

FORGOTTEN

- Buckenton Haase Feb. 2021

1. The hand reached in the darkness and through the partially open door to drop food on the floor. Quickly, the door slammed shut with a clang that reverberated what seemed to say, "You deserve all of this." Each and every time, the sound made Namuh fearful and cringe. It was Namuh's automatic reaction to curl his lips in a snarl and emit a deep growl. Often, he felt the urge to lash out at the Control Officer's (C.O.), who could have taken the time to shut the door slowly so it only closed with a click. But Namuh didn't, because he knew it was useless, and it gave his beast more control over him every time he gave in to his anger. Some C.O.'s delighted in their subtle and sometimes not so subtle abuses, but most C.O.'s were just plain old indifferent. Wasn't it just a part of their job though?

2. Possibly, what made it okay was that Namuh was only a dog, and a brown dog at that. Namuh wasn't aggressive or aggressive looking, handsome, or descriptive in any way. He wasn't short or tall. He was an American mutt, a half-breed. A kind person might say, "Namuh was past middle age and from mixed descent." There was a time when Namuh was young and people might have considered him



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handsome. He was very strong then and able to work hard, but that time had since passed. Who could possibly want a middle-aged, brown dog like him anyway? The Co.'s don't let Namuh out of his cage very often, but when they do it's so he can go into a larger cage. This is where the Co.'s monitor him from a control tower. Years pass, Namuh falls victim to depression and ill health due to forced sedentary living. Hope for him is like an elusive echo, and much like a distant memory of freedom now gone. Is this not what society demands? Society creates the laws and the laws demand payment. Namuh once bit someone so society locked him away. In Texas, a dog who bites someone is often executed, and if not then it's usually a life sentence. A life sentence was definitely not on Namuh's Budget List.

3. Most people believed Namuh deserved to be locked away from them. After all, Namuh was only a brown dog who was a biter. Everyone who knew Namuh in his former life were shocked to hear about him. They all loved and respected him but, "How could he have done that?" Actions such as those don't happen out of nowhere. There is one event or series of events that usually lead up. Most people didn't know, but Namuh was abused many times while

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growing up. The beatings taught Namuh to be fearful, among the things he should not have learned. For many years Namuh was good, but a series of events brought out the beast in him. For a long time, Namuh even served his country and saved lives. Society pinned many medals on his chest and said, "What a good Soldier." It did not matter how many lives Namuh saved or how many years he served his country. Society will never trust a dog who once bit someone. Although, not everyone thought the worst of Namuh. Namuh's mother and father both knew he still had value. Value to them and to society. They knew Namuh can still contribute much if he only had another chance. What will happen when Namuh's parents are no longer alive? Who will believe in him and be an advocate for him then? But, society will not give Namuh the same opportunity to serve them as before. They say, "Once a biter always a biter."

4. Everyday, Namuh thinks about his little ones, wondering, ^{just} how well ~~they~~ ^{are they} growing up without him? He thinks they do not remember him anymore. Namuh's memories of them only add to the haunting sadness in his eyes. Eyes that are no stranger to loss. The kind of eyes people won't look directly into because they are afraid

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to know or they don't care. Little do they know, but Namuh would still not hesitate to give his life to protect them or his little ones.

Even after all these years Namuh still cries. The tears in his eyes are mostly gone now, but Namuh's heart will never stop crying.

5. Once a year, a doctor of medicine checks Namuh over and says, "My job here is done."

Once a year, a doctor of psychiatry checks Namuh over and gives him a daily pill to keep him calm and says, "My job here is done." The C.I.'s yell and curse at all the dogs and at the end of the day say, "My job here is done." Society knows this not the correct way to teach dogs not to bite, but they do not want to teach them. They want to punish them. Namuh has to remind himself he helped prepare his own bed. Namuh has to roll over once again, because the hard bed hurts him and makes parts of him go numb. Namuh knows the key is to share the punishment with all the other parts of his body.

A sound makes Namuh look out of the mesh in the door to the other cages where more dogs are imprisoned. Namuh forgot his real name long ago, but he put a reminder on his shirt, over his heart, to remind him of something he's since forgotten.

In the scratched mirror in his cage it reads, "NAMUH."