

## *You can call me “Mother”*



*It was raining.*

*At this time of the year, the sky looked cloudy almost every day. The garden bed did not need to be watered as the rain had soaked the soil, turning it muddy. We intended to put a new door at the kitchen's back entrance, for one day a young woman had suddenly turned up while I was cooking.*

*My daughter, my son and I were standing on the landing at the back of my house. My partner, Wally, and my son-in-law were carrying in a wooden door. Following them was a German shepherd. At first, I thought it was Tina, Wally's beloved dog. As I embraced the big Shepherd and held its neck in my arms, I heard Wally say excitedly:*

*- “Look who's here!” I realized this was not Tina, because the tan of its fur was lighter.*

*- “A lost dog or an abandoned one,” Wally said. “He inspected me when I unloaded the wooden door on the footpath and followed me in.”*

*- “He's so gorgeous! I want to keep him,” I said cheerfully.*

*- “Somebody must have lost him, Mum, his owner may be looking for him, they'll come and claim him back,” my son disagreed.*

*- “He's free to go, but if he wants to stay I'll let him stay, then return him to the owners if they turn up,” I insisted.*

*My daughter does not like dogs. She feared a big German shepherd, so she kept on moving away from him every time he got near her.*

*- “Push him away, Mum! He's not your dog!” my son said.*

*- “If he's been abandoned by his owner, think about what will happen to him when he ends up at the Council's animal shelter. He will be put down if no one claims him or gives him a new home. I wouldn't like that happen to him after he's already called into my home for help.”*

*- “But you're not allowed to have him, it's illegal to keep a dog without registration, Mum.”*

*- “I will make things legal, then.”*

*While we were talking, the handsome Shepherd had made by himself comfortable in the corner.*

*- “He must be very tired,” I uttered with concern.*

*- “Must be,” Wally added. “As you can see, he is willing to stay. I'm sure he's happy, he's found himself a new home.”*

- "Sure, I am willing to give him a new home," I said firmly. At dinner time he was still around. I didn't have dog food at that time, so I gave him some cooked rice and pork. By the way he ate it I knew he was very hungry. It happened to be Easter Friday, 2 April 1999.

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The next day we sat at the kitchen table to discuss the circumstances of the lost German shepherd. He would stay at my place over the holiday weekend. I was very happy and, so was he.

On Monday, 5 April, Wally drove me to Liverpool Council's dog shelter and there we asked for advice. The office was closed, but there were two girls still at work. We asked the workers how we could sort out things about the lost dog. I told them I felt guilty if I kept the dog away from its owner, maybe it belonged to some kids that would be heart-broken. We were told to take the dog in and they'd find out if he had a microchip put in, which would enable them to find the owner. In the meantime I could keep the dog at home. Anyway, by law, after seven days I would be able to keep him legally.

On Wednesday, 7 April, we took the dog to the animal shelter. He was scanned, but no ID was found. So, we took him home and helped him settle in with the family. We named him Rex, but I call him REXY. He did not respond to the name yet; I was not worried by this, since he would learn to after some time.

On Thursday, 8 April, we took Rex to the animal hospital for a general check-up, vaccination and de-sexing. This had to be done because I wanted a healthy pet in my place. Rex stayed overnight in the animal hospital. I had to bear all the costs, but I did not mind, not at all.

On Friday, 9 April, I cleared my backyard, mopped the kitchen floor, and made everything nice and clean, ready for welcoming Rex into our home. A good meal for him was also ready. He was so happy to see me. We left the hospital after all the paperwork had been cleared. We'd have to take him back to take out the stitches in a week. I thought of having him registered, and I did on 14 April.

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It's been two weeks since Good Friday. No one has bothered to come looking for Rex. I am sure he had been dumped in the park near my place. During these two weeks all the shoes have been put away in a safe place. Still, the garden hose has been damaged by Rex's strong and sharp teeth. The garden bed has suffered a lot, he just walks over it, jumps over it. But he's just too young to know better. He still has a baby face and loves to

*play a lot. I must hide myself from him sometimes, but he knows where I am and just sits right at the door and waits for me to come out. He is very alert, a faint sound from the gate being opened never escapes his notice. He's overjoyed when Wally comes to my house. Wally gives him plenty of affection, and so do I.*

*He is now a member of my family. I am sure he will be my best friend. I caress his face and, in a very soft voice, say to him: "Your name is Rex and I call you Rexy. Rex Tran, what a lovely name! You can call me 'Mother'!"*

*Dã-Thảo Quế Trần*  
*April 1999*



*Rex Trần*

