

Brinnie the Greyhound

by
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He never knew the love of a family. He never had a bed or a soft place to sleep. He was young, lean, swift, strong and agile. He had all the tools to be a gifted runner. Hundreds and then thousands would come to see him race. His running times were so remarkable that he broke several state track records.

He was adored by his fans, some even draping their arms around him after victory. And for that moment, he thought he knew what it was like to be loved.

But soon his racing days were through. The throng of thousands that had come to see him run had long forgotten who he was. He now lived in squalor side by side with other former runners. No one understood the cruelty of humankind more than him.

Katsu Powerful was a greyhound who had turned 5. Like thousands of other racing greyhounds, he had outlived his usefulness. He was now destined to die in a cage in Florida. It is estimated that as many as 28,000 non-profitable greyhounds are quietly destroyed each year.

In a place far away, Apollo, Pennsylvania, a golden retriever known as the mighty Thor bounds through the high grass like a leopardess on the Serengeti. She is followed by her clumsy companion Zeus. Together they frolic at a frenetic pace.

But now a new friend is introduced to the playful duo. He is a shy, sleek dog whose ribs can be seen from months of a deficient diet. He takes one step and then another and then another as though he doesn't know what to do with the freedom that surrounds him.

Brinnie is a rescued greyhound and it doesn't take him long to rediscover and employ his magnificent speed. Thor and Brinnierace stride for stride down the old warn trail. Unknown (until weeks later) to the valley woman who had adopted him, Brinne is the former Katsu Powerful.

Brinnie wasn't complaining about his new name. In fact that old name he would gladly forget. The fleeting, adulation of thousands who enthusiastically rooted for him to win did not compare to the loyalty bestowed by a single owner. Brinnie had never been hugged with love until he was adopted. The love he returned was priceless.

The National Greyhound Association has taken some positive steps to remedy the slaughter of these magnificent animals whose ancestry is depicted on the tombs of the ancient Pharaohs 4,000 years ago. However the very nature of the track industry to produce top performers while culling out the unproductive ones makes this a dubious task.

Breeders now realize everyone involved would be better off if they could agree to breed fewer dogs, and from 1992 to 1994 they reduced the number of greyhounds born in the US from 49,000 to 39,000. There are good, top-notch breeders and unscrupulous breeders alike in this industry. Some take care of their dogs and others do not.

I am not an animal rights zealot and there are many causes in life far more important than rescuing a dog. However my trek to the races in Wheeling every couple years will never be the same since I have known Brinnie. The exhilaration of winning a small bet is now weighed in my conscience against the treatment of an animal capable of love.

Greyhounds are gentle, low-key dogs that need a fenced in yard. Ok, I admit I like huskier dogs and greyhounds are not built for rough and tumble play. But they do have a great disposition and they make good pets for gentle children. As responsible stewards of this earth, adopting a greyhound is a worthy act.

"Going Home Greyhounds" is a local non-profit Pittsburgh area group that found homes for 100 dogs last year. Volunteers drive to the racetracks and pick up dogs. Brinnie was one of the fortunate dogs that got a second lease on life. Volunteers and dogs are usually at Petsmart, Century III Plaza, West Mifflin, from 1 to 3 PM Sundays.



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