
One
BEAD
A Four Angry Dachshunds Legend
A Simple Babysitting Assignment
Takes an Unexpected Turn...
WWDD
eureka
Sometimes the smallest things
lead us to the greatest discoveries.

It began, as most stories do around here, with something that should have taken about five minutes.

The boys and I were babysitting my sister's two girls, Abby and Bella.

Now, if you've never experienced four dachshunds in the same house, allow me to explain the family arrangement.

JOHNNY — My handsome red-haired boy

- One of the Brothers of Thunder.
- Self-appointed protector of the entire household.
- A heart as big as his bark.
- Stubborn as a mule.
- Worries about things that haven't happened yet.

JIMMY — Johnny's black-and-tan brother

- The other Brother of Thunder.
- A rather substantial, long-haired fellow.
- Sherlock Holmes when something needs investigating.
- Rip Van Winkle when it doesn't.
- Conserves energy for important matters. Like food.

ABBY — My sister's beautiful cream-colored girl

- Sweetheart of the family.
- Gentle, dignified, and affectionate on her own terms.
- More common sense than both boys combined.
- Recognizes a bad idea before it becomes a disaster.
- Prefers not to participate in unnecessary foolishness.

BELLA — Abby's little black-and-tan sister

- Smallest member of the family.
- Self-appointed director of security.
- Suspicious of shadows, lawn decorations, and anything that moves.

- Barks first. Investigates later.
- Firmly believes she's in charge. Of everything.

The boys belong to me.

The girls belong to my sister.

The boys are the girls' uncles.

The girls are the boys' nieces.

And Bella believes everybody belongs to Bella.

There. Now that we've established the family relationships, we can proceed with the story.

It was an otherwise ordinary afternoon.

Johnny was supervising the living room.

Jimmy was conducting a detailed inspection of the inside of his eyelids.

Abby was minding her own business.

And Bella was doing what Bella does best.

Looking for trouble.

She found it beneath an old piece of furniture.

A small, dusty bundle of string and wooden beads.

Now, any reasonable creature would have brought this mysterious object to an adult for examination.

Bella is not a reasonable creature.

She immediately declared it hers.

Within seconds, the following events occurred:

- Bella grabbed the string and ran.
- Johnny pursued Bella because an uncle has responsibilities.
- Jimmy joined the chase because something interesting was happening.
- Abby followed to prevent a catastrophe.
- I attempted to intervene.
- Nobody listened.

The four little hounds raced through the living room, around the furniture, and beneath the table.

A chair moved.

A blanket disappeared.

Somebody barked.

Somebody else barked louder.

And then...

SNAP!

The string broke.

Wooden beads scattered across the floor.

They rolled beneath the furniture, bounced across the kitchen, and disappeared into places that hadn't seen a vacuum cleaner in quite some time.

For approximately three seconds, there was silence.

Then Bella barked at one of the beads.

Apparently, it had moved without permission.

I bent down to pick up the little cross.

And suddenly, I recognized it.

"MY ROSARY!"

I couldn't believe it.

I'd been looking for that particular Rosary for years.

Now, I've been praying the Rosary all my life. I've owned more than one, worn out a few, misplaced others, and probably left enough of them in coat pockets, drawers, and forgotten corners to equip a small monastery.

But this one was special.

I remembered its familiar wooden beads.

The little cross.

The way it felt in my hand.

And now, after all this time, Bella had somehow managed to find it.

Unfortunately, she'd also managed to dismantle it.

I looked at the mess.

I looked at the dogs.

I looked toward Heaven.

And I did what any sensible dachshund owner would do.

I began making a list.

THE EVIDENCE

- One long-lost Rosary.
- One broken string.
- A considerable number of wooden beads.
- One small cross.
- Four suspects.
- No witnesses willing to cooperate.
- One bead unaccounted for.
- One increasingly irritated human.

Jimmy approached the evidence.

His Sherlock Holmes expression appeared.

He sniffed the cross.

He examined the beads.

He inspected Bella.

Then he returned to his chair.

Apparently, the investigation was exhausting.

I sat down with the Rosary.

I'd prayed those familiar prayers for as long as I could remember.

The Our Father.

The Hail Mary.

The Glory Be.

The mysteries of Christ's life, contemplated with His Blessed Mother.

But holding those old beads again made me wonder about something I hadn't given much thought to in years.

Where had the idea of counting prayers with beads come from in the first place?

That was my first mistake.

Because rather than simply gathering up the beads and putting the Rosary somewhere safe, I decided to investigate.



My search led me to something called a **Paternoster**.

Pater noster.

Our Father.

Long before the Rosary took its familiar form, Christians used pebbles, knots, and strings of beads to keep track of their prayers.

Some repeated the Lord's Prayer.

Others prayed the Psalms.

One prayer.

One bead.

Then another.

It was simple.

It was practical.

And unlike most things involving dachshunds, it didn't require batteries, replacement parts, or a subscription.

Jimmy approved.

He liked the idea of doing something repeatedly without having to move.

But the Paternoster beads led me to another discovery.

The Psalter.

One hundred and fifty Psalms.

For centuries, the Psalms had formed the daily prayer of monks, priests, and religious communities.

But what about ordinary people who couldn't read, couldn't afford books, or couldn't remember all 150 Psalms?

They prayed what they knew.

The Our Father.

The Hail Mary.

And over time, the practice of counting prayers became entwined with a devotion known as **Mary's Psalter**.

One hundred and fifty Hail Marys.

One for each Psalm.

Eventually, those prayers and meditations helped shape the Rosary we know today.

I looked at the beads scattered across the floor.

I looked at the four dachshunds.

And I began another list.

THINGS THAT WERE NOT PART OF MY ORIGINAL AFTERNOON

- Paternoster beads.
- One hundred and fifty Psalms.
- Mary's Psalter.
- The Rosary.
- Four dachshunds.
- One missing bead.
- A very large headache.



At this point, I should have stopped.

Instead, I began thinking about St. Dominic.

I'd known the stories about Dominic and the Rosary for years.

But with four dachshunds sprawled around the living room, one particular part of his legend suddenly struck me as rather interesting.

St. Dominic was a remarkable preacher who founded the Order of Preachers, better known as the Dominicans.

He wanted people to know Christ.

He traveled, preached, prayed, and carried the light of the Gospel into places where that light was desperately needed.

According to the old Rosary legend, Our Lady appeared to Dominic and entrusted him with a powerful means of drawing souls toward her Son.

The Rosary.

Prayers repeated with beads, while the heart contemplated the mysteries of Christ's life.

But Dominic's story also included something rather unusual.

A dog.

Before Dominic was born, his mother, Blessed Jane of Aza, was said to have dreamed of a little dog carrying a burning torch.

The dog ran through the world, setting it ablaze.

Not with destruction.

With the light of the Gospel.

And the Dominicans eventually became affectionately associated with a Latin play on words.

Domini canes.

The Hounds of the Lord.

I read it again.

Domini canes...

Dominicans...

I said it slowly.

Domini canes.

Dominicans.

Wait a minute!

DOMINI CANES! DOMINICANS!

HOUNDS OF THE LORD!

I stared at the screen.

Then I looked over at Johnny.

Then Jimmy.

Then Abby.

Then Bella.

Four dachshunds.

Four hounds.

FOUR HOUNDS OF THE LORD!

Now things were getting interesting.

Johnny immediately accepted the appointment.

Jimmy requested a written description of the duties.

Abby wondered whether the position was voluntary.

Bella declared herself Mother Superior.

I explained that Mother Superior was not normally a position occupied by a dachshund.

Bella disagreed.

But there was something about Dominic's torch that caught my imagination.

A little dog carrying the Light.

A saint preaching Christ.

A Rosary that led people through the mysteries of His life.

And four little hounds who had managed to scatter an entire prayer devotion across my kitchen floor.

I was beginning to suspect that the missing bead might be the least of my problems.

Now, you might reasonably assume that St. Dominic, the Rosary, and 150 Psalms would have been enough for one afternoon.

You would be wrong.

Because somewhere along the way, I stumbled upon another extraordinary coincidence.

A badger.

Yes.

A badger.

The Book of Exodus describes the coverings of the Tabernacle, including the skins of a mysterious animal called the *tahash*.

Over the centuries, translators wrestled with the identity of this peculiar creature.

Among the possibilities was the badger.

And in German, the word for badger is...

Dachs.

I read it again.

Dachs...

Dachshund...

I said it slowly.

Dachs.

Dachshund.

Wait a minute!

DACHS! DACHSHUND!

A BADGER HOUND!

I looked over at Johnny.

Then Jimmy.

Then Abby.

Then Bella.

Four dachshunds.

Four badger hounds.

FOUR BADGER HOUNDS!

Centuries ago, Martin Luther had translated that mysterious Hebrew word as *Dachsfelle*—badger skins. And there it was: *Dachs*. The very same German badger that gave the dachshund its name!

I sat back in my chair.

I looked at the boys.

I looked at the girls.

I looked at the Bible.

And I began yet another list.

THE CASE SO FAR

- Four dachshunds.
- One long-lost Rosary.
- Paternoster prayers.
- Mary's Psalter.
- One hundred and fifty Psalms.
- St. Dominic.
- A dog carrying a torch.
- The Hounds of the Lord.
- A biblical badger.
- One missing bead.

I couldn't believe it.

We had started with Bella stealing something from beneath the furniture.

Now we were discussing the Hebrew Bible, German badgers, medieval prayer customs, and a thirteenth-century saint.

And I still hadn't found the missing bead.

Jimmy, who had been sleeping through most of the investigation, suddenly raised his head.

"Did somebody say badger?"

Johnny rushed to the window.

Bella began barking at the shrubbery.

Abby closed her eyes.

And I made a note to myself.

Never mention badgers in front of dachshunds.

By now, I was completely absorbed in the history of the Rosary.

And while I've prayed its mysteries for a lifetime, I'd never considered what would happen if four dachshunds decided they were entitled to their own.

Four sets of mysteries.

Four dachshunds.

Naturally, the dogs demanded assignments.

THE OFFICIAL DISTRIBUTION OF MYSTERIES

- **Abby — The Joyful Mysteries.** A gentle soul who reminds us that some of life's greatest blessings arrive quietly, without barking, growling, or overturning furniture.
- **Jimmy — The Luminous Mysteries.** Our resident detective, forever searching for the next clue, even when the answer is sitting directly in front of his nose.
- **Johnny — The Sorrowful Mysteries.** Our watchful, loyal boy, always concerned for those he loves and never entirely comfortable when someone is missing.
- **Bella — The Glorious Mysteries.** Because there was absolutely no possibility of convincing Bella that she was anything less than glorious.

Bella was delighted.

Johnny wanted to know why he had received the sorrowful assignment.

Jimmy wondered whether the Luminous Mysteries could be investigated from his chair.

Abby suggested that perhaps the mysteries weren't intended as job descriptions.

Nobody listened.

But as I looked at the four of them, I began to see the old familiar mysteries in a slightly different light.

The Joyful Mysteries remind us of God's promises.

The Luminous Mysteries reveal Christ as the Light of the world.

The Sorrowful Mysteries lead us through His suffering and love.

And the Glorious Mysteries proclaim the victory of life over death.

Four sets of mysteries.

One journey through the life of Christ.

A journey I've been making with Mary and my Rosary for as long as I can remember.

And the Psalms?

They take us along much the same road.

Joy and sorrow.

Fear and courage.

Darkness and light.

Wandering and returning.

Suddenly, the connection between Mary's Psalter and the 150 Psalms seemed more beautiful than ever.

And St. Dominic's torch?

It was beginning to illuminate the whole thing.

But there was still something missing.

Not just the bead.

Something much more important.

By this time, my simple investigation had consumed most of the afternoon.

The beads were still on the table.

The cross was beside my Bible.

Johnny had returned to his supervisory duties.

Jimmy was asleep.

Abby was resting comfortably.

Bella was watching the door, apparently expecting a badger to arrive at any moment.

And I was still searching.

Badgers.

Beads.

Psalms.

Dominic.

Mary.

The Rosary.

Four mysteries.

Four hounds.

I had all the pieces.

But I couldn't quite see the picture.



Then Jimmy climbed down from his chair.

He walked slowly toward me.

He stopped.

He looked at me.

He looked at Bella.

And he opened his mouth.

PLOP.

One small wooden bead fell at my feet.

The missing bead.

Jimmy had found it hours ago.

Apparently, he'd been keeping it for further examination.

I stared at the bead.

Then at Jimmy.

Then at the bead again.

"EUREKA!"

Johnny jumped.

Abby looked concerned.

Bella barked.

Jimmy looked rather pleased with himself.

"WE'VE FOUND IT!"

Jimmy glanced at the bead.

"Well, of course. I've had it all afternoon."

I picked it up.

The case was solved.

The evidence was recovered.

And then I stopped.

Eureka.

What a peculiar word.

I'd shouted it without giving it a second thought.

But what did it actually mean?

I looked it up.

Greek.

I have found.

And then, because one discovery around here apparently requires at least three more, I started looking for similar expressions.

In Hebrew, I found another beautiful word.

Matzati.

I have found.

The words led me to the Song of Songs:

"I found him whom my soul loveth." — Song of Songs 3:4

I sat quietly for a moment.

Finding something you love.

Something you've been searching for.

Something you thought was lost.

I looked at the little wooden bead in my hand.

And then I came across a passage in the Gospel of John.

Andrew had encountered Jesus.

He hurried to find his brother Simon and announced:

"We have found the Messias." — John 1:41

In Greek, the word was *Heurēkamen*.

We have found.

I stared at the words.

Eureka.

Matzati.

Heurēkamen.

I have found.

We have found.

That was exactly what Andrew had announced to Simon.

Not that he'd found a lost coin.

Or a missing bead.

Or even a particularly interesting badger.

He'd found the Messiah.

I nearly fell out of my chair.

Of course!

All afternoon, I'd been trying to find the connection between the beads, the Psalms, the Rosary, St. Dominic, and four little dachshunds.

But I had been looking at the wrong end of the journey.

The beads weren't the destination.

The badger wasn't the destination.

Even the mysteries weren't the destination.

They were all pointing toward Someone.

Jesus Christ.

Andrew had found the Messiah.

Dominic had devoted his life to preaching the Messiah.

The Rosary led us through the life of the Messiah.

The Psalms prepared our hearts to recognize the Messiah.

And Mary's great joy was bringing the world to her Son.

And suddenly, our little legend had found its way home.



I sat quietly for a while.

A rare occurrence in a house with dachshunds.

I thought about all the Rosaries I'd prayed over the years.

The familiar prayers.

The mysteries I'd returned to again and again.

The beads that had passed through my fingers in moments of joy, sorrow, worry, and thanksgiving.

And now, after all this time, one of those Rosaries had returned to me in the most ridiculous way imaginable.

Courtesy of Bella.

I thought about the early Christians counting their prayers.

The monks praying the Psalms.

The ordinary people offering their Paternosters.

The devotion to Mary's Psalter.

St. Dominic preaching Christ.

The Rosary passing from generation to generation.

And the old legend of a little dog carrying a torch.

For centuries, people had been finding their way through the same mysteries.

Some with books.

Some with beads.

Some with nothing more than a whispered prayer.

One step.

One Psalm.

One bead.

One mystery.

Always searching.

Always hoping.

Always moving toward the Light.

I looked down at the recovered beads.

It was such a small thing.

Just a handful of wooden beads.

Yet it had taken us on a journey across languages, centuries, Scripture, and Christian tradition.

All because Bella couldn't leave something alone.

I thought about St. Dominic.

His beloved Dominicans had a motto.

Veritas.

Truth.

And another beautiful Dominican tradition: contemplate the Truth, then share what you've discovered.

That sounded rather familiar.

I'd spent an entire afternoon investigating a Rosary, a badger, some prayer beads, and four dachshunds.

And now I wanted to tell everybody about it.

I could almost hear St. Dominic laughing.

Then I remembered something from the Psalms.

"Thy word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my paths." — Psalm 118:105

A lamp.

A light.

St. Dominic's little dog carrying a burning torch.

Perhaps that torch wasn't such a strange image after all.

And there was another Psalm.

"I have gone astray like a sheep that is lost: seek thy servant..." — Psalm 118:176

I looked at Johnny.

Then Jimmy.

Then Abby.

Then Bella.

Four little hounds who could find a crumb beneath the refrigerator but couldn't find their way out of a paper bag if somebody closed the top.

And yet, somehow, they always knew where Home was.

Then came the familiar words of the Good Shepherd's Psalm.

"And that I may dwell in the house of the Lord unto length of days." — Psalm 22:6

There it was.

Home.

Not merely a place.

A destination.

And perhaps the most comforting thought of all was that we weren't expected to find our way there entirely on our own.

I looked at the four dachshunds.

They might wander.

They might get distracted.

They might chase a badger halfway across Pennsylvania.

But somehow, they always knew where Home was.

That evening, after the excitement had finally subsided, I gathered the beads and placed them beside my Bible.

The four dachshunds settled into their usual positions.

Johnny remained close, keeping a watchful eye on his family.

Jimmy returned to his chair, satisfied that another important investigation had been successfully concluded.

Abby curled up comfortably, undoubtedly relieved that the afternoon's nonsense was over.

And Bella?

Bella was still watching the door.

Just in case.

I thought about the four little hounds.

Two brothers.

Two nieces.

Four very different personalities.

Four different ways of approaching the world.

And yet, when something happened, they all came running.

They might disagree about the details.

They might argue about who was in charge.

They might wander off in different directions.

But somehow, they always found their way back together.

And isn't that a little like the journey of faith?

We wander.

We worry.

We argue.

We chase things that don't matter.

Sometimes we lose our way.

Sometimes we lose our beads.

And sometimes, like Jimmy, we discover that what we were looking for was right under our noses all along.

The Psalms remind us to pray.

The Rosary invites us to walk with Mary.

St. Dominic reminds us to carry the Light.

And the Hounds of the Lord?

Well, perhaps they remind us that the journey doesn't require perfection.

Only the willingness to keep following.

Even when the road is long.

Even when the mysteries are difficult.

Even when the barking seems endless.

For somewhere beyond the badgers, the beads, and all the bewildering complications of life, a light shines in the window.

And Someone is waiting.

Someone who knows our names.

Someone who understands our stubbornness.

Someone who doesn't mind how muddy our paws are when we finally come through the door.

Someone who never tires of calling us Home.

I looked at the four sleeping dachshunds.

I smiled.

Eureka!

Matzati.

I have found.

Heurēkamen.

We have found.

And somewhere, I like to imagine, St. Dominic smiled.

His little hounds had finally understood the mission.

Not to chase the badger.

Not to collect the beads.

Not even to carry the torch for their own glory.

But to follow the Light.

And perhaps, along the way, help somebody else find it too.

Which, come to think of it, is probably what St. Dominic had in mind all along.

I looked around the living room.

Johnny was keeping watch. Jimmy was sound asleep. Abby was enjoying a little peace and quiet.

And Bella?

Bella was Bella...



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FOUR ANGRY DACHSHUNDS

The Four Hounds of the Lord

Badgers. Beads. Barking. The Beaten Path Home.

One hundred and fifty Psalms. Four little hounds. One extraordinary journey.

We may wander. We may bark. But we're always looking for the way Home.

And if you happen to find yourself wandering along that same road, you're welcome to join us.

Just keep an eye on Bella.

She's probably already claimed your chair.

To Him be the honor and the glory.

The End



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