



*Robert Lampros*

**Lulu the Dog**

(Illustration by Heather Denise Cotter)

LULU WAS AN ALL-TOGETHER DIFFERENT ANIMAL. Not quite a Labrador, not quite a Pit Bull, at times not quite even a dog. How many dogs do you know that can climb a tree? She used to remind me of a lion cub, her eyes, the color of her coat, the black at the tip of her tail. She'd swat at you with her paws, too, just like a cat, when we wrestled.

I adopted Lulu in 2002 from the Boulder Humane Society. She was the only dog in the whole place clever enough to feign sanity, at least long enough to get outside. The second that leash came off she blasted out like a cannon ball, bouncing off the fences, twirling, sliding, gnawing my forearm like a chew-toy then grinning and blasting off again. I didn't care. I'd have hesitated if she didn't act like a maniac. Dogs need to run.

And Lulu had a good run. For thirteen years she was a much beloved family pet. There was some concern at first when my siblings, some of whom had been newly blessed with children, heard I was returning from Colorado with a notoriously "lethal" breed of canine. Their fears quickly evaporated however when they realized the only threat she posed was that of a slobbery face or a smack from her club-like tail.

To me that's the most beautiful thing about dogs—their reckless, unconditional affection. It didn't matter who you were, what you looked like, or where you'd come from—if you were a human being, Lulu would love you. "Rooooooooooooh," she'd say, wagging her crazy tail. She

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even tried to speak our language. My mom said she was trying to mimic us with all her rooing and howling.

I have a million great stories about Lulu and probably more, but I'll leave you with just this one. A week or so after Christmas her health took a turn for the worse. Her breathing became severely labored, and she stopped wanting to move at all, even to go outside. We took her to the vet who told us she could die any day now. We brought her home and waited a while. When I prayed over her, she got better. A couple days later she got worse again. I asked Jesus to take her peacefully and painlessly, and that weekend, one hour before her final appointment, she laid down next to my mom and went to sleep. It's more than fitting that it happened that way, because while I was Lulu's keeper, my mom was her undeniable best friend.

Part of me wanted to forget about Lulu after she left us. God wouldn't have it, though. "You remember her," He said. "Mourn properly for that amazing creature." So I did, and I know where she is now, bounding limitless and free, galloping through the high grass of heaven and launching baby rabbits skyward with her snarfing, upturned snout. I wonder what the weather's like up there. Peace, Lu.