

Frankie, the Crocodile Dog

A True Story

Some puppies are born lucky. They live in loving homes. Some puppies become beautiful and graceful dogs. Some stay tiny and cuddly and puppy-like all of their lives. Some become grand and serious with fierce faces and hearts of gold. Some puppies are born with only one of these things. Some puppies may even grow up to become some of these things. This is the story of Frankie, the only puppy in the world who was once none of these things, but who grew up and became all of these things. This is the true story of Frankie, the Crocodile Dog.

Frankie was born in a neglected field near a city by the sea.

A little girl found the little black wirehaired puppy with a schnauzer face and bat like ears, hiding in a stack of wood, surrounded by wild weeds, old newspapers and garbage. The little girl called to the puppy, but he still wouldn't come. Then she sang a song to him. Frankie loved the music in the little girl's voice, and he came out of his hiding place and ran right into her arms. He was only a puppy, and he was happy to leave the garbage and the wild weeds and go home with the little girl.

The little girl lived in a small apartment with her mother and father at the edge of the city. She was afraid of her father. She was afraid to go home alone, but she was also afraid to bring Frankie with her. She thought to herself, and then she shared her thoughts with Frankie, "I will save you, little dog. And one day you will grow up to be as strong as a lion and as big as a mountain. And I will ride on your back, and we will fly off together to a wonderful place. I will hide you in my room, and you will be as quiet as the night, and no one will ever know, and we will live happily ever after as secret best friends forever."

But that very night Frankie made a noise, and the father woke up.

The little girl tried to save Frankie from her father's rage, but she was too small, and her mother was too afraid to help. Frankie tried to escape, but he just wasn't fast enough. The father caught the puppy by his nose and picked him up in the air, and then he threw him to the floor. He beat and kicked the little dog, until Frankie stopped whimpering, and the little girl stopped crying out for help. The little dog wanted to move but could not move. He just lay on the floor, and the little girl sat in the corner and covered her eyes.

"Now get this rag out of here, the father snarled, or you'll be next in line."

The little girl's mother promptly complied. She tiptoed out of her room, knelt down on the floor until she, too, became the same size of her little girl. She whispered softly into her daughter's ear, "I'm sorry, I can't help, but this is the way it has to be. Now do what your father says. Put the puppy outside somewhere, anywhere, and someone will come along and find him in the morning. Now please, please listen to me. You must always be careful not to make your father angry."

The little girl's mother wrapped Frankie up in an old towel and put him in her daughter's arms. The little girl went out into the night with Frankie. She stood at the entrance of the large gray apartment building and looked up at the one small window to her bedroom.

She could hear her father screaming and then saw him turn out the only light in her room. Suddenly it was dark and quiet everywhere. The little girl could see that the puppy was hurt and afraid, and she whispered softly in his ear,

"I'm sorry, but this is the way it has to be. Now I must do what Mamma would do. I must leave you somewhere, until someone else will save you in the morning. I must be careful. I must always be careful not to make Father angry."

She put the little dog down near some garbage cans and started to walk away. She could hear Frankie whimpering for help. The little girl stopped, and then turned around and did what her mother was too afraid to do. She picked up the little dog and began walking silently towards the lights of the city. A police car passed her, stopped, and then turned around and came back.

Two policemen were inside the car. They asked the little girl if she was lost and why she was out so late wandering in the dark. The little girl didn't seem to know they were there. She just kept repeating the same words over and over again. "I must never make him angry, Never. I must fly away somewhere, anywhere with my puppy."

The policemen made a phone call and in a very short time, another police car and ambulance drove up with a very nice policewoman, social worker and paramedic inside. They got out of their cars. The social worker lady smiled kindly and spoke softly. She took the little girl's hands into her

own and told her who all these people were and why they were there to help her and her puppy. The paramedic took the little girl's pulse and asked her how she felt. He then took the little puppy from her, unraveled the towel and showed the puppy to the policemen and social worker lady. The social worker lady looked at the puppy and then looked into the little girl's eyes. She picked the little girl up high into her arms and hugged her and held her close to her heart almost forever.

Later that night, the little girl was taken to a special home with kind people who take care of children, who are neglected or abused.

The little girl was given a cup of hot chocolate and a warm bed in a pretty room with two other little girls. She was told that the puppy urgently needed medical assistance, and that he had to be taken to an animal hospital immediately.

The little girl bent her head like a reed in a rainstorm. She was very sad. "I was supposed to save him", she cried. "And he was supposed to grow up to be as strong as a lion and as big as a mountain, and we were supposed to fly away together and live happily ever after as best friends forever. And now he's going to die. Oh, what have I done?"

And as the little girl sighed and wept, the social worker put her hand under the little girl's chin and lifted her face upward until their eyes met.

"You've done something very brave and beautiful, said the social worker lady. "Only you don't know that yet. And your little dog, well, he isn't dead yet" she added. "We're going to help him all we can. And don't you worry. He's going to help himself get better as well."

She paused, looked into the girl's eyes and finally asked, "May I tell you a secret?"

"I suppose so", answered the little girl. I'm the best secret keeper in the world. My father and mother tell me secrets, too. They're terribly scary secrets, and I don't tell any of them."

"Well", said the social worker. "This is a different kind of secret, a very happy secret, and one day, whenever you wish, you can tell it to whomever you wish".

"Really?" asked the little girl. That's the strangest kind of secret I ever heard of. What is it?"

"Well, simply this", said the social worker with a smile. "No matter what happens, on this very night you and your puppy have become heroes, because you saved him and now he has saved you. You have saved each other, and by doing that you have saved yourselves. You may not understand that now, but one day you will remember our secret, and you will cry and smile at the same time. Why, at this very moment you are both growing bigger and braver, even bigger and braver than all the mountains and lions in the world. And now both of you are going to be given a special chance to have happier lives and safer lives than you ever had before."

"Will I ever see my puppy again?" asked the little girl.

The social worker lady looked deep into the little girl's eyes and smiled.

"Well, that's my second secret", she said. "And it's even more spectacular than the first. And now I'll tell it to you. From now on", she whispered, "your little puppy has a very special job to do. From this moment on he will be your very own 'Dream Helper'. Whenever you need help to get through a tough dream, just call him, and he will come running or flying or swimming right into your dreams, maybe even with a lion or two in his mouth and a mountain in his paws".

She laughed and gave the little girl a big kiss on her forehead.

"My 'Dream Helper' ", the little girl said. "My very own 'Dream Helper' ".
She repeated the words over and over again.

"That's the best secret in the world". She yawned and raised her arms
high over her head, and then smiled softly and drifted into sleep.

While the little girl was sleeping safely in her special home,

Frankie was asleep in another place. After the policemen had taken the
little girl to her Special Protection Center they returned with Frankie to
the station. They didn't know whom to call so late at night, and they were
sure the little fellow wasn't going to make it, anyway. They put him on his
towel in a corner of a big storage room and let him sleep. When they came
back the next morning they were surprised by a miracle. Frankie was
trying to sit up. One of the younger policemen remembered another very
special place, just like the one the little girl went to, and he called them
up.

A friendly voice answered the phone. "Good Morning, This is 'HAMA',
'Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance'. Can we help you?"

The policeman related the story about the little girl and the puppy.

Within the hour an old car drove up to the station, An older man and a
young woman assistant got out of the car and entered the building. The
young policeman took the man and woman to Frankie. The little puppy
looked up at the large human figures looming over him. The big man sat
down on the floor next to Frankie and started petting him slowly and
speaking to him in a low soft voice. Frankie didn't move. He was very
suspicious and frightened of big men with hands that bite.

But after a few minutes, Frankie felt reassured that these hands were not angry and violent. They were in truth good strong hands. Frankie let the man pick him up gently and put him on a blanket in the back seat of the car.

"What do you think?" asked the young policeman. "Will he make it?"

The man looked down at the little dog, who was shivering and shaking from pain. Frankie's upper jaw was broken, and his left eye was large and red and swollen and his body burned with fever.

"Well, go figure", said the man. "If this pup were just a regular dog, or person for that matter, he'd have died then and there".

Maybe, he should just be put down, said the policeman, "and save him from his misery".

Frankie suddenly raised his head just a little. The man patted the little dog and said to him. "You know, little fellow, This nice policeman isn't listening to a word you're saying. I can see you're no regular dog, and in time he will, too. Only, so far you've gotten only one part of the story about us humans. True, we can be the worst creatures on this planet, but we also have the capacity to be the very best, if we set our minds and hearts to it. So, what do you say? Will you give us another chance?"

They started up the car and waved good bye to the policeman. The engine gagged and gargled, and the car began to move farther and farther away from that strange city by the sea. Frankie didn't know where he was going. For all he knew he was flying to the moon, but somehow, and from somewhere inside him, he finally sensed safety.

Dr. Nachmias DVM (Doctor of Veterinary Medicine) greeted Frankie

with a sad smile. He immediately gave Frankie an infusion. The little dog was in shock and had lost a lot of blood.

"Wow!" said the vet to himself. "I've seen it all, but this puppy looks like a survivor from a terrorist attack."

"He is," replied the man, as if he had heard the doctor's thoughts. Only he saved a little girl, and now we've got to save him."

"I can't look at him," said the veterinarian's young assistant. "What kind of monster does that to a helpless puppy?"

"The same kind of monster who does it to other helpless human beings", the man replied. "Only they start on puppies and kittens and other poor animals and then work their way up to people."

"Well", said the vet after he checked Frankie all over, took a blood test, an ultra sound and a x-ray. "He really is a victim of terror. He's been beaten and broken all over and he's suffering from shock. You can see how he curls up into himself and is barely able to make contact with us. That's a function of physical and psychological trauma", said the vet.

"What's that?" asked the veterinarian assistant?

"It's a phenomenon called PTSD", replied the older man.

'P' is for Post. 'T' is for Trauma. 'S' is for Stress.

And 'D' is for Disorder. 'Post Trauma Stress Disorder' ".

There was silence in the room. "Well", said the man finally. "It is, as it sounds, very complicated, but the way I understand it is like this:

When something very scary or painful suddenly happens to us or to someone we love or know, and we have no way of stopping or controlling that awful thing from happening, then we feel terribly helpless and small, like a tiny seed blown off its mother tree by a raging wild wind."

"Like September 11." said the vet.

Well, yes said the man. Sept 11 is a strong example about a whole nation feeling 'PTSD'. As far as Frankie is concerned, he experienced his own personal September 11. He was suddenly attacked and didn't know why all this violence and cruelty was exploding all around him. He couldn't stop it. He couldn't control it. He called out for help, but no one there could protect him. Then and there in his mind, in his heart, he felt as if he were lying peacefully on a warm bed dreaming about all the wonderful days to come, when suddenly everything around him – bed, dreams, and hope- are inexplicably blown to smithereens. Violence strikes in many forms, and all of it does damage to both our bodies and spirits, whether we be human or animal."

"Well", said the vet, we have a long way ahead of us, This puppy has to go through some difficult operations. His face will never be the same again. His upper jaw will not grow any more, but his lower jaw will, and that will give him a very strange appearance, His eye has to be placed back in its socket, and I'm not sure if he will ever see from that eye again. And his upper palate, well," He paused to take in some air. "Let's just start with one day at a time. "

In the days that followed, Frankie underwent surgery, was placed on antibiotics, fed through a tube, and monitored carefully, until his temperature was normal.

At the end of the next week the man and the young woman assistant came to pick him up.

The veterinarian's assistant was filling out his card. "What is the puppy's name", she asked.

"I don't know yet", said the man.

"Maybe we should just call him Frankenstein," said the young woman. Everyone looked at her in surprise. "I'm serious!", she said. "Look at that pathetic animal, and at what that poor child's violent father did to him!" He'll never be normal again!" She turned away and started crying.

"Now listen carefully," said the older man. This puppy will never be the same again, that's true, because that's what 'trauma' does. It changes a life forever. But it can surprisingly change that life, even for the better, far better than 'normal' could ever be in the strangest and most miraculous ways. Why, he may not be a Frankenstein at all. He may very well become a Franklin D. Roosevelt. Who knows?"

The veterinarian's assistant hugged the young woman and said. "I have a brilliant idea. We will call him 'Frankie, because 'Frankie' is a name where everything is possible, from Frankenstein to Franklin D. Roosevelt to Frank Sinatra, the singer of all those great love songs."

The young woman picked Frankie up into her arms and laughed and cried at the same time. "Oh, my little "Frankie Frankenstein"! What will become of you?" Nmonster, singer, president, What will you be?"

"That's for Frankie to decide", answered the man. "Now all he needs is a helping hand, not to hit him, but to love him and to guide him".

And this is how the people, who were to become an important part of Frankie's life, discovered his true name.

Frankie was taken home to the man's house. There, he met the man's family: his wife, Pam, their sons, Ilan and Adam, and their daughter, Alyssa. Pam prepared Frankie a bed of his own with a cozy blanket. However, the pup didn't yet believe that the bed was truly meant for him,

so he slept under sofas, beds, chairs, tables, and anything else that could protect him from falling hands and flying feet. Finally after the second week, the man sat down on the chair next to the sofa. He was drinking his morning mug of coffee. Frankie was lying under the sofa with his nose peeking out.

"Good morning, Frankie", said the man in a pleasant, matter of fact way. Frankie didn't answer, but his big ears perked up a bit for the first time. "You and I have never really been formally introduced", continued the man in his matter of fact way. "I mean, I know your name and where you're from, and even why you're here, but you really don't know anything about me or my family or where you are, and why we're here with you."

The man took a long loud sip of coffee. Frankie's ears stood straight up like two radio antennas. His nose wiggled and wagged a bit as it crept out from under the safe darkness of the sofa, until two dark soft eyes blinked into the morning light.

"Well", said the man, "my name is Beni, and I head an organization which works full time at trying to save animals who save people. We also try to help people who save animals. Sometimes I can honestly say I don't enjoy what I see, but I always love what I do, if you get my meaning".

Frankie's ears responded with a curious wiggle.

"You see", continued Beni. "I agree it isn't exactly the most 'normal' kind of work a person can do, but for me it's kind of 'abnormally adventurous' and 'eccentrically essential', sort of like deep sea diving and moon walking, if you get what I mean".

Frankie's ears now began to vibrate at their tips. Beni laughed and held out his hand with a tasty treat inside it. Frankie couldn't resist, but he was afraid to approach the hand. He was hoping that the man would just put the food on the floor and remove the threat of the hand. Beni,

however, wasn't cooperating. Instead of removing his hand, he opened it wide like a serving plate and let the scared puppy creep up slowly and lick his fingers clean. Frankie retreated under the sofa once more, and looked out again until half his body was fully exposed to an open room. Beni smiled. "See what a human hand can do", Beni said smiling like a magician. "I close it hard, and it becomes a fist. I open it wide, and it becomes a tray full of goodies".

He held out his hand again and this time Frankie came willingly and licked his open hand. While he was licking Beni's right hand, the left hand gently patted the puppy's back. "See what else an open hand can be", laughed Beni. It can also become a bona fide petting machine".

Frankie wagged his tail in response, and then sat down just a few inches away from Beni. Frankie was eagerly anticipating his next treat.

" Well, little fellow, we have indeed made progress today", said Beni with a smile which stretched from one end of his face to the other.

"There are hurting hands and helping hands, and you, little Frankie, have just learned this important difference. Welcome back to the world of human potential."

In the weeks that followed, Frankie met the dogs and cats of the HAMA (Humans and Animals in Mutual Assistance) Program. They were all very different from each other. There were seven furry little Pekes (short for Pekingese dogs), who waddled about like ducks in a row. Last in line was Solo, who had been blinded by a Pitbull dog attack.

He followed everyone else by scent and even held onto their leads with his teeth for better navigation. There was an old stately Great Dane who

was so tall he looked like a watchtower on an ocean cliff. There was a hyperactive Boxer named Sky. She loved life and lived it at full speed with a fun loving Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier named Paddy and an Airedale named Ally. There was a three legged handsome Canaan dog named Doobie who seemed to understand what exactly happened to Frankie and a magnificent and kindly Newfoundland named La Belle who accepted Frankie right into her large paws. And then there were the ten cats. They were mysterious beautiful creatures with amazing athletic abilities and sensitive souls. The king of them all was Kee-Kee, a twenty-pound veteran Ragdoll cat, who seemed to have earned the love and admiration of everyone, animal and human alike. This was the world of HAMA, an old house with a big fenced yard, huge trees, good food and funny looking people.

Frankie spent his first year at the HAMA Center growing strong inside and out. Beni often took him to work with the other feline and canine helpers. He met small children in need, elderly people who were alone, teenagers who were confused. He met people in every size and of every shape of all ages, religions and colors. And the best thing of all, Frankie was deeply loved by nearly all of them.

One day Frankie came to a special Center for children who live there until they are placed in foster families. There he and met a little boy who hadn't smiled for a long time. The little boy took Frankie into his arms and started petting him. He held Frankie in front of him and they stared at each other.

"What kind of dog is he?" the little boy asked".

"I really don't know", Beni answered. "I was hoping you could help me out on that one".

The little boy looked into Frankie's eyes for a long time. Then he started petting Frankie's nose and stroking Frankie's teeth, which stuck out from the young dog's lower jaw. The little boy thought very hard and then finally decided. "He's a Crocodile Dog".

"Wow!" said Beni. "I've never heard of a Crocodile Dog".

"That's because there are almost none left in the world" the little boy replied. "Frankie is the last Crocodile Dog in the whole universe".

"What happened to them all?" asked Beni in absolute awe.

"Bad hunters killed them", whispered the little boy. He hugged Frankie and went on with his explanation.

"Crocodile Dogs save all the little animals who are thirsty, but who have to drink water from the dangerous rivers".

"Why are the rivers so dangerous?" asked Beni.

"Because the crocodiles live there", said the little boy in a deep low voice.

"I even saw them hiding in the river on TV. I also dream about them".

"And how does Frankie save the little animals from the crocodiles?" Beni asked, shaking in fear.

"Well", said the little boy, "Frankie sits near the river's edge and watches over the little animals. The crocodiles come to Frankie first, because he looks like them, and they think he is one of them".

"And then??" asked Beni, gripping his chair.

"And then it is too late for the crocodiles", affirmed the little boy.

"Frankie swallows them whole and saves all the defenseless animals at the river's edge".

"Wow!", said Beni. You've really helped me understand my dog a lot better. By the way, maybe you could tell me how Crocodile Dogs are with people."

"They're great with people", said the boy. "But you have to know how to train them. They are very strong and frisky and always get into trouble, even when it's not their fault".

"Well", said Beni. "You certainly are professional with this very special and rare breed of dog. Do you think you could help me and Frankie with a good training program?"

"I think so", said the little boy. He gave Frankie a big hug, and then stuck out his lower teeth just like Frankie. He hugged the little dog with all his might and smiled a smile as long as that very river Frankie had made safe again.

Back in the van and on the way home Beni looked over at the little black dog sitting beside him and, gave him a loving pat on the head.

"Well, little fellow, how does it feel to save the world?"

More than a year passed, and Frankie had grown up to become a true Crocodile Dog. HAMA's veterinarian, Dr. Nachmias, was right in his prognosis. Frankie's lower jaw grew to magnificent proportions, while his upper jaw remained the same size it had been when he was injured as a small puppy. His white teeth and fangs now fully exposed to the weather had turned gruesome yellow. His body was long. His ears were longer. They could stand up like ladders or roll themselves down like toilet paper or rotate themselves around and around like an airplane propeller, all depending upon the many moods of their pilot. Frankie's legs were short

and crooked and faced outward. His fur was wiry and black and hard to the touch like reptilian scales. He had a long wiry grisly beard with premature white hairs. He was the size of a husky Dandie Dinmont Terrier, breaking the scales at 22 pounds, but looked more like a miniature Komodo Dragon with fur. Despite his many operations, Frankie still had a big hole in his upper palate from his injury. Food often got in that hole and Frankie would sneeze and snort it all out in every direction. In brief, Frankie was truly awesome and terrifyingly huggable. He was wonder and magic all rolled into one.

What made Frankie a true Crocodile Dog, however -- the first and last in the whole wide universe -- was his soul. It had indeed grown to become braver than a lion, bigger than a mountain, and it could hold more tears than the largest, puffiest, rain cloud in the sky. And the light bright secret behind Frankie's success was that all the dark deep secrets he had held inside him finally fled like fleas after a good long flea bath. He could now hug with his paws and kiss with his teeth. He not only learned to trust humans again. He learned to forgive them. He learned to love them again. And he had even one more magical power, far greater and even more magical than these others. He had the power to help these same humans love each other as well.

One day a remarkable family came to see Frankie. They already had a Labrador Retriever with epilepsy named Kenny, and a mixed Border Collie named Ella. They had also rescued an abandoned mixed Rhodesian Ridgeback called Buddy. The father of the family, Bill Grace, was an artist. His wife and mother of the family, Shua, was a biologist, and their

three children, Sean, Paz and Shara were professional animal lovers. They didn't need another dog, but they could not get Frankie out of their hearts and minds. Paz in particular loved Frankie so much, that it was decided that Frankie would come and live with them, Shua and Bill and their three children and three dogs lived in a big old friendly house right on the sea, and Frankie, now dog #4, fit right into the family.

The next year was a wonderful experience for Frankie. He helped Paz with his homework, by using his long jaw as a bookmark. He helped Bill with his artwork by sneezing on Bill's ceramic sculptures. This unique process endowed the pieces with new creative texture and energy. He helped Shua with her housework by unraveling the toilet paper from the top floor to the basement. He helped Sean and Shara feel delightfully ridiculous, and as the smallest dog in the household he felt protected and loved by his bigger canine cronies. In the evenings the family and their dogs would run on the beach and climb the sand dunes, and the wind would almost pick Frankie up by his ears and send him soaring. It was a wonderful year.

And then it happened. The remarkable family had to move far away. They could not take their dogs because of a six month confined quarantine restriction. It was very hard for Frankie and even harder for Paz and his family. Bill took a hundred photographs of Frankie, so they would have his picture everywhere. One of the counselors of HAMA, a young man named Shai, rented their home and kept Kenny with him. Ella and Buddy were placed with good families. As far as Frankie was concerned, his future was assured. This time he was coming home to Beni and HAMA for good.

Since Frankie was a small pup he had always joined Beni and his canine and feline co-therapists once a week at a special All Day Care Center for Young Children at risk in the inner city. Over the years Frankie had become an important helper and friend for the children and staff at the Center. For the children, the All Day Care Center was like an island of good will in a raging wild sea. No wonder. The children's inner city neighborhood was poor, depressed, and ridden with violence. Frankie was born in such a place. He nearly died there as well. Deep inside Frankie felt connected to these little children. In each and every one of them he remembered that brave little girl who had found him hiding in the abandoned field so many dog years ago.

It was Sunday, November 9, and the skies were full of rain clouds. Beni and Pam, traveled with their seven waddling Pekingese dogs, Jerry, the Great Dane, La Belle, the Newfoundland, Ally, the Airedale, Paddy, the Irish Soft Coated Wheaten Terrier, Kee-Kee the Ragdoll cat, Remus and Romulus, the Cream Persian cat twins, and Frankie, the Crocodile Dog to the All Day Care Center. They worked there together as an AAT (Animal Assisted Therapy) Team for the last five years. All the animals sat next to each other on the seats in the van like a group of camp kids waiting to get to their favorite movie. They loved their work, and they loved this Center in particular, because they were always so warmly welcomed and well treated by staff and children alike. Zippi, the Director and Yael, the social worker, and Hava, Sima, and Vered, the children's caretakers, all greeted the cats and dogs with kisses and hugs. The Pokes, the cats, and Frankie, all went as usual to Zippi's warm office where they were spoiled by Zemira and Sarit, the Center's cooks with warm soup. The big dogs had a special enclosed yard with a roof. There they could run and play and

rest at will. They, too, were given warm soup and big whole raw carrots to chew on as if they were tasty bones.

It was a wonderful day. Frankie as usual had his teeth brushed by the children, so they could learn how to brush their own teeth. He was bathed and combed, and has his wiry hair blown dried like a movie star. He was fed his special dog food by hand, so the children could learn that hands were not meant to be weapons. Hands give food, brush teeth, comb hair and reach out to pet a dog or embrace a child. Frankie loved the attention and liked working with his other canine and feline friends, especially the Persian cat twins, Remus and Romulus, who were gentle and affectionate and who let Frankie eat most of their food treats.

It was a long day. The hazy gray skies grew dark. Beni and Pam started to get the van ready. There was a bowl of soup in the kitchen that Vered had put aside for Frankie. Frankie loved the soup at the Center, and Beni decided to put the big dogs in the van and move Frankie over into their enclosed yard where he could eat in peace, while he and Pam got everything ready. It was an unusual arrangement, but Beni thought just this once, he'd let Frankie have another bowl before making the trip home. The Pokes waddled out to the car and the cats jumped in and took their places. Beni closed the doors to the van and off they went -- back home to HAMA. It was a long trip, and everyone sat tired yet relaxed in the comfort of the van. Beni turned on the radio and soft music filled the car. The Pokes began snoring. When they finally got home, Beni opened the gates to the HAMA Center and everyone jumped out of the car and headed to their beds in the old house. There were so many animals coming and going that Beni didn't notice at first. And then Pam asked, "Where's Frankie?"

"Oh, good grief!" cried Beni. I left him at the All Day Care Center.

I gave him his soup and forgot that I had taken him out of his usual place". Beni ran inside and called the Center. No one answered the phone. Beni also tried calling the Director and Head Social Worker at their homes, but again no answer. Pam and Beni got all the dogs ready for bed and their daughter. Alyssa came over to baby sit. They drove back to the inner city. It was the middle of the night. They stood outside the Day Care Center's locked gates and called out Frankie's name. There was no answer. Across the street lived an old woman that sometimes came to visit the Center. She knew Frankie by sight and by name. She came out of the building when she saw the HAMA van.

"Are you looking for that strange little black dog?" she asked.

"Yes, oh yes!" Beni screamed so loud that some more of the lights in the building suddenly went on. "Have you seen him"?

"Why, yes" she answered. "Several hours ago. He was running after your van. I thought you'd have the common decency to slow down and wait for the poor little guy. But you just kept driving off, right on your own merry way. You should be ashamed of yourself".

Beni sat down on the curb in front of the building. "Good Lord!" he sighed to himself. "What have I done? How could I have forgotten him"?

Pam took the keys and said resolutely, "There's no time right now to blame either ourselves or anyone else. He's lost and we will just have to find him".

That night, Pam and Beni walked the streets of the inner city, calling out Frankie's name, but to no avail. He had vanished into the darkness.

That same night a storm thrashed its way through the city. The next morning Beni and HAMA's faithful driver and helper, Ronen, returned to what Beni called, "the scene of his crime", and combed the neighborhood. The two men looked everywhere -- in the bushes, in the piles of rubbish,

and in the dugout cellars. They asked everyone, but no one had seen anything remotely resembling Frankie's description. Beni called a private pet detective, the local city pound, the SPCA. Ronen put posters up all over the city with a picture and description of Frankie. A large picture of Frankie was placed in the city newspaper. Still no answer. The clouds cried rain for several days and nights, and then the sun came out, but still no sign of Frankie. Beni was distraught.

"Who's going to save a deformed little dog who looks like a vampire?"

Beni asked himself despondently. "Frankie is lost in the most dangerous part of the city. He could fall victim to stray dogs, teen-age gangs, and cars traveling at high speed. Who's going to help Frankie now?"

Back at the All Day Care Center the children and their parents, as well as the staff were all heart sick to hear of Frankie's disappearance. They, too, took part in the search, but came up with nothing. After nearly two weeks passed Beni received a call from a Mr. Noam Giloh, a major radio personality. Two very kind women, Michal and Carla, who were always helping HAMA, had made the connection. Mr. Giloh arranged an interview on another major radio station, and Beni went on the air at 8:50 A.M. on the 21st of November. He talked about Frankie -- what Frankie looked like, where he came from, and how much he helped people of all ages, and how important he was to him, and to the children of the All Day Care Center. Five minutes after Beni went off the air, Zippi, the All Day Care Center Director got a phone call from a very kind man named Avi, who worked at an Occupational Rehabilitation Center about seven miles away. Zippi called Beni and Beni called Avi.

"That Crocodile Dog of yours," said Avi. "The way you described him, there really couldn't be another one like it. I think we've got him.

He just walked right into our Center about ten days ago. He sure is one scary little monster with those yellow teeth of his. People were afraid of him and wanted him taken away, but one of our students took him to heart, and she's standing guard over him".

"I'll be right down!" yelled Beni ecstatically.

"Not so fast." Avi explained. Our Center is closed for two days. You'll have to come and get him on Sunday. There just isn't anyone who can open the Center for you now."

"I can't believe this", Beni moaned. He's been left alone again. He could panic, and then we may lose him again",

There was nothing to be done. Pam and Beni just had to wait. Sunday finally arrived. It was two weeks since Frankie disappeared. Beni and Pam arrived at the Center at 8:30 in the morning. Avi, the kind man who had called the All Day Care Center waited for them at the gate.

As they approached the building by foot, they could see Frankie sitting in a corner of the yard with a sweet middle-aged woman. Her name was Sarah. She was stroking Frankie gently while feeding him a cream cheese and tomato sandwich. Beni called out to Frankie, and the little dog perked up its huge ears and looked excitedly about him. Beni called again, and this time Frankie spotted him. He charged over to Pam and Beni and jumped right into their arms. Frankie was so excited and so happy that he peed all over himself and all over Beni as well.

"I know just what you're feeling!" laughed Beni. "I could do with a good pee myself."

Sarah started to move away, but Pam took her hand. "You did a beautiful thing", Pam said, "and I don't know how we can repay you for your kindness. Frankie has suffered so much in his life, and we just couldn't

bear the thought that he'd end up where he began. How can we ever thank you?"

"Nobody wanted him", said Sarah sadly. "Everybody was afraid of the way he looked. They wanted the city pound to take him away, but I just couldn't let that happen. I looked into those beautiful sad eyes of his, and I saw myself."

Pam and Beni were visibly moved. "Those eyes reflect the journeys of many wonderful people" Beni said softly. "Many get lost for awhile, just like Frankie, and many find their way home again, just like Frankie."

"I have six cats", said Sarah. "I had to leave Frankie here alone every evening, I came early every morning and fed him some of my sandwiches".

Pam put her arm around Sarah's shoulder. "You did just fine! You know, Sarah, I can't help but believe sometimes that Frankie must have a guardian angel".

"Oh, no! You're wrong", said Sarah, "Frankie doesn't have a guardian angel. He is the guardian angel."

Sarah walked Frankie back to the van with Pam and Beni. She hugged the little dog goodbye. "I called him Rex" she said. "I didn't know his real name. Well, good-bye, Rex! Good-bye, Frankie! Good bye, my guardian angel!"

The van rolled down the driveway, homeward bound. Frankie looked out the window and saw Sarah waving good-bye and blowing kisses into the wind. Beni reached over and gave Frankie a warm pat on the head. Pam wiped the cream cheese off Frankie's face with a soft towel.

"Well, little fellow", Beni finally said. "How does it feel to save my world?"

THE END

RESCUE ME

Rescue me not only with your hands but with your heart as well
I will respond to you.
Rescue me not out of pity but out of love.
I will love you back.
Rescue me not with self-righteousness but with compassion.
I will learn what you teach.
Rescue me not because of my past but because of my future
I will relax and enjoy.
Rescue me not simply to save me but to give me a new life.
I will appreciate your gift.
Rescue me not only with a firm hand but with tolerance
and patience. I will please you.
Rescue me not only because of who I am but who I'm to become.
I will grow and mature.
Rescue me not to revere yourself to others but because you want me.
I will never let you down.
Rescue me not with a hidden agenda but with a desire to teach and trust
I will be loyal and true.
Rescue me not to be chained or to fight but to be your companion.
I will stand by your side.
Rescue me not to replace one you've lost but to soothe your spirit.
I will cherish you.
Rescue me not to be your pet but to be your friend.
I will give you my undying love

Author Unknown