



a second chance at life

Loretta Chen says adopting Argo was one of the best things that ever happened to her. She shares how the former show dog was left for dead after having outlived his usefulness.

BY BRYAN WONG

When creative director of 360 Productions, Loretta Chen, finally decided to get an animal companion, she did what any first-time pet owner would do: trawl the various pet shops and farms. “Many of these places fell short of my expectations, and it was quite disheartening to see the living conditions of some of these dogs. I even had an accidental peek under the black canvas sheet where breeding canines are held at one such farm and decided there and then against buying any of the cute puppies on sale,” she said.

That was before she met Argo. Born in South Africa, Argo was once a top show dog, even appearing in a few commercials and magazine covers. However, he was a far cry from the majestic Siberian Husky he once was. Argo had previously been adopted by someone living in Thailand after retiring from the show ring at the age of seven. After a couple of months, a friend who was a dog trainer heard news of Argo’s terrible living conditions and flew down to rescue him. “Argo was in pretty bad shape when my friend found him. Apparently, he was left out in the sun, and it got so blazing hot that he had started biting off his fur, causing skin allergies to develop,” said Loretta.

Loretta later found out the reason for the ill treatment: Argo was infertile. “He had a low sperm count so I guess when they found out, they treated him like a used commodity. Who knew how long he could go on living under such conditions?” Loretta did not care about his past accolades or even his disorder. “We had instant chemistry. In a way, he picked me first as he just walked right up and nuzzled me. That was when I knew we were going to be lifelong friends.”

After shaving him down and slowly nursing him back to health, Loretta found Argo has an immense love for car rides. “I don’t know whether it is because he has travelled to many other countries, but he loves our little trips around Singapore.” Loretta even brought him to Changi Airport once, even

though animals are not allowed within the premises. “I do not know what possessed me to do it then but I just decided to bring him there for a walk,” she recounts. For an hour, the couple walked through the three terminals, even taking the Skytrain before sitting down for a coffee. “We only left when security requested me to. But we had already been inside for so long! I guess people thought he was a guard dog.”

Argo’s love for the outdoors has also caused much drama. There were a few instances where he had run off and Loretta thought she had lost him forever. “He loves chasing cats and even once jumped out of a moving car to chase a stray feline,” she says. However, the incident that was

most memorable was when he had dashed out from home, and got lost in the process. “I was panicking and calling everyone I knew, including all the relevant agencies on his disappearance.”

After a couple of hours, Loretta started receiving calls telling her that they might have spotted Argo.

You would never have guessed his location. “He was spotted at a void deck where a wake was being held, seeking refuge and comfort under a huge fan. Due to his size, the people at the wake were a little frightened to approach him,” she recounts.

Today, Argo leads a quieter life due to his age (he is 13 now). Besides exploring new places with Loretta, he wills his free time on his very own treadmill to tone up his muscles. He occasionally gets recognised on the street from his past advertisement work. “There have been a couple of times we were stopped on the streets by people who ask whether Argo was the same dog they had seen all those years ago. It is always good to hear what they have to say,” she laughs.

As our conversation ended while walking along the Singapore river, I notice Loretta to be extremely easy-going while handling Argo. “As he is currently in his twilight years, I try to make things comfortable for him with as little rules as possible. Some people might disapprove. But with his age, how could I not?” 🐾

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– Loretta Chan



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