

Daisy

I remember the day Daisy came into my life. I had just left my local Walmart, and as I turned on to the street, there was an old man wearing worn out clothes standing next to a shopping cart he had borrowed from a grocery store. It looked like all his worldly possessions were in the cart. He was holding up a cardboard sign that said, "Please Help". Next to him, sitting at his feet, was a small brown dog.

Like everyone else, I passed him by, but as I drove away it began to bother me. I'm not wealthy, but I could certainly spare a few dollars to help him out. I turned around and went back to where he was standing. I parked on the street a few feet past him and got out of the car. I walked over to the old man. His dog came over to me, wagging its tail. I bent down to pet the dog. As I did that the man asked, "Sir, you like dogs, don't you?"

"Yes, I love dogs."

"Perhaps you can help me."

"That's why I stopped. How can I help? Do you need money?"

"Yes, always. But there is something you could do for me that would mean more to me than any money."

"What would that be?"

"I love my dog more than anything else in the world. She came into my life a year ago, and for the first time since I was a child, I felt like I wasn't alone. There was a bad storm, and I was sitting on the ground under a bridge trying to keep dry. She came up to me, wagging her tail. Then she laid down next to me. We have been together ever since. I don't eat very often, but when I do I share all my meals with her. I've tried to take care of her as best I could, but without money or a permanent place to live, it's very difficult. Now I am getting old, and I know that soon I won't be able to take care of her at all. I'm worried that if something happens to me, they will bring Daisy to the pound and kill her. To be honest, I would give my life for her. What I want more than anything else is a good home for Daisy. Can you do that for me?"

That was completely unexpected. I figured he would want ten or twenty dollars so that he and the dog could eat for a few days. I thought about what he said, about being lonely until Daisy came along. I was lonely too. My wife died a few years earlier. We never had children, and I was alone. I looked at Daisy, and she looked at me with her big brown eyes, wagged her tail again, and the decision was made.

I said, "She seems to be a wonderful dog, and I'm lonely too. I would love to have some company. So, sure I'll take her, and I promise to give her a good home."

"God bless you sir. I can't tell you how much this means to me."

“Would you like my address so you can come and visit her? I wouldn’t mind.”

“No, I want her to forget about me. She’s yours now.”

The old man picked up Daisy, said a teary goodbye, and put her in my car. I had sixty-eight dollars in my pocket and I gave it to the old man. He didn’t want to take it, but I finally convinced him that he needed it more than I did. Then, Daisy and I drove home together.

It was obvious Daisy was confused by the situation. She whimpered softly and watched as the old man disappeared from view. It took a few days for her to get used to me and living in a house. Although she had been an “outdoor” dog for a while she had evidently lived in house before, because she was housebroken. Within a week, we were inseparable. She followed me everywhere, and she quickly became my best friend.

A week later Daisy and I drove back to Walmart to look for the old man, but he wasn’t there. We went back to Walmart every week for a few months but the man had obviously moved on.

Daisy and I spent our days together walking, playing, and relaxing in front of the TV. We spent our nights together too. She slept next to me on the pillow where my wife used to sleep.

I soon discovered Daisy’s favorite foods were steak and ice cream. So, every year on the anniversary of finding each other, I bought a big steak and a container of vanilla ice cream and we celebrated the occasion with a good meal.

As our tenth anniversary approached, it was obvious that Daisy was getting old. She walked slower, and limped occasionally. I could see the cataracts forming in her eyes, and I knew she was going blind. Then one day she was lying next to me on the couch and she began to cry. She was clearly in pain, and I took her to vet that same day.

The vet examined her and took an x-ray. Then he came back and said she had severe arthritis in her hips and the pain would continue to get worse. He gave me some pills to give her for the pain and said that I should consider putting her to sleep.

The pills helped for a while, but almost every day she would lay next to me and cry. I took her back to the vet and asked if we could give her more powerful pain medication. He looked at me and said, “If you really love her as much as I think you do, you have to think about what’s best for her. You know what needs to be done.”

I fought back the tears that were forming in my eyes and said, “I know you’re right. Let’s get this over with.”

The vet left the room and came back a few minutes later with a syringe. I held Daisy tightly in my arms and watched as the vet injected her with the drugs that would end her life. I thought of the old man again and the way he said goodbye to her as he put her in my car. Now it was my turn. I could no longer hold back the tears when I said, “Goodbye Daisy”.

I watched as she closed her eyes for the last time and as she took her last breath. Then the vet took her from my arms.

I left the vet's office crying, and that continued on and off for several days. I kept thinking about getting another dog, but I was sure no dog could replace Daisy. The next few weeks were the loneliest in my life.

I finally realized that I could either continue to feel sorry myself or do something about it. I made the decision to go to the pound the following day and find another dog. Even if it wasn't Daisy, it would still provide the companionship I desperately needed, and would probably save the dog's life.

It was winter, and when I woke up that morning I realized it had snowed several inches during the night. I loved looking at snow and I remembered watching Daisy playing in it. The thought made me smile for the first time since Daisy died.

I was drinking my morning coffee when I heard a dog barking. I walked to my front door and opened it to look out. Standing on my front porch was a small brown dog. The dog looked up at me, wagged its tail, and walked into the house. I don't know where the dog came from, or how long it had been there, because there were no paw prints in the snow. But none of that mattered, because now my life was complete again.