

Little Doggy

by Carl Santoro

A few years ago, my wife and I were asked to watch our 4 yr. old grandson, Connor. His mom was in the hospital about to give birth to a new brother. The only catch was we had to drive up to Massachusetts from Long Island to retrieve him. The entire situation thrilled us; welcoming a new grandchild and spending time with Connor. However, we began to sense that Connor would have some adjusting to do soon, sharing everything and everybody with a new person on-board. Even "Little Doggy" (as he named him) his ragamuffin, beat-up, soft, worn-out, longtime favorite pal, no larger than a size 7 slipper.

With Little Doggy in hand, we spent some fun time visiting mom, dad and his new brother Owen. Then it was off to Connor's house to put him to bed.

While driving 65mph on the Mass Pike, suddenly Connor yelled for his mother. Looking in my mirror, I could see tears welling up in Connor's eyes as he sat squirming in the child's carseat behind me. I thought he got hurt so I immediately pulled off onto the shoulder.

I quickly discovered that what actually happened was a super fast escape of sorts from the opened window to his left. Little Doggy was sucked out into the Massachusetts air in a flash.

He started crying for momma.

Now on the shoulder, I promised Connor I'd back up to find him.

"There he is!" he shouted, his face glowing with new hope as his tears found their way into his open mouth. *"That's him grandpa, that's him!"*

This small, white and brown, floppy-eared cute stuffed toy found its way to the median dividing six lanes of semi-controlled chaos whizzing by and nicking an ear or a leg every other second.

I parked and as I exited the car, I reassured Connor and my wife that I would get him. I walked to the back of the car to think it through. Would there be a good enough break to make the dash to and fro?

Resting cautiously on the trunk, I gazed out into what can only be described as a blurring river of colored metals. I immediately recalled to mind the recent images on TV of tsunami-provoked bodies of water, spontaneously absorbing hundreds of cars, trucks, boats, buildings, people into a maddening, unforgiving, menacing monster that would stop for nothing. It couldn't. From its own momentum. From its own volume. From physics. This traffic here in front of me was no different. It too moved forward with no mercy. A gush of sand-peppered wind from a passing semi-trailer hit my face rousing me from my mental comparisons.

I could see Connor to my right now with his nose pressed to the rear side window crying, *"I want my momma; there he is; there's Little Doggy!"*

This is heart-wrenching I thought. We just left the hospital where my grandson was introduced to his newborn brother. Our mission, as grandparents, was to take Connor home to his house for a long awaited nap and then return to the hospital. This is the absolute wrong time to lose his grasp on his security toy just when a new person will be sharing everything he owns, toys, clothes, mother, father! I had to get it!

I looked back at the traffic flow for an opening. It was so fast and tight, I knew it would take awhile. And then I hear from in the car my wife yelling, *"State Trooper car backing up to us!"* Sure enough, I could see there were red and blue lights flashing atop his black and grey Crown Victoria cruiser as he appeared through the cloud of dust he was creating. His blaring siren scared the daylight out of me. This was becoming a situation.

Sure enough, there he was and he stopped right in front of us. Connor, however, still had his eyes on his tiny floppy pal lying face down 3 lanes away.

The trooper exited the car as if in slow motion. Hat on head first, sunglasses next, followed by a dark moustache with waxy curled up ends, and then rising out with a lumberjack's build, complete with 6+ feet of tight grey uniform, and stepping out only to crush the pebbly road surface with the glossy blackness of well cared for boots. I almost thought I heard cowboy-style boot spurs clinking as he walked directly towards me.

"WHY ARE YOU STANDING OUT OF YOUR CAR"? he demanded to know.

I stumbled for the right words....new baby, little doggy "security blanket kind of thingy, flew out of window, heart-broken grandson...

I pointed to Connor who was still crying, *"I want my momma"*

The trooper immediately grasped the intensity of the situation I was in and knew full well what I had in mind.

"YOU CERTAINLY AREN'T PLANNING ON GOING OVER THERE TO RETRIEVE IT"?

"Wellll, I was kinda waiting for an opening..."

He starred in at Connor, turned to look at me and without hesitation said,

"Okay, I got this. Here's what I'm going to do. I'll drive forward and ease over to the median and then back up to get it, you wait here."

In a flash he was behind the steering wheel and making magic happen. As he orchestrated the rescue, traffic stopped and he quickly proceeded on his mission.

I got in my car and picked up the point & shoot to record him in video.

As I turned to see where he was, he was already walking to pick it up. I looked through the viewfinder just as he was leaning down and pressed the shutter button.

"MEMORY CARD FULL"

He grabbed Little (newly-bruised) Doggy, got in the car and was back in our presence in no time flat!

Connor happily received his beat up little pal from the officer's hand and hugged it to his chest and said, *"Thank you officer!"*

I reached out the driver side, shook his hand and thanked him for saving my life too.

As we rejoined the right lane, Connor made sure both him and his furry friend were both buckled in.

