

## When I Grow Up – Natasha Deen

When I was small, I wanted to be lawyer. Then I wanted to be a doctor, a teacher. Now, I think when I grow up, I want to be a dog. I've been watching my dogs for eight years and I've seen them transition from adults to seniors, gracefully accepting hip problems and dietary changes. In them, I see a strength of character, an integrity that eludes my grasping fingers.

My dogs have slowed physically. Mentally and emotionally, however, they seem more like a fine wine that gets better with age. We go for saunters now, as walks require too much energy. But they never complain. Instead, they inspect every blade of grass, smell each flower with the care of a connoisseur determining a vintage.

When the wind blows, rather than pressing into it, they stop. They stand with canine smiles, welcoming the breeze like an old friend. Sometimes they sit and I think they're tired. But I'm wrong, they're not weary or sore. They're content. And while the wind swirls around them, they relax, communing with it, inhaling all the scents and news carried on the currents of the air. Then, as the wind whispers its good-byes, they watch it depart, bidding it farewell with a woof, a smile, and then they're on their feet again, searching out new flowers and friends.

My life is full of flowers and friends, grass and winds. I tend to judge, to fight the wind, and trample the grass in order to get to the friends and flowers. But watching my dogs, I see the error of my ways. The grass, the breeze, they are friends I haven't valued. They carry stories and news, laughter and love, if only I would sit and welcome them.

So I'm going to go for a saunter with my dogs. And while others learn how to be doctors and lawyers, I'm going to learn how to smell the wind, how to sit quietly and listen to its stories, and when it departs, I'm going to bid it farewell with a woof and a smile.