

BLONDIE

Due to lack of space at the Kingston shelter, small dogs are housed in portable kennels on top of the big dog kennels, so they are more or less at eye level. One day I spied a little bundle of woe cowering at the back of a cage and opened the door just to try and stroke her. To my surprise she struggled up, wobbled towards me and stepped straight out into my arms, and that was the beginning of our love affair.



At first all I knew about Blondie was that a woman had brought her in with an injury to her eye, and it had been removed. What was certain was that aside from a little face seemingly full of stitches, she was filthy, matted and running with both ticks and fleas, so I began working on her, and soon she was clean and sweet-smelling, flea-free, de-ticked and combed out, and feeling much friskier. When the stitches were removed, I started teaching her how to walk around without bumping into everything in her path, and she was catching on quite quickly.

I began asking about how she got there, and I gathered that a woman was seen furtively tying a little dog to a tree stump, intending to leave her there, when the other clients waiting to be looked after shouted to her to bring the dog into the clinic. She was shamed and did so, and that's how we knew who she was, and found out Blondie's name.

One day doing walkabout in the car-park I suddenly heard 'Blondie'. I spun round and asked the young girl if the dog was hers. No, she said, she belongs to him, and pointed to a boy of around 10 years. I picked her up, called him over

and said 'Is this your dog?' He said no, it was his mother's but he had to look after it. I wasn't impressed with his 'looking after', but as sweetly as I could muster, said 'Well, tell Mummy she's ready to go home, look, the stitches are all out!' He made not the slightest attempt to touch her, stroke her, or even look at her, but proceeded to tell me a rambling story about thieves trying to steal his bicycle from the yard, she had barked at them and they threw a big rock at her. When he saw the eye hanging out of its socket he called his mother and they had brought her to the shelter. I didn't press him, because I had the immediate feeling that this family shouldn't get Blondie back.

Over the next couple of weeks I held my breath as phone calls were made to the woman and she never responded, and at last I was able to officially adopt Blondie and bring her home with me. One of the things I noticed was that she had trouble slipping and sliding on my tiled floors, as if it was an entirely new surface to her, and that combined with what the little boy had told me led me to think that she had been not been allowed in the house. Imagine her life as an outside dog – all seven pounds of her!

Initially my other two shih tzu-poodles viewed her with suspicion, especially Luna who is convinced she is the Queen, but soon she was integrated into the group. She developed a special relationship with Bones (who was nothing but a few grey bones strung together when I picked him up off the street, but who now looks more like a fluffy, ginger-and-white barrel), and they frolicked endlessly, with him being ever so gentle, although when he plays with the other big dogs he can be quite rough.

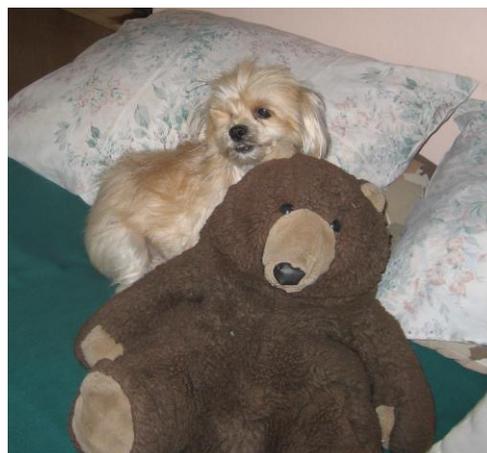
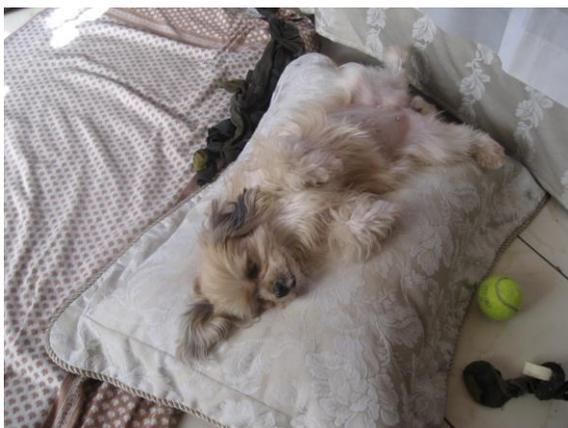


Blondie blossomed and turned into a voracious eater, going from seven pounds to nine, but she still had the occasional accident in the house, especially when it looked cloudy, fearful, no doubt, that she might be thrown out into the rain. I was also concerned about her belly, which seemed a bit swollen, so I had her thoroughly checked out. To my dismay an ultrasound showed a problem with both kidneys, and I was told she had irreversible kidney disease. She went on herbal medicine, and a special diet (mince, white rice and hard-boiled eggs – I said to the vet ‘are you serious?’) which she loved.

I was warned that sooner or later she would go into kidney failure, and the first signs would be a loss of appetite and interest in life, but for four years she was an incredibly joyful little creature, full of spunk and rushing from one end of the house to the other in her exuberance (you would never know she was missing an eye).



But, she also knew how to relax . . .



I am grateful for each of those days, and for being given the chance to provide her with security and love. She would snuggle and cuddle, and look up at me with her big one eye, and I could almost hear her saying ‘I don’t miss the other one - if I hadn’t lost it I wouldn’t have come to live with you’.

However, all good things come to an end. Her appetite began to flag, and on our walks she would suddenly stop and look vacant, as if she was somewhere else. I saw that look on my Mum’s face shortly before she passed, and knew Blondie had begun her last journey. Still, we tried to put it off, she and I, and she rallied and dutifully plodded through her food, although with little enthusiasm. A few days more and we could no longer fool ourselves – she was in pain, though she tried hard not to show it, and only uttered a tiny whimper now and then. It was time.

She went gently and peacefully, thanks to our wonderful, caring vet. Just once she slowly raised herself up and looked at me with her big one eye, as if asking what was happening. I told her I loved her, and that everything was fine, and she laid her head back down on my arm and floated away.

Rest in peace, my beautiful baby Blondie.

