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Topic: Pets, Paths and/or Hope

My Hannah

When my husband walked out on me, my 15 year old son was just starting High School. He had always wanted a dog and we had been unsuccessful in having one. My then-husband grew up with non-dog dogs who were like those turn of the century children, seen but not heard. A bit like a household accessory. Lovely but not engaging. I grew up out in the country where pets came and went as they wanted; bringing back treats or trophies to share as well as a smell or two that we would have preferred not to share. I asked my son if we should get a dog. The holidays were coming and Hannah was our gift.

She was just what we needed. My daughter had gone back East for her first year of college so my son selected Hannah. She was the runt of the litter. A beautiful silver grey Weimie (Weimaraner), sweet and shy, curled up in his lap with those bright blue eyes that would eventually turn amber. I remember her continuing to snuggle with him as we drove home. As often happens, with my daughter away and my teenage son active in school sports, Hannah became my dog and companion more so than theirs. I was working part-time close by so I would run home whenever I could for walks or hikes with her. Living close to Chautauqua and just below Flagstaff, I discovered trails I never knew were there. She kept me in the here and now, with her curious and excited, puppy energy. She excelled at bringing me treasures of bones or horns that she would discover off trail. Her joyful exploration and unconditional love helped me get through those first few months of separation and divorce. I was restless and anxious, not able to find a place for myself nor knowing what the future held. The walking and hiking eased that energy and allowed me to be truly present, for her and for me. I composed all kinds of things in my head as we wandered about the foothills: poems, stories, conversations, images, even sounds I wanted to somehow save. It allowed me to vent,

silently, but loudly in my head, and not disturb anyone. She always brought me back to earth with her happy wiggling smile and to make me see what I might have missed. She stayed close and if I began to slip or slide on the ice she would quickly be right by my side to make sure I was OK.

When she began to fail I lived downstairs with her. She still had her gentle, loving disposition but not the strength or energy to explore the foothills let alone the stairs. She never seemed to be in pain...just slowly fading as Ghost Dogs do. When it was time to say good-bye I went through two boxes of tissues. She slipped away curled up as sweetly as she had when she first came into our lives.