

# Puppy Love

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## *A Love Story*

At the time this story took place Rita was an 11 year old girl who shared her life with her dog, Rocky. The two were best buddies, always together; he took over the role of friend, confidant and defender for this timid and shy little girl.

Unfortunately, Rocky had a rough start in life. His first family adopted him when he was seven weeks old. An adolescent boy in this family attempted to drown the puppy in a lake on two separate occasions. The puppy was rescued and he became part of Rita's family when he was 10 weeks old.

Rocky's early trauma left him with an extreme fear of the water that would be considered almost pathological. Any time he was near water he would display extreme anxiety. When Rita went swimming in the lake Rocky would pace along the shore trembling and whimpering.

Tragedy struck these two best buddies when they went on a shopping trip with Rita's mother in an upscale area that was located along the edge of a lake. It featured a short wooden boardwalk built over a sharp embankment that plunged down 20-30 feet to the surface of the water.

As Rita was walking along the boardwalk a boy on a bicycle skidded on the damp wooden surface and propelled Rita through an open section of the guard rail. She let out a shriek of pain and plunged into the water below hitting the water face down. She was lifeless.

Rocky stood looking at the water, trembling in fear, making sounds that seemed like barks, whimpers and yelps all rolled into one. But, Rocky's love for Rita seemed to overpower his fear and he leapt through the same open space in the rail and plunged into the water.

Rocky grabbed a strap on Rita's dress and it rolled her over so her face was no longer in the water. She gagged and coughed but was still able to grab Rocky's collar while he struggled to swim to shore. Once on shore Rocky stood beside Rita, licking her face while he continued to tremble and whine. Several minutes later human help arrived, much too late to have provided the help Rita needed. Rocky was a hero.



## Can it be Love?

Marc Bekoff, a behavioral biologist at the University of Colorado, believes dogs are social animals, and all social animals have a strong desire to connect with other members of their social group. He notes, that this motivates individuals to communicate, protect and support each other, establishing strong emotional bonds ~ what we, as humans, often refer to as love.

Indeed, recent research has identified the hormone oxytocin associated with the feelings of love among humans; it helps people form emotional bonds. One of the triggers to release oxytocin is gentle physical touch, such as stroking. Dogs also produce oxytocin, and petting releases the hormone associated with emotional bonding.

Dogs have the chemical mechanism associated with bonding so it makes sense to assume that they are just as capable to love as we are. Of course, we already knew that!

*He is your friend, your partner, your defender, your dog. You are his life, his love, his leader. He will be yours, faithful and true to the last beat of his heart. You owe it to him to be worthy of such devotion. author unknown*