

Hey, my name is March. I'm a golden retriever, which means I'm ten percent fur and ninety percent appetite. As a puppy, I had three main hobbies: chasing butterflies, smelling things and being greedy. I wasn't just hungry; I was pro-level greedy. My household was great. Dan and Janet were kind, and I loved playing with their kids. It always smelled of coffee, cookies and chocolate. One day, Janet told me I would become a guide dog. I did not really know what "guide-dog" meant but if it involved snacks and scratches, I was definitely in.

Training was a marathon of self-control. Every day, I was taught new stuff. I learned to navigate curbs, dodge chaotic cars, and the ultimate boss-fight: ignore a delicious slice of pizza on the sidewalk. That last one nearly broke me, but, slowly, I started to understand I wasn't just learning tricks; I was learning how to become a partner.

When I was about two years old, I met a boy named Michael. He was ten, and his dream was to become a professional blind football player. When he touched my head, my heart warmed up. "Hello March" he said in a soft voice. He told me that one day, he would play in the Paralympic Games. Right then, I decided his dream was ours. Life with Michael was a high-speed adventure. He worked harder than anyone I knew. Every morning, I walked with him to school, guiding him proudly through the streets of our town. The world was a mess of honking cars and laughing people and yes, the occasional cookie-scented breeze that tested my soul, but I stayed focused. At the sports centre, I watched him sprint, listening to the jingle jangle of the bells inside the ball. Michael was happy and so was I.

One afternoon, the city was covered in snow and grey slush. We were heading home from training. When we reached the busiest crossing in town, the walk signal chirped its robotic bird noise and Michael gave the command "March, forward". I stepped out on the road, but I saw something unusual. To our left, a massive delivery truck was barrelling towards the red light. I heard the hiss of brakes then the sickening screech of tyres sliding on ice. The truck was not stopping. It was coming on us. "March, forward" Michael said again, sensing my hesitation

but unable to see the four tons of steel heading for us. Instead of listening to him, I followed my instincts. I barked and pulled him backwards. A second later, the truck crashed into a post. The air filled with the smell of burned rubber. Michael stood frozen. His trembling hand reached out to me, and he felt my heart thumping. The realization of what had just happened hit him like a physical blow. He collapsed onto one knee and buried his face in my fur. “Thank you March” he whispered, his voice cracking, “you saved my life”.

Ten years blurred past. Michael grew stronger. We did everything together. I heard thousands of voices, but Michael’s was the only one that mattered. One day, Michael sat next to me on a bench. “You’ve worked hard my friend” he said. He smiled but his eyes were watery. “It is time for you to retire.” Retire? I did not know that word but soon, I understood: Dan and Janet were there with cookies in their hands and I followed them. On a bright summer day, we went to a massive stadium during the Paralympic Games. It was a blind football match. When the players arrived on the field, I saw him. That day, Michael and his team won the game.

At the end of the match, a woman gave me a gold medal then led me onto the field where I gave it to Michael. I had known him since he was just a kid with a big dream. He hugged me and said: “I would not be here without you girl; you are the best dog ever”.

I have learned many things in my life: how to be brave, how to ignore a delicious hot dog on the floor and I learned that helping someone is the best job in the world. Most importantly, I learned that love never disappears and my heart is full of it. My name is March and I’m a guide dog.