the anchor dog of our home and hearts, the friendly “sister” and coach of the adopted Rescues who came after her. The shock of her goneness took the heart out of Becky. I have never seen a dog grieve so deeply and inconsolably. It was as though her whole world had crashed. Her personality completely changed. Becky became morose, lethargic, and unresponsive to anything going on around her. She gave up all her previously happy activities, stopped chasing squirrels, playing with toys, going for walks, even barking. She fell silent and began a life of isolation and unassuaged grief, a ghost of her former self. She was nearly deaf at this point, which made her even more socially inhibited. The only thing she volunteered to do was to go for a ride in the car, and that I gladly provided once or twice a day. However, much as I tried, I was unsuccessful in drawing her out of her deep depression. Becky became even more inscrutable.