

## Bonus' story by Jax Bergersen

I received a call of stress and panic one morning in December 2008 with the news that my friend, Jan, had died suddenly. Among a flurry of “what’ll we do about this” questions came “what’ll we do with the dog”. Suki was the dearest, wee ball of electrified fluff you can imagine. “Bring her over here”, I suggested, “and we can sort her out down the track”. I put the phone down and knew instantly that she was mine.

Suki arrived, anxious and uncertain, along with an array of leads, bowls and bedding. So began our wonderful, interesting and loving life together. I tried to keep up with Jan’s regime of brushing Suki’s long, silver coat, but she has easily adopted the shaggy, too-busy-to-groom look of her now owner. With that has come a freedom of spirit that she was not allowed in her disciplined early years. She’s very happy.

So here we are at the hairdressers, early in the piece. Everyone knew Suki. She’s so very cute. But I am an up-a-ladder, hammer-wielding, motorbike-riding kind of gal. The name “Suki” just did not fit with my image. One shower-capped, purple-dyed head asked if I realised that I would have to clip Suki’s hair, because such dogs don’t shed. Hating dog, cat and human hair clogging up the carpet and the car seats, I exclaimed “Well, that’s a bonus!” The dog swung her head around to look me in the eye and we both knew “Bonus” was to be her new name. And so it has been: she is such a bonus.

I don’t regard myself as the owner of Bonus, more so her friend. We share so much. She demands so little. It’s a pleasure to fulfil her every need. She rarely complains. She talks: please open the door; please lift me up into the rocking chair; please lift me up into the car for my afternoon nap, then lift me down again in a couple of hours.

Request for dinner is a little more demanding and urgent. She also howls. She used to howl whenever the phone rang. That became a little constant so, with some urging, she’s eased up on that one. There is a good morning song, a ‘you-walked-out-without-telling-me’ howl, an excited we-have-visitors greeting song and two or three others during the day that I haven’t interpreted quite yet. We have lots of visitors to our community nursery and lots of phone calls so lots of songs. Melodic as I’m sure Bonus believes her songs are, the general anxious enquiry by visitors is “what are you doing to the dog”, to which my stock response is “It’s more what the dog is doing to me.” We’re joined at the hip.

Bonus and I have been together for seven years now and I hope there are many more years left to enjoy.

