



Chicken Soup
for the Soul[®]

101 Tales
of Canine
Companionship

**My Hilarious,
Heroic,
Human Dog**

Amy Newmark

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An Unlikely Pair

Animals are such agreeable friends — they ask no questions; they pass no criticisms.

~George Eliot

Our daughter was three when we brought Sabrina home on a cold winter's day. All legs and floppy ears at six weeks of age, she was already as big as many adult dogs. My husband Bill stopped weighing her when he could no longer pick her up and stand on the scale. At that point, at only eight months old, Sabrina weighed 185 pounds. By the time she was a fully grown Great Dane, though, she stood over six feet, three inches tall with her front paws on Bill's shoulders.

Over the years, when I would answer the doorbell, Sabrina always joined me. It was one of her duties to inspect anyone who might want to enter "her" domain. What a sight: She stood quietly but impressively next to me, black ears pointed high, with the back of her large, firm body at my waist. Unsuspecting strangers would start out smiling, then gasp when they looked down. I think both Sabrina and I looked forward to their reactions.

However, the most surprised individual was our six-inch-tall squirrel monkey, Samantha. Sam was five years old when we brought our puppy home. From the moment this gentle, loving, vigilant dog came into our lives, she bonded with Sam. More precisely, Samantha bonded with Sabrina — the only animal bond Sam allowed in her twenty-five years of turning our world upside down.

Their bonding occurred shortly after our Dane grew too big to sleep in an open suitcase or under our daughter's canopy bed. Sabrina started taking long naps in front of the fireplace, where Samantha decided to join her. This tiny monkey, curled up and tucked into the chest of this massive Great Dane in front of a large fireplace, was an image that will be (as my grandfather was famous for saying) "forever green in my garden of memories." They were both warm-blooded animals with very short fur. So, the roaring fire we built every day during the cold months in Las Vegas was a perfect solution for them to keep up their body temperatures. Snuggling was optional.

Soon, Samantha relinquished household control only to Sabrina, and Sabrina was the only one who could punish Sam without facing any retaliation. Monkeys tend to lose control when something doesn't go their way — and the list of offenses is a long one. If Sam was mad, she'd jump up and down while emitting a long, high-pitched "squeak" — usually while sitting on the arm of a couch or her favorite, the overstuffed chair. After watching Sam go into her tantrum, Sabrina would calmly raise a large paw up over Sam's body and bring it down with a gentle but firm plop onto the back of the small monkey. Sam would be flattened against the chair's arm — two arms and two legs spread out flat.

Sitting down close to Sam, Sabrina's head was at the perfect level to look directly into Sam's eyes. Still spread, head resting on her chin, Sam would look back. Then she'd sit up, shake her head slightly, and appear to be thanking Sabrina. You could almost hear her saying, "Thanks, I really needed that." It was an unbelievable sight. In anticipation of what was to come, it was hard not to laugh when Samantha had a meltdown.

Sabrina also seemed to know when Sam needed a back rub. We'd come across the two of them — often lying by the pool in the warm sun — only to find this six-inch squirrel monkey lying flat-out while this 185-plus-pound majestic Great Dane was chewing rhythmically (gently with her front teeth) up and down Samantha's small back. Sam's eyes would be half-closed, apparently in some sort of monkey heaven.

Samantha joined all of us in abiding respect for Sabrina. And if

Sabrina could have answered the phone over the years, we never would have had babysitters for our young daughter and son.

Sabrina was only two when our son was born. And, having just become a full-grown adult dog, she increased her protecting to a new level. It was serious business now. Still preferring to sleep in our daughter's room at night, as soon as she'd hear me in the kitchen warming a bottle, she would seek me out and gently follow me from the darkened kitchen into the quiet nursery. There, she would settle down next to the rocking chair until I put the sleeping baby back in his crib. Then, only after she did a complete check of our resting son, would she leave the room with me. Her nose was mattress height, making the official examination easy for her.

Years moved on, and we built a lovely new home in California's Malibu mountains just after our son turned three. With brand-new construction and no fences yet separating the homes on Castleview Court, Sabrina took charge immediately, overseeing ours and all the neighbors' children playing in the cul-de-sac. With ages ranging from three to ten, no one was beyond her protection, no matter how old they got.

Sabrina reigned over Castleview Court until she left us at age nine. Sam never forgave us — actually, *me*. Apparently (in this little monkey's mind), as the mother of the family, I controlled everything. So, I seemed like a good person to peg this tragedy on. One sunny day, I had taken an unusually quiet Sabrina away... and she never returned.

I have no doubt that this highly intuitive monkey knew that Sabrina was "someplace else" — even feeling Sabrina's presence in the years following — but I was going to pay anyway. Samantha continued being the boss of all she surveyed in Sabrina's absence. It would be another eleven (long) years before Sam could join her best friend.

They are in a place where Sabrina and her beloved, rebellious Samantha can once again share the warmth of their spirit together. Their fireplace is always flickering gently.

— Diane Dowsing Robison —

on the Iowa Hawkeyes. Tonya is married to Brian and is mother of two daughters; all of whom continuously provide inspiration for her blog which can be found at complicatedblessingsoab.com.

Jill Ann Robinson graduated with a Master of Arts from Northern Illinois University in 2001. She spent her career as a pediatric speech-language pathologist in the Chicagoland area. Her favorite people are her husband of seventeen years and two boys. She writes to get the extra ideas out of her head and find some quiet time.

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