

The Feeling of Love

March 30th 2018, it was my 10th birthday, Lanie's 14th birthday. Lanie is my companion, my owner, and my best friend. I was trained to be her protector, her helper, and her dog. Even though I was supposed to help her, she has done more for me than I have ever done for her. I'm going to tell you a story about the time I made a terrible mistake. The old wise dog you see today is not the same as the one from a few years ago. Nothing could stop that dog from doing what he wanted.

Not even Lanie.

I'm the service dog to Lanie Grey. We live in Southern California, just south of Los Angeles. I love Lanie so much. We are like peanut butter and cookies. Better together. I wear this vest that lets me know that I'm on duty, but I'm never off duty even if the vest isn't on. One time I got angry at the vest and tore it up, but Mom got mad. Mom is always mad at me, at Dad, at Lanie, or at the mailman. I love the mailman. Anyway where were we... oh ya the vest! The vest lets me go anywhere Lanie goes even if they don't allow dogs. It is like a VIP pass for a dog. So I suffer through the uncomfortable vest for her. I would do anything for her.

I was a gift to Lanie on her fourth birthday. Her eyes lit up when she saw me with that big pink bow on my back. Lanie doesn't have many friends at school. All she has is me. So on that day when I walked into her room, even when she was just four years old, she knew I was going to be her best friend till my last days. And I would be, I would love her till my very last breath.

You're probably wondering why I'm a service dog. What do I do to help Lanie? There was a problem while Lanie was being born so she is paralyzed from the waist down. Or that is at least what Mom says to all the people that come to our house. I help Lanie by just being there. It comforts her to know that I'm there to help if she needs me. Like one time when she fell out of her chair in

the hallway I had to run and get someone who could help. But most of the time I'm just there for support. I love my job.

Even though Lanie looks different she is still very smart. Always number one in her class. She is always reading or writing or doing some math problem. All I know is that two plus two is four and that is all that I can retain from every math class since kindergarten. I think I'm more of an English dog but I usually just fall asleep in class anyway.

Dogs are very compassionate creatures always putting others first. But on this day, I was a selfish dog...

Sleep, dream, imagine, that is what I do in my sleep. June 2nd, I remember the dream like it was yesterday. I dreamed of being outside, lying on the green grass, soaking in the warm sun, eating the delicious flowers and leaves that cover our yard. The bad thing was the dream was so vivid that I thought I was actually outside. I was not. I was lying on the floor in Lanie's room. I guess I had to go to the bathroom very badly because I dreamed of going to the bathroom and I did, all over the floor. I woke up, startled and feeling something wet underneath me. I quickly realized what I had done. I scrambled trying to find something to cover it with so Mom wouldn't get *too* mad. I was really upset with myself. I had been potty trained for two years and, I peed on the floor! *What was I thinking, stupid dog.* Lanie has a clock with different dogs for each hour which makes it easy for me to read. Mom comes in to get Lanie out of bed when the line is on the red dog. *Oh no! The line is almost on the red dog!* I scramble and find a stuffed animal on the floor and shamefully set the fuzzy toy on the you know what. The line was almost to the red dog and I quickly and quietly suck under the bed hoping that Mom would just come in and not notice.

I waited for what felt like hours my heart beating out of my chest. I hear the door creek—and I close my eyes. The lights snap on and my heart beats faster and faster. I start to shake and hold my breath. "Lanie! It's time to get up," Mom says as she walks into the room. She seemed

like she was having a good day, but not for long. Not for long. She walked in and tripped on the doll and fell into my urine sitting on the floor. I scoot farther under the bed hoping she wouldn't see me. "Ouch! Charlie!" She yelled so loud it made my ears ring and Lanie was startledly woken. Mom rushed to Lanie. I guess I forgot how long my tail was cause it was sticking out and mom stepped on my tail. I couldn't hold it in so I whimpered in pain. I pulled my tail under the bed and came out on the other side. "Bad boy, bad Charlie!" Mom yelled. Mom has a different yell it so loud and so angry it makes you feel so awful. Lanie bursts out into tears and cried as much as she could. She was so sad and angry she looked like she wanted to burst into flames. Although I wasn't really sure why. She knew that Mom and I were not the fondest of each other. And then I realized, she wasn't just mad at Mom for yelling at me. She was mad at me. It was so dark when I pulled that doll onto my pee that I got her favorite doll soiled.

My heart sank to the floor and I slowly walked outside to take my morning walk but realized I had nothing left. It felt like no one loved me. When Mom got mad at me it was ok but Lanie I couldn't bare to have her angry at me. I looked around and saw a hole in the gate that if I squeezed I could probably just get through. *They'll be better off without me*, I thought as I slipped through the hole and walked toward whatever curves life might throw at me next. Somberly, I walked along the road of the neighborhood. I wanted to go back but I just kept hearing, *They are better off without you, they are better off without you*. Ringing in my ears over and over.

I walked for days looking for my next meal. I kept regretting my decision but I was certain was the right one. Even though it hurt me. The sun would come up, I would walk in whatever direction I felt compelled to go in at that moment, find food in the garbage and keep walking. On and on I went walking and walking. I walked all the way to a place spelled T-E-X-A-S but, I still don't know where that is

About a month after I left home a nice lady stopped me and asked “Are you lost boy?” I wanted to tell her *No I’m fine, I don’t need your help*. But me being a dog can’t do anything but bark. “Ruff” I exclaimed, but I think the way she took the bark was *Yes, I am lost and I need your help*. So she checked my tag that I had conveniently scratched so that no one could read it. But she must have been a detective or something because she did something with dirt and water and I guess she made out Mom’s number from the scratched silver tag that hung around my neck.

She took me back her apartment. It was small and smelled of fresh baked goods and fresh flowers. I heard her call mom and say “I found your dog on 5th street in Houston, Texas.” The conversation went on for awhile and eventually the nice woman told me “My name is Sarah, I’m 22 years old and we are about to spend a lot of time together.” She packed up a bag put me on a rope because she didn’t have a leash and we got in the car.

We drove for two days before we came up on my house. It looked prettier than usual more inviting. Sarah pulled me out of the car and brought me into the warm and fuzzy house. When I walked in and saw that same look that Lanie gave me on the day we first met my heart felt warm, and I was home. She was so happy, her smile went up to her ears. I even saw a little smile from Mom. We shared a short look and she winked at me as if saying “I’m sorry,” and I felt ecstatic. I jumped into Lanie’s arms and licked her face I was so happy to see her. I guess Mom and Sarah really hit it off because now Sarah is our nanny. She stays in the house with us does laundry, washes dishes and takes care of me and Lanie. We all get in fights with each other but in this house there will always be a feeling of love.

Like I said I will love Lanie till my very last breath but every breath I take that moment gets closer and closer. Everything will come and go in Lanie’s life and I am no exception. One day Lanie will get another dog and another friend. She will grow old and will have to deal with the coming and going of things that she loves. I have done my job as Lanie’s dog and it’s time for me to leave her. I

will always live in her heart and she will always live in mine. I lie down on the cool floor and try to take a nap. This is a different kind of tired. I feel like I'm going around in circles and can't stop. Mom comes up close to me and rests my head on her leg. She whispers in my ear "It's ok Charlie, you can go," and then my life went dark pitch black.