

Hello, my name is Sam Burns.



By Mike Ortega

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*Have compassion for the elderly for they know
what they're doing.*

There are men like Sam Burns all across America, quietly living out their golden years alone. You might know someone who fits the description of the man in this book. He might be your father, your uncle, your brother or an Ex-husband. They live out the rest of their lives the best way they can under their own personal circumstance and preferences. Overlooked by society and left to enjoy their lives on what ever they can get by on.

Have compassion for the elderly for you too will one day be included in that demographic.

Episode 1 Trailer / Hello, my name is Sam Burns

Not sure what day of the week it is, the calendar has not been turned in months. My daily routine is based on TV schedule line-ups. I know it's trash day when I see the dumpster overflowing from my living room window. My Social Security check arrives when it gets here. I get my haircut every other month, usually the day after I deposit my check.

I don't own a car, the bus passes right in front of my apartment building. I get my meds a block down the street at Walgreens. I'm a relatively healthy guy with decent eye sight, but teeth—not so good. I have surprisingly good hearing. I hear everything my next door neighbor says. I like to include myself in their conversations but most of the time I get no replies. I feed my leftovers to two stray cats because they do a good job keeping the mice population down.

My name is Sam Burns, I'm seventy-three years old and I live in a small town outside LA called Ventura, population 110, 763 at last count. I'm originally from El Paso, Texas. My father kicked me out of the house when I was 19 he said, "For being lazy."

I remember catching a ride to the Greyhound bus station downtown with barely enough money to buy a one way ticket. The pretty girls and sunset beaches on the travel posters of California spoke to me. The landscape on the way looked the same as back home in El Paso until I got to Los Angeles—oh what a difference indeed.

I got a job at a convenience store where they let me sleep in the back store room for about 6 months. The rats were horrendous at night. I made a few friends along with who I thought was the love of my life. She turned out to be the craziest girl I had ever met. Thing is, we had a kid together, and by now I was in my late twenties. She would leave our kid at home alone while I was at work to go find drugs. The neighbors would hear him crying and call the cops. Eventually I was given full custody of our baby boy. We named him Tom at the last minute while watching cartoons, waiting for her to go into labor.

So here I was, raising little Tom on my own and working two to three jobs to get ahead. Tom never left my side. I found delivery jobs where he rode around with me in a box cradle, then at one point I kept him in a large dog crate until he was old enough to sit in the passenger seat.

Somehow we got by. I saved up enough money to rent a two bedroom duplex in Burbank, and no more motels. Little Tom grew up quick and learned to take care of himself without getting into trouble which was quite an achievement back then. I think he had spent enough time the dog crate as a toddler to learn what jail was all about.

He was about 14 when he got his first tattoo. It was a bad rendition of a pinup girl. I guess he thought I was going to get pissed off, but I remember how happy he was back then and who was I to judge a kid who had to put up with me.

I remember the conversation we had while splitting a 12 pack of beer on his 18th birthday.

"Well Tom, now that you're an adult, you can go live where ever you want." He looked at me and said,

"Well dad, I think I just wanna live here a 'lil while longer if ya don't mind."

I wasn't going to kick him out like my father did me—he just needed a little more time. LA streets are a do or die situation, ask me how I know.

I now live by myself in apartment 2D in a small but friendly complex where I ended up do to circumstances I will explain shortly. The lady upstairs likes to call herself Marilyn but I know that's not her real name because sometimes I get her mail by mistake—she's a sweet lady nonetheless. A couple more people worth mentioning are the maintenance guys Juan and Jose. Jose is always looking out for me. Best part is he always bring me a bottle of Scotch Whiskey on the holidays.

The family upstairs reminds me of when I was a kid living next door to the Lopez family who would make homemade corn tortillas and the smell would linger over to our house. They're always inviting me over to their barbecue cookouts on the weekends.

Last but certainly not least is Katrina from the apartment directly across from mine. Bless her heart, if she only knew how thin her curtains really are.

As I said before, Tom and I still lived in a two bedroom duplex in Burbank. Then he got a job offer in Chicago back in 2022, finally giving him the opportunity to live comfortably on his own. Rest assured, I was not going to Chicago to freeze my nuts off.

When I got lonely, I wondered if the story was just a plan to detach himself from the burden of looking after me. He packed a U-Haul and drove off but for all I know he lives up in Santa Barbara county. He has yet to provide me with his new address and I've only spoken to him once since he left.

So here I am, too young for a nursing home and too old to be good to anyone besides McDonalds. On occasion, you might see me digging in your recycling bins for egg crates and small plastic containers. I use them to start my vegetable garden, and various other uses.

I really can't complain, until my first earthquake. One day without warning, the ground felt rubbery and everything shook from side to side—a good Magnitude 5 they say. It's a good thing that the lawn padded my fall. Not just me but Jose as well who was trimming the rose bushes outside my window. He got back on his feet almost as fast as he went down, and with a big smile said, "Welcome to California Mr. Burns!"

Episode 2: Feed the hungry

All good days start with a good breakfast. Unfortunately, my refrigerator was as empty as my bank account. 'Nothing like the echoes of an empty stomach to put a get rich plan into action. I strapped on my walking shoes hoping they hold up long enough to catch the bus down to the grocery store for senior Sunday discounts.

They had whole frozen chickens on sale—a deal I couldn't pass up. Contrary to popular belief, I do not eat food out of trash cans, I don't need to, in fact I pay less for my food than the average person. "How is that?" you ask, Well, I keep up with the expiration dates at the grocery store. I know what day the meats gets swapped out and I'm there before the butcher even gets to work. The same with breads, dairy and prepackaged foods. I'm sick and tired of good food being thrown out while people in this town go without.

I'm no stranger to the food bank either, I donate food when ever there's a mother-load. Between myself, Juan and Jose, we sometimes fill up a truck full—no kidding! Our agreement with the manger is he turns the other way as long as some of that food gets delivered to the Food Bank. The generosity of the grocery store works in silent harmony with a strong shopper patronage—It pays to be kind.

Unfortunately these frozen birds were getting extremely heavy with every step. Off the bus and 100 yards to go, I could feel the burn, now is when my internal coach blew the whistle to keep going.

"Why do you think your name is Burns?" He said to myself. "Shake it off Sam, you're almost home." The handles on my four grocery bags were cutting into my hands like nylon rope—painful and merciless. I kept my eyes just ahead of my step to watch were I was going and trying not to think

about how far away my apartment was. "Come on 'Burns, you got this!" I was counting backwards from 50 like a blind man, watching the sidewalk, watching my fists turn knuckle white. I reached the familiar parking lot curb before the final stretch of sidewalk that I held so dear in my heart. 20 sections to go, 19, 17, 15 "you're not gonna make it without one last breather Sam." I told myself. I stopped but never letting the bags out of my hands, just setting them down long enough to get some circulation back down into my fingers.

Then, like an angel from heaven above, guess who steps outside?—Katrina from across the way. I almost dropped my load when I saw what she was wearing. This brunette beauty was wearing one of the smallest t-shirt she could possibly fit into that read "*Love Me and Squeeze Me*", that revealed enough of her navel to determine if it was an "innie" or an "outie", and denim shorts that revealed a suntan line I could not disagree with. My now limp physique shouted a silent S.O.S. in her direction, and she answered my distress call. Her slow motion rhythmic prancing took what little strength I had left. I stopped where I stood and set my bags down.

"Mr. Burns, oh my let me help you!" She said in her most compassionate voice.

"Oh my dear, you're just in time, another step and I would have dropped these heavy chickens!" I said in my most exhausted voice. This was probably the closest I have ever been to her. Most the time it's just friendly smiles and waves from my door to hers. Her scent was that of jasmine with a touch of body odor that produced a hormonal reaction in my pants. Well mostly in my mind.

My hands had cramped up so badly that I could hardly release my grip. I made this moment lasted a lifetime. Her scent was like oxygen that I wanted to inhale as long as I could.

"Oh my dear Katrina thank you so much, you came not a moment too soon." I gasped.

"No problem Sammy, where would you like me to put them?" She asked.

I paused for a second to admire how her breasts were pushed together by the weight of those grocery bags. It all happen in slow motion, you know, like those corny TV scenes with the backlit sunshine and wild blowing hair. I don't think I blinked the entire time.

"Katrina my dear your'e a lifesaver, just set them right there by the door." I said.

"Is there anything else I can do for you Sammy?" She asked tenderly.

"Oh my dear the list goes on and on, not that I would take advantage of your generosity in any way." I replied as my insides melted in warm, gushy waves of delight. I was far from recovering from her euphoric display of beauty, and probably would not until later this evening.

"Well ok then, I'm right across the sidewalk if you need anything." She offered.

For the rest of the day my mind could only focus for about 15 minutes at a time without shamelessly drifting back to those 10 minutes of pure bliss.

Katrina and I have gotten to know each other quite well in the last two weeks. She's always willing to drop what she's doing and come over to lend a hand. My endless to do list is ever growing.

I have learned so much about her lately; where she's from, her family and all those lucky boyfriends in her past. We take turns sharing our leftovers in those colorful Tupperware containers. She could have any man she wants. I have not seen any guys come over to her apartment in ages. Not that it's any of my business.

Oh well, I do feel a bit lucky in that regards, secretly having her all to myself—in a protective, fatherly kinda way of course. I must admit since that day with the groceries I've become more aware of my own presence and appearance. I've wanted to pretend that I'm not over the hill but rather seeing it in the far distance and taking my time getting there. I'm considering getting my salt and pepper hair dyed light brown—not too dark, so as not to appear that I've dyed it over night.

The rumor of a rent increase was confirmed when I found the official notice left in my mailbox. The frequency of moving trucks in the parking lot also confirmed this, making me wonder if I too may have to look for a new place to live soon. It also brought back those mixed feelings of wondering how my son Tom was doing on his own.

Episode 3: Rents going up!

I decided to take a walk to the 7-11 this morning and pick up one of those apartment rental booklets. You have to flip to the back page where the low rent listings barely take up half a page to find anything under a thousand a month. There were a couple of garage apartments but according to the address, the neighborhood was sketchy. Also I'm not fond of stairways that show no mercy.

On the way back I noticed a small, handmade sign that read APARTMENT FOR RENT in the window of an old two story house. It had that well lived-in charm with those folk-art type tire pots containing a nice assortment of weeds and *Setcreasea* purple plants you can't kill. However, the place was loaded with hazards that told me to turn around and get a tetanus shot before going any further.

However, all this neglect meant the rent might be low enough to afford and leverage for handyman deductions. Continuing over a half rotted porch and up to the rusty screen door where I found a good spot for a *rap-tata-tap-tap*. I felt a soft rub around my ankles followed by a faint *meow* of a tuxedo kitten. Midway of my second round of *rap-taps* the sound of unlatching security chains and dead bolts by a dark silhouette standing no more than five foot tall through dingy lace curtains opened the interior door wide enough to let out a musky cold wave of air conditioning that I found relieving.

"Can I help you?" A half-face smile of a young female mumbled through the one inch opening.

"Hello, I noticed a sign in the window about an apartment for rent, I was wondering if it was still available?"

"Oh you mean the back room, you'll have to talk to my mother about that and she's not available right now."

"Oh ok great!" I said in an effort to appear friendly. "Is it ok if I just come back later?"

"Well yeah," She replied obnoxiously, "Come back 'round five-thirty."

"Ok, thank you." I said as the door quickly closed and locked in my face.

I was back at 5:35 p.m. full of courage and enthusiasm. One set of *rap-taps* is all it took before a taller figure wasted no time with the locks and latches, generously sharing her cold air—this time with a strong aroma of homemade cooking that made me hungry.

A middle-aged woman wearing readers and holding a few letters cocked her head to one side and asked, "Can I help you?"

She had a calm demeanor and familiarity of a trusted friend you never forget.

"Hi there, my name is Sam, I was here earlier, I spoke to a young lady regarding your sign of an apartment for rent. I was jus wondering..."

She cut me off abruptly with, "Well you might be too late, two other folks have already come by this week askin'..." She continued about how there was so much interest in the place in such a short amount of time. I just smiled in agreement, doing my best to stand up straight, even though my back was killing me.

She finally paused for a moment and gave me a once-over look, then asked me if I wanted to come inside and have a seat.

"That's very nice of you, thank you." I said.

She introduced herself as Mrs. Lucy Brown, and her daughter Annie.

"Like I said earlier, I've got two other folks interested in the apartment, but I really need to get someone in there right away. All my bills are piling up and money ain't rainin' from the sky ya know."

"It's nice to meet you Lucy, again my name is Sam, Sam Burns. I live about two blocks from here at The Spanish Villa apartments."

"That place has been there longer than I can remember," she said in a level voice, "In fact I rented there in my early 20's." She had a way of not beating around the bush.

"Yeah it's been there a while." I replied. "I've been there at least five years. Recently, the landlord handed out memos about the rent going up in January." I tried to keep my replies short.

"That doesn't give you much time does it?" She said.

"No it doesn't, I hate moving."

"I like you Sam, I'm willing to get the room ready to move in as early as end of next month for someone I can trust."

"If I may ask, how much is the rent?"

"It's \$800 dollars a month plus first month's deposit. I can split the deposit into two payments. The rent includes the water bill but you have your own electricity meter back there and there's a small garbage pickup fee included. How does that sound to you? Oh and no pets of any kind." She said in a stern voice.

I paused the conversation with a smile, while I did some quick short math in my head. Unfortunately I was probably going to come up about a hundred dollars short every month.

"Ok well, not sayin' that price ain't fair but it's going to leave me a bit skinnier than I was hoping for. Is there any way I can work off about \$100 dollars a month maybe fixing up some things around the house? I'm good with plumbing, painting and general maintenance. I could probably handle most minor situations that may arise. Of course you would have to pay for materials and have them delivered because I don't have a car."

"Well, I tell ya what Sam, I know this place does need some fix'n up. We would need to sit down and work up a plan for each month. This would be a month to month rental. We could start at \$50.00 a month in exchange for labor, to be completed before the end of the month—not including materials as you said. I'd want to see if you work out as a tenant first, then a trade-off would start a couple of months after you move in. We're not going to start giving discounts without first approving each project or seeing if you can keep up with the rent."

"You drive a hard bargain Mrs. Brown."

"Well Sam you know how it is, folks like to make promises then drag their ass and never finish a job—take it or leave it—and that's Mrs. Brown. I'm a widow, but you can just call me Lucy. Let's keep things on a first name basis—easier that way."

"I think I can work with that." I said, even though it was going to wipe out my savings. But I was not going to be on the streets.

I extended my hand, "Can we shake on it?" She did not commit.

"So far so good Sam, but if you'll excuse me, I need to get dinner on the table. Come by tomorrow afternoon and I will show you the place, you can reserve the apartment with 50% of your deposit and we can make it official then, ok?"

"That sounds great Lucy."

She politely extended her warm, rough hand and said, "We'll see you tomorrow."

And with that, I rose to my feet and turned towards the door. My stomach was disappointed we would not be having whatever was on the stove that was making me hungry. For once, I had a good feeling about my future.

The next afternoon I headed back over to see Lucy and Annie. I was very eager to finalize our deal and take a look at the place. I was trying my best to make a good impression on her, I even got out the white shoe polish for my sneakers.

My focus was on one thing, securing my new place of residency.

As I made my way down the sidewalk, I noticed a fire truck and what looked like an ambulance right about where her house stood. I had a bad feeling about this as my heartbeat got more intense the closer I got. Two houses away my speculation was confirmed. Two EMS guys were bringing out what appeared to be an adult wrapped in a white sheet. I had to lean on the neighbor's fence to catch my breath.

I could see Annie and a female paramedic sitting on the back step of the ambulance that gave off an eternal white light, guiding the paramedics wheeling Lucy's body from the house. I felt apprehensive to approach them as all this was taking place but I knew I had to find out what's going on.

"Annie what happened, oh my God, what's going on?" I said empathetically—this was any child's worst nightmare.

"Do you know her sir?" Asked the EMT.

"Yes, well I met Lucy and Annie yesterday. We spoke for a short time about the rental unit in the back." I answered.

"I see, were you here earlier today?" She asked.

"No I was supposed to come back over this afternoon." My throat felt swollen and sore when I answered.

She continued with several other related questions that began to make me feel uncomfortable.

"What happened if I may ask?"

"Mrs. Brown was found by one of her neighbors about half an hour ago, I'm afraid that's all I can say sir." she said in a soothing voice.

The next morning Mrs. Brown was still on my mind. She had probably neglected her health for a while now. Working and having to keep up with a house and provide for Annie at her age finally caught up with her. I hope Annie is now living with a next of kin.

I stepped outside for some fresh air. I couldn't help but feel the emptiness coming from Katrina's apartment. Nobody coming or going over there in days made me wonder how she's doing.

Episode 4: Sam's dog club

The end of the month was soon approaching and the landlord has not been poking around like he usually does which had me wondering what's up. Surely he would be by with the bad news soon. A gloominess hovered over the whole complex that felt unsettling. No TVs, no music, not even Maria the babysitter talking with my neighbor upstairs like she usually does. This apartment complex is like its own universe.

The sound of an ambulance whaled down the nearby highway bringing back thoughts of last week's incident with Mrs. Brown. I wondered how 'lil Annie is doing right now. I need to just go for a walk.

Making my way around back, the familiar sounds from the parking lot greeted me without hesitation. Same kids making trouble seemed welcoming—I was looking for normality.

“Ok, I like what I see so far.” Not really sure if I was making a big deal out of the rumor of a rent increase. As I rounded the corner to my building, I see Katrina sitting on her front step.

Just go home Sam, I told myself. *There’s nothin’ going on around here, just lay low.* Expect the unexpected has been my motto for so long that maybe I’m just looking for things that aren’t there—I’m getting too old for paranoia, all cooped up in my apartment, fabricating scenarios is gonna drive me crazy.

I was up early Friday morning having coffee on my front steps and feeling sorry for myself when Jerry and his dog Choco hastily passed by for their morning walk. Jerry looked to be late for work as always. I put myself in his place for a second, wondering how stressed out he must feel. Then the light bulb went off!

What if I could provide a morning walk—heck they could stay with me all day, and allow folks like Jerry to leave for work on time. A win-win for everyone! Sam, you’re a genius!

“Hey Jerry, come by my apartment after work will ya?”

He gave me a thumbs-up while speed-walking back to his place. I downed the last cold swig of coffee and I pulled myself up with both knees popping—a quick reminder that I had to keep moving to stay in the game.

Around 6:00 p.m. Jerry stopped by. I had no idea how this was going to go off but when I offered to watch his dog during the day, he didn’t hesitate to take me up on my offer. That was just too easy!

Saturday morning brought a knock at my door. Two Jehovah witnesses with bright smiles stood there, pamphlets in hand ready to change my life. I invited them inside but they preferred the view from my sidewalk. Still in my robe, I patiently listened to how my life would change by subscribing to their Watchtower magazine. After about 5 more minutes my bladder refused to partake in this conversation any longer. A 10 dollar bill nearby that I was saving for pizza sufficed their mission with me and I excused myself.

I went back to bed but sleep was miles away. As I laid there I suddenly realized that these two ladies were sent to me to set a motivational example—I needed to get my ass up and get the word out about my new pet sitting services. I needed my own pamphlet—Get the word out about Sam’s dog club and the rest will fall into place.

PET SITTING BY SAM

Your dogs new best friend!

Nearby and Affordable

Call me at 805-324-0009

or come by Apartment 2D

Dogs only.

After about half I was ready to hit the street with my six flyers in hand. Just as I opened the front door, I was met with a closed hand about to knock by who other than my landlord Henry Thomas.

“Hey Sam, where you headin’ to?” The smirk on his face said he was not here to see how I was doing.

“Oh, hey there Henry, just going for a walk around the complex, it’s a beautiful day out.” I tried to sound convincing.

"You got the memo regarding the rent increase didn't you?" He always spoke quickly to emphasis his point.

"Yes sir I sure did." I said as sweat beads began to form on my upper lip.

"Ok well, you think you gonna be ok with that, let me know ahead of time if you need to downsize."

Any smaller and I'll be living in the supply closet. I said to myself. I really had no answer. Feeling cornered, I took a few steps back inside my apartment. Looking down at my feet in a submissive way, all I could do was reply with a positive nod that neither convinced him nor gave him any reason to doubt me. I was in no position to discuss my options—I just wanted him to leave.

"We'll be in touch, talk to ya later." He said with a smugly tone that reminded me what a slime bag all landlords really are.

Making a mental assessment of all the pet owners in the complex. If I could just get three customers for now that would be a really nice start.

Jerry needed a reminder flyer and perhaps I drop off a few by the mailboxes. Twenty minutes later I had handed out all my flyers and I was feeling a bit more optimistic. Surely one of my ideas will pan out sooner or later.

The next day, there was a knock on my door around 7:45 a.m., Early morning visits make me worried. It was Jerry, with flyer in hand and Choco on a leash.

"Good morning Sam, I know we talked about watching Choco during the week but I was wondering if you could watch my dog for a while, I need to see how my sister is doing in the hospital, I'll probably be back by lunchtime. Oh and for next week, is 6:30 a.m. too early to drop him off?"

"Not too early at all Jerry, We'll see ya when you get back."

With that he handed me the dog leash, a small bag of dog food and his dog bowl.

"Great Sam, I really appreciate it!"

And just like that, I was in the dog sitting business.

"Well buddy, it's you and me today." Choco looked up at me with that hansom Bulldog face. Why on God's green earth would anyone breed such an ugly dog.

For the first time in a very long time life seemed promising and inclusive. All because of this ugly mutt staring back at me.

I must have dozed off after our walk because when I woke up the clock in the kitchen read 11:30 am, Looking over to my right I see Choco waiting on me wide awake and ready to go. His head sprung up and nubby tail wagging when he saw me making an effort to get up.

"Lets move boy." I said with conviction.

Walking proud and full of purpose, sniff sniff, turn around, sniff, target point, check, assume position, here comes the big payola... ahh the smell of money!

"Come on Choco before somebody sees us! Not two seconds later one of the little girls from down the sidewalk sneaks up behind me. "Mr. Burns, you're supposed to pick up the dog poop!" I was not prepared with those fancy little poop bags so I pretended I didn't hear her but she only got louder, "MR. BURNS, YOU'RE SUPPOSED TO PICK IT UP!"

"Run Choco run!"

I haven't moved that fast in years, and from a nine year old at that! I just about fell on the floor when we got back to my apartment, blurry eyed and dry mouth, I headed for the kitchen faucet for a streaming drink of water. I looked down at Choco who's eyes just bulged at me with the same

exhaustion, I picked him up and put his head under the running water, at this point he just lapped up the faucet water.

"Where's your dog bowl?" I asked him but got no reply.

"How'd it go Sam?"

"Fine Jerry, just fine. We went for a walk and fell asleep watching the animal planet."

"Cool deal Sam, well how much do I owe ya?"

I did some quick math in my head, subtracted a first time discount... "An even 20 bucks will be ok Jerry."

A few minutes of small talk and he was on his way back to his apartment. As I closed the door I could see a familiar piece of paper folded and stuck under my door mat. It was one of my flyers with something written on the back. It was from Bob and Alice from the next building over.

The note read: *Dear Sam, would you be able to watch Leroy on Monday? Let me know ASAP! Thanks, Bob.*

That made me feel officially "In Business!" By early next morning I was up and scheduling my work week.

6:30 a.m.- Noon - Choco.

7:00 a.m.-5:00 p.m. - Leroy.

After two days in a row now of fully booked dog sitting, the rest of the week was starting to look just as busy. Now I was trying to schedule a day off to recuperate. I was going to have to wait till Saturday. Do I dare hand out more flyers? How many dogs are in this place anyway? I grossly underestimated this!

A few days passed and the word got around. I now know there are exactly 12 dogs, 3 cats, and 2 parrots. My apartment was taking on a pet odor smell. My legs felt stronger, I got less winded when walking and I totally gave up those occasional cigars.

Return clients got a discount coupon, priority scheduling as well. I was beginning to service 90% of the tenants and scheduling was slowly becoming more manageable. Business was great and things were going smoothly until the landlord happen to drop by. I think the kennel smell hit him at the door. "Sam, what's going on?"

"Oh, just helping out a couple of neighbors while they ran some errands." I said in the friendliest way possible.

"Sam it smells like a pet store in here, are you doing some kind of dog sitting service?" I really couldn't hide the three bags of dog food by the front door. Uh Oh, Busted!

Episode 5: A sweet tooth of a deal

It sucks getting old. My upper jaw had been throbbing for days. I noticed there was a flyer in my mail box for a new dentist down the street. My hopes were that I could cover the office visit in cash and get them to spread out payments. It was a walk-in clinic but the room was full.

Stepping up to the receptionist desk, "Hi, I received your ad in my mailbox..."

"Ok sir." She abruptly cut me off and handed me a clipboard and asks me to fill out a questionnaire to the best of my ability then bring it back to her.

"Okie-dokie" I said.

With nowhere to sit, I stood by the receptionist desk. "Excuse me sir, but you will have to leave this area open for signing-in patients please. Take a seat when ever possible."

I rushed through most of the questions. After what seemed like an hour a nurse came to the door and called my name. She asked me to follow her into a consultation room.

"What brings you to our office today Mr. Burns?"

"Well, I have this coupon for a \$50.00 evaluation and exam that I got in the mail." I replied.

She continued to take notes and use her finger to scroll on her laptop.

"Have you been having any pain lately?" Her question hung out there for a minute.

"I have yes, I get sharp pains from time to time on this side of my jaw but nothing that a couple of Tylenols can't fix. Cold water also aggravates that side." I replied with a finger in my mouth.

By now she was tapping and scrolling in a conclusive manor, as if her dialog was secondary to the information I was giving her.

"Thank you Mr. Burns, I'll let the doctor know you're waiting, he should be right in."

She briskly rose from the stool and scooted out the door. I heard the next stall open and close. Her faint voice introducing herself and asking the identical questions. I knew exactly what I was getting myself into. I had regrets about doing this. It was my day off and look how I decided to spend it. I missing out on taking care of my dog friends. I could have been at the beach. The room felt like it was shrinking as the minutes went by.

Eventually a light knock on my door, followed by a well groomed young man that couldn't have been 30 years old entered the room. His name embroidered over the left pocket read Dr. Fadi Bishara DDS. Big concerning brown eyes greeted me with a calming handshake. For the first time I felt better about wasting my time.

"Good afternoon Mr. Burns, my name is Dr. Bishara, I understand you are having some sharp pain discomfort?" He asked with a sincere voice.

"Well that is true, at this point my teeth take turns hurting." I replied jokingly.

He reached into the drawer and unwrapped a new tongue depressor.

"Lets take a look under the hood shall we." He goes from one side to the other, then asked, "When was the last time you have been to a dentist?"

"You know doctor, It's been so long I can't remember, over 10 years for sure." I said apologetically.

"Mr. Burns I do see some gum swelling, I'd like to help address some of your discomfort, We'd need to do some x-rays, then we can have a better idea were exactly the pain is originating."

I pictured a mouth full of cavities and dentures being my only solution when he was done. There wasn't a tooth that didn't hurt—I just wanted to escape at this moment.

"I can have one of the assistants work up a 6 month treatment outline for you to help remedy some of your cavities. The lower teeth are the ones of most concerning to me, they look like you will be having to extract at least three within the next six months. I'm sorry for all the bad news."

"It's ok doctor, to be honest, that's about what I expected to hear. I will take you up on that consultation with a nurse as long as she is cute." I tried to be funny but that one missed the mark.

"Ok there, I will send her right in." He stood, we briefly shook hands and he took his exit.

With a folder full of colorful brochures of beautiful smiling people and an estimate totaling over three thousand dollars, doing short math, figuring out how long it would take me to pay off. By the time the bus dropped me off, I think a few more teeth had loosened up. This whole dentist thing was a bad idea to begin with and I'm sorry to have put you through it as well. I really shouldn't pay attention to these flyers in my mailbox.

Episode 6: A not so quiet evening

It's after 7 PM and Sam is settled in for a couple of hours of TV before bed. There's a knock at the door he wasn't expecting. "Hey guys what's going on?" It's Bob and Alice, looking like they have a plane to catch.

"Sam we're really sorry, this is kinda of an emergency; Alice's mother is sick and we need to run over there, is there any way you can watch Leroy for a few hours tonight, I'm not sure how long we're gonna be?" Bob asks in his nicest, most convincing voice.

Leroy who gives him those "please let me in" eyes.

"Of course." Sam replies in a somber, honoring way.

"Oh Sam you're the best!" Alice declares.

"Don't worry, go do what you gotta do, Leroy will keep me company."

Sam has no choice really. He gives Leroy enough space to slip by and jumps on his favorite chair.

"See ya soon Sam!" Bob says as he trails behind Alice.

There's a sense of companionship as soon as he locks the door, Leroy lets out a big yawn as he settles in.

Sam resumes his paused episode of Bonanza. Half an hour later he's half asleep when there is a knock at the door.

"They're back already, that was quick."

He opens the door expecting Bob or Alice but instead it's the new couple from upstairs—the McDonalds.

"Hello sir, my name is Alvin McDonald, I don't think we've met, my wife Claire and I are kind of new to the building."

"Yes I have seen you guys once or twice." Sam replies.

"What brings-ya by?"

"Sam, we found out about your pet sitting services from our next-door neighbor and well, my wife just got a last-minute phone call to fly out of town tonight. We have been so busy trying to settle in we just haven't had a chance to come by and introduce ourselves. Is there anyway you can house our dog for a few days?"

Sam's eyes open in disbelief, this unexpected guests will not be turned away but he's just not ready to accommodate two dogs at the moment.

"Hmmm, I don't know." Sam answers with a doubtful tone.

"Mr. Burns, we are willing to pay three times your regular fee for such a short notice, we have no one else to turn to."

The prettiest blue eyed dog he had ever seen looks up at him almost pleading to say yes while taking peeks inside at Leroy who was halfway to the doorway wearing a happy grin.

Before Sam can even name his price, Mr. McDonald pulls out a wad of 50 dollar bills. He divided the sum in half and handed it to Sam in a generous manner.

"Will this be enough for now, you can bill me the rest when we get back."

"Who can say no to those beautiful eyes!" Sam quickly replied.

"Thank you so very much Mr. Burns, we really appreciate this."

"What's his name?" Sam asked.

"Her name is Maisy, she's sweet and very easy to get along with, especially around other dogs."

"Oh and for the most part the food here is basic dry Purina, if you want something special let me know." Sam says as he takes the leash.

"That'll be fine, thank you Mr. Burns, we'll be in touch."

"Leroy, it looks like you have company." Sam said cautiously. "This is going to be a first. I need to get the middle bedroom ready, there's no way I'm gonna keep these two in the same room."

It's after midnight, Sam's finally fallen asleep binge-watching Bonanza. Leroy can't wait any longer. The passage doors throughout all the apartments have those lever type knobs that only require a small amount of pressure to open.—something Leroy is very familiar with. Leroy knew things, things Sam forgot to ask. Leroy could smell she was in heat the second Sam open the front door.

His Oscar Meyer wiener has been patiently waiting for Sam to fall asleep, and that intoxicating aroma she's been giving off has been driving him crazy all night.

Quietly Leroy jumps on the door handle and easily pops the latch open. Maisy wags her tail as if to say, "What took you so long?" She reaches over and hits the switch to turn on the red mood light and soft jazz. Leroy likes to take his time, there's plenty of room to find a comfortable position in a dog bed large enough to fit a full grown German Shepherd.

As Kenny G. plays in the background, Leroy's eyes meet hers and its hank-panky time in Sam's honeymoon suite.

It's 3:00 a.m. when Sam wakes up needing to make a bathroom run. Looking over he notices Leroy is nowhere in sight and the middle bedroom door is wide open. A quick peek inside almost causes him to lose his bladder-full at the sight of Leroy lovingly spooning Maisy as Kenny Rogers sings 'Lady'.

While sitting on the toilet, Sam tries to find a nice way to ask God for a favor. Something along the lines of *"Please Lord, when I go back in there to get Leroy, may his puppy maker not be lodged in places it doesn't belong."*

Taking a deep breath, stepping into the hallway to confront the love couple, Leroy's tail gives him a wag of approval. There is no doubt of what took place in the last few hours, he knows this will take some serious undoing.

Plan A: Lure him out with the leftover chicken no dog could resist. Leroy is trying to get up but his hind quarters are not responding. Even with encouragement from Maisy, his efforts are painfully heard throughout the apartment. Sam thinks for a minute.

"Oh shit Leroy, you are stuck!"

It seems that the inability to deflate his dogwood has created a painful situation.

"Sam, think of something fast, we don't know what time Bob and Alice will be back from her mother's house." Leroy tells Sam telepathically.

Plan B: Sam knows the only other solution is one he witnessed as a kid when he his father unlocked a couple of dogs in the back yard with a bucket of cold water.

Sam prepares the bucket of shock treatment and Leroy knows something is up—he's trying his best to get up but it's no use.

Everyone braces themselves for what is about to happen. Sam takes a deep breath, the two dogs are feeling Sam's anxiety, One-two-three-now! Splash!

The frigid water hits right on target causing Leroy to painfully extract and hobble back into the living room to recuperate. Maisy just shakes the water off her back and settles back down. For those of you who have no idea what just happened, go Google: unlocking two stuck dogs.

Mission is accomplished. It's time to get the dirty towels out and soak up this water before the room takes on a cheap motel smell. Not 15 minutes later, Bob is knocking at the front door.

"Hi Bob, you're back so soon! Sorry Leroy is a little wet, we had a little water bowl accident. How's Alice's mom doing?"

Episode 7: Is Tom in Chicago?

It's one of those shitty days where nothing is going right. Sam has all but given up hope on finding Tom.

"I think by now Tom would have had enough time to settle down, get his life together and Prioritize!—that's the key word here." He feels his emotions spiraling out of control.

"Who are you kidding Sam?" He wants to finally resign to the fact that Tom is gone. He feels the weight he has been carrying around cave in crumble like dried bricks. it's painless for the moment, he wants to try and live with the idea for a while.

"Beginning tomorrow, I never had a son named Tom, I won't look for Christmas cards, I won't look both ways when crossing the street, and I will eat boney fish without a care in the world. I feels like an idiot for worrying about someone who could care less if he I'm still breathing.

Who am I trying to kid, I'm no better than a dry used condom in the sand."

His mind can sometimes be on a short loop. He goes from total dedication, put plan into action one minute, to "Imma worthless condom in the sand" the next. Strangely enough, right now in this very second he is neither here nor there. Sam is in a "purge my life" mood, digging through the kitchen junk drawer, throwing out all those plastic utensils, collecting up spare napkins, salt and pepper packets, old grocery store receipts... then a lightbulb goes off in his head!

"Damn, why didn't I think of this before?"

He quickly finds a piece of paper and pencil to write down his Eureka moment!

He writes: Call U-Haul on Monday, find out if they have a Record of Tom's Rental!

This instantly gives him a new feeling of hope he hasn't felt in quite a long time. Speaking of which, now he has to think back to when exactly did Tommy move out?

"They're going to ask for a ballpark time frame. Good Lord, how many years has it really been?"

San feels the weight of anxiety surrounding this subject begin to crash down on him for the umpteenth time. The usual short list of doubtful questions take center stage:

-Why hasn't Tom made an effort to call? or,

-Why hasn't he planned an unexpected surprise visit?

-What did I do to run him off?

—As if miraculously one day there will be an unexpected knock at the door, where Tom standing there with flowers in his hand.

"Maybe between now and Monday I'll have a good idea what month and and year Tom moved out."

It takes another visit from the Jehovah witness gals on Sunday morning, to motivate him into sitting down and dusting off the mental cobwebs for the answers he'll need on Monday when he talks to the moving company.

"OK let's start off easy:

-Was it hot? Yes, it's always hot.

What about at night, was it cold?

-I remember my roses were in full bloom, they like cold weather. So it was definitely fall-winter.

"Think Sam, what do you remember? Elections! The damn elections and those commercials were relentless. The Olympics were on, I remember they were on at night the winter Olympics of 2023? Wait no, that can't be right, the last winter Olympics were in 2022 in China. Yes! So it's been four years already?" Sam sits perplexed.

Come Monday morning, Sam sits at the breakfast table ready to call any and all U-Haul offices he can get a number to. Leroy is snoring extra loud, as if he's finally getting some restful sleep.

After a couple of calls to local offices his efforts are coming up short. Nobody can answer his basic question:

-How far back do you keep a rental records?

"Looks like I'm going to have to call the main number Leroy." He is answered with a few slobbery exhales.

Automated reception begins with:

"Hello and thank you for calling U-Haul America. For English press one, para Español, oprime el dos.

If you are a first time customer press three." Sam selects three. At this point he hopes a breathing, living human will answer the line.

A recorded announcement begins saying

"If you want to reserve a rental, stay on the line and one of our reservation agents will assist you shortly." Annoying muzak begins to play.

Sam takes a deep breath. Be patient Sam, this is the easy part. He looks at his cellphone, four minutes, thirty-five seconds and counting. Muzak stops, two clicks,

"Hello my name is Kim, I'll be your customer service agent today who do I have a pleasure speaking with?"

"Hi Kim, my name is Sam."

"How can I help you today Sam?" Kim interjects.

"Yes umm, I'm trying to track a rental my son made I believe right around the end of 2022—November, December.

Can you help me with that?"

"I'll see what I can do Mr. Sam. I'm gonna have to ask you to verify a few things beginning with the name of the person who reserve the rental. I'm also going to need what city the rental originated?"

Sam's throat is closing up from anticipation, "Yes the person who rented the truck is Tom Burns, or Thomas Burns, he rented the truck in Burbank, California."

"And you say this was right around November 2022 correct?" Kim asks.

"Yes ma'am that's correct." Sam looks around for his bottle of water but it's nowhere in sight.

"Mr. Sam give me a minute, do you mind if I put you on hold?"

"No that's fine," And before Sam can thank the woman the same annoying muzak begins to play again, along with an hideous advertisement,

"Are you planning a long distance move across the country or across town? U-Haul can help. With the most convenient rental units on the market, U-Haul's got you covered. With over five thou..."

Sam takes a second to let his left ear cool off. The conversation feels like an eternity, actually it's been twenty minutes- forty five seconds, with the battery icon glowing red at a 12%. To make things worse, his bladder now begins to coax him that it's time to go.

Muzak stops.

"Sorry to keep you waiting Mr. Sam. I found a 16 foot rental back in 2022 to a Tom Burns. Now, as a security measure to our customers, I'm gonna have to..."

"It's my son, Tom, my name is Sam Burns. I'm in Ventura, California and I'm trying to locate him, and I..."

Sam desperately explains the situation to the customer service rep but here is where his rocky road blocks begin.

"I see." Kim cautiously replies. "However we need to verify a few things ok Mr. Burns. I'm going to try my best to make this as easy for you as possible."

Kim has to maintain her stance regarding privacy policy. Meanwhile, Sam's bladder is reaching its limit of capacity.

"I understand, I appreciate your help so far." Sam is worn out.

"Mr. Sam can you provide me with Tom's drivers license number and the phone number he might have used at the time of..."

A strange double beep and short click, the background ambient sound from Kim is no longer present. Sam looks at his cell phone and sees a keypad screen—he has lost connection.

with a bursting bladder and one leg completely asleep, he hobbles to the bathroom and finds his approximate target. The sight of his worn out face and glowing red ear in the mirror make him question his determination.

"Why is this being so difficult, what were her last words before the phone died? The phone number he used, his driver's license number. Collapsing on his couch he thinks, "God what was our phone number back then, that's gonna take me a while to remember, but you can do this!—The other thing was his driver's license, pffft, forget that."

Sam's mind stares outside in deep concentration, lost in the view from his apartment window, waiting for the numbers to arrive in his head.

"Piece of shit cell phone!" He curses out loud, letting the blame bounce off the walls.

"What was my old phone number... 805, 326... 805-326-71... 805-326-5128? 805-326-5128? 805-526-5128! yes that's it! Where's my notebook damn it, where's my phone charger?"

Episode 8: Sam visits the doctor

Sam knew his bad eating habits and all the stress lately were eventually going to catch up with him. Those night sweats and sudden morning blackout spells after getting out of bed were not a good sign.

He doesn't really trust the county hospital but he has no other choice so he's on the bus bright and early, The heat has been brutal this summer and being outside after noon feels like walking on the sun. His 9:30 a.m. appointment will take an hour each way with who knows how long at the clinic.

His dentist appointment two weeks ago was a breeze compared to this. If he thinks that waiting room was packed, wait till he gets a look at this sick bay.

But ya know, amazingly they call his name within 45 minutes of him finding a seat. These nurses had to have been cattle rustlers in a previous life, and after draining him what seemed like a liter of blood, the doctors gave him a quickest physical he ever had.

He is ordered to come back in and do a few more tests which he knows he's not gonna do—he's tired and just wants to find the nearest exit to this madhouse.

Seems like that's his go-to follow-up in life these days. He went looking for Tom and put it on hold when he was met with obstacles. He went looking for seashells and gave up, went looking for a new apartment and put that on hold. Deep down, he knows he's not well and with heart disease running in the family, death by heart attack is looming.

It's just another weekday morning—hotter than usual. Sam's air conditioner hasn't cooled right in years and it's really straining to cool down his apartment.

He and Choco have been procrastinating about going on their morning walk and it's gotten kinda late. Sam gets distracted easily and for some reason on this hot ass morning he decides to go a bit off the beaten path. Choco doesn't mind, he's ready to mark off new territory. Neither one is keeping up with the fact that their distance traveled is doubled upon return and the next thing you know, They're kinda lost. Good thing Mc Donald's has a 50 foot land marker and that should give Sam some idea of where he is.

By the time he is somewhat backtracking his route, any shade they enjoyed is now a distant memory. They find themselves on the overgrown vacant lot behind the apartment complex but Sam knows a shortcut.

His blurry vision, probably due to a low blood sugar is making it difficult to find the opening in the fence through the over grown weeds while dozens of sticker burrs bury themselves deep in his socks. They don't seem to be bothering Choco much as he finds a cool spot to lay while Sam calculates their position. Someone has dropped a water bottle in the tall grass that looks tempting to drink but it does help him locate the right of passage.

Once through, they dodge oil slicks and loose gravel that completely interrupts any pattern of stamina while the parking lot slanted this way and that.

He wonders how he could have been so stupid to think he could handle walking two to three extra city blocks into unknown territory. Perhaps it was the clinging wet t-shirt on that babe washing her car, somehow it all seems worth it.

Desperately he uses Choco's overpowering pull for the final stretch, but the uneven sidewalk holds an unfortunate surprise that is about to erase the goal line in one disastrous step.

That uneven sidewalk causes an unforgiving stumble, answered by a right knee impact that echoed under the hollow slab.

His split second reaction brings his right arm out to absorb the impact. Unfortunately for his rotator cuff, the shockwave compression eventually finds his shoulder socket.

A cheekbone & nose combination to the cement brought all momentum to a grinding stop. He was tasting the cement with the side order of gravel on a hot September afternoon.

A loud grunt reached the window of Mrs. Rodriguez.

"Mr. Burns, are you OK?" She yelled from her window as Sam laid motionless like a half dried earthworm. Rolling on to his back, it took him a minute to figure things out. With a bloody nose and kneecaps numb to the touch, Sam hobbled his way up to his front door where Choco is already waiting.

The dog found his water bowl and Sam found the couch.

Mrs. Rodriguez followed close behind. "Mr. burns, can I get you anything?"

"Please, a bottle of water from the fridge." Sam answers between agonizing groans.

He kept reminding himself to breathe as Choco found a cozy spot down by Sams feet.

"I'm going to go get Jose Mr. Burns." She said in a panicky voice.

Episode 9: Well well, look who's here. The Deuteragonist comes forward

One look at Sam and Jose immediately called 911. The agony on Sam's face says it all.

His frontal lobe concussion is now playing tricks on his mind by juggling unresolved recent issues. The voice of Mrs. Lucy Brown, the uncertainty of his old phone number, the water bottle in the tall grass earlier that might have given him hepatitis C... all circle in his head like unresolved novellas on a three channel television.

Luckily the paramedics arrive quickly and the frigid temperature inside the ambulance help Sam out of his state of shock. Jose follows close behind in his own car, and once Sam is settled in the E.R., he is able to check on him. The E.R. doctor looks at Jose and says, "Mr. Sam has good friends looking after him, I think we got his shock under control. It could've been life threatening if it went on too long."

Jose feel responsible but rather for what he has to do next.

"We're gonna keep him here for a while, he's getting X-rayed soon to take a look at that shoulder—nothing we can't replace. Are you related to Mr. Burns or does he have family we need to notify?"

Jose nods nervously and takes the doctor aside for a private conversation.

"Well Mr. Burns, They gonna take good care of you here, get some rest, we see you soon ok." Jose makes his exit. He has to make a very important phone call to make.

A subdural hematoma in the forehead region is giving Sam a run for his money with dreams right out of Twilight Zone. There's a nurse with an unusually clear voice in his apartment checking his vitals. "Good morning Mr. Burns, hows your pain level on the scale of 1-10?" she asks.

Sam does his best to focus on an unrecognizable back-lite figure standing at the far end of his sofa.

"It all hurts." He replies with a deep groan.

He continues his dream as the beeping trash trucks from his apartment complex become the I.V. machine signaling his saline bag is dry.

Two tone blue walls wrap around his like the horizon. He hates that his hospital door is always slightly open, he wants to be left alone. Sam desperately wants to scratch his armpit but his pain threshold reminds him that an itch is the least of his worries.

Meanwhile back at the ranch, Jose has finally made the unanticipated phone call to Tom he promised to make.

“How long it been Tom?”

“I’m not really sure, over four years I think.” Tom hadn’t stopped to give it much thought. The clock would have continued running if not for the “Break Glass in Case of Emergency” phone call from Jose last night. He loves his father with all of his heart and the feeling of remorsefulness has been present long before this day.

Before Tom had moved out, he asked Jose to keep an eye on Sam for him. The two had a heartfelt talk as to why he had to disappear from Sam’s life for a while. A while turned into four years and three months.

You see Tom had a gambling problem back home that was racking up a debt and putting both him and Sam’s lives in danger. He had to sell, steal and locate a job anywhere that would give him a large bonus at hiring—to pay off his debt. So the move to Chicago was in fact true, but once again he was dead broke, living paycheck to paycheck as a regional manager for Office Depot.

Then came the layoffs. No retirement packages to new employees, just a measly 401k with a few thousand dollars to survive on; and when that ran out it was time to head back to California. With no money to afford his own place, he found a hippy commune in north Hollywood called the Hog Farm that took him in. Two years passed in a stagnant, get-by-and-get-high environment.

What most people didn’t know about the Hog Farm was that it facilitated a very profitable hemp growing operation that allowed Tom to quickly save money while taking advantage of the low cost of living, self-sufficient community. He was finally able to settle down in a modest studio apartment in Santa Barbara county approximately 35 miles away from Sam’s apartment. Makes you wonder what would have happened if Sam would have persevered with his hunch and continued his systematic search into adjacent counties.

The two get off the elevator to the ER, Tom follows Jose closely as room numbers with hand written names scare the hell out of him. The hospital food cart makes Tom’s stomach turn.

[519 Sam Burns/ Dr. Patal] “We’re here.” Jose says.

They enter respectfully with a soft double knock, greeted by the doctor and a nurse who is trying to wake Sam up. they give them a friendly nod to approach the bedside.

“Mr. Burns, someone here to see you.” The nurse quietly announces.

Tom moves in slow motion trying to keep the distance he can no longer afford.

“Mr. Burns, someone here to see you.” Jose repeats.

Sam tries to open his eyes, taking as much time as needed to process his surroundings.

Both Jose and Tom are standing at the foot of the bed to make it easier on Sam.

Sam’s forward motion to focus triggers his shoulder pain as he struggles to sit up. He motions Tom to come closer.

“Mr. Burns, is this the young man you been talking about?” His doctor asks.

Waiting to acknowledge the moment is real, Sam finally answers, “Yes that’s Tom.”

Sam’s eye wonder the room for a few seconds, double checking, giving himself a minute to figure out what to say. He doesn’t want to spoil this fragile moment with questions.

His doctor soothes the moment, “Tom your father is a tough old bird, he took quite a spill but we’re here to patch him up and get him flying again.”

The room is quiet as Sam and Tom just look at each other in disbelief. Sam looks around, double checking reality. Finally collapsing back in his bed with pain. Tom looks for the controller to tilt the bed forward, knowing his father would want it.

Jose wants to look for a cup of coffee down the hall, “Tom, when you are ready just come looking for me ok, Mr. Burns we need you back as soon as possible ok.”

“Thanks, I will.” Tom replies while keeping his focus on Sam—ready to accept what comes next.

“I’ve kept tabs on you old man.” Tom says, “Jose has helped me keep a close eye on you. He was the only one I could trust.”

Tom feels that forgiveness is close by. Sam’s tearful eyes sees a man who never really left his side. If this accident is what brought them together, he wishes he would have been hospitalized sooner.

“Tom you have no idea how hard it is to find someone these days.” Sam has a bit of a bone to pick but he chooses his words carefully.

“I’m sorry that I kept our relationship at a distance dad. Just know that things are different now, I’m here to stay.” Tom holds his hand with a heartfelt grip.

Episode 10: It all comes together.

It seems like once Tom moved back into the neighborhood, he and Sam put their heads together like the old days. With Sam’s business growing, Tom felt it was a good idea to buy a house and turn it into a complete resort style facility for dogs. The place was a big hit!

In the age of reality shows, they had everything the Lifestyle Network was looking for. The show ran for eight season, afforded them a new truck, and place large enough to accommodate more dogs than they could have ever imagined.

Sam never let all the hoop-la and celebrity show status go to his head. He kept up his Robinhood mentality with his weekly deliveries to the food bank and never forgot who his real friends were back at the apartments.

Sam passed away waiting at a light with a truck load of groceries along with ‘Lady’, one of Maisy’s pups from that infamous night by waiting patiently for someone to come wake up her best friend.

Sam’s Kennel and Boarding House is still owned and operated in Burbank California to this day by Tom, his wife Marie and their four kids Tommy jr., Kassie, “Little” Juan and Sammy with Jose keeping everything looking spiffy and making the weekly food drive deliveries.

—who could ask for more than that?

