

The Brave, Beautiful & Bold – Ms. Kianna Fairweather

If you are very fortunate indeed, you might come into contact with a dog like Kianna Fairweather, once in a lifetime. Kianna was an Alaskan Malamute/wolf cross and probably the most beautiful and intelligent creature I have ever known. There is no doubt in my mind that she had a soul and that she was a spiritually evolved being.

Kianna had been a stray for at least a month in a rural southeastern suburb of Dallas. She consistently defied the efforts of Animal Control (AC) to capture her – she was extremely clever and street smart. Apparently, she loved children and would come up to them to lick them and be petted as they walked home from school. No matter how hard AC tried to catch her, she managed to elude them – for a month or so. And then, finally partly out of anger, partly out of annoyance and frustration, AC shot her with a tranquilizing dart gun. She succumbed and was nearly paralyzed. Once she had been captured, the dart was surgically removed. She was then placed in a barbed wire cage in isolation with a sign above her crate that read “Unadoptable”. Her eyes were luminous, but it was obvious that she was very emaciated, weak and ill. It was also discovered that she had a very serious and advanced case of heartworm disease. It was highly unlikely that this white and sable dog would survive for any length of time.

There was an element of magic to Kianna – she was very telepathic and seemed to know what people were thinking. My dog, Caesar, was dying of osteosarcoma and very near the end of his life. He was a beautiful Alaskan Malamute without whom I could not imagine life. I was his “mother”, “rescuer”, “caregiver”, confidant and true friend. I desperately wanted another Malamute to be with Caesar during his last month of life – to comfort and console him and to assure him that she would “carry on” his role and serve as his legacy in our family.

I learned of Kianna through my new friend, Betty Christenson, the director of the North Texas Alaskan Malamute Rescue Association. Betty had paid a visit to the shelter and seen Kianna. She said that Kianna was very gentle and accepting of her fate. She also implicitly seemed to understand that Betty was there to help her. I told Betty that if she could somehow manage to get Kianna out of the shelter, I would adopt her sight-unseen. I knew it was the right thing for me to do.

Betty made friends with one of the shelter workers and persuaded her to give her custody of Kianna. To this day, I have no idea how Betty managed to get Kianna out of that place, but then, Betty had her own special kind of charisma and magic.

I bought a beautiful turquoise collar and leash and I.D. tag for our soon to be new family member. Betty and Chris drove from the shelter to my home, introduced Kianna to me in our front yard. Kianna was painfully thin but absolutely beautiful. Her eyes shone with intelligence and wisdom. After walking Kianna for a short while, we took her to our vet to have her examined and groomed. He vaccinated her, re-tested her for heartworm and other potential health issues, took her blood, did a fecal and urine analysis – the works!!

Kianna did not wince or whine once. She was very brave and stoic in this new environment. She had been through so much suffering, and had been homeless, starving, out on the streets, in a barbed wire cage... Although people had betrayed her, she, nonetheless remained trusting. I had fallen deeply in love with Kianna at first sight. I admired her beauty and respected her nobility.

After she had been thoroughly examined by the vet and deemed to have no contagious diseases, we brought her home. We walked her on a leash around our house and down the street to familiarize her with our neighborhood. We walked her on-leash around our two-acre back yard several times and then introduced her to Caesar, Katie, Spencer and Sophie. She and Caesar formed a very special bond from the moment they met. It was as though both of them recognized and understood that they had been brought together for a reason. After Kianna had been introduced to each of the dogs individually, we introduced them together as a group.

Caesar was dying and terribly weak and ill. Kianna was remarkably sensitive to and considerate of his needs. She was very maternal, gentle and loving and licked his ears and put her head over his neck. She would lie down next to him whenever she could. They became devoted to one another within a matter of days. It was deeply touching to observe the tenderness with which they treated one another. Kianna was clearly an Alpha female and took charge of her household and the other dogs without fuss. Her role as pack leader was clearly and immediately evident and understood by the other dogs. She was in charge and adapted to the leadership role Caesar had played in our canine family. She became co-ruler of our family along with Caesar.

Kianna was receiving treatment for heartworm disease, and I am certain that she was not feeling well. Inherently, she was very strong and powerful. However, the treatment was debilitating and slowed her down. Nonetheless, she was very inquisitive and loved exploring our large back yard and the ducks and geese that swam in our pond. However, she was most intrigued by the amount of cooked food that Norm and I brought into our home. I know she marveled at our skills as “hunters” and respected us as the true “Alphas” of the entire household “pack”. . She was a highly talented “counter-surfer” – sniffing out and finding food in our kitchen’s pantry and on the counter tops. She also managed to kill and eat several of the ducks in our pond. She was a natural born hunter. It is no wonder she seemed to be putting on weight. Although I attributed her weight gain to a healthy diet, my husband sensed that something else was going on. He thought she might be pregnant, and his hypothesis was correct.

Our vet confirmed that Kianna was pregnant with eight to nine puppies. Now, we grew very worried, as she had been inoculated, had surgery and received anesthesia in association with removal of the dart AC had shot her with, anesthesia, and heartworm treatment all while she was pregnant. We were very concerned that the puppies would die or be blind, deaf, or in some other way, debilitated or disabled. We feared the worst and hoped for the best. No matter how they turned out, we, of course, were willing to adopt them. We prepared ourselves for their birth.

On Christmas Day night of 1998, Kianna began giving birth to her puppies in our cozy study. She and they were swathed in blankets and towels. One by one, the puppies emerged, so very tiny and fragile. Kianna licked each of them all over and tried to give them life, but each managed to live for only a short while. We rushed the puppies to the Emergency vet hoping somehow to save them. We spent all night at the animal hospital hoping and praying that the puppies would live. Only one, a pure white female, managed to survive. We named her Sedonia Kennicoot Fairweather. Caesar had been with Kianna throughout the birthing process and, amazingly, she allowed him to lick her afterbirth. There was an extraordinary bond between them.

Although we were devastated by the loss of eight of the nine puppies, we immediately fell in love with the one who survived, and who, thankfully, is still with us today, our beautiful, regal all white and cream Sedonia ("Dony").

Caesar and Kianna and the new puppy were inseparable for three days. On December 28, Caesar died. We had him euthanized by our vet in our living room surrounded by his canine siblings and, of course, Norman and me. Kianna, Katie and Sophie were by his side. We hugged and held him, kissed him and prayed for him. We thanked God for the privilege of knowing and loving him. We wished him Godspeed.

After Caesar's death, I experienced utter devastation and despair. There isn't a day that passes these many years later that I don't think of and dearly miss my Caesar.

Kianna rose to the occasion, seeming to understand the gravity of the situation and the depth of my grief and anguish. She assumed the mantle of responsibility and authority that had been Caesar's. She grew healthier and more robust. Her appearance always reminded me of Caesar and brought me deep comfort and joy. Her daughter, Dony, also brought us great happiness. There is no doubt in my mind that Kianna had been sent to us by God to help lessen the grief we felt over the loss of our Caesar. But we quickly discovered that there were many other reasons that Kianna came into our lives...