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Killer Stories F2025 Composition CCNY

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The Magic I Knew:

Our first family dog, Magic, was named for his speed. One moment he was in one room, but could run to the other so fast, it was as if he was trying to leave a cloud of smoke behind like in the cartoons. Me and him would always be together. He taught me to walk, allowing me to hold on to his back for stability and then be patient enough to let me get my footing, before I waddled away with him. He guarded my crib, and would bark if anyone he wasn't comfortable with came too close. This went on for a long time. Up until I was eight. When I was eight, everything had changed, snapping into a much different place. I have one memory, only one, that plays on loop in the back of my mind, as if on film. One that I made a conscious decision to never forget. It was one of those days where I was alone. I had tried to do my homework to pass time, but that seemed to make time move slower. I tried eating the time away, but then ran out of snacks. I watched TV, but that too proved to be too still. I then had the idea of finding adventure outside. I put on my hat, my thin coat, and boots before taking Magic out with me into the yard. It was fall. The leaves were of orange, red, and yellow hues. The grass was faded, and the sky was still blue, as if summers traces were still present. I had no permission from my parents, nor desire to go outside the gate, and so, I sat on the stoop on my Ipad playing games, and people watching. At one point, I searched for a pretty leaf on the ground to give my mother upon her return. That was when Magic began pacing by the gate, pawing at the gates wire as if something had irked him so much that he felt the yard to now be too small for him. He barked loud and reverbed. I didn't

know what had set him off in such a way, but I wasn't worried, this was normal to me. Magic enjoyed being out and about outside the gate he had learned how to open. He learned how to open doors too. He wasn't the type who could be kept still for long, and even his very name reflected that truth. It called for him to come to me, and to relax, but he did neither. I waved his behavior off because I had checked the gate lock myself. When we had initially come outside, I had purposefully twisted it to try to ensure he couldn't leave without me. Now on the stoop, his barking continuing to swirl in the conch of my ear, I looked up from my Ipad to see a blind man across the street looking to the right, but standing still. He had his guiding stick with him in one hand, and his service dog in the other. Although the blind man was looking to his right on the sidewalk across from us, his service dog was staring right at Magic. The dog was big, brown, and burly, with droopy eyes and longer ears. I looked down at a leaf I had been inspecting, just for a moment, and that's when my ears picked up the sound of the creaking metal gate swinging open. The knot must've gotten loose. I looked up to see Magic lunging for the blind man and his dog. I didn't understand nor comprehend quickly enough, but my slowly forming panic quickly tripled. I shouted out for Magic, tears already pricking my eyes, and my heart racing at a speed that scared the rest of my body. Magic didn't even look back to me. He was running with such purpose, maybe territorial, maybe not. Then the blur of a car appeared before me. The screeching halt of a speeding car, the harsh thud, the limp body, the car stopping. My world cracking and then absolutely breaking. The second I looked down to see Magic no longer running, but now laying on the street was the moment time stopped existing in numbers, but rather in moments. Everything collapsed into that one moment. My hands cupped my mouth, tears streamed down my knuckles, and pain seared my heart. Magic. My Magic. Was gone. Everything happened a bit faster after that. When my father came home, I was shown Magic's body one last time. Magic

was buried, my mother was called and told—only responding with an “I have to go.” I could tell by hearing her tone that she was barely holding herself together at work. I cleaned and did my homework. I didn’t want anyone worrying about anything else other than how to handle their grief, so I did what I could to make the house look nicer than it felt, and to make sure my mother wouldn’t have to remind me to do my homework, or get ready for school the next day. I realized later that night in bed, my eyes wet and throat dry, that I felt so small. Of course, I was only eight, so small I was. However, this small was different. It was the kind of weakened and withered small. Something felt dislodged from me, a piece of energy missing, and gone—seemingly never to return. I felt I had failed Magic. I should’ve gone inside with him sooner, I should’ve triple checked the gate. I should’ve run after him? No, then we would both be dead. I should’ve done something. The next day I came home to find all of Magic's things gone. My mother meant no harm by it, but her way of dealing with grief was: “Out of sight, out of mind”. I tried to do that too, but it didn’t work for me. I still thought he died due to my ignorance and negligence. It took years before I started to realize that it was not my fault. Through growing into the knowledge that in that moment there was nothing I could’ve done to remove the car from the equation, and looking back at old pictures of me and Magic together, I realized that Magic—wherever he was now, would always be a guardian to me. I know now that he isn’t mad at me or disappointed in me like I had convinced myself of before. His life had so much more meaning than his death. His life that had nourished mine in so many different ways prior. Now Magic's grave, of which I still visit, grows flowers that always seem to have a bend in their stem. I like to believe he is reaching out to me through them. I remember everything. How he’d greet me at the door after school, how he’d guard my crib, and help me walk, and how we’d share oxtail as I would eat the majority of food, but save him all the bones. The way the sun rose on

our early morning walks. It all replays in my mind. Magic's only fear was thunder, and even now I whisper "Don't be scared" when it thunders outside my window. Nothing could take away the love, and familial bond I had with Magic. Memories keep those who are dead alive in some way. Telling stories, looking at photographs, and simply remembering. These are all small ways of celebration of the life once cherished. He plays in the back of my mind, and will never stop doing so. I now know and feel his energy will always live on because of how strong it was, and that is the tether between me and my Magic. I see that now.

- **Mia Doreen George**