



Dee Raisl and Onyx



Everyone thinks their pet is the greatest. Rightly so, but I still believe that mine may be even a little more special.

Onyx had a rough start on life. We believe he spent most of his first six months tied up in an isolated area. He was not socialized... and then was dumped at a shelter. He was scared. So scared that they deemed him unadoptable and did not plan to keep him past the three day run-away-hold. It was about to expire. Luckily I found him first, cowering in a corner of his kennel, yearning for some love. I was concerned that he had too many problems. He wasn't eating, walking, or interacting with anyone.

Being around more than one person at a time overwhelmed him. That is until I got him home and he found himself in a quiet home where he could learn all the things he didn't know. Like a bird singing, or leaves rustling in the trees. It took a few months but he slowly learned that he didn't need to be afraid of all these things. He learned to trust that I loved him and wouldn't let anything hurt him. And the happy puppy came out of his shell. His demeanor now matches the smile created by his under-bite

During a visit to an elderly aunt in California, I noticed that the first thing Onyx did each morning was check on my bed-ridden aunt. He would put his feet up on the edge of her hospital bed and make sure she was okay. Later he would jump in her bed to take naps with her. She loved it. I'm not allowed to visit without him anymore, even if that means driving all the way to southern California. Since my life has long been connected to health care I realized that this was an area that we could volunteer in. He now enjoys having me tell his story to the patients he visits in the hospital, and the kids he plays with at the resource center so that they can see hope for a better future.

We have some favorite stories of helping others. One patient was in severe pain, sobbing uncontrollably.





Then Onyx snuggled up to her in her hospital bed, resting his head on her stomach staring into her sad eyes. We ended up spending 20 minutes with her as she pleaded with us to stay. She forgot her pain as she stared into his eyes. We were reluctant to leave. Then there was the comatose patient with her family gathered around her. After visiting with her children, a daughter commented on how much her mom loved dogs. I offered to place him by her side and gently laid him next to her with the family's consent. She immediately picked up her hand, laid it on Onyx's head and said "dog". That was one of her last moments, but the entire family smiled at such a pleasant experience at such a sad time. And then there was the homeless three-year-old that was struggling with his speech. His first word was "dog", the second "woof", and his third "Thursday"... the day Onyx visited with the kids. When his family prepared to move away to try to better their circumstances they advised me that they promised him a dog. A rescue dog.

Yes, he is now a very happy boy. And he just celebrated his sixth birthday. To say that me makes others happy is to know him. He is a little unusual. We believe he is a mutt, a combination of a Standard

Poodle, a Schnauzer, and a Spanish Corded Water Dog. So he has dreadlocks. Lots of dreadlocks. And it makes people smile as he peers through his hair to catch sight of everything.

Most importantly he makes me smile. Onyx has enriched my life more than I ever expected. I tell people that my life has gone to the dogs. In reality, it has gone to just one very special boy. Mr. Onyx. And we are both happy to give back the love that we share by visiting people who are struggling. Pet Partners has helped us help others and is a big part of our lives.

