

MY BEST FRIEND

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**INT. VETERINARY OFFICE - LOBBY - DAY**

ROBERT (72) is sitting in a chair. A faded "Vietnam Veteran" hat is on his head. A stoic expression on his grizzled face.

In his lap lays a small female poodle named MAGGIE. 10 years old. Fuzzy black fur with streaks of gray. Sleepy eyes with obvious cataracts. A slight wheeze with every exhale.

CINDY (45) approaches. Medical scrubs. Sympathetic smile.

CINDY  
Hi, Robert.  
(re: Maggie)  
How is she?

Robert gently pets Maggie's head.

ROBERT  
She's ready.

CINDY  
Follow me.

Robert cradles Maggie as he slowly gets to his feet.

**INT. VETERINARY OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - DAY**

Maggie is resting on the exam table. An IV port is secured to her leg. Robert is standing over her, stroking her back.

Cindy removes her medical gloves and presses a button on the wall-mounted intercom.

CINDY  
(into intercom)  
We're ready.

DOCTOR BISHOP (O.S.)  
(from intercom)  
Thank you, Cindy.

Moment later -- DOCTOR BISHOP (55) enters. Kind face. The front pocket of his lab coat holds two pre-filled syringes.

DOCTOR BISHOP (CONT'D)  
Good afternoon, Robert.

Robert politely nods. Doctor Bishop pets Maggie's head.

DOCTOR BISHOP (CONT'D)  
Hey there, Maggie.

He looks at Robert.

DOCTOR BISHOP (CONT'D)  
I know we went over everything on  
the phone, but do you have any  
questions before we get started?

Robert shakes his head. Doctor Bishop removes a syringe from  
his pocket.

DOCTOR BISHOP (CONT'D)  
This first medication is to help  
Maggie relax. It'll make her a  
little drowsy as well.

He puts the needle in the IV port and injects the medicine.

DOCTOR BISHOP (CONT'D)  
So why "Maggie"?

ROBERT  
I'm sorry?

DOCTOR BISHOP  
Ten years of caring for her but I  
never asked how you settled on the  
name Maggie.

Robert ponders for a beat. He looks at Maggie as he continues  
stroking her back.

ROBERT  
Mom left when I was a kid. My old  
man didn't take it well, so he took  
it out on me. The only respite I  
had was the neighbor girl across  
the street. We were around the same  
age. We hung out everyday. Nothing  
romantic. Just a kind soul in a  
dark time. Cancer claimed her a few  
years later. Her name was --

His voice trails off. The first sign of emotion behind his  
stoic facade.

CINDY  
Maggie.

Robert nods. He clears his throat. Steeling himself.

ROBERT  
'Nam broke out not longer after. I  
enlisted to escape my old man. He  
died while I was there.  
(MORE)

ROBERT (CONT'D)

I inherited the house once I shipped back. Found a decent job at a factory and devoted my life to it. Never found a reason to get married or have kids. Life on my own was all I knew.

(beat)

Until this little fuzzball showed up on my doorstep one night.

CINDY

I remember that. You brought her in the next day. No collar. No chip. No missing posters. As if she just appeared out of thin air.

(beat)

She chose you.

Robert's lip quivers. His facade slipping even more.

ROBERT

That she did.

Doctor Bishop removes the second syringe from his pocket.

DOCTOR BISHOP

This one will put Maggie to sleep. Her breathing will slow down and then eventually, it'll stop.

A tear rolls down Robert's face. He wipes it away.

ROBERT

Will it hurt?

DOCTOR BISHOP

She won't feel a thing.

ROBERT

Can I hold her?

DOCTOR BISHOP

Of course.

Robert gently picks Maggie up and sits in a chair. Her sleepy eyes look up at him as she wags her tail slightly.

A small smile appears on Robert's face. Tears flow freely. He doesn't wipe them away.

ROBERT

We're ready.

Doctor Bishop places the syringe into the IV port and injects the medicine.

DOCTOR BISHOP  
We'll step out so you can have some  
privacy.

Doctor Bishop and Cindy exit, shutting the door behind them.

Maggie's breathing starts to slow.

Robert cradles her against his chest.

ROBERT  
(softly, voice breaking)  
Thank you for saving me.

Maggie closes her eyes and nuzzles into him.

FADE TO:

**INT. VETERINARY OFFICE - EXAM ROOM - MINUTES LATER**

There's a KNOCK on the door.

DOCTOR BISHOP (O.S.)  
Robert?

The door opens. Doctor Bishop and Cindy enter. They stop in their tracks. Staring straight ahead. Stunned.

Robert is seated in the chair. Holding Maggie to his chest.

Both have their eyes closed.

Both are no longer breathing.

Both at peace with their best friend.

THE END