

Telling Tail Tales

Rescued by Magic

By Kasper Halevy



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“He didn’t make it,” sobbed my mom. My sister, grandparents, mom, and I surround a motionless angel with paws. We are grieving at Adobe Animal Hospital. We just lost Magic to a catastrophic car accident. Magic was a miracle dog who comforted and rescued me as my life turned upside down in second grade. I am unable to imagine life without him because he was my most humane buddy and best cheerer-upper. No more welcome committee after school? No more snuggles at night when I can’t fall asleep? No more old man grunts from under the bed? No more 24/7 playmate? No more—I could go on and on. Let me tell you the tale of Magic—the best therapeutic canine companion ever.

It all started when my parents declared their divorce. I was in shock. For months, I was a constantly depressed outcast in school. One day, mom asked my sister and me, “What breed of dog will help cheer you up?” I was taken by surprise (and joy)! We were getting a dog? That seemed more unlikely than my parents separating! I was so grateful that I didn’t dare be picky. My mom and sister settled on a breathlessly gorgeous German Shepherd puppy, and we named him Magic; he was born on the day my sister and I learned about the divorce.

I recall waiting for him to wake up from the car ride home to introduce myself properly. He eagerly explored our house and backyard upon arrival, which soon became his territory. We bonded immediately and became inseparable. Playing with and training smart Magic (he reacted to commands in English, Chinese, and German) after school and on weekends were always the highlights of my day.

Over time, Magic and I became more and more attached. He seemed to be able to read my mind, comprehend my language, and empathize with my emotional roller coasters. When I was down, he would lick my face with the wettest kisses, expose his tummy for me to rub, and breathe his sweet and calming breath on me. He was, in every way, my emotional pillow. When I was away, Magic often moped by hiding his head under my bed or staring blankly out the window for long stretches of time whenever he heard the sound of cars or other noise from outside mom’s house. As soon as he got whiff of my return, he would start jumping, barking, and tail-wagging in excitement. Whenever I felt like no one could console me, I remembered that I could depend on Magic’s love, protection, and loyalty in all circumstances. Cuddling and whispering with him always made the world brighter. Toward the end of his life, I had a great affinity for not only German Shepherds, but also for all dogs—in fact, for all animals.

After Magic crossed the rainbow bridge, I began the journey of helping animals through volunteering and advocacy. Volunteering made me overcome fears of being haunted by memories of Magic. Instead of being upset about his death, I reflected on the good memories we had together. I started

at the American Canine Institute, an organization that provides dog training sessions and where Magic had received weekly training. I'm especially proud to have helped train a German Shepherd named Max who was rescued from a kill shelter's death row, and Zena who, like Magic, was a warm bundle of love and affection. Zena triggered memories of Magic: sitting in the back of mom's car on the way to my school, play dates, and activities; distracting me from shooting hoops in my backyard with his mischievous come-get-me-if-you-can look in his eyes and flapping red tongue ready for slurping up treats and water from his bowls; and enjoying my belly rubs with his feet dancing in the air while heaving sighs of satisfaction.

I soon realized that to become an animal advocate, I should learn how to interact with many different animals. I began to help out on a farm where I groomed, socialized, trained, and fed horses, chickens, goats, rabbits, and guinea pigs. I also volunteer at the Silicon Valley Animal Control Center where I socialize and help train dogs, cats, and bunnies, as well as doing their laundry and dishes.

After Magic's passing, tears sometimes welled up as I waited to be picked up from school. I would have flashbacks of my friends hovering around him and how Magic reciprocated their affection with his trademark playfulness and high-fives (well, shakes). I thought, wouldn't it be awesome if more people could experience the joy of human and animal bonding? Then, I had an epiphany!

I launched an animal advocacy club at school last fall after seeking advice about club projects from Ms. Delgado of the Palo Alto Humane Society. On November 30, as soon as the bell rang for recess, I sprinted to the classroom where I was scheduled to present an information session. Within ten minutes, there were more than twenty students and a few teachers in the room. I was thrilled! With all my heart and soul, I then presented my motivations and vision for founding the club. I was thrilled when all who attended signed up to join the club. It was the best day of my life other than Magic's arrival!

The club is currently working on three projects. One, creating a pet owner's manual on what to expect when committing to a pet. Two, organizing fundraisers for animals in need, such as our first bake sale of the year that raised over \$400. Three, researching what actions organizations are taking to prevent future wildfires, in addition to helping the affected animals by encouraging people to donate to those organizations.

I miss you every day, Magic. Thank you for inspiring me to spread joy through animal advocacy. Because of you, it has become my mission to support all of the wonderful animals out there! Thank you and sleep tight, Magic!

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