

Heaven
Dogs Really Do!

by Noo Writer

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Heaven

So...I'm one of those guys that went to heaven.

For like, maybe, three minutes. Approximately. Not sure exactly how heaven time translates here, but you get the gist.

I'm pretty sure it was some kind of mixup; not surprisingly, most, or actually, if I am being honest, all of my friends heartily agree with this suspicion.

For the record, my family agrees as well.

So much for unconditional support and all that...but I digress.

Anyway, I won't bore you with the details of how; suffice it to say there were two cars, a windy road, and lots of rain involved. Feel free to connect the dots.

So there I was, slowly regaining some form of consciousness, and realizing that I was not in Kansas anymore...or anywhere else I could begin to imagine.

Believe it or not, the first few seconds (again, I am guessing on the time here,) were pretty much like the other stories you hear about this kind of thing...big tunnel, bright light, etc.

Fast forwarding a bit, the next thing I know, I see what looks like an endless landscape of gently rolling hills, sprinkled with beautiful trees, thick, lush bushes, amazingly colorful flowers and all kinds of other flora, dotted periodically with rivers, lakes and other awesomely gorgeous natural features.

The view was like the most breathtaking valley scene you could ever imagine, way beyond anything Hollywood could even begin to create...extending as far as I could see, all the way to the distant horizon.

After staring in jaw dropping wonder for a bit, I noticed two strange things at about the same time.

First, I noticed that the ground was, instead of grass or clover or some kind of flowery thing, made up of some kind of writhing, wriggling, obviously living "thing".

At the same time, I noticed that right in front of me there were a handful of dogs.

Not some kind of angel-y things with wings and bright white fur or anything like that...just regular dogs, different kinds, sizes and colors, just like you would see at a dog park back home.

But then I looked a little closer and realized that one of them looked familiar, and I mean FAMILIAR. If I hadn't known better, I would have sworn that one of them was my old dog, Cavan, a big, beautiful, slobbery black lab who broke my heart when she died a few years ago.

Time (or whatever passes for time up there) stopped, and all I could see was that dog...Cavan...was it really her? She must have heard my thoughts (can they do that up here?) because right then she separated herself from the little pack she was playing with and walked over toward me. She stopped a few feet in front of me, sat down, and just kind of gently wagged her tail, like she was saying yes, dummy, it's me.

I guess I didn't respond the way she thought I should, because then she pulled out all the stops and did her little downward-facing-dog-I want-to-play pose, front paws down, chin on top, butt in the air, tail wagging like crazy...and I knew beyond a shadow of a doubt that this was my Cavan. How, why, where, when...none of it made sense or even mattered. This was my Cavan.

So I did whatever any good dog owner would do when reunited with their long-dead dog...I got down on my hands and knees and tackled her, of course. Well, that went about as planned - lots of fir and slobber and wagging...you know the drill. I didn't know how or why or anything else, but nothing else mattered. I was rolling around in a beautiful park with my Cavan and all was good with the world...whatever that meant up there.

A little background here before I get to the point of this story...Cavan died of natural causes just past her 14th birthday...but about 5 years before that, she had a very close call.

We were walking through our neighborhood, which is a perfectly normal neighborhood, on our normal nightly stroll, when suddenly she did that thing dogs do where they instantly become a living, breathing sensing machine.

She stood stock still for about 3 seconds, turning her head, ears and nose all in different directions simultaneously (still not sure how they do that) and then she took off like she was shot from a gun at about a 45 degree angle across the street.

Normally this would have ended badly for both of us, because she was on a leash at the time...but chalk it up to that weird Vulcan mind link owners have with their dogs; as soon as she took that first step I unconsciously dropped the leash, knowing she had somewhere to go in a hurry and trusting that it was the right thing to do.

I took off after her at a pretty good jog, not sure if I should be more worried about finding her, or what I would see when I did...but just as I got to the next corner I heard that sound that no dog owner wants to hear; the sound of their dog in a life and death struggle.

I don't know how far or how fast I ran, but when I came back to reality I was stumbling full speed into a little vacant lot in between a house and the edge of some kind of strip mall, having followed the sound of what used to be Cavan, but was now some kind of vicious, feral monster.

I did not fear for myself for even a split second, but that part of my brain that wasn't keeping me upright understood that she was, in that moment, what dogs used to be, back before the first one crawled into the light and warmth of that first family fire pit thousands of years ago.

She was filled with the pure, unadulterated power of nature, and in that moment death was hers to command. All I could think of was how much I pitied whatever or whoever was the object of her rage.

Turns out it was a drunk, more accurately a big, hulking, mean drunk, who for some reason had decided to try and beat his golden retriever to death.

As I stumbled to a stop, I took in the scene instantly; the huge bastard with a bloody baseball bat in his hands, weaving just enough to demonstrate he had had about two too many...and the bloody, broken lab trying to crawl away, self-preservation finally giving him permission to leave his owner's side after one too many unexplained blows.

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