

Man's Best (Man's Only) Friend

Emma K. Branstetter

Olivet Nazarene University, ekbranstetter@olivet.edu

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/tygr>



Part of the [Fiction Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Branstetter, Emma K. () "Man's Best (Man's Only) Friend," *TYGR: Student Art and Literary Magazine 2018-present*: Vol. 2022: Iss. 1, Article 20.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.olivet.edu/tygr/vol2022/iss1/20>

This Fiction is brought to you for free and open access by the Student Publications at Digital Commons @ Olivet. It has been accepted for inclusion in TYGR: Student Art and Literary Magazine 2018-present by an authorized editor of Digital Commons @ Olivet. For more information, please contact digitalcommons@olivet.edu.

Emma Branstetter
11/04/2021

Man's Best (Man's Only) Friend
2 SAMUEL 12:1-4

There was a man. There was a dog.

The man and the dog were not raised as one. The dog was not a packaged gift wrapped pristine under the Christmas tree. Neither was the man a boy who asked his parents for the dog. But the dog was a gift regardless.

The dog was black and brown and all things good and snuffed for scraps in his hands and curled into his body on cold, sleepless nights under the bridge.

The dog didn't care how he had lost it all. The dog didn't think. The dog didn't speak. The dog didn't judge. The dog didn't gawk. The dog didn't care.

The dog was his friend.

The dog came to him on a night like any other. It might have sensed the way the man's heart screamed for release (more likely, it might have just been looking for food). Clumps of jet-bister fur, threatening to fall out, mange and disease blooming, eyes dark and roaming. When the man lifted his thread-gloved hand to let it search him, it did. And it whined and wagged its tail.

And it stuck around, like it had found a fellow packmate to lay beside in the filth they gathered.

The man thought the dog would leave. Every day, he would bare his yellowed teeth and curse it, knowing it would be much safer, much happier with a roof under its head, with a family to love it (knowing all that had led the man to this point would never deserve him such a privilege).

And at the end of every day, they remained, the dog and the man, under the bridge.

It could have stayed like that. The man could have rebuked his selfishness. The man could have ignored his gnawing stomach a day more. There were others to feed. There were others to house. There would always be others. Leaving the safety of his home under the bridge (for he had none) had always, always, been the dangerous path.

But the man had forgotten what it was like to live.

And when he returned, crowded belly aching and spirits momentarily lifted, the mob of children in his stead screamed and raced for asylum as he chased them out of his home. His heart dropped at the sight of the sticks and stones clenched in their rebellious fists.

The dog was prone. The dog was whimpering. The dog was broken.

The dog was not a human. The dog was not a belittling employer, or an absent volunteer, or a cautious child, or a stern officer.

But the dog was all he had. The dog was black and brown and all things good and lay shivering in his arms and died on another day under the bridge, and all the tears that he could give were shed for it.

And there was a man.