

Brendan Read

In my lifetime, I have borne witness to the passing of our dog, Roan, and our cat, Wolfie. Roan passed away back in 2009, on the examination table in a clinic that has long since shut its doors for the last time, surrounded by loved ones. She was 15 years old. Wolfie and Roan were inseparable, and so for every night for a month, Wolfie would make a noise akin to crying, unable to understand what had happened, and unable to find her missing companion until she too passed away, this time from a broken heart. She was 24 years old.

She was buried underneath an amur maple on our property, with a simple tower of stones and a hanging wreath marking the grave. Even today, I visit it often.

I was lucky. Both of my aforementioned pets passed away naturally and painlessly. Not everyone is so fortunate. Because of this, I have pledged myself to become a veterinarian to help prevent the preventable, and to spread awareness for the unpreventable. Even now, I do my best to help in any way I can.

As of right now, I work at a vet clinic as a cleaner. As the name implies, I am responsible for the cleanliness of the examination and surgery rooms, the utensils used, the runs for the patients, and much more. At face value, this might seem menial. Useless even. After all, I'm not even in contact with the patients.

But I look at it differently. I am responsible for maintaining a perfectly sterile environment, to prevent the spread of disease and pests, and am the first line of defense to ensure the healthy can stay healthy, and the unhealthy can get better. As a result, I value it dearly.



But this alone isn't enough for me. I want to be on the front lines of care, not just helping indirectly. I want to make the information people need to care for their animals mainstream. For example, I bet you didn't know that peanut butter, a treat commonly put in KONG toys, can be lethal to your dog when it contains the chemical xylitol, a sweetener found in a wide range of products such as many fruits and vegetables, as well as other foods all the way to items such as toothpaste, and is deadly in small doses. Xylitol is already harming your dog in under half an hour after ingestion, which in some cases, is already too late.

One mistake is all it takes to lose a friend forever. If only you knew, if only you knew.

