

My Newest Patient

A memoir written by
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 Age 18



Golden brown leaves littered the sidewalks and dewy grass in front of my red brick house. A crisp wind pinched my already pink cheeks and tiny nose. It was too early for snowflakes, though the clouds above threatened with rain or sleet. I hesitated to leave my dad’s four-door Honda Civic; it was so warm and cozy. I slid my hands around the strap of my gym bag and ran for the dark green front door. As I ran, my brother’s windbreaker pants swooshed and swished, creating a sound similar to nails on a chalkboard. I cringed as I heard it, and thought about how I could get rid of the pants before my mom forced me to wear them again. My bag, filled with my sneakers and basketball, landed with a thud on the hardwood oak floors.



My dad hustled in the door behind me, allowing for a chilly wind to break into the house. I continued on my way to sneak a snack in the kitchen before heading upstairs to watch television with my younger twin brothers, who were undoubtedly glued to the newest episode of “What’s up, Scooby Doo?” The hallway quickly became the kitchen, and the smell of chocolate chip cookies and brownies surrounded me. A white plastic table was set up along the edge of the wall, littered with utensils, plates, birthday candles, and of course, the cake. The cake was chocolate underneath a mound of chocolate icing, with an assortment of colored candles spelling out ‘Happy Birthday Elizabeth’ for my sister, who was turning 13.

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As I hovered closer to the table, I became aware that I wasn't alone. I turned and found my aunt, uncle, and mom standing close to each other, each wearing a huge toothy grin, patented by adults, that usually meant, 'I know something you don't know.' I followed my mom's gaze and discovered a small, black animal wrapped in a blue fleece blanket in my aunt's arms. My immediate reaction was, "Oh my god, you guys got a dog! Congrats!" They laughed, and I turned into a typical eleven year old, continuously shouting, "What's so funny? Tell me now!" My uncle, in his carefree, nonchalant manner of speaking, said, "We didn't get a dog, Mooch...you did." I walked up to that puppy with a newfound purpose in life. My reoccurring dream of getting a dog had finally, and most definitely, come true. I held the soft, black paw in the palm of my hand and stared into the most beautiful face I had ever seen. His light brown eyes stood out in contrast against the jet-black fur. I knelt down on the white-tiled floor of the kitchen, as my aunt carefully placed the biggest responsibility I had ever had on my lap. He was small, just about nine weeks old, although the size ratio of paws to body suggested he would grow much, much more. I sat there, in that moment, nodding my head to my mother's instructions but not entirely listening. I was too consumed in my thoughts of how long I had awaited this moment, and how it had finally become reality.

I never played with Barbie or baby dolls; I was a veterinarian. My collection had grown to over twenty stuffed animals, mostly dogs, which were injured and needed a place to stay and rest. For my birthday a few years earlier, my parents got me a veterinary kit, which included a carrying crate and two additional stuffed dogs. Business was booming. Yet, I knew this puppy would be a huge responsibility, so I had to leave my practice to take on my newest patient.

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Dr. McGowan's Veterinary Office, Out Of Business



As I climbed back into reality, I realized that my parents picked an odd day to give me a present. The kitchen was bustling with food and drinks, all in preparation for my older sister Elizabeth’s 13th surprise birthday party. Elizabeth was off shopping with my cousins, completely unaware that the greatest present ever was yawning in my lap. I was surprised myself that my parents were trying another surprise party for Elizabeth. A few years earlier, my dad took my sister and me to a restaurant to “get a letter from a friend”. The huge glass doors were right in front of me, and I tugged on the wooden handle, opening the doors to a chorus of “Surprise! Happy birthday Elizabeth!” Whoops...

I was now worried I had ruined it again. The dog was my present; I was the one who asked for him almost a million times. I was nervous that Elizabeth would be angry with me. She had a bit of a temper.



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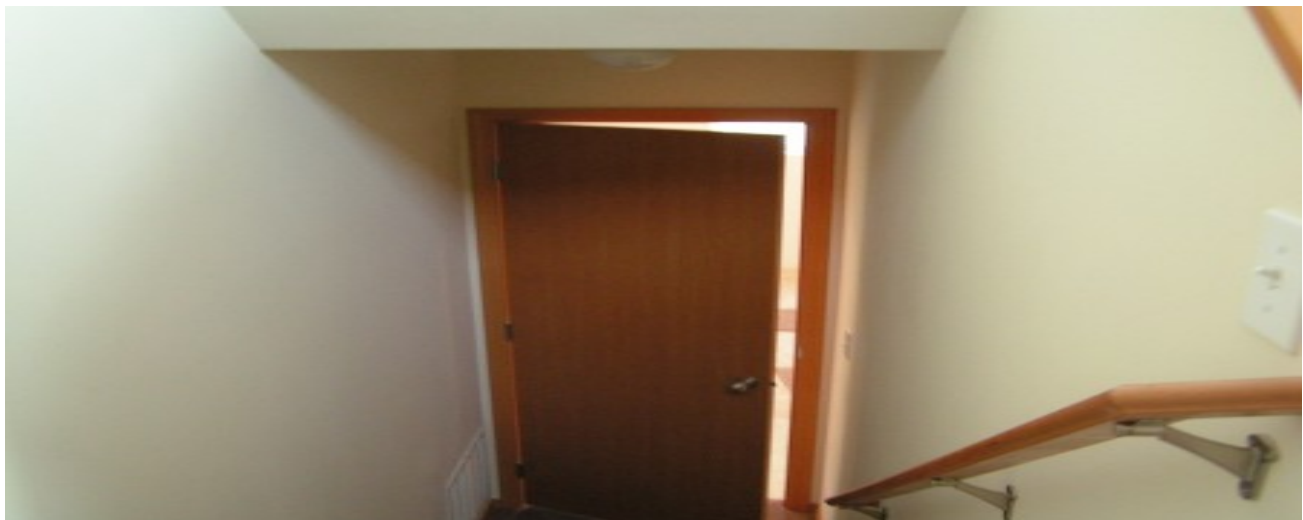
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Time passed, and the lights were dimmed. My family and Elizabeth’s friends hid in our basement under tables, behind doors, and behind the television. I wanted to be the first one seen, so I sat, in plain view, on the floor in front of the stairs. I could hear the creaking of the floorboards up above, and the cellar door screeching open. First, a shoe, then a leg, then her face appeared, bent over trying to see if anyone was there.



I could hear the clock behind me ticking. Time was dragging on. The room was tense with anticipation, and the partygoers were growing restless. My puppy whimpered in my arms, even he could feel the tension. After what felt like a century, a light flickered on, which triggered other lights, and shouts of “Surprise! Happy birthday!” could be heard from down the street. However, the greatest moment was yet to come. My sister, taken aback by the amount of people and loud noises, firmly shouted out...

!! OHHH SHITTTT!!

If getting my puppy was ice cream, hearing my sister curse in front of my family was the sprinkles AND the cherry on top. She quickly regained her composure and smiled, and threw herself in front of the dog and me. I was concocting my choice of words and phrases so I could tell her calmly that this dog was all mine. Yet, it was her birthday, and she was my only sister, so I forced myself to say the words that children don't normally use..."We could share."

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Works Cited

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