

# Puppy Love

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## The Christmas Puppy's Tale



"Mommy what are they doing?" The little one looked up at his mother with questioning eyes.

"They are exchanging gifts for one another to give on Christmas day." She shifted just a little for him to rest gently against her chest. The warmth of the fire crackled nearby, giving a comforting glow to each as they nestled together.

"Christmas, what is Christmas?" The puppy sat up and cocked his head slightly. He had seen his people do odd things, and was never really sure what they were up to when they dashed from place to place, in and out of buildings, when he accompanied them in the car. He knew they had a purpose in all they did, but what they were doing now made entirely no sense to him.

His mother smiled as only moms can do. "Christmas is a time of celebration where they give presents to one another in memory of one who gave them a gift of great value, ages ago." She gently began caressing and nuzzling him, making the pup squirm just a little.

"Oh, ok, but I still don't understand why?" He stood for a moment to avoid another nuzzling. These were important questions, and he had to know what this Christmas thing was all about. "What sort of things do they give each other?"

"They give many things, but the reason is to show how much they mean to each other."

Peeking around the edge of the hearth, the puppy gazed inquisitively at the sparkling multicolored lights on a tree, of all things. It was so very strange and wonderful. There were soft musical sounds that surrounded him, and the yummy smells of cinnamon and spice, and of food warming in the kitchen. He loved it when his people celebrated, mostly because the children were far too involved in having fun than to mind where they were holding their goodies, which they always shared anyway.

But this time was different. This time there was a solemn peacefulness to the air. This celebration was done in hushed tones and softer voices. There were old family members in the house, some he had never seen before, and everyone was hugging and touching, laughing gleefully as if they had never been apart.

His mother patiently nudged him toward her. "They want to show their devotion to one another, and this is the holiday celebration they love most of all. It is a season dedicated to giving, a time to reflect on family and friends.

The warm embers in the fireplace crackled and spit, filling the room with a musty comforting scent. He spied the brightly wrapped boxes and objects beneath the lighted boughs, spotting one small package with pictures of puppies and kittens upon it.

"Momma, who is that one for?" Curiosity flashed across his chestnut eyes.

"Hmmm, well, if this year is like the previous, then that, my little one, is for you."

"A gift for me?" He was surprised! Oh, he knew they loved him, but to be given a present too? "Oh momma, why would they do that? I haven't done anything to deserve a gift from them, have I?"

"It's not for what you have done, it is for who you are. Their gift is given simply because they love you." And she began again to caress him gently.

"But I have no gift in return." The puppy's eyes filled slightly, and a tear began to form.

"On the contrary, you have given them the greatest gift of all! You have given them a puppy's heart. You see, we don't have the material things in which they put so much value. Our lives are spent in searching for what are far more important and priceless treasures. Over the centuries, we have tended their flocks and accompanied them between pastures. We have brought their game when invited to their hunts. We keep them warm when the cold of winter calls, and drive away vermin who look to steal their provisions. We offer our friendship, protection, obedience, and most of all our love.

"These are the real gifts of this season, and for that, they place all that they have in our care and keeping. My little son, there are no greater gifts to be given."

"Then I too shall give all that I am to them." With a satisfied resolve, he slowly turned to lie again against his mother's chest, resting his head lightly upon his paws.

He watched across the hall, the family gathering in the dining room for their holiday meal. He had felt their kindness and knew he too was cherished. And as sleep gently rested upon him, he loved them all the more in exchange. Yes, he would give his gift to them also. He would give all that he is in gratitude, for the whole of his days. by David J. Arthur

