



WRITERS GROUP March Assignment

The magnificent breed of German Shepherd has been exalted through its participation in police work, the military and as service animals. If you have ever had the opportunity to cuddle a Shepherd, you know their fur is soft, dense and silky, except for the back where the hairs are more bristle-like. The adult Shepherd has thick foot pads and a wider toe span than many other breeds and a strong tail that could whack a person silly, or knock a cup off a table. Personally, I have never owned a Shepherd. But, I had the pleasure of loving a Shepherd/Chow who was the most cuddly, loveable, even-tempered animal I ever had and that, of course, was the Shepherd in her.

I was privy to many tales of other Shepherd owners in my life and recently, listened to the marvelous antics and witnessed the owner's love and admiration for their beloved pet, Sophie. She loved to catch the Frisbee, swim in the pool and run the fields with her owners. They were blessed with her company for over fourteen years. She had recently passed when I met her "parents". Now, they were training another rescue, a young Black Lab. In their conversations, they were always comparing this mischievous young pup to their beloved, Sophie. I would chuckle to myself, because I knew that in time, their new charge would become just as important to them.

During a chance visit to my home, they noticed the paintings of dogs on my wall and when they discovered I had painted them, asked me to paint their Sophie. Granted, I would only be using a photograph and could not experience her for myself, which does make it less likely that the painted image would reflect the personality of their pet. The only remark they made was to be certain I did not crop her unusually large ears as that was a feature they most loved.

A strange thing happened just after I began working on a 20" X 24" canvas (the same size as the ones on my wall). Being acutely aware I didn't 'short' Sophie's ears, I quickly realized I needed to use a larger canvas to do justice to this princess. When I began laying out the larger canvas and had invested approximately two

hours beginning with her chest fur, the strangest wave of, well all I can call it is 'knowingness' came over me and I felt sweet Sophie was right there in front of me. I physically felt her sweet personality I had heard so much about. This feeling continued until she was finished. When I stepped away from the painting, I was reduced to a puddle, so full of joy having had this incredible experience that I could hardly contain myself.

I know little of pride, but I knew this painting was extra special and refer to it as my 'Masterpiece in Oil'. I do know humility and that is what I feel when I look at it.

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