



IN THE TRENCHES GRIEF. IT'S WHAT'S FOR DINNER

My beloved Pomeranian companion of the past ten years died suddenly a little over two months ago and I have yet to make heads or tails of the whole thing.

Truthfully, I've been carrying his cremated body around in a tiny tin box ever since, sleeping with him next to me at night, and am so far having a really hard time letting him go.

During the first few weeks after his death I was in a state of sheer panic around his absence. For over a decade, silence in the house meant little dude was up to some sort of mischief or that he was in trouble, so to be suddenly surrounded by this new, impenetrable quiet has been unsettling. I found myself calling for him in the night, looking for him all over the house in the morning, and waiting to hear the pitter-patter of his paws on the hardwood floor as I opened the front door or walked to the kitchen, but he is gone.

As it turns out, I had a great deal of purpose wrapped up in taking care of this tiny creature, and I'm finding that in many ways I was dependent on the love I received from him in return. He was the only consistent thing in my life for the past decade, and without him around everything just feels harder. I have yet to make it through a full day without some sort of tearful breakdown and was unable to control said emotional outbursts at all until very recently. It sounds crazy that an animal could make me lose my mind like this, but he was so much more than a dog to me. For many years he was my child, my family, the only reason I got out of bed in the morning, and the only reason I came home at night...so to call him my "pet" minimizes the depth of our relationship.

A few weeks back while I was talking to a close friend about my inability to let Dutch go, he challenged me that maybe it was feeling too hard to do because I wasn't actually supposed to be doing it. He suggested that, instead of working so hard to let him go, I should learn to hold onto Dutch in new ways. His body is gone, that much is certain. All that's left is this box of ashes...which isn't all that comforting when I stop and think about it.

So, I took his advice. I began to look for Dutch again, minus the feeling of panic those initial searches held after he passed. I started to focus on all the ways he is still here with me instead of mourning all the ways he is not, and suddenly he was everywhere again. We walked by a baby Pom on the street the other day who had the same goofy sideways gait my guy always had and I was transported back. It had been so long since I had seen him, and this short glimpse felt like such a gift. I passed another the following day who was trying to chew his way through his leash; something my little one had managed to do with many leashes over the years. Once more I felt him close to me and we were, in that moment, together again.

I know that grief has to run its course, and I know that it takes time. It is my hope that, in missing him, I can continue to find my dearly departed friend in nature, in my interactions with other animals, and in the silence that has replaced his noise in my life. His body may be gone, but his spirit is not. Our love was real, and I will carry that with me forever.



Logan Lynn

Grief is tricky business. There's a fine line between letting oneself feel the pain of loss and becoming completely taken over by depression and despair. In the end, I have not been able to swing this one alone. It has taken a lot of therapy, support, and countless hours crying out my feelings to get to the point of being able to function again, and I am still working on getting there.

One of the most painful truths about love is the impermanence of life, but the experience of someday losing everything that matters to us is something we all share. I don't regret giving

my heart to Dutch, even if it's been broken as a result. When you love someone, you risk the heartache that comes along with it; but choosing to protect yourself from the pain of loss by not allowing love in is so much worse. Be brave, love fiercely, and know that nothing is permanent. There is so much freedom in that truth.

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