

- THE PET SITTER -



# The Pet Sitter

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**Tana Reiff**



Grass Roots Press

The Pet Sitter

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### **Acknowledgements**

Grass Roots Press acknowledges the financial support of the Government of Canada for our publishing activities.

The logo for the Government of Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a stylized maple leaf to the right.

Produced with the assistance of the Government of Alberta through the Alberta Media Fund.

The logo for the Government of Alberta, featuring the word "Alberta" in a cursive script font with a stylized mountain range to the right.

Design: Lara Minja, Lime Design Inc.

### **Library and Archives Canada Cataloguing in Publication**

Title: The pet sitter / Tana Reiff.

Other titles: Other people's pets

Names: Reiff, Tana, author.

Series: Reiff, Tana. Working for myself.

Description: Series statement: Working for myself | Originally published under title: Other people's pets. Belmont, CA : Lake Education, ©1994.

Identifiers: Canadiana 20200241672 | ISBN 9781771533478 (softcover)

Subjects: LCSH: Readers for new literates.

Classification: LCC PE1126.N43 R4444585 2020 | DDC 428.6/2—dc23

# 1

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## A Love for Animals

Rocky was an old brown mutt with the kindest dog heart in the world. Now he lay dying. Rocky had been Ginny's best boy since she was a little girl. She was grown up now, but still living with her mom and two brothers.

She just sat on the grass beside Rocky, petting him.

She remembered the day she found Rocky. He was in a box by the side of the road. A sign on the box said: FREE PUPPY. Ginny took him home. She loved him right away.

"What's that little rag?" her mom said when she saw the dirty little puppy.

"Oh, please, can we keep him?" Ginny begged her mom.

"Give him a bath," her mom said. "We'll decide after he's cleaned up."

Ginny got a bucket and filled it with water. She rubbed soap all over the puppy. He stood still and let Ginny wash him. Then he jumped around and shook himself. Ginny dried him with a towel. The puppy looked like a soft ball of fur.

“Please, Mom?” she asked again. The puppy went over to Ginny’s mom. He looked right into her eyes. His eyes melted her heart.

“How can I say no?” her mom said with a laugh.

All the time Ginny was growing up, Rocky was her buddy. He grew much too large for a bucket bath, but he always had a baby face. He seemed almost like a brother to Ginny, even though she had two real brothers. Rocky loved her—no matter what.

Now, Rocky was old and very sick. Ginny knew he couldn’t last much longer. She stroked his fur. She fed him out of her hand. The old boy could hardly lift his head.

Then Rocky closed his eyes for the last time. He was gone.

Ginny cried and cried, and then she dug a grave in the backyard. After burying Rocky, she marked it with a stone. She painted ROCKY on it in big letters.

“Why don’t you get another dog?” Ginny’s mom asked her.

“There can never be another Rocky,” Ginny said.

Then one day Ginny’s friend Eva called. Eva had her own place, where she lived alone. “I’m going away for a week,” Eva said. “I don’t want to leave my dog in a kennel. She would much rather stay home. Could you come by every day and feed her?”

Ginny wasn’t sure she was ready to take care of someone else’s dog. But she understood how Eva felt.

She would have hated to leave Rocky in a kennel. So she said, "OK."

"Stop over for the key and stay a while," said Eva. "That way, Poppy can get to know you. Of course, I want to pay you for helping out."

"You don't have to pay me," Ginny told her friend.

"Come on!" Eva said. "I'd pay plenty to board her at a kennel. Don't put up a fight. Just get over here."

Ginny put on her coat and drove over to Eva's house.

Poppy was a little black furry thing, not at all like Rocky. When Ginny walked in, the dog sniffed her up and down. She knew Ginny right away. She just kept on sniffing anyway.

"Poppy looks really pretty," said Ginny, petting the soft fur.

"I just finished clipping her today," said Eva. "I love grooming my Poppy!"

The dog sniffed Ginny's hand.

"And you painted her nails pink, just like yours!" said Ginny.

"We are almost like sisters!" said Eva.

Then Eva showed Ginny where she kept the dog food. She showed how much to feed Poppy. She gave Ginny a leash so she could walk Poppy around the neighborhood.

Then Ginny noticed Eva's plants. "Do you want me to water your plants while you're away?" Ginny asked. "I might as well."

“That would be great!” said Eva. “I won’t have a thing to worry about. And will you be sure to give my baby some TLC every day?”

Ginny picked up Poppy and rubbed her head. “That goes without saying,” she said. “Tender loving care is part of the deal!”

“You really *do* love animals, don’t you?” Eva asked.

“I do,” said Ginny. “I thought I only loved Rocky. But maybe I loved Rocky so much because I love all animals so much.”

“You know, there are people who do pet sitting for a living,” said Eva.

“Really? They go into people’s homes to take care of their pets?”

“Oh, yeah,” said Eva. “Lots of people have pets. And lots of people worry when they go away and can’t take their pet along. They want their pets to be happy and healthy at home when they’re not with them.”

Ginny didn’t say anything. She was thinking to herself.

“Pet sitting would be good work for you,” said Eva. “You’re cut out for it. That’s why I asked you to take care of Poppy.”

“I already have a job,” Ginny said. “I’d rather not work nights, but it’s a job.”

“That crummy job? Heck, you could pet sit during the day and still keep your job,” Eva said.



Eva gave Ginny a door key. “Here,” she said. “Guard this key with your life. I hope everything goes fine with my baby. I know she’s in good hands.”

“Don’t worry,” said Ginny. “And I’ll think about what you said. If looking after Poppy goes well, maybe one thing will lead to another.”

“We’ll see, won’t we?” Eva said with a laugh.

Ginny stopped by Eva’s place the next day and the day after that. The third day she went twice. She was getting to like these little visits. Pet sitting didn’t seem like work at all.