

Gala and Dottie

By A Montana Collie Adopter

I adopted her sight unseen – one of the Montana collies, #89, so shy no one who volunteered at Camp Collie really remembered her. I named her Galadriel. I call her Gala, and in the three and a half years since she came to live with me, I have seen a neglected and traumatized collie blossom into a happy, loving, silly clown.

When I first met Gala, I had my doubts about her starting her new life with me. Gala really had no interest in people, only in other dogs. As my friend and I drove home with her and another Camp Collie dog that was going on to a home in New England, I poured out all my fears that I'd made a mistake. My dogs had never met her. What if she fought with my old collie or my Sheltie? What if she tried to kill my cat or my 15-year-old Yorkie? What if? My friend kept telling me she had a good feeling about this dog, but still I was worried.



When we arrived home, Gala wanted to leave with the other collie. Then, she saw my dogs at the front door and turned back to them. They met in my fenced back yard. First my old girl, Stripe, went up to her, greeted her politely, and seemed to invite her to stay. This was surprising, because I had taken her to meet

other collies since the death a year and a half before of my alpha blue merle, Lacy, and she had growled and snapped at each one, clearly turning them down as possible pack members. The Sheltie, true to her suspicious nature, just stood far back and watched this new dog from a safe distance. Gala followed Stripe inside. So far so good.

But the true test came later that night. After all the dogs had had their supper and had napped, I brought Gala out of her crate on a leash so that she could explore her new home. In the narrow passage between the living room and the hallway, she met my cat, Dottie, for the first time. I was sure I'd see hissing and growling, maybe Gala making a grab for the cat, but I was stunned as 12-pound Dottie paused, then calmly walked up to 51-pound Gala and touched noses. They stayed like that for a long moment before Dottie-cat, Queen of All She Surveyed, continued on her royal progress past Gala, both of them sniffing each other all the way.

At that instant I knew Gala was staying, and that everything would be fine. She had passed "the cat scan." The dogs could approve, but without the blessing of Her Majesty, there would be no peace in the house. Dottie had decided. My fur-kids had a new sister.

Gala enjoyed the favor of Queen Dottie-cat. Even though she swatted and hissed at the other dogs for so much as passing too near her, and even though Gala chased her every morning, Gala was the only dog allowed to lie close, lick and nuzzle her. When visiting dogs tried to chase or harass Dottie, Gala took it upon herself to intervene, placing herself between "her" cat and the offending canine, daring them to go through her if they wanted the cat. Not one took her up on the challenge.

In Dottie's last days, Gala seemed to be keeping a vigil, watching over all the medical care we imposed on her cat in our attempts to reverse irreversible kidney and heart damage. She always chose a place close to Dottie to sleep, and I often found her nuzzling Dottie, either trying to comfort her, or perhaps trying to help her get better.

When Dottie crossed The Rainbow Bridge, it was Gala who kissed her goodbye. A rescued torti-tabby cat and a tri-colored collie – unlikely soulmates who found one another by chance. I'm certain that when it's Gala's time, I can send her to Dottie who will be waiting for her best canine friend to come Home.

