

HEART DOG

BY LISA TREEN



The pills were administered morning and night—several combinations. Jerri regained the weight she had lost. I also enlisted the help and advice of Luciana from

Sassy Treats. Luciana made up a diet that would help Jerri gain some weight and keep her healthy.

The call came in the late afternoon. It was my vet, and he had been over the test results. Jerri, my eleven-year old Dalmatian had been admitted for ultrasounds to her heart.

A few years prior we'd been advised she had a heart murmur and were told that we needn't worry too much about it. Her life would carry on pretty much the same as normal. The vet did, however, take the time to tell me what signs I should look out for should or rather, when, her condition worsened.

Rapid weight loss, shortness of breath, fainting and coughing would all point to her condition turning more serious. And from that first prognosis I made this mental note.

Our early morning walks in the park continued. Jerri was always by my side.

One spring morning we had walked half way around the park when Jerri just stopped. She stood still and then she started swaying. Trying to regain her balance, I held her close. We took a very slow walk back home.

These were the signs and this was what the vet had told me about. I rang them that morning and then we drove over to the practice.

That afternoon's call from the vet was a hard one—for me and for him. He delivered the news that Jerri's heart condition was bad. She possibly had several months to live and would need to be on medication to keep her ticker ticking over.

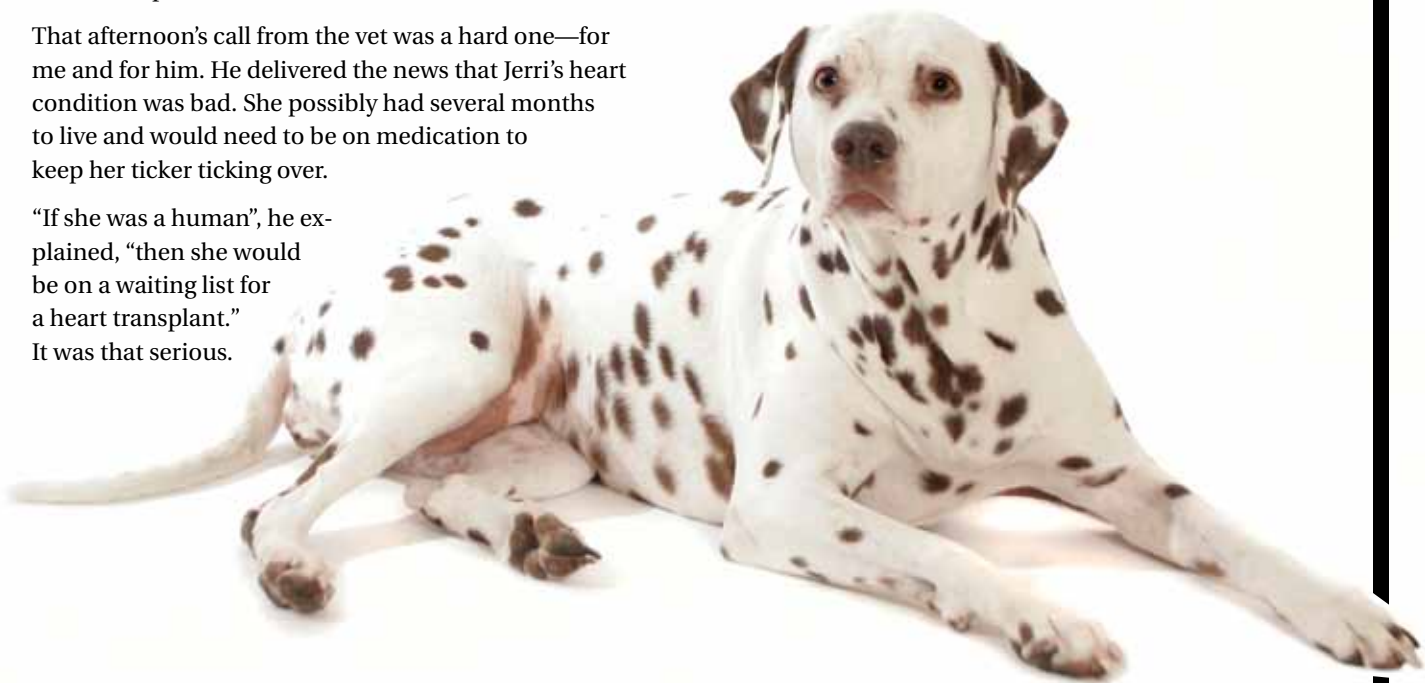
"If she was a human", he explained, "then she would be on a waiting list for a heart transplant." It was that serious.

A small patch of fur was missing where the vets had shaved Jerri for her ultrasound and x-rays. I made her promise me that she would not leave me until her fur had grown back.

Daily walks and life in general continued and Jerri's overall health seemed to improve, but always nagging at the back of my mind was the vet's cautionary advice. The end would be quick and unexpected.

Earlier that year my mother had passed away without much warning. It was a shock, and some days I found it hard to cope with the grief. Jerri seemed to absorb some of that grief for me. I used to nuzzle the soft fur in her neck, and at times I would just sob. No one else understood the magnitude of my grief or the hollow feeling I felt without my mum. Jerri did.

I've often heard the term Heart Dog. A heart dog may only come once into your life. They're different from other dogs you may know. Heart dogs have a stronger connection to your soul. Some people are fortunate to have several heart dogs in their life. Jerri was my heart dog.



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