

sick days

by Marlene Luna

“December 21st, 1995.”

It was another cold winter day, as the one lily grew outside my trailer window remained with a single, shrunken grey petal. The snow was spiraling across my window, haunting me with its freedom to linger outside my yard as I was imprisoned in my own bed. However I told myself it was alright...Violet helped me be alright.

Violet walked into my room this morning, her white fur resembling the snow outside, yet her brown eyes smiled at me, unlike the snow, as she brought my medicine container from the top of my bathroom sink. She handed it to me getting on the bed with ease, knowing her presence brought me peace, as she licked my cheek before lying by my side.

After months of doing this, I was surprised she did not force me to get out of bed and play, despite my Obstructive Sleep Apnea (OSA), that makes me sleeps hours on end, which only adds to my depression. Still, I'm grateful my fluffy Samoyed, helps me when I wake up to when I fall asleep.

Today we were both at peace.

“January 10th, 1996.”

At seven in the afternoon I woke up to the sounds of Violet, barking frantically. I heard her whining and crying, like I did every night. I don't blame her, even I can't tell when I stop breathing while I sleep.

I stood up carefully, my bones aching from sleeping so long. I then knelt by Violet's side, ruffling her long locks of white hair to soothe her as she nuzzled against my neck. My frown disappeared with the comfort of her warmth.

Violet always made me smile, because she'd let me feel I had a source of tranquility as I looked out the icy window. The storm disappeared, and the snow now gently fell to the already porcelain floor. Outside the window, the lily's petal remained hanging by a thread. Another peaceful and quiet night in this trailer of mine.

“March 20th, 1996.”

What a day it was to be alive. The sun shone past the clouds and the snow had gone from a carpet to melted patches on the grass. Violet ran around my feet in content after I woke up at 10 o'clock in the morning, no barking, no pain no help, only the freedom of a gleeful awakening.

Today I brushed my hair, showered and changed my shirt. Instead of sweats, I wore some jeans. Instead of a t-shirt, I wore a button-up, and brushed my hair back into a bun. I felt good, like I could do it all, and Violet ran around my legs proudly as we made our way to the park.

Outside the trailer I saw first hand, the bud of the lily outside my window growing with the light of the sun. Violet ran as fast as she could to the park, she seemed more ecstatic than I to arrive. We walked alongside the pond, playing ball as we enjoyed the beginning of the winter breeze. I saw her chase birds, play with other canines and bark at strangers for approaching me. It was so nice to watch her be a dog after months of her nurturing me, and years of her accompanying me in my rough days.

I listened to Journey's, "Don't Stop Believing" as we walked back home. During the past days, the medication and much needed support of my trusting good ol' 12 year old dog, I can freely say my mental health has improved.

As we came back home I saw, hanging by the window, the first glance of the white petals of the lily.

“July 4th, 1996.”

The fourth of July! Fitting for the sense of freedom surrounding my being, and to celebrate, I made a cookout in my front yard to enjoy with Violet, my loyal companion who I believed deserve something more than the usual can of dog food after her days of caring for me.

I bought us some groceries and an American flag dog shirt for celebration, and as we spent our day in the sunny comfort of my yard, I could not help but smile. From watching Violet run around in circles, trying to catch her tail, to chewing away at the bone from the previous unseasoned steak she was given, and comforting each other inside as we shielded ourselves from the sounds of the fireworks outside, I can gladly say we are at peace.

Looking out at the bright fireworks from my window, they were surprisingly not the most striking thing that caught my eye. It was the white lily which caught my eye, fully bloomed and radiating despite the bright exploding lights outshining it.

Today was a peaceful and joyful day, and as I looked beside me at my resting Violet, the one whose energy and spark filled my day with laughter and ease, I promised that her companionship would one day be repaid.

“November 15th, 1996.”

The fall has come home, and this morning I looked out my window to find the lily’s petals begin to fall. I was saddened by the thought of the warmth outside slowly fading, but this did not affect me. I woke up with the same energy as I’ve had over the last year. However, Violet seemed to not feel as ecstatic as I.

She remained in her bed an hour after I poured her food, and when she awoke, she did not seem to want any food. Her lack of energy and enthusiasm was concerning, so the whole day I dedicated myself to her care.

She might’ve started assigned to me as service, but she is my companion and taking care of her is my duty.

Throughout the day, I allowed her rest, and remained by her side as she would’ve with me. So tonight I allowed her rest on my bed.

“December 1st., 1996.”

Last month after Violets lack of energy, I had taken her to the veterinary clinic, there I learned that my Violet was dying. Not of sickness, nor disease or infection, rather because of age. Violet had reached her prime, and her time would come anytime now.

Her food went from kibbles to canned dog food, for it was difficult for her to digest or eat anything else, and our walks had been cut short due to her lack of energy. Even so, as old and as tired as she was, Violet managed to succeed in putting me at ease in my nights of discomfort.

Our nights remained the same, as we looked at the yellowing scenery from out the window, watching as the lily dangled from it’s last petal, ever so peacefully.

“December 16th, 1996.”

My heart was broken today, the cold winter breeze greeted my day as I got out of bed, as if preparing me for the event to come. I made myself breakfast and allowed Violet to rest as she needed the past month, serving her food after serving myself.

An hour or two went by, and I realized Violet had not once moved.

What happened next, I cannot describe in words because the feeling of sadness and loss I felt when I figured that Violet, my white fur of joy had passed, is indescribable. What I can describe however is the events, after I buried her in my back yard, beside the tree in which she enjoyed to sleep beside in the summer. I recall tears.

My tears did not last long, for I knew Violet rested in peace, and I knew she enjoyed her time with me as much as I enjoyed my moments with her.

As I stare out the window, the one we both used to look through before she passed, and there I saw the lifeless lily. No petal, no color on it’s stem. But even so, I’ll continue to watch it grow, as she did with me.