

Spike

WYATT BACKER

Spike was a terrier, that's about all we ever knew.

Mom picked him up at a Lowe's parking lot, from an aloof girl trying to free him from the abuse of her household.

He was mangy and matted and he had fucked up teeth and he was ugly and we loved him. We got him cleaned up quick.

He was a sensitive fella, moved real slow and didn't do too well when no one was in the house with him. He was grey, always looked old but we had no way of knowing how old he really was. One vet said six, one said eight, one didn't even bother to try.

We got Rosie after about five years with Spike. Rosie was a dorkie (a dachshund-yorkie mix) quite full of fire—she'd fuck with the old man any chance she could get.

She particularly loved clamping onto his ears and hanging off them when he tried to get away.

To us, it was cruel. But probably more endearing than we could ever know. Truly, they got along great, and they spent their time sleeping, playing, and hoarding toys and trash in the nook behind the couch.

We put Spike down a few years after. I didn't go with. I greeted my family's car when they pulled back into the drive without him. I remember the light-polluted night sky. And the pity.

He's in a little doggy urn on a shelf next to a clay outline of his paw print and his collar – white and red, stitched like a baseball. Rosie lost some fire for a while.

We gave her his collar; she kept it with her. We eventually put it back up on the shelf.

Old Rosie's still with us some seven years later, much subdued as time has passed.

Now her teeth are fucked up, and there's a new dog to tug at her ears. She probably deserves it.

And Spike's collar disappeared for a while. No one knew what happened as nothing else was missing, and we turned the place upside down to find it. And, eventually, we did.

It was tucked up in a nook behind the couch.