

The Boy Who Picked Me

I was eight or nine when a friend in the neighborhood gifted me a German Shepherd puppy. I was in love. He was small and clumsy and perfect, and I carried him home like a treasure.

My mother took one look and said, "Take him back. I don't want a dog in this house."

And then, in the way only she could deliver ultimatums:

"If you want the dog, you can leave with the dog."

That was the end of my first dog story.

Years later, while living in Australia and working at a bowling center, I came across a stray—half Border Collie, half mystery. The security guard brought her in, soaked and lost. She had nowhere to go for the night, so I took her home. I named her Cassie.

There was no neighborhood board to post on, no social media group to check for lost pets. I waited. Weeks went by. No one came. Cassie was mine for a while, but eventually, I realized I couldn't give her what she needed. I wasn't ready. Letting her go broke something in me.

That's the day I made myself a promise:

Someday, when I have a house with a yard and a life to hold it, I'll have a dog. And no one will get to say no.

Almost a decade later, Vijay and I bought our first house. The yard was small, the timing uncertain, and Vijay wasn't exactly sold on the idea of having a dog. So I did what you do when you know something is yours: I waited...I plotted.

He started traveling for work. I started looking.

I found a litter of Australian Shepherd puppies—a tumble of fluff and chaos. Isha and her best friend ran around laughing as the puppies chased and clambered over everything. I sat down on the floor, quietly watching.

That's when he came to me.

One tiny pup walked over, placed his soft snout on my lap, and looked up at me with this calm, certain gaze—

like he already knew.

Like he was saying, *"I don't know why you're looking at the others. I'm yours."*

And of course, he was.

He was only two weeks old, still with his mother. He'd come home in five weeks, which worked out perfectly. Vijay was due to travel again. One week before his return, Ice came home.

When Vijay walked back into the house, he had a new family member.

There was no negotiation. Just fur, eyes, and a quiet, steady heartbeat that had chosen us.

The first thing Ice did when he met Vijay was pee himself in excitement.

Vijay was convinced his life was over as he knew it—he'd be living in a house that smelled like puppy pee forever.

That was twelve years ago.

If you ask Vijay now how he feels about dogs, he'll tell you he can't imagine life without one.

Ice is one of the best gifts the universe has ever given me.

His joy at the smallest things. His delight when I return, even if I've only been gone an hour.

His ingenuity when he's sneaking food.

His emotional intelligence—tuning into my sadness before I can name it myself.

He is not just a dog. He is an embodiment of devotion, of presence, of unconditional love.

And every single day, I remember:

I didn't choose Ice. He chose me.

The Truth That Emerged

The universe sent me Ice to experience unconditional love and acceptance. To be present in every moment. To love, play and eat because I can.

Dogs are the best humans.