

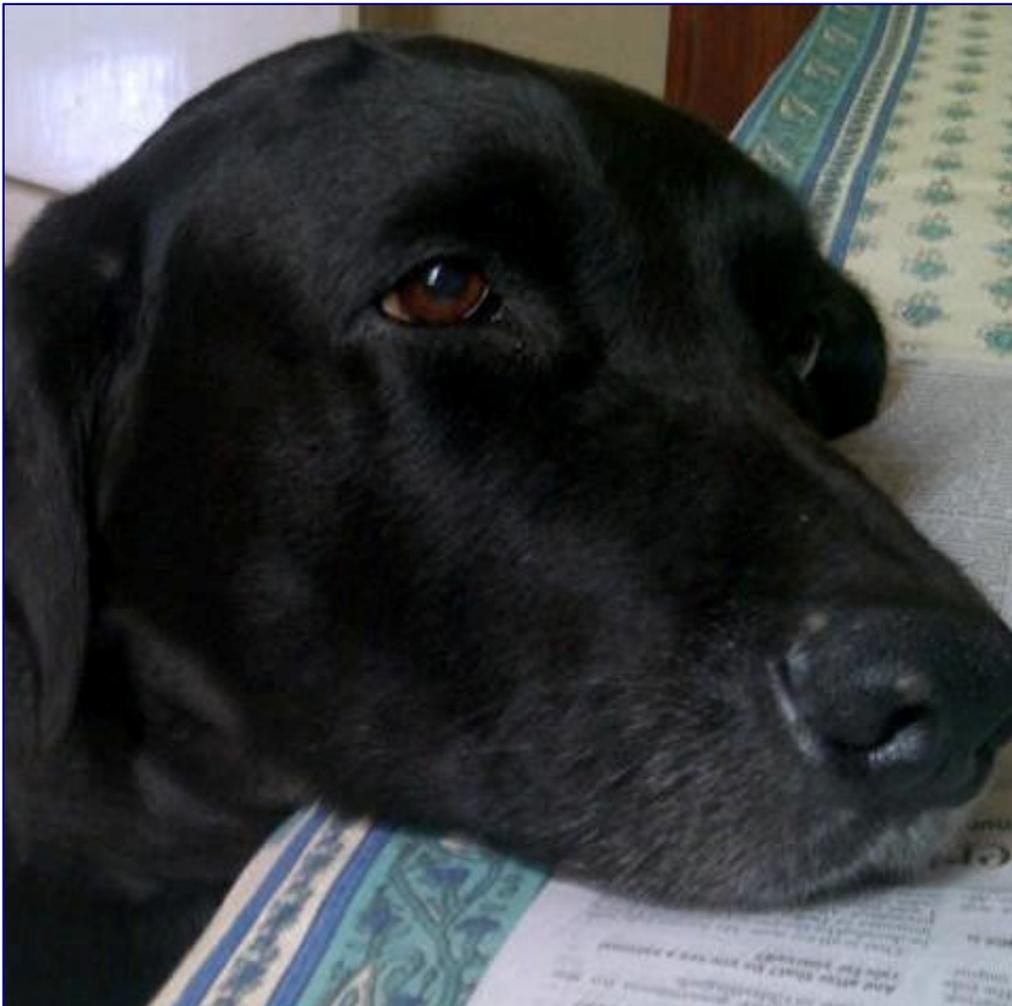
# Just Once More

By Lekshmi Nair

Somebody liked a post of my daughter's, of about two years back. The post propped back right in front of me, and left me in an overwhelming state of longing. That feeling when all you can do is just long...

The post:

“Rocky...you were my best friend ever...I wanted you to be there with me...just for some more time...some more time.....you just shouldn't have gone....Who will give me company when Mamma goes out of town? You were such a security, Rocky.. Who will come up running to me when I eat bread? Who is going to wake me up in the morning for walks? ...Who is going to eat the food from the dining table when nobody is around? Who is going to sit with me and lie on my feet just after Mamma scolds me..? Come back Rocky.. I still make sounds with the toffee wrappers thinking that you will come running to me...I wish I could see you one last time.. to tell you that you were the best thing that happened to me.. I haven't had enough of you...You just shouldn't have gone...just for some more time .....I love you loads.....My best friend, Rocky..”



Rocky, my dog came to my life as a little pup of two months. As all pups go, he was sweet and cute. But as mums go, to me, he was the cutest!

I can't think of anyone, not even my children, who belonged to me, or established their right over me, as Rocky did. There was nothing I didn't communicate with him, and he was a keeper of my secrets. Around me were human beings who didn't understand my needs, but it was only Rocky who recognised my need to be cuddled. If I slept too long, his wet, cold nose would gently touch my cheek, reminding me that it's time to get up. When migraines came and went like ill-timed jokers, Rocky would be nearby, comforting me with his gentle breath.

Unconditional love. Was it? I don't know. I don't know if such a thing as unconditional love exists. Because I loved Rocky as much as he loved me.

I love animals. I love birds. I love human beings. But I loved Rocky more. From me, it was not unconditional. The conditions which Rocky created to be loved so much were incomparable. No human being has loved me as much. I can't remember an association with anyone with whom I can't recall at least one instance of being let down. But not my Rocky.

The memory of his last days with me never fail to choke me, just as it chokes me now. On the night he left, Priyanka, my daughter, cried out in her sleep "Mamma..Rocky idhar hai Mamma...mere heart ke andar baitha hua hai...Come Rocky, bread khao"...she wasn't awake, but in a state of delirium. I woke her up, and gave her a glass of water. As I lay awake that night, hugging her, I looked around for Rocky's spirit.. just as I had searched for someone else I had lost to death, many moons ago.

Now I know for myself, the pain of losing a child. A friend, a companion...

I did everything in my capacity to keep him alive. He had to go.

It's been long. But time, in fact, doesn't heal. The new experiences of life just blanket over a wound. And it takes only a whisper to hurt all over again.

But I know that I loved him, and loved him well. Our love for each other inspired others who didn't love animals to love them. My children grew from being children to being adults in the company of this wonderful God-sent called Rocky. I know he'll be there when I reach the other side. He'll be the only one waiting for me.

We get only one chance. I got mine.