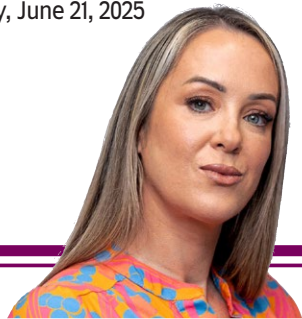




Lisa Brady

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Goodbye to my best friend, who taught me so much

I'M going to talk about pet loss, something that will resonate with some more than others. However, even if you don't have a huge emotional connection to animals, everyone understands grief and sorrow. It's one thing that binds us all.

And today, I am grieving. I'm in mourning for my best friend who died on June 9. Her name was Elle and she was as much a part of my life as water and air.

This may sound a tad dramatic to some who have never known the joy and privilege of caring for a pet – or even those who can 'take or leave' our four-legged friends. To some people, dogs are 'just' dogs. That's okay.

However, I could never just take or leave Elle. It wasn't biologically possible for me. For as soon as I set eyes on her teddy-like tiny self, her small tail wagging enthusiastically in unadulterated excitement at this new, friendly person in front of her I fell head over heels in love. And I'm going to speak for my darling girl now when I say – so did she.

You see, Elle healed me in ways I didn't even know I needed healing. When we started our journey together, I was a broken soul.

Two years previously, I had lost my fiancé suddenly in a tragic accident and my world was obliterated.

I was lost, drifting from one day to the next, untethered from reality almost, with little sense of purpose in my new half-life.

Then came this small energetic little fluffball, a Yorkshire Terrier so cute she was nicknamed Bear and who, like any typical puppy, was naughty and playful in equal measures, taking pleasure in chewing through my shoe collection and piddling on my apartment floor.

And she required so much of my time for training, walks and snuggling. Puppies are demanding, and from the get-go it was obvious that she needed me a lot.

And as the days turned to weeks and we developed a

routine together, I realised something – I needed her just as much, if not more.

My heart, which I thought had been closed to joy and more specifically love, was opening in a way I didn't think possible.

When I woke to give her breakfast in the mornings, I found myself singing with happiness.

As she snuggled her little body beside me in bed (yes, I'm one of those dog moms) I would inhale her biscuity scent and just feel so grateful that she was there.

We walked together, played together, I took her as many places as I could. We were a team.

As things started to change and happen in my life, Elle was my constant. She was always there, either by my side or waiting patiently for me to come home.

I met my future husband a few months after I got her and he fell just as much in love with her as I did. When we moved from an apartment to a house, Elle was delighted. In fact, we joked that we had bought a house with a garden just for her.

I can still see her now, sniffing the air, running about happily in her very own patch.

NOT even two years later, we added to the fur brood with Bowie – another Yorkie, this one a little smaller, but just as cute – even if initially, Elle found his incessant barking and relentless desire to play with her incredibly annoying (typical little brother).

But the pair of them soon became firm pals and were great company for each other when their pawrents had to go to work.

Then we became parents to a beautiful baby girl and I remember feeling anxious bringing Lana Rose into the house for the first time. How would the dogs take to her? A quick sniff later told me everything I needed to know – she was part of their pack now. And not quite two years later, so was our second daughter Layla.

Over the years, two cats and another puppy were added to the mix, and they too were accepted. And when there were huge life changes in our family, and my



Striking a pose must be a natural instinct for Sharon

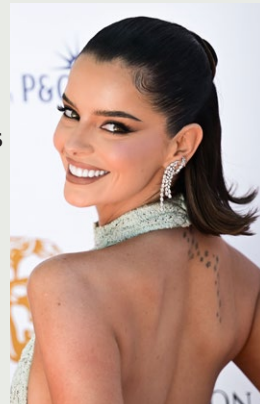
MOST famous actors will have one scene or role that the world always remembers, and for actress Sharon Stone, left, it has to be her Basic Instinct bombshell character Catherine Tramell and THAT leg-crossing scene. The 67-year-old actress seems to have had mixed feelings about it over the years, from believing she was 'tricked' into it, to recreating her own spin with a playful Instagram post last year. But there's no confusion about her latest racy shoot. The actress, who graces the cover of Vogue Adria this month looking absolutely incredible, is pictured wearing a see through top in one shot, perched on a man's shoulders while a plethora of men swoon over her. Being iconic is instinctual for Sharon it seems.

I NEED to make a trip to the Rebel county, and soon, as it seems that's where all the money is – or, more specifically, where all the luck is. Clifford's Centra on Cork's Shandon Street sold the winning EuroMillions ticket that made someone a quarter of a billionaire last week; just

over six months previously, the same shop sold a €100,000 ticket to a customer on New Year's Eve. I actually can't even get my head around winning €250million but I'd be willing to give myself time to get used to it. So next time I'm in Cork, I know where I'll be getting my quick pick.

A traitor in our midst as Maura joins the US show

I HAVE to say, I am a big fan of Maura Higgins. I only ever watched series five of Love Island – the one where the Longford lass, right, showed she was not a woman to be messed with – and if I'm honest, it was her feisty cheekiness and quick wit that kept me hooked. Given her charisma, looks and presence it makes sense that she's done so well in showbiz and is now teetering on US big star territory, with news that she is one of the names of the upcoming series of The Traitors USA. She is taking a break from her Love Island USA hosting duties to take part in the massive show, where she will be joining celebs such as Real Housewives star Lisa Rinna, RuPaul's Drag Race star Monét X Change and Travis and Jason Kelce's mum Donna 'Momma' Kelce. I'll admit to not having watched the show yet – and given the enthusiasm of Traitors fans, I was feeling a bit of FOMO about it all. But now that Maura is involved, I'll definitely tune in – she's a woman to watch.



husband and I separated, it was Elle who was with me as I cried and tried to build a new normal.

For the past few years, she was slowing down, her trotting turning to a trudging. But she was still there, my faithful forever pal, even though I knew the time was coming to say our goodbyes. And in ways, she started to make it a little easier, by teaching me to be without her towards the end, choosing to sleep in her bed instead of our slow little amble around the block.

The last weekend of her life was searingly difficult, even though she wasn't in any pain.

And when I had to take her to the vet that Monday morning for the appointment I never wanted to make, she was ready – but I wasn't.

Her eyes locked with mine in that final moment, as if she was telling me it was okay to let her go – and she left so peacefully, I had to ask if she was indeed truly gone.

The grief came in heaving sobs

that still rack my body when I realise she is dead.

Today, the house is quieter. I still see her in my mind's eye and I genuinely feel she has not left me. And just as she taught me about unconditional love and secure attachment – she is still my life teacher, guiding me on how to let go and carry on.

Elle was never, could never, just be a dog to me. We had 15 years – but the impact of her little life will stay with me for all of mine. Goodnight, my wonderful girl.