

Fluffy goes to Puppy Heaven.

Our household, going into this weekend, had three people, two Carlton and one Saints supporter, and two dogs, the eldest Peettee, 13 years old Poodle Shitzu who acts like he's a five year old, and Fluffy, an 11 year old Poodle Shitzu. This weekend, Fluffy got sick, very sick. In the middle of the Friday night game of football, we took this feverish, unhappy dog, to the newish Animal Hospital on Dandenong Road, Malvern East. Geelong were their usual self and dominated, and put Essendon to the sword.

All day Saturday, while listening to the footy in the back ground, while Hawthorn smashed Collingwood, while Adelaide smashed West Coast Eagles and while Brisbane barely beat Gold Coast, I was comforting my 17 year old, who Fluffy officially belonged too. Let's not talk about who walks, feeds, medicates and cares for the dogs, my daughter is the official "mum". Fluffy was her gift 11 years ago. We saw his cute little face in the Chadstone Pet Shop, and were sucked in good and proper. Newly divorced, with everything being a fresh beginning, we got a second dog. Peettee is my sons dog. They get naming and bragging rights, me as mum got the work. But that's OK. I knew I was the favourite. They (the dogs) certainly knew who did what.

All Saturday I rung and talked to the vets. He'd improved slightly but was defying all their diagnostic skills, but one thing we knew by late Saturday night, he was very sick indeed. They were talking about his not being able to walk, having fluid on the spine or brain. All really awful diagnosis and prognosis. We were going to bring him home for the night, but he got so much worse, we gathered ourselves and went to say goodbye. He was suffering badly and I am not one to go drastic animal rescue. If he is suffering, we had to let him go. The work was in easing my daughter to this place. In twenty-four hours, there is not much easing. While she distracted herself with study during the day, I was outside pulling up a ton of weeds. It was such a beautiful, sunny Saturday afternoon. Normally I'd be painting. Yesterday, I just felt like ripping stuff up from the garden while listening to Collingwood being ripped apart.

Peettee was also unwell, and I took him in the morning to the normal vet, anal gland problems, he's never had that, it's in sympathy with his mate who always had this problem, and while gardening, Peettee hung near me, his head in a cone to stop any licking and biting of his painful butt.

So by evening, by the time I'd rung the fifth time, we were in a very sad place indeed. Not even being right in my tipping of Carlton over the Western Bulldogs helped. We tearfully went to say our goodbyes. Who knows if he was carrying something internal for a while that just went viral on this weekend. They even talked of meningitis. But he was one sick, sad puppy and we were all in tears, patting him and saying goodbye, all in our own ways. I held his head and talked to him, his eyes never leaving mine. He was saying goodbye too.

This is a dog who would chase the ball like I wished St.Kilda chased in on Sunday. He was fast, ruthless and accurate, and always brought it straight back for another throw. And another throw. I eventually had to stop throwing, he'd been hit by a car (nothing serious, but dashed away and got bumped) and my arm couldn't take it anymore either, so we gave up the ball and the thrower, and we would just walk fast and he would sniff the other dogs. Then a year or so ago, he got more

aggressive and possessive, and would go at other dogs if they came near, only big ones, brave little mad dog, and I would keep him on a leash to stop him getting to them so they wouldn't take a bite out of him. It also meant that he was always close to me. He also tried to bite my sons visiting friends or the gardener. He had a thing about men visiting his territory.

At home, if Peettee came for a cuddle or a sit on the lap, Fluffy would always push in, get his share of the love going around. When you'd go near him to put on his leash, or to pat him, he's was such a suck. He'd be on his back instantly, saying, rub the tummy, rub the tummy. Most morning, after the walk, the dogs would get raw chicken wings to eat. Peettee has the habit of leaving his sitting there half the day, I think to torture Fluffy who would gobble his up immediately and then watch Peettees' all day, hoping Peettee would get distracted and he could make a dash for it. Lately, he's been pretty good at stealing it. I always say to Peettee, eat your wing, or Fluffy will get it. My dogs listen to me about as much as my kids do, but more than the Saints did to Watters today in Sydney.

So once the kids had said their goodbyes to an alive Fluffy, I stayed with him to the end, as the Vet eased him out of this life into another doggie heaven, where as my eldest says, he'll get tummy rubs forever and chase balls for eternity. We are kinder to our dogs that to some humans. We was eased from his pain and into oblivion, surrounded by love and care, and he will be remembered always. He will be cremated and spread across his beloved back yard and his beloved Caulfield Park.

We all slept poorly, and now have to take special care of Peettee who has been feeling Fluffy's absence acutely. He has not left any of our side since last night, way more clingy than usual. So he was on my lap part of the game of the Sydney Swans versus the inconsistent, frustrating St.Kilda Saints. We blew it good and proper.

Peettee's felt the love, but we have felt the love too, from family and friends as they followed our loss this weekend. The footy was a good distraction for a while, and at least there was one quarter that felt OK watching. The positive to take out of the game? We were in it almost until the end, the goal fest at the end no indication of the tight battle it was for most of the game. We are better than we supposed (I thought we'd be thumped) but at least I got the tip right.

I just wished we could have been more like Fluffy, really take it up to the biggest team. Or steal the chicken wing (or game). Act bigger than you actually are. Go Fluffy. Go Saints.

Yvette Wroby

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