

Olympia: A Bright Shooting Star

Despite her cruel fate, Olympia remained gentle and affectionate until the end. BY VANA THEODORIDOU

She was small and frail when she came to our shelter on January 26th, 2008. Her bones were visible on every part of her little body and her eyes – those beautiful green eyes – had lost their spark long ago. She was a creature on the verge of starvation.

Olympia, a petite Pit Bull Terrier, was found after a house in Marcopoulo, Greece, where fighting dogs were kept illegally, was raided by police. A number of Pit Bulls – covered with scars and many suffering open wounds – were discovered on the property, tied up on short chains and forced to live outside without cover. Left-over puppy body parts were scattered nearby – telltale evidence of what they were fed. When the police arrived, many of the dogs were found wandering the streets, released by the criminals to hide their evidence. We were able to catch a few and bring them to our shelter ... one we named “Olympia.”

We gave her the name “Olympia” with the hope it would give her added strength to win her battle with death. She was a sick girl, but her olive wreath would be winning the right to live. Daily, her eyes became more luminous. She was delighted every time we played with her. She cuddled in our arms as if she had known us her entire life. She kissed our faces and licked our vet’s hands every time he drew blood for the numerous tests she was subjected to. Initial results revealed her kidneys and liver were in very bad condition. She suffered from severe diarrhea, leaving her exhausted, and neither special food nor medication helped.

Her pictures and life story were posted on websites in Europe and Canada. A flood of e-mails arrived asking how she was doing. Many people offered to adopt her but there are ownership restrictions concerning Pit Bulls. After corresponding with a young German woman, who runs a dog training school and has a special attachment to the breed, we decided that she would adopt Olympia. She said she would pick up Olympia when she was better. She didn’t provide details on how she would return home with a Pit Bull, but we were prepared to go to any length to get Olympia into the country.

Meanwhile, supporters of Tails From Greece Rescue (www.tailsfromgrecerescue.com), a Toronto-based charity which provides homes for stray dogs rescued from the streets of Greece, donated the funds to conduct tests on Olympia at one of the best vet clinics in Athens. They didn’t want to abandon Olympia to her fate without doing something. Unfortunately, X-rays, blood tests and scans revealed the bitter truth. Due to a grave malformation of her intestines, Olympia had to undergo a major operation. Parts of her intestines were to be removed and particles sent to Oxford University in London, for biopsy. After the surgery, we visited Olympia and even though she was tired and in pain, she was so happy to see us again. Sweet thing, she thought she could come home with us right at that moment!

That same night her German mom-to-be called me. She’s an animal whisperer and she had just “talked” with Olympia. “I don’t want to fight anymore,” Olympia told her, explain-



ing, “I just want to sleep.”

At two in the morning, March 23rd, 2008, a few hours after I spoke with her mom-to-be, I received another phone call from Olympia’s surgeon. Olympia had undergone more emergency surgery. For the second time, her intestines had knotted up. She would last just 24 hours. Should we wake her up from the anesthetic? The pain in my heart was unbearable! I couldn’t bring myself to tell the surgeon to let Olympia die. And I couldn’t have him wake her up either, just to have her die in anguish the next morning.

Olympia never woke up. The next day we buried her in our shelter’s small cemetery. Next to her grave, we planted an oleander bush and we hope that next year she’ll send us a sign, with some beautiful white blossoms, that she’s happy and well at the “Rainbow Bridge.”

Olympia visited our lives like a short-lived, but bright, shooting star. She was a gentle, patient, affectionate, yet tortured creature. Sweet Olympia left a burning impression on the hearts of all who knew her.

Vana Theodoridou is a member of KAZ, standing for the Greek equivalent of “Home for Stray Animals” — Katafigio Adespoton Zoon. (www.kazshelter.org) The dog fights referred to here, take place on the outskirts of Marcopoulo, Greece, in mountainous regions, other secluded places, or on the property of the dog owners. A rush of publicity ensued after the raid in which Olympia was discovered, but things quickly died down and the police never laid charges against the property owners. KAZ sued the owners but, as Vana reports, the papers have been conveniently “lost” in the maze of Greek bureaucracy.