

RUNNING THROUGH SILENCE

July 30th, 2019. April Torres would never forget that date. She had written it countless times in her journal, hoping that somehow, she could take the words from her mind, and put them on paper.

To April, soccer meant everything to her. Her team had been about to qualify for the summer championship, when in the middle of the game, she broke her leg and dislocated her shoulder. The shoulder hadn't been a problem, but because of her leg, she couldn't play in the championship. She had been so devastated; she hadn't really left her house for weeks.

Her parents were getting worried, not about her injury, but about her depression.

"John, go tell April she needs to take these to the humane society." April's mom dropped a large, heavy box into her father's hands.

"Okay, honey." He took the box and yelled up at the upstairs floor, "April, darling?"

"Yeah?"

"Could you take these donations to the humane society?"

"Do I have to?"

April's father sighed. "Yes, honey, you have to."

"Fine. I'll be right down." There was the sound of footsteps on the upper floor. April trudged down the steps, with her crutches in hand.

"Excellent!" said her dad cheerfully. "Do you need help getting in the car?"

"No, I'm good, thanks" April answered. She limped quickly out the door and stepped into the car. As they started to drive, April's dad said,

"Alright, I'm going to drop you off at the front door, and then leave you there for at least an hour, then pick you up again. Is that okay?"

"Uh, huh." April replied absentmindedly.

"All righty, then, I'll see you in an hour."

Her dad parked the car and April stepped out. She breathed in the fresh air. She had forgotten how good it felt. She started walking swiftly toward the entrance. April shoved open the doors and walked inside, to be greeted by the front desk helper, Ryan.

“Hey, April, long time no see!” He called. April walked up to the desk and heaved the box on to it. Ryan opened it up and smiled.

“What’s in there?” April asked.

“Stuff like collars, leashes...” April didn’t hear the rest of his sentence. She was distracted by a small whimpering in the back.

“What’s back there?” She interrupted.

“Oh, that? I don’t know, probably just some new dog or something. You don’t have to go over there.” But April was already walking towards the back. She gently pushed the door open and smiled at what she saw. It was a litter of German shepherd puppies. Most of them looked healthy and strong, but one caught her eye.

It was a meek, small, and shy puppy, with cute, big, lopsided ears, and it cocked its head curiously at her.

A tall man with black hair and sideburns turned to look at her and said,

“You don’t want that one, he’s deaf.”

“So, what do you care?” She snapped. She felt pity for the small puppy. And then, she noticed something. It was his birth date. July 30th, 2019. Her heart seemed to stop. But strangely, she wasn’t mad. It made her feel like she had a closer *connection* with the puppy.

The man tried to grab the pup, but it kept dodging his every move. Finally, he wrapped his hands around the puppy, and picked it up. The puppy wriggled around, but when the man plopped him into April’s arms, he immediately stopped and snuggled up with her.

The man wiped sweat off his brow. “Man, he’s a handful. I don’t know how you manage to do that...”

“April.”

“Nice to meet you. I’m Ian.”

The puppy looked up at her with bright, curious eyes. April set him down on the floor.

“What’s his name?” She asked Ian.

“Don’t have one. I guess you can name him if you want.”

For some reason, the first thing that came to April's mind was the puppy dodging Ian's every move.

"Dodger." She whispered.

"What was that?" Ian asked.

"Dodger," April repeated, this time more loudly. "His name is Dodger."

"Look, April, I've never seen um... Dodger love anyone more than you, so would it be okay if, uh, maybe you could be his, I don't know, personal trainer?"

April was totally silent. Her mouth fell open

"Yes!" She yelled. April could think of no better thought than training the dog she loved. She dropped to her knees and opened her arms. Dodger leaped into them and started licking her face.

"Oh, Dodger," She whispered into his ear. "This might be the best day of my life.

The next few days were a blur. April went to the humane society every day, for at least four hours.

Dodger, despite being deaf, was an amazing dog. With hand signals, she had taught him to sit, lie down, shake, play dead, and high five.

Everyone had been impressed by April and Dodger's connection, including Ryan and Ian. And on top of that, April was smiling more than she was frowning.

On Friday night, April got picked up by her mom for a change.

"So, honey, how was your day?"

"Really good." April had been thinking about it for a while now, and she had decided she had wanted to adopt Dodger. She just didn't know how to break it to her mom and dad. "Um, mom?" April asked hesitantly.

"Yes, darling?"

"So, there's this dog at the humane society, and he's deaf, but super well trained, and maybe we could, I don't know, adopt him?" April held her breath. But April's mom just laughed.

"Oh honey, we can't just buy a dog! I'm so glad you're happy, but that's no excuse for getting a dog!"

"You would think differently if you just met him!" April shouted, suddenly angry.

"April! This is silly! You. Are. Not. Getting. A. Dog! Period!"

"You don't get it! You'll never get it!" April yelled. And then, mother and daughter fell silent.

When April's mom pulled into the driveway, April limped out of the car and stomped straight into her room, slamming the door behind her.

"What happened?" Asked April's dad.

"John, she wants a dog. What else could I say?"

"Oh, Mary. You could have at least said you would think about it."

"But that would be lying!"

"Yes, but she would still be happy. I'm going to go talk to her." And with that, April's dad walked up the steps, leaving her mother behind.

April heard a knock on the door.

"Come in." She said softly. Her dad walked in.

"I heard you want a dog."

"I do." April whispered.

"I'll tell you what. Why don't you show me this dog of yours? If he's as good as you say he is, then maybe we'll reconsider."

"Seriously?" April asked, her eyes wide.

"Seriously." Her dad replied, with a slight smile. The next day, when April and her dad were driving to the humane society, April's heart was pounding with excitement. She was sure when she showed Dodger to her dad, her dad would fall in love with him, and they'd adopt him.

When they arrived, April sprinted out of the car, and called to her dad,

"C'mon! Let's go!"

Her dad chuckled. "I'm coming, darling!"

April led him towards the back excitedly.

"Wait here." She told her dad. She used odd hand signals to call him over.

Dodger ran straight up to April and pawed her leg happily.

"Hi, buddy! How's it going?" she said, as if he could hear her. Then she started scratching his ears. "Dad, this is Dodger."

Dodger raised his paw and shook hands with April's dad.

"Why, what a polite young fellow!" Exclaimed April's dad.

Over the next hour, April showed her dad all the tricks she had taught Dodger, as well as showing him around the humane society.

"So, can we adopt him? Please?" Asked April hopefully.

"Honey, he is such an amazing dog, I'm sure we could arrange that." April's father said with a smile.

"Yes! Thank you so much dad! Thank you!" She cheered.

"Let's go home now and I'll talk about it with your mom."

"Okay!" April would have skipped, but she couldn't with a broken leg, so instead she walked with a bounce in her step.

About an hour after they arrived home, April heard a knock on her door. Her mom entered the room with a smile on her face.

"Honey, your father and I have decided that you can adopt that dog of yours. Of course, you'll be doing all the work and care, right?"

"Yes!" April yelled happily! "Can we get him today?"

"I don't see why not."

"Great! Let's go!" April ran down the steps as fast as she could manage and leaped into the car, followed by both of her parents. April's smile grew the whole way there, and when they arrived, she was grinning ear to ear.

"Okay, honey. You go get Dodger, and we'll fill out the paperwork." Said April's mom.

"Okay!" April replied enthusiastically. She limped towards the back where Dodger's crate was.

She used her hand signals to call him over, and he put his paws on her shoulders.

"C'mon, buddy. We're here to adopt you!" As if he had heard April, he perked up and barked loudly.

She picked him up and walked to the front of the building. Ryan handed her a certificate of ownership.

On the way home, April whispered, "You know what boy? I think July 30th, 2019 may have been the best day ever."