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Rick

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It is very difficult for me to write this editorial, but it is unavoidable, and I know that in doing so I am fulfilling a debt of gratitude.

Four days have passed since Rick left us in a sudden and unexpected way. Still in shock from the lack of logical explanation to which we are accustomed, perhaps even obliged, to seek, we cannot avoid looking for comfort in a question that, in this case, does not have an answer. Perhaps the best response was one from a good friend, a Professor of Animal Law in Michigan, who was one of the first people who I told about Rick's death, as I have known him for a few years now. This is what he said:

“Oh my, that is very sad. Death of others we care about is always so hard to deal with. It is so final, so out of our control. Take care of yourself as you deal with this.”

Indeed, it is difficult and sad to say goodbye to our companions, our dogs, which form part of our lives, because our mission over the years is to love and take care of them as best as we can. Their departure is the final point of this intense and beautiful relationship, woven day to day by both, and this last moment is out of our control.

Rick was a white West Highland Terrier, Mallorcan by birth and Catalan by adoption, with a British mother and father – a brilliant mix. He was registered here since 2000. He had only two weeks left before turning 16, and aside from slight weariness, he was in great shape; always happy, enthusiastic about anything new, fun, loving and always sure of and secure in himself, with an intense look, sometimes inquisitive, other times sweet and good-natured, behaving in a way that showed a strong, friendly, tender heart. However, like all terriers, Rick was very valiant and resilient dog in the face of suffering. I never heard him complain, even when he was wounded and had to undergo painful treatment while awake. He also never grew tired, and we both loved the mountains, and his endurance was legendary. His last feat was climbing (already at 14 years of age) the “Matagalls”, a considerably high peak. He took the lead, finding the path and checking every now and again that I was okay. He also loved the sea and walking along the beach in winter. When we lived in Mallorca, we always walked at dusk in Illetes and, when we moved here, we always went to Castelldefells. It was typical of him to suddenly stop right in front of me, lift his head to look at me and shake it as a sign of happiness, finding himself at ease. He also loved to swim; during his first years in Mallorca he followed after me if I jumped from a rock so as to swim alongside me. All throughout this last summer, I took him to swim a lot so he could strengthen his rear legs and combat the slight osteoarthritis of the hip that had bothered him during the winter. But the end of the summer he was great – he did not even limp.

I named him Rick after the character in “Casablanca”. Sometimes I thought that in his demeanour he seemed similar to the character played by Humphrey Bogart, as if he had found a name that was meant for him. Rick knew how to be close when necessary, and also how live independently, just like me. We both loved to travel and we did it in every way possible and to many places in the world. I think he liked, just as I do, the

“smell of airport”... his first trip with me was 1200 kilometres by car when he was only a 6-month-old puppy; we had to move to Cologne for three months, where I worked as a Visiting Professor at the university there. It was a very enjoyable trip, and I realised that with him I had begun to discover the world. Everything interested him; the ducks in the parks; the birds in the squares; the street musicians, by which he was captivated, saying “Uuuuuhhhh...!” On this occasion we travelled firstly by ferry from Palma and then by car. He endured it brilliantly. I remember his astonished expression as the ferry began to move, followed by a glow of joy in his face.

All these years that we lived so intensively leave me only with a smile on my face - a feeling of gratitude for having known and shared so much together. He adapted to all the changes that came about in my life in those times, some very important. He accepted new people into our environment and, in the last four years, it can even be said that he “adopted” Hudson, a Westie that has been his soul mate that he taught – with difficulty – to be, as Rick himself was, a “gentledog”.

I just wanted to share with my readers that I am not ashamed to be suffering this pain. Pain for the loss of Rick is a sign of nothing less than having deep, calm feelings. Rick meant a lot to me, and I to him, and I have an encyclopaedia of anecdotes that have filled these years – a constellation that shall forever shine in my memory.

Rick was also very beautiful, and he knew it, but never to the point of vanity. He always came close with a calculated shyness, due to which he was immediately accepted by both humans and animals alike. He was not confrontational with anybody, nor did I ever hear an aggressive growl. He was a *bon-vivant*, a “pleasure-lover”. On Saturday he ate his dinner with a ravenous appetite, as always. I took him in my arms to put him out for his business, and when I placed him down, he collapsed. We did everything to revive him, but he had gone.

In the end, we were taken in by the Hospital Veterinary Clinic of the UAB with professionalism, haste and a care and respect for which I would right now like to thank.

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