



Blackie: An Odyssey of Furry Hearts

William Schwenn

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Mountain coves offer incredible beauty; their privacy can hide a nightmare. Having finished their work careers, Skip and Mary leave the city bustle behind, and with their three dogs move into their newly constructed home in the North Carolina mountains. Wildlife and nature surround them in a secluded cove. A friendly, wandering dog becomes a daily community greeter. Sunny mornings and cool evenings complete a picture of endless possibilities for a life they had long dreamed of. But frantic barking from a dog in an adjacent cove in the wee hours becomes unsettling. Their new neighbor, Claire, is in the midst of a nasty divorce; seeking work in places far from home, she leaves her many pets to fend for themselves. Skip offers what he thinks will be a short-term, temporary pet-sitting service-instead, it turns into a yearlong struggle for the welfare of innocent beings, with lives literally hanging in the balance. As Claire's life spins out of control, Skip discovers the ugliness of neglect in its many forms, and ultimately uncovers a pattern of grisly outcomes for some of Claire's animals. His clash with her over temperaments and values escalates through nerve-wracking frustrations, climaxing in a dramatic confrontation over the story's central figure-Blackie. Skip has formed a strong bond with this mixed breed of modest stature, to whom the other survivors desperately cling for emotional stability. In a dramatic turnaround, Blackie is finally given an opportunity to escape his devastating situation, only to face fresh challenges in Skip's household from an already established pack of a pair of headstrong, rival Border Collie sisters and a psychologically damaged pound mutt. Dedicated commitment by Skip and Mary to make the new arrangement work, and Blackie's thoroughly endearing nature, lead the new partnership through an unforgettable adventure. Blackie's odyssey reveals surprising respect, mutual devotion, and enduring love, as dogs and humans learn more about life and each other than they could have ever imagined. When rescuer ultimately becomes the rescued, the story comes full circle, confirming the existence of magic and wonder in everyday life. Join Skip, Mary, Blackie, and the others in a story of character, strength, and heart. In delightful and excruciating detail, a side of life often hidden is revealed behind unrecognized cries for help. Incredibly generous spirits and memorable characters make this emotionally rich, true story one that will stay with the reader long past the final page.

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