

By Nikhil K.

Today is day thirty-nine of being in the shelter. I am not in love with the fact of having me in a cage that is about twice my size, but I am fed daily. I wouldn't call it food though. I am not sure why, but I am in a good mood today. A young girl is standing in front of my cage, looking at me. I usually get very nervous around humans, but this one is calming. She sticks her hand into the cage and drops something. A treat. Each day our caretaker gave us a treat. At least until he was fired. I ate it. It was very cold, but it tasted good. She stares at me for a moment and then walks away. And then a man opens my cage.

I am taken out of my cage by the man. "Malinois require a lot of care. Make sure to give it a lot of exercise and feed it every day.", he says. He places me in a brown box. I look through the holes. And see what I saw thirty-nine days ago, the day I came here. Many cages, some empty, some not. I watch as I leave the building, and enter a car. When the car stops, I am taken out. My box is being carried. Finally, the box opens. That little girl I saw today was staring at me when it opened. We make eye contact for a moment and a half. After that, she kissed me on the head. I licked her on the face. "Thank you, puppy!" she says. She threw a toy. We played fetch. I never understood why humans "own" us, but it all makes sense now. Humans are great...

At least that is what I thought...

Today is day two-thousand five hundred. I can't believe I have made it this far! I now have the privilege to go outside all by myself. My owner spoke with her mother and she installed a door just for me. Now I can go outside whenever I want! My owner also takes me out on walks now! It's great.

I have a good feeling about today. My owner is spending more time with me. She is playing fetch with me, and, for some reason, can't stop petting me! And, of course, since we are playing a lot, we are sleeping a lot. After me and my owner played fetch for hours, I slept for the entire day!

When I woke up I noticed that the sky was turning dark. I realized that I woke up at the time I usually go to sleep. So I just went back to sleep.

I wake up to the sound of glass shattering. I look to my left and see two boys, dressed in all black. One of the boys laughs and says "Oh! Look what we have here!". He makes eye contact with me. I hear quiet footsteps from the other room. I see my owner peek outside her bedroom door. She's frozen. Not frozen like cold. Frozen like scared. Me seeing her almost makes me forget that two boys are approaching me. I growl at them, hoping it'll scare them off. They don't even flinch. The boy goes up to me and kicks me in the leg. I try my best not to whine because it would make me seem weak. The boy notices that I am in pain and punches me, over and over again, while muttering something that I cannot make out. Then he puts his face up to mine and laughs. He keeps his face right there as the other boy kicks me over and over again. I try to make sure I don't harm them because doing so would make me no better than them. I tried to hold it in as one boy kicked me while the other taunted me, but it was too late... And I snapped.

One of the boys falls on the floor, not moving or breathing, and his scalp lays on the floor. The boy that was kicking me screams and runs away, whining and crying.

I realize what I have become. I thought they were monsters. But no. I am. I run, through the broken glass and over the fence. I run until I find a tree to rest by. As I rest, I notice the scars I have from being kicked. They are very painful, but I can handle it. I go to sleep, wishing this was all just a dream.

When I wake up, I realize that I am in a cage. A cage just like the one from my old shelter. I acknowledge the fact that there are other dogs here, in this dark room. I peek my head through the bars and see a window. And I see her. My owner. She points in my direction while talking to a man. She is given many sheets of paper. She frowns. I decide to walk away from the bars and take a nap because it will make it go by faster. Sure enough, I wake up to the sound of the cage opening. I am brought outside to where my owner is. Her expression is bittersweet. She whispers in my ears "I know you did it to protect me. I am sorry".

My owner and her mother put me in the car. And then we go. When the car stops, we are at a completely different house. We go in. Inside there are boxes all over the place. My owner takes me to a room and we sit down. And then she starts talking to me. "The boy that was taunting died after the incident. We were forced to move. I am so sorry about everything that has happened. I saw what they did to you. Thank you for protecting me and my mom,". I am surprised. She never spoke to me in a normal voice. She always talked in a baby voice when she was in my presence.

I will never forgive myself for what I have done, but at least my family is safe. That is all that matters.