



Lily

Foster Mama Dawn in New York ~ "Lily reeked. When I picked her up from another volunteer in the parking lot of a McDonald's hours from my house, that was the first thing I noticed. She smelled and looked like she was rotting. Open sores, hairless patches, matted fur. We drove home with the windows down. Normally, I let my fosters roam the yard and... sniff the permanent residents, but not this time. The front door was still closing and I had her in the tub. As I gently washed the filth and scabs off her frail body, Lily stood there with frozen limbs and stared at the wall. There was no fear in her eyes. There was nothing in her eyes - they were black, void of light, dead - no one was home. It wasn't until I went to clean her ears that I saw it. The number 72 was crudely tattooed in her right ear. It didn't register at first. Huh? Is that pen ink? How strange. I was chilled to the bone in that steamy bathroom when I realized what it meant.

Lily.....my first puppy mill foster. To the monsters who kept her confined to a cage for her entire life she wasn't "Lily". She wasn't honey bun, or sweetie, or hairy beast or any of the other endearing things we call our beloved pets. She was nothing more than a baby making machine wedged between 71 and 73. As I held this broken dog in my arms on the bathroom floor, I cried and I made her a promise. No matter how long it took, she was going to know love, she was going to know she mattered, and she was going to know her name.

As the weeks progressed, the pieces of her puzzle came together. Lily had never seen a bowl as her food was always just thrown in her cage. I started feeding her on the kitchen floor before graduating to a very flat plate. Lily had never felt grass, had no idea what a toy was, she seemed quite amazed at soft blankets, she never made a sound - not a whimper, not a yelp, not a growl, not a bark, not a single peep. In the months she lived with my husband and I, Lily was lavished with words of praise, hugged, kissed, doted on, exposed to long walks and new sniffs. She found her voice; a raspy, tentative bark that was quite fetching. Our own dogs taught her about the good life. Her skin healed. Her hair grew. Her eyes began to show interest and emotion and life. But, nothing, absolutely nothing compared to the joy I felt when I shouted "LILY GIRL!" and she came running.

I still hear from the adoptive parents. They are the perfect family - full of love, and understanding, and patience. They knew there was still work to be done and they were up for the task. A month after she went to her forever home, I got an email. Our girl was doing great. She already had a favorite chair. The mailman loved her. They said it was "meant to be" because long before the adoption, they knew what they would name their new dog.... They would name her Lily."

♥xo...Volunteer, Foster, Donate, Adopt...xo♥