

## Living with Lucado

I often refer to my two and a half year old female German Shepherd/Alaskan Malamute mix, Lucado, as the most difficult dog I have ever known. She is brilliant, has a keen sense of smell, sees remarkably well, astutely grasps and accurately assesses most situations with a rapidity and clarity I can, hardly fathom, hunts with an uncanny efficiency, and, in actuality, is smarter than just about any human I know. She would make a wonderful K9 Police Officer or Search & Rescue dog. Living in a house with twenty-one other dogs, we simply cannot provide her with the constant attention, training and interaction she craves. And, so, we are forced to deal with the trials and tribulations Lucado brings upon us...

Lucado is the subject of much discussion among our friends and colleagues. "Why is she always in trouble? they ask. "Why is she so destructive?" Why can't she learn to behave? "Maybe you should hire a dog trainer. "The dialogue goes on and on, and Lucado's evil ways continue. She has, by count, destroyed our washer and dryer, our drywall in the utility room, a wooden table, several wooden chairs, lots of objets d'art, vases, and food bowls, various and sundry mops and brooms, numerous towels, several rugs – well, I guess I could go on and on. Our friends cannot understand WHY we would keep such a difficult animal in our home. On a frequent basis, I frankly wonder the same thing. And I also wonder why Lucado came into my life in the first place. "Hmmmmmmm," I mutter to myself, "There must be a good reason that Lucado came to live with me."

And then I remember why I adopted her. She is beautiful, loving, playful, impish, mischievous, keenly intelligent, resourceful and, yes, a "handful" She is a formidable adversary and defiant opponent. She is disobedient, willful and stubborn. Very few people would have put up with her. She had been sent from home to home to home before her most current sobbing owner informed us that her landlord would not allow her to keep Lucado. Couldn't we PLEASE save the dog's life? I examined the alternatives available to Lucado. She would, more than likely, be put to sleep if I didn't take her in. I regarded Lucado as defenseless and vulnerable and in need of loving care. I view Lucado's presence in my life as a test of my mettle, fortitude and stamina – as well as my patience, tolerance and perseverance. In spite of all her errant ways, I have grown to love Lucado.

It is always interesting to me to examine why certain events occur and why certain people and animals enter our lives. I truly believe that there is a purposefulness to all with whom we come into contact. I have no doubt, whatsoever, that Lucado has come to teach me many important life lessons. She has also come to learn about life and human beings from me. I have no regrets...