

HOPE

By Susan McPheat

I wrote this story to celebrate my Mum and Dad's 40th Wedding anniversary. I hope you enjoy reading it.

"Everybody needs hope! My only son, Jason, believes very strongly in that statement. He was always a very helpful and positive boy, and I am not just saying that because he is our son, isn't that right, Fred?"

"Are you wanting a cup of tea while you are waiting on Jason making his faithful weekly visit? He should have been here by now "As I was saying before you refuse to accept the grim news, there's no easy way to say this but your Jason unquestionably saved my little niece's life when he dashed out in the busy road outside the university after Jilly here. He managed to push her out of harm's way, unfortunately he wasn't so lucky. He was hit. I glimpse this happening from the shop window and I dashed out to see if I could help. Jason could hardly speak but he managed to say what sounded like... Hope!"

I was already reaching for the phone to dial St. Andrew's hospital. "Do you have a Jason Kelso there?" I asked. "This is his mother wanting to know how he is.' ... "They say he is in a coma but he may come round," I said as I replaced the phone. "So, the last thing he said was... Hope! That's the name of his precious dog."

"My name is Gail, by the way. Would you like us to take Hope out for a walk? Where is she?" the pretty stranger smiled as she left her card, displaying her name, address and phone number. "Jason sounds like a really nice person so will you give

him my card when he gets better?" Gail stood up, obviously looking for Hope.

"Yes, yes that would be a help. She's in the kitchen" I said, going through to let her out.

"I'll come too. As she is a cross between a terrier and a spaniel, Hope can be very possessive and unsure of strangers," Fred confirmed. Hope instantly took to Gail by jumping up and licking her face.

"She's not usually so friendly. I think she must sense how good and kind you are," I put in.

When they had all left, I decided to phone Jason's flatmate, Bill, who was surprised to learn that Gail was involved as he had told me that Jason was smitten with Gail and hoping to get a chance to talk to her. Bill said he would look out some tapes to help Jason to recover. When Fred returned, Gail and Jilly had already left for home. Fred and I took our car to the hospital. I was already surprised and rather alarmed at the deathly stillness and all the frightening machines making him look so small and helpless lying there. We had more bad news to follow as the tapes didn't help.

"We all miss you. Hope does as well. You'll soon be back with her!"

I tenderly patted my unconscious son's arm. That made me wonder. If perhaps they could agree to me to bring Hope into his side room? Fred had the same idea as he went away as soon as I mentioned that.

"You are going to have a visitor that you'll definitely want to see. Your mum and I will go back and bring her," Fred smiled at his motionless son.

Whilst I was grooming Hope, she looked at me with understanding. Her large melting brown eyes made me feel so trustworthy, as Jason felt when he collected her from the cat and dog home. She followed me into his room at the hospital so obediently. She was so eager to get over to Jason that she was pulling the lead, finally she managed by sheer force, surprisingly quickly leaped up and licked Jason's face all over.

"Hope, behave yourself!" I moaned horrified thinking she might wreck the small room.

"It's only her animal instinct, love, as she would naturally lick her puppies better," Fred still enthused.

... I don't believe it! Look, Fred! His eyes are flickering," I shouted in ecstasy.

"Oh, Hope, that was Jason moving," Fred confirmed, as he wiped the tears from his eyes. Hope had knocked his jacket over and an envelope fell out of the pocket. "Oh, I forgot to give you this from Jason. I got it from Gail. It has today's date on it anyway," Fred handed me the envelope, smiling all the while, nearly as much as I was.

"It's a perfectly nice fortieth wedding anniversary card for us, wishing us a happy and fulfilling time. Well, we've achieved this now thanks to Jason and Hope!" I smiled as I cuddled Fred.