BRUNO â?? MY NEW BUDDY

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(Perhaps, my wife had foreseen a possibility of a social isolation and the ensuing sense of withdrawal I have to deal with after her â??eternal adieu.â?? She has left her loyal, humble pet dog, the ten-year-old white, cottony Pomeranian â?? Bruno. Now I have an intimate understanding about him â?? though no gift to speak it shows in a hundred healthy ways in a high-pitched yelp, his devotion, sitting close to me sniffing â?? demonstrating his trust.)

Suddenly I wake up, jolted by an unpleasant dream, momentarily cursing the disruption of the deep sleep; I toss myself adjusting to the dark shadows, waiting for the slumber to take me in. In the meantime, in the roomâ??s dimness, I assume a damp breathing run close to me; I open my eyes, there, a close-up of brown eyes peering at me, his tiny small feet placed on my bed â?? a posture hinting, â??is something wrong.â??

Let me introduce my gentle, moody, twelve years old Pomeranian â?? the Bruno, my new buddy, caretaker, an innocent character that makes me feel better on each passing day. Itâ??s been a caring accessory, a graceful family bequest, left by my wife who passed away two years ago.

It became visible in many unkind ways, how tough it was to fight the loneliness after living, enjoying and sharing the spine of togetherness for thirty-four years of married life with Mani â?? my wife. All along, we raised a good and caring family adjusting ourselves for whatever punches throw at us as we took in our stride the chosen vocation â??managing the family enterprise â?? the school.

So when we both excitedly getting ready to hold in our laps the blissful delights â?? our three grandchildren; the heartless karma flung its noose at our family! Losing my wife to cancer shattered me, my future, and the plans I framed for our children.

Each day crawls at its lazy pace as if giving ample stretch to measure the burden of staying alone. I find no sign that it would become any easier in the days to come. All I often see one unsuspecting reality after another in a hurry to shove me to lonely corners as if damnably making clear, â??no one comes to you, the battle is yours alone â?? to endure or to fight.â?•

I enjoyed the companionability of people, always looking for occasions to spend time with well-wishers and well-meaning circle of friends. Suddenly, as soon as I lost my wife, I felt, overshadowed by a cultural taboo â?? itâ??s a sour unfriendly sympathy as people Iâ??m close to left me high and dry. No one to knock my door, no one to sit with me, no one ever, so far, blinked at my house to find out â??how Iâ??m surviving my mourning.â??

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Perhaps, my wife had foreseen a possibility of this social isolation and the ensuing sense of withdrawal I have to deal with after her â??eternal adieu.â?? She has left her loyal, humble pet dog, the ten-year-old white, cottony Pomeranian. It got into our home, ten years earlier coaxed by my teenage daughter Neelima, as a birthday gift. Given the size of a tennis ball, eyes not yet fully open, silky, trembling curled furry lump, a tender soul, launched into our home with Bruno as its title. With its babyish playfulness and cute innocence, it right away became the sweetheart to Mani and Neelima.

Twelve years later, for Bruno and me, life took an unexpected deep plunge. My wife disappeared from our lives claimed by cruel cancer. My daughter got married and left to settle in the US. Having left alone, I found myself in a fix. I have never volunteered to enroll Bruno as a friend. His loyalty and affection always set apart to my wife. My presence to him was just an obliging authority and therefore unnecessary to stay obedient â??like Iâ??m never entitled to his friendly tail waving.

Today we find ourselves thrown into a harsh possibility of living together, huddled, more often at night in our allotted beds in the big hall; earlier used as the treatment room for my wife. The telltale symptoms of exhaustion of suffering the absence of my wife were as grimly prominent on the blank staring face of Bruno as it is on mine -not knowing how to hide it â?? for both of us.

Let me be frank; I was never good at â??pet â?? sittingâ?? or never had a keen interest in the psychology of canines. They were the prerogatives of my daughter and

wife. I hardly displayed any sympathetic bias to cuddle him or walk him around on the terrace for prolonged morning and evening â??itâ??s easing outâ?? trips.

Now, between the two years, I started enjoying its attentive presence watching him sprawling at my feet whenever Iâ??m in my reading or on couch watching TV. I could guess an agreeable rapport have emerged between Bruno and me. I noticed he kept a close watch with its sparkling eyes, particularly during nights, curled up close to my bed with pricked ears, keen eyes, head tilted to one side. He takes his post as the vigilant.

So long as Iâ??m awake, he stays close to me on guard. Occasionally, we both share a midnight snack or a sandwich. Whenever I dozed off, Iâ??m aware of the slow sounds of his sides rising and falling and peculiar breathing noises. Although eyes shut, I knew, his smart ears were watchful attentively listening to sounds beyond the bolted doors.

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If I get up at midnight, flustered, I notice an alert Bruno intently watching me with its wet marbled eyes as if inquiring with â??are you okâ?? look. Iâ??m fascinated and surprised at the faithful demeanor he held for me. With its hopeful gaze, the unconditional devotion he has been displaying from the time after my wifeâ??s departure â?? â??what an unselfish giftâ?? â?? I believe about Bruno.

Now I have rallied my affinity with Bruno, developed a bond and we have started exchanging cuddly looks whenever I go out and surprised by its excitement twirling around when Iâ??m back home. As soon I wake up, putting on hold my morning ebullitions, I leash him around supervising the peculiar warming and excretion procedures of him. Going around, choosing specific corners, twisting noisily, and finally scraping his nails on the floor, giving a signal to me he had done with the morning session.

â??I have to praise my wife for making me realize the fact that the pet dogs are the most devoted fellas without ever looking back what they get. Even though I see mostly, itâ??s served the leftovers and the scraps. No qualms, no protests, they lap up any snack held before them, at our convenience. They never look up questioning us; never yelp bothering us about their moods or pains. This little guy is there for me, been my companion, and I think with love, faith, and trust he just chose me. I didnâ??t choose him. Now I have an intimate understanding about Bruno â?? though no gift to speak it shows in a hundred healthy ways in a high-pitched yelp, his devotion, sitting close to me sniffing â?? demonstrating his trust. Looking at him I enjoy a sentimental rush for me to conclude: no animal bonds to a human being the way a dog does.â?•

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