

A ZINE SHORT STORY



LUCKY CHARM

By S. Randall Colley

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## CHAPTER ONE: THE PET SHOP

The PICC-line was painful, but it had to be done. The veins in Jill's arms were disintegrating from the caustic chemotherapy drugs they had been putting into her body for the last six months.

The doctor put a port in her neck for the poison she would need once a week for the next six months.

She had a few hours before the sickness would take over, but she hated going back to their apartment. In a few hours she knew she would be in bed for the next day and a half.

The walls of the apartment would close it on her.

This was a particularly bad day. Not only was her cancer not responding to the treatment, but it had moved into stage four.

Jill told Eric, "I want a goldfish." Eric said, "Sure, when do you want it?" As he drove toward home. "Now... I want one now..." "OK, the pet shop is on the way, we'll stop and get a goldfish."

There was no particular reason, Jill just wanted a goldfish. She really just needed a distraction. The pet shop was only a few blocks from their apartment, but they had never been inside.

It was a small mom-and-pop store. To their surprise, there were a lot of people inside. There was a little lady in her 80's, buzzing around the store helping and chatting with customers while her husband managed the cash register.

The wall behind the register was covered with old photographs of customers with their pets.

Generations of pet owners.

Grandchildren that were brought to the store by their grandparents and are now they are bringing their grandchildren. If nothing else the photographs were a record of the fashion changes over the years.

Jill noticed that some of the older ladies were staring at her and smiling. She was used to people staring at her. She tried wearing wigs when her hair first fell out.

They were too hot and she decided just to wear a scarf and sometimes nothing, just her cute little bald head.

Jill picked out a goldfish and a small fish bowl.

On the way to check out they walked past the old cardboard TV box with a yelping, barking, puppy. It was a little yellow Labrador Retriever puppy.

She was barking at Jill trying to climb out of the box to get to her. The puppy was beside herself trying to get Jill to pick her up.

One of the ladies said, "She wants you."

Jill could not resist the cuteness and she went over and picked her up. The puppy barked, and yelping so loud that everyone in the store was watching and smiling at her.

The puppy cuddle next to her and put her head on her breast. She calmed down as soon as Jill picked her up.

Jill looked at her husband, and made a cute pitiful face and said,  
"Please... please can we keep her?"  
One of the ladies whispered to Eric,  
"She needs that puppy."

When Eric saw the brightness in her eyes and sheer joy that this little puppy brought to his wife, after months of agonizing chemotherapy treatments, he would have agreed to anything that would give her a moment of happiness.

The old man said, "That's Lucky Charm." Then he took a snapshot of Jill and the puppy. "Now you have to take her so I can put you up on the wall."

They took the puppy home.

The puppy slept in the bed next to Jill for the next two days, while she recovered from her treatment. Always next to her always touching her.

They had a routine, they went to the park when Jill felt better and then they stayed in bed for two days after each treatment. She slept next to her when she came back from chemotherapy.

Finally, she started to respond to the chemo and radiation. The tumor began to shrink, until one day, to the doctors amazement Jill was cancer free.

## CHAPTER TWO: TRACY

Jill took Lucky Charm to the dog park, to let her run. Jill was beginning to regain her strength and was feeling good, she was loving life again.

Lucky pulled loose from her and took off running and barking across the park, dragging her leash behind her.



Lucky stopped at a park bench, where a mother and her young daughter were sitting together. The daughter was laying with her head on her mother's lap, she did not feel good.

Lucky was barking and licking the girls face. The little girl giggled and wanted to hug the big yellow furry Labrador. She had a bright red scarf wrapped around her head and her cheeks were round and puffy. Jill recognized that look and knew what it meant. She thought she was too young to be going through chemotherapy and steroids.

Jill apologizes for Lucky's behavior, but the little girl's mother was overjoyed at seeing her daughters' laughter. It was such a blessing to hear her giggle and be silly with this big fluffy dog. When only a few minutes before she was crying and full of despair.



Jill apologizes again. The mother assured her that it was no problem. The little girl was up, hugging and petting Lucky.

The mother explained that she brings her to the park after each treatment. She hates to go straight home. She loves to see the dogs. They wanted to get a puppy for her, but the apartment was too small, so they got a goldfish instead it's what Tracy wanted.

They lived in the apartment next to the park. Nothing takes your mind off your problems like the affection of a puppy.

Jill asked the mother what type of cancer did she have? She told her that Tracy has stage four and she had been in remission for a year, but now it's back.

Tracy asked if Jill would bring Lucky back to the park next week? She has treatments the same time every week.

But, When the little girl started to leave, the dog was adamant that she wanted to go with her. Lucky was uncontrollable pulling on her leash. There was no changing her mind.

Jill thought maybe if she let lucky walk with her to the apartment, that she might calm down. They agreed. On the way the little girl talks to Lucky as if she was a person. She was telling her where she was going and what she would see in her apartment. That she would get to play with her dolls.

On the way Tracy asked, her mother if Lucky could sleep over please... please. Lucky begins barking as if she was also saying please... please.

The mother explained to Jill that for Tracy, losing her friends has been the hardest part. No one will ask her to sleep over anymore and they always have excuses why they can't come to our house. The parents are afraid to have their child exposed to cancer you know the dreaded C-word.

Once inside the apartment, Lucky jumped onto the bed with Tracy. It was obvious that she was not leaving the little girls side. Jill seemed to understand on some level what Lucky wanted. She knew that she was not going to leave Tracy.

Tracy and Lucky played Barbies and had a tea party in Tracy's bedroom. Tracy was giggling and laughing as if at this moment her body was not filled with cancer and toxic painful chemicals. This big yellow dog gave her a reprieve from her suffering.

Tracy's mother fixed a pot of tea and her and Jill talked for hours at the kitchen table like best friends.

It was good for Jill to understand how the other person felt. The fears and stress that the caregiver experiences. Eric never really talked about how he felt and she never really asked.

They noticed that it was getting late. They looked into the bedroom and found Tracy and Lucky both sound asleep on the bed.

They agreed to let lucky stay with Tracy for the night. Thinking that would be the best thing to do. Jill offered to come back in the morning and pick up Lucky.

Lucky would spend the night with Tracy on the days that she got her treatments. Then on weekends she would babysit Lucky for Jill and Eric.

Jill saw Tracy and her mother in the park, Tracy ran to her with a big smile, Miss Jill the tumor is gone and the cancer is gone. She and her mother were elated with joy. Lucky was barking and as excited as they were.

Tracy had her life back, she was going to a sleepover tonight and going with her friends to the movies.

She was moving on and there were no more days in the park with Lucky. She could now grow up, get married and have children or what ever she wanted to.

### CHAPTER THREE: MARGE

Jill and Eric had a party one night with some of their friends. Jill's friend Marge came. Lucky went berserk, she wanted to be close to her, but Marge did not like dogs.

She became annoyed that Lucky was trying to be next to her. Jill had to put her in the bedroom where she continued to bark and scratched at the door to get out.

Jill apologized for Lucky's behavior and without thinking, Jill asked Marge, "When did you find out you had cancer?" Marge became very upset with her and explained that she did not have cancer, and she did not think that was very funny and she left.

Jill tried to apologize, but Marge stayed estranged from her for several months.

Then one day the doorbell rang it was Marge she was in tears. How did you know that I had cancer?

Oh... Marge, "I'm so sorry, it's like she seems to somehow know."

Well, Lucky was lucky for me. I found a lump a few weeks before your party, I guess I was in denial. My mother died from breast cancer and I just could not face it. But after you asked me that question, I knew that I had to face it.

I start my treatments next week.

Jill and Marge became close friends. Marge lived alone, so Jill and Lucky would take her to her doctor appointments. Lucky would stay over and keep her company on the days she had her treatments. She learned to love dogs, at least Lucky.



Marge got good news from the doctor that the cancer was in remission, she got a job and she was going on a date all in the same day.

#### CHAPTER FOUR: LUCKY'S ILLNESS

Jill was giving Lucky a bath and noticed three lumps on her stomach. She took her to the veterinarian. The news was not good. The irony was the dog that had helped three women, through the worst times of their lives, now was dying of cancer and there was nothing they could do. In less than a month Lucky was gone.

Jill and Eric decided to bury her in the pet cemetery near their home. Marge came and so did Tracy and her mother.

They had a large headstone that reads.

OUR BELOVED "LUCKY CHARM" YOU GAVE US  
SO MUCH.  
DIED 7/7/2019.

While they were getting in their cars to leave and giving last-minute hugs. Tracy had been exploring the cemetery and reading headstones. "Mom there are a lot of people that named their dog Lucky and there's a parakeet named Roscoe and a snake named Truman."

They hugged and said goodbye and hoped they will stay in touch.

#### CHAPTER FIVE: MIDNIGHT FLASHBACK

Jill woke up in the middle of the night and sat up in bed. She flashback to the pet shop the day she found Lucky. She remembered how the other ladies would look at her and nod and smile.

She thought they were staring at her scarf, but it was more like there was some big secret that they all knew and it was all about her.

It was as if they all knew something about me. They all wanted me to have Lucky.

The cemetery, she said out loud, "it's in the cemetery." She remembered what Tracy said, there are a lot of Lucky's buried here.

Get up Eric, she shook him in a panic and told him to get up. He looked at the alarm clock, it's 3:30 in the morning, why are we getting up now. What are you doing? Get up now we have to go to the cemetery. What cemetery? The pet cemetery where Lucky is buried.

I have to know how many pets named Lucky, are buried there? Tracy said, there were a lot of pets named Lucky.

They got dressed and went to the cemetery in the middle of the night. With flashlights, they looked at the headstones.

Eric would call out, "There's one over here, there's another one over here, all with the name Lucky. Then Jill yelled out, "I found one over here."

## CHAPTER SIX: THE PET SHOP

Jill announced with great determination, "We are going to the pet shop and find out what all of this means." Eric said, "It's 7:AM, they won't be open for another two hours."

When they arrived at the pet shop, there was already a crowd of customers waiting for the store to open. There were men and women of all ages waiting in front of the store laughing and enjoying each other's company.

Jill walked up to the crowd, she had an overwhelming feeling that she was home, and these people were old friends. She felt a common bond, she did not know how or why, but she knew they were all connected to each other.

They were hugging each other, showing each other pictures of their family. As Jill and Eric were walking up to the door, she heard someone say, "She's back..."

A young boy and his family were in the crowd, the mother said, to one of the ladies, "He wants a goldfish."

One of the men said, "This is the place to come, they have a lot of goldfish."

The old man unlocked the front door and they all hurried into the store. Jill and Eric were the last to enter the store.

They were not sure why they were there, but they knew, it was where they were supposed to be.

When the little boy walked past the old cardboard T.V. box, the yellow Labrador puppy started barking and yelping. She wanted that little boy. Jill recognized that bark, the instant she heard it from across the store.

She knew that little puppy. She stood back and watched the little boy, as he picked the puppy out of the old box and begin hugging her. Now she knew what the lady meant when she said, "She's back."

## CHAPTER SEVEN: THE LUCKY BOY

The little boy asked his parents if he could have the puppy, "Please..., please..." The parents did not know what to do. Seeing the parent's indecision, several of the older ladies gently guided them by telling them to take the puppy. Others in the store chimed in, "take the puppy". The old store owner, snapped the boys picture holding the puppy.

The little boy asked his mother, "Can we name her Lucky?" Jill said, to the little boy with tears in her eyes, "That's a wonderful name."

As they were leaving with the puppy, the father looked back and whispered to Jill, he has cancer, Jill whispered back, "We know... we know..."

Eric asked, the old man about the pictures on the wall behind the counter. Who are all these people in these photographs?

The old man proudly pointing at a lady holding a puppy and said, "that one is my wife Edith, taken in 1970." He added, "She is just as pretty today as she was then. The doctors called it a miracle."



How long have you owned this store? We took it over that same year, from the old couple that owned it. They were ready to retire.

They were in their 80's and just and waiting for the right couple. They sold it to us cheap. Now we're in our 80's and we're just waiting for the right couple to come along, so we can retire.

Eric went over to Jill and gave her a big hug. He asked her, "How would she feel about owning a pet store?" She said "I think that is a wonderful idea."

THE END

MAKE A POEM  
WRITE A STORY  
MAKE A DRAWING  
MAKE A ZINE  
EVERYDAY

