

# Our Readers Write

## Angels with Fur

By Kelle Lynn

"Your life will never be the same if you get a dog." Those were the words from my friend almost three years ago. He was crazy about his own dog and wanted me to know how much my life would change. I was living in Houston at the time and had succumbed to a severe relapse with Chronic Fatigue Syndrome. I was homebound and feeling lonely.

One day I stopped by my niece, Leah's, apartment. I walked in the door and noticed a tiny puppy lying on the floor. He looked like a cotton ball with big brown eyes. "Look what I bought yesterday - a little Shih Tzu. He's eight weeks old and weighs three pounds. I still don't know what to name him," she said. Leah already had a Shih Tzu named Romeo. I suggested she name him Julian. I offered to take them home with me and "baby-sit" since she would be busy working.

That one night turned into a whole week of babysitting. Romeo, Julian and I were inseparable. We slept together, went for walks, and thought of new things to buy at Petco every day. The lonely feeling I had completely vanished. They gave me a reason to get out of the house. I felt like I had been sent two angels to lift my spirits.

Then Leah decided it was time to take them home. I was devastated. My home was empty. I decided the only way to get my joy back was to buy my own dog.

I asked Leah to take me where she bought Julian. She was excited and asked me to buy a female Shih Tzu and name her Bella. It would be like our own little family. We spent a whole afternoon picking up puppy after puppy until I found Bella. She weighed three pounds, had gray hair, and big brown eyes. It was love at first sight.

Romeo and Julian used to stop over and play with Bella all the time. They spent many nights with us. We would go walking in the beautiful courtyard. Julian and Bella, weighing three pounds each, were smaller than some of the rubber tree leaves that fell on the ground. They would run down the sidewalk holding the same leaf in their mouth - one on one side and one on the other. Everyone who saw them was immediately smitten.

A few weeks later I left Texas to stay with my mother in Michigan. Bella and I made the drive together. I arranged

the car for her comfort, but she sat on the console next to me the entire time. We played a game the whole way. I put my hair in a pony tail holder and she pulled it out with her paws and mouth so she could chew on it. I put another holder in and she did it all over again. But we desperately missed Romeo and Julian.

Six weeks later Leah called to say the demands on her life were too much. She couldn't take care of Romeo and Julian anymore. She asked if I would consider taking Julian and finding a home for Romeo. My prayers were answered. My mother agreed to help and two days later we took a flight to Houston, bought doggie carriers, and flew them back to Michigan.

Then reality hit mom. She went from living alone to me staying with her, and from no dogs to three dogs. Plus she had spotless white carpeting and furniture. I found the perfect solution. I met Kathy Burch, the owner of Camp Canine in Spring Lake. The dogs went to camp every day and played hard with the other dogs. It became a second home for them and peace of mind for me. They came home with just enough energy to eat their dinner and that was it. They were sound asleep in their crates the rest of the night.

One of the staff at Camp Canine, Stephanie, loved the dogs so much she nicknamed them "the angels." She said they never failed to lift her spirits every time she saw them. I call the Camp in advance to tell them I'm picking up "the angels." Every time I pulled up all three are sitting on the ledge of the big window looking out. As soon as I get out of the car they have a look of excitement on their faces. It's a celebration every time I walk in the door.

I think back to my friend's words of advice when he told me my life would never be the same if I got a dog. He was right. My life changed in many ways - all for the better. I still can't help but wonder if they really are angels with fur.



Romeo, Julian and Bella waiting in the window of Camp Canine for a ride home.

Photo: Stephanie Schindlbeck

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