

# “A Dog Named Aloha”

*A Parable of God's Love*

Written by Kenson Kuba

© 2015 Kenson Kuba

## “Aloha” ... More Than a Name

A Certain Old Man had a dog named Aloha. To say that it was the Old Man's best friend would be an understatement, for they were inseparable. He remembered the first time they had met at a Farmer's Market.

Someone had brought a litter of puppies to sell and had set up a small corral made of planks. Parents and children surrounded the enclosure, playing with the puppies who were running toward outstretched hands reaching eagerly to touch and hold the squirming bundles of fur, and pressing their flat snouts against their cheeks with joyful glee. All the puppies ... except one. It sat back observing the spectacle, not fearfully but attentively. The Old Man could not help but notice this odd one who would not join his siblings in their needful quest to be adopted. And as He continued to watch, the puppy raised its gaze and locked it onto the Old Man's. Something special happened in the moment their eyes fixed on each others. There was a *knowing*, a *connection*, as if the puppy were reading the Old Man's very thoughts. The Old Man surprised Himself when He gave a slight nod to the puppy as if to acknowledge, *'Message received,'* and reached down to pick it up. He raised it to His face and gazed into its eyes. They were dark and deep and intelligent. And when He cradled him against His chest, it gave a sigh, closed its eyes and promptly fell asleep. The Old Man looked down at him and smiled. He asked the owner how much it would cost to purchase him. The price was agreeable and the Old man found Himself with a new friend sitting beside Him in His truck on the ride home.

For several days, the Old Man had wondered what to name His new friend. He had run through a list of familiar names such as Buddy, Chief, Rex, Sparky and others, but none reflected what the puppy meant to Him ... until He considered the name 'Aloha' ... the Hawaiian word for *Love*. 'Yes, I'll call him *Aloha*,' the Old Man decided, 'for he has brought Love back into my life.'

The Old man had lived alone ever since His wife of 56 years had passed away five years before. His children had long since departed to live out their lives in lands beyond. Both the house in which they had all lived and the Old Man Himself seemed to grow old and dim with their absence ... until the arrival of the puppy who brought new life into the aging forms. He filled the void that was left with a warm nuzzle and a wet nose. He was aptly named, for Aloha, in its essence, is Life and so a fitting name for His new companion.

Through the years that followed, Aloha grew into a muscular dog with a large square head and strong limbs. He was completely white with short hair, an intelligent countenance and friendly smile. He rarely barked except in warning and chose instead to communicate through his eyes. His stare could freeze an intruder or communicate love with his friends. Everyone who came to know him came to love him and enjoyed hugging his thick neck and shoulders, while at the same time receiving a wet kiss in return.

The Old Man and Aloha did everything together, whether it be maintaining the enclosed one acre property complete with numerous fruit trees and a large vegetable garden, or fishing in the Cove across the street, or sitting on the veranda to watch the sun paint the sky a fiery red as it set each evening and finally, sleeping on the Old Man's King sized bed every night. The Old Man had found a friend for life.

Then one day they noticed a new family moving in next door. A single mother and her bright little six year old daughter. But what caught Aloha's attention was the sight of a young female Boxer no more than a couple of years old bounding out of the car and running circles around the woman and her daughter as they walked to their new home. Aloha jumped to his feet and was held back only by the Old Man's word to, 'Stay.' 'Don't worry, Aloha. We'll go over and say hello after they've had a chance to settle in,' the Old Man reassured His friend.

They didn't have to wait long, for soon after they saw the girl and her dog coming over to meet them. 'Hello,' she smiled as her Boxer hid behind her after noticing Aloha stand to his full height. 'Wow! That's a big dog, mister. What's his name?' she asked with curious eyes.

"It's Aloha," replied the Old Man. 'What's yours?'

"Eve," answered the girl. "My mom named me after the first woman God created. I like it cause it reminds me of *Christmas* Eve when Santa brings me presents ... like my dog, Sara," she added with a smile that brightened the veranda where they were meeting.

"Eve ... Hmmm, that's a good name," the Old Man complimented. "I like it, too! You can call me Uncle Pono if you want."

"Okay, Uncle. But what kind of name is Aloha?" Eve asked the Old Man.

"Aloha is the Hawaiian word for Love ... the kind that cares about the other person as much as you care about yourself," the Old Man explained.

"Oh. Does he like to play?" the girl asked.

"I'm sure he'd love to play with you and Sara. I'm too old to run around with him," laughed the Old Man.

And off went the three new found friends, running and laughing around the large yard ... getting to know each other as they took turns chasing one another and jumping and falling and rolling on the green grass. The Old Man watched happily as Aloha ran with the Boxer and Eve, leaping and frolicking and enjoying himself. "Every dog," the Old Man thought, "should have a child to play with." And He couldn't help but be glad that Eve and her mother had moved into the house next door.

It wasn't long before Eve's mother came by. "Hi, I'm Ruth, Eve's mom," she introduced herself. "I hope my daughter isn't bothering you."

"Absolutely not," the Old Man replied. "She's giving my dog more exercise than he's had in a long time. I don't mind at all. Besides, it's nice to hear the sound of a child laughing again. It's been a while since my old ears have had that pleasure. Here, why don't you sit and chat for a while," He offered. Ruth sat down and they ended up talking for much longer than she expected, mostly about what had brought her and her daughter to the town.

Ruth shared a sad tale of pain, abuse and abandonment. Of a marriage that fell apart when her husband became addicted to cocaine which took control of his mind and turned him against his family. To protect her daughter, she had decided to leave him and start a new life where Eve could grow up without fear and where she could be surrounded by Love. Her opportunity came when she was offered a nursing job in the town's Health Clinic, and she leapt at it.

By the time Ruth concluded her story, two hours had passed. By then, Eve had joined her mom and was asking about lunch. "Mom, I'm hungry. Can we go and get something to eat?"

"Oh my!" Ruth said in surprise when she looked at her watch. "I can't believe the time has flown so quickly! I'm so sorry I took up your morning talking your ears off," she apologized.

"No problem," the Old Man replied with a smile. "I'm so glad you and Eve came. Aloha and I have needed something to do, so if you ever need someone to look after Eve and Sara, I'm offering our services. Seriously now! It would be a pleasure ... right, Aloha?" the Old Man said as He looked down at His canine friend now panting happily with a smile. "Aloha seconds that offer," he added with a laugh.

"Yay!" Eve exclaimed. "I can stay with Uncle after school until you come home, Mom," Eve suggested as she looked up at her mom.

"Well ... we'll see. I don't want to take advantage of Uncle," Ruth said looking down at her daughter.

"Don't worry about that," the Old Man said. "Aloha and I would be happy to look after Eve. And you will always know she'll be right next door."

"Well ... I can't see how I could refuse your generous offer," Ruth eventually admitted.

"Then it's settled," the Old Man said with a firm nod of His head.

"Alright, Uncle!" Eve cheered with a happy smile.

Ruth reached out her hand to shake the Old Man's. "Thank you so much," she said. "You just answered a major prayer I had. I really do appreciate your generous offer," she said with a grateful smile. Then, after a pause, she looked down at her daughter and said "Okay, let's go get some lunch." As they turned to leave, Ruth looked back at the Old Man and called out, "Good bye ... and thank you."

Eve also looked back smiling as she followed her mom, and waved, "Good bye Uncle! Good bye Aloha!"

The Old Man waved back and called out, "Good bye Eve. Come back anytime!" He thought to Himself how blessed He was to be given this opportunity to help a single mother by caring for her little girl and her dog. "Well, Aloha, looks like I got us a job. Are you up to it?"

Aloha looked up and gazed into the Old Man's eyes ... and surprised Him with an affirmative, "Woof!"

### "The Power of Love"

The school was located just two blocks away, and soon the Old Man had settled into a routine of waiting with Aloha and Sara under a tree, just outside the school property, for the final bell to ring. And when it did ring, both dogs sat up and scanned the sea of kids bursting from the classroom doors, watching for Eve who would come running toward them with a bright smile. When they spotted her, they would take off like Thoroughbreds at the Derby, and quickly close the gap between them. Then all three would collapse in laughter and happy yelps and a lot of wet dog kisses. It had become one of the highlights of each day for the Old Man who watched the happy scene with delight.

Eventually, Aloha and Sara would allow Eve to regain her footing and would then escort her proudly back to the Old Man.

"And how was your day, little lady?" the Old Man would always ask.

"Not bad," she would always reply with a smile, but then add, "but it's much better now!" With that she would attach her back pack to Aloha's harness, and then put an arm around each dog and walk with the Old Man back home. Once there, the routine would be a cold glass of chocolate milk and a cookie, as well as a complete recounting of what she had learned from her teachers that day. The dogs would lie under the table, their heads cradled in their outstretched front paws with their eyes turned upwards in hopes of any crumbs that might fall. Their ears twitched in time with the dangling feet of the little girl as she happily conversed with the Old Man.

After the refreshments, the Old Man would help Eve with her homework which usually consisted of a vocabulary list and arithmetic problems, but he limited this time to only thirty minutes after which Eve was free to play with the dogs in the large enclosed property under the watchful eyes of the Old Man who sat in the cool shade of the veranda. Never in his wildest dreams could He have imagined that His Golden Years would be filled with such joy in the company of a lively little girl and two furry friends.

As the days turned into weeks and the weeks into months, the Old Man and Eve spent a lot of time together planting gardens, or building a playhouse or exploring the sea creatures in the Cove. She regaled Him with stories she created with her imagination and He, in turn, told her of myths and legends from times past. The Old Man loved her as He would His own granddaughter and treasured every minute He had with her.

One day, as He waited for her after school, He was surprised to see her emerge without her usual smile. Even the dogs' enthusiasm could not brighten her countenance. And when she drew near, He asked, "What's the matter, little lady?"

At first she remained quiet and simply looked down trying to hide her tears. The Old Man pulled her unto His lap and held her close and allowed her to cry in His arms. Then He picked her up and carried her home with the dogs in tow. Even they seemed to know something was not right for they had curbed their zeal and now shared her grief on their faces.

Once home, as usual, the Old Man brought Eve a glass of cold chocolate milk and a cookie, and waited while she took a sip and bit off a piece. Then He ventured, "Can you tell Uncle what happened at school today?"

Again she hesitated, but then she confided, "One of the boys in my class called me 'stupid' and 'ugly' ... and the other children laughed at me." At that she burst into tears again.

The Old Man brought a napkin to dry her eyes and nose, and comforted her. He gently told her, "You know, Eve, as you grow up you will often meet people who will say and do mean things to you. But do you know what I've discovered about people who do that? They can't help themselves because something is broken inside of them."

"Broken?" Eve asked curiously as she dried her eyes. "What broke inside of them, Uncle?"

"Their hearts," replied Uncle. "Their hearts got broken and all of the Love inside of it leaked out, and that's why they don't have any more to give away to others."

"But how did their hearts get broken, Uncle?" Eve asked.

"Well, it's kind of like what happened to you today. When people say or do mean things to others, it's like throwing rocks at a person's heart. Eventually their hearts break and leak out all of the Love that was inside," the Old Man explained.

"Oh, that's not good," Eve said ... her tears no longer flowing as she became concerned about the broken hearts of people. "How can we help fix it, Uncle?"

"Well, the only way I know is to give it lots of Love, because Love has a special power to heal a broken heart and to put all the broken pieces back together so that it can be refilled with Love again," the Old Man shared. "Do you think you can give your Love to the boy who was mean to you, and to your classmates who laughed at you?"

"Oh, yes, Uncle. I can give them my Love because I get so much from you and Sara and Aloha ... and my mom!" Eve said smiling. "But how can I show them my Love?"

"Do you remember what I told you about Aloha and what his name meant?" asked the Old Man.

"I think so," replied Eve. "You said Aloha's name means Love ... and to care about others as much as I care about myself."

"That's right, Eve," the Old Man said with a smile. "You give them Aloha, or Love, when you always seek the best for them as you would want someone to do to you! This means to talk to them with kindness and with respect, and not in a mean way. And to treat them as a friend and not as an enemy. That's Love! That's Aloha!"

"Uncle, how come I hear people say 'Aloha' when they meet each other or even when they leave? Does 'Aloha' also mean 'hello' and 'goodbye', too?" Eve asked.

"That's a good question, Eve. When you greet people by saying 'Aloha', what you are really doing is blessing them and wishing the best for them. And you do that especially when they leave because you want them to be well and safe," the Old Man explained. "That way, you can't have enemies because you're always wishing the best for others around you."

"Oh, I like that!" exclaimed Eve. "So I can always bless people around me by wishing them 'Aloha' and treating them with Love. I'm going to try and do that from now on, even if they treat me mean or say mean things to me!"

"Eve, you're the best!" the Old Man said as He held her close.

"And you're the best uncle, Uncle," Eve said with a laugh. And with that, she took out her homework and began to study.

## No Greater Love

One Saturday, the Old Man and Eve took Sara and Aloha to the Dog Park. They always enjoyed seeing and playing with the other dogs. The Old Man sat under a nice shady tree and happily watched Eve and the other children chasing their dogs and throwing toys for them to retrieve. Sara was especially athletic and enjoyed racing around with Aloha and the other dogs, leaping high in the air to catch a frisbee and showing off her abilities. What Aloha lacked in agility he more than made up for in strength. When he and Sara played tug of war with a toy rope, the outcome was never in doubt. Aloha would strut triumphantly with the toy firmly held in his square jaw which he held high in a game of keep away from Sara and the other dogs. In the months following the arrival of Ruth and Eve, the two dogs had become fast friends. Every minute that Sara spent in the care of the Old Man was a minute spent with Aloha such that they became as inseparable as Aloha was with the Old Man.

After a while, all of the dogs ended up on the far side of the Park. Aloha stood off from the pack and started barking, which caught the Old Man's attention. As He focused on the dogs He noticed a man He did not recognize wearing a jacket with a hood covering his head and dark glasses covering his face. He was leaning over the fence facing the dogs. It appeared Aloha was barking at this stranger. The Old Man stood up and began making his way to where the dogs had gathered near this man. As He did, He could see that the stranger was tossing some items over the fence and that the dogs were eating them. The Old Man called out to Aloha and Sara. Aloha looked back to see the Old Man still far away and barked out the warning again and again, willing Him to walk faster. When the stranger noticed the Old Man approaching, he quickly

turned, jumped in his car and sped away. It was too far for the Old Man to see his license plate but He made a mental note of the car which the man drove. His first concern was what the man was feeding the dogs. He knew that Aloha had not eaten any of it, but He wasn't sure about Sara. He was glad that the children were playing among themselves in another location of the Park and were not near the stranger.

The Old Man finally reached the far side and began looking for the thing the man was feeding the dogs, but He could not find any. He had a bad feeling that it was not something good. He quickly located Sara and called to her. She came bounding toward Him and seemed fine, and the Old Man was hoping she would remain that way.

Aloha also came to the Old Man and examined Sara, and finding nothing wrong, they ran off together to look for Eve. By then, all of the other dogs had also sprinted back to their child, and the Old Man began to think that He was worrying for nothing. Unfortunately, time would prove Him wrong.

The Old Man quickly gathered Eve and began the walk home, all the while praying everything would work out fine. But even before they reached the house, He began to notice Sara lagging behind and unable to keep up with Aloha's pace. They finally reached home and the Old Man immediately called the local Veterinary clinic and explained what had happened, and asked if He could bring Sara in for an examination. They told Him to bring her in immediately. The Old Man checked with Ruth to let her know what was happening and that He was taking Sara in to the clinic as a precaution. He asked whether she wanted to come along. Ruth said she did and jumped in the front seat of the Old Man's truck with Eve, while Aloha and Sara rode in the back.

The Old Man was trying not to alarm Eve, who remained quiet until she said, "Is Sara going to be all right, Uncle?"

The Old Man was tempted to say 'Of course', but decided to be honest with this bright little girl who had won His heart. "I don't know, Eve. And that's why we're going to see the doctor to make sure she'll be fine." He knew it wasn't the most encouraging answer He could give her ... but it was the truth.

By the time they arrived at the clinic, Sara was lying on her side in the bed of the truck taking in deep breaths and barely able to raise her head, while her fearful eyes stared at the Old Man. It was now clear something was definitely wrong. Aloha stood watching with concern for His friend.

The Old Man lifted Sara from the bed and carried her quickly inside where He saw two other owners with their dogs already waiting ... both with similar symptoms as Sara's. The Old Man and Eve recognized them from the Park that day. The Veterinary Techs were moving quickly to admit the dogs and taking them into the examination rooms. After several agonizing minutes, Sara was brought into a room and placed on a stainless steel table. The Tech immediately administered an IV into one of Sara's legs. By then she was completely listless and could not even lift her head. The Tech told them that one of the doctors would be in as soon as possible. Eve pressed her face against the table, her head barely able to see above it. She was stroking Sara's body and whispering a prayer for God to save her. Tears were now streaming down her cheeks. Ruth stood behind her, holding her shoulders, tears welling up in her eyes as well.

The Old Man felt terrible about what was happening and started to apologize to Ruth, but she stopped Him and, shaking her head, said, "You don't have to apologize for anything. You cannot know how much Eve and I appreciate you and all you've done for us. I don't know what I would have done without your help and the love you've shown Eve. Whatever happens, we will always be in debt to you."

The Old Man tried to offer a smile in appreciation but His sorrow showed through instead. It didn't help that loud cries of sadness suddenly erupted from the adjoining room where one of the other dogs had been taken.

The doctor finally came in and performed a quick examination of Sara. Turning toward Ruth and the Old Man, she said gravely, "I'm going to be completely honest with you. We're facing a very serious situation here. One of the other dogs that came in has just died and as far as I can tell, your dog is suffering from the same condition. I believe they have been poisoned with a toxin that targets the heart. Sara is still alive only because of her size, but as far as I know, she will suffer the same fate unless drastic measures are taken."

The Old Man asked what 'measures' she was referring to. "Well, for one thing we're administering a drug that will help clean out the toxin from her blood," she explained. But then continued, "But the damage has already been done. What Sara needs in order to survive is a new and healthy heart, and frankly, we don't have time to obtain one."

Eve could not hold her grief any longer. "Sara ... Sara ... Sara," she cried loudly, "Sara, don't die ... please ... don't die," she cried repeatedly, her face now drenched in tears of anguish. Ruth picked her up and carried her out to the lobby as she continued to scream her dog's name.

Beneath all of this, and almost forgotten, Aloha stood observing the situation, and then, with a mighty leap, jumped up on the examination table and lay down beside his friend. But before the Old Man could say anything, Aloha lifted his head and stared intently into His eyes. At that moment, their thoughts connected and remained so for several seconds. Then, with a pained expression, the Old Man gave a slight nod. The intensity of Aloha's gaze diminished allowing the Old Man to see only pure Love in His best friend's eyes. Then Aloha turned his head and gently licked Sara's face.

After a discussion with the doctor, the Old Man emerged from the room and closed the door behind him. He slowly walked to where Ruth and Eve were sitting. Both their faces were streaked with tears, but already accepting of Sara's fate. They all walked back to the truck and began the sad trip home, so lost in their sorrow that none mentioned the absence of Aloha.

Later that evening, the Old Man received a call from the clinic informing Him that the operation went well and that He could now take Aloha home.

A week later, the Old Man got another phone call from the clinic informing him that He could come to retrieve a recovering Sara. The doctor told Him that during the operation, they discovered Sara was pregnant with a litter of puppies, and that miraculously, they were all healthy. When Sara saw the Old Man she began wagging her short tail so fast her entire body shook, but her joy was tempered when she did not see Eve or Aloha accompanying Him.



"Don't worry, Sara. We're going to surprise Eve," the Old Man assured her. Then He thanked the doctor for her miraculous work, but it was a gratefulness tainted with sorrow for the sacrifice that made it possible. The doctor noticed the sadness in the Old Man's eyes and held His hand in both of hers in appreciation for what He was willing to give in exchange for the happiness of a little girl.

The Old Man smiled through His tears as He lifted the Boxer gently in His arms. "Come on, Sara. Let's go make a little girl happy," He said as He carried her to His truck.

Sara lifted her head to look out the open window and enjoy the wind blowing in her face once again. Her excitement grew as she saw and smelled familiar landmarks indicating her home was drawing near. By the time the Old Man turned into His driveway, Sara could barely be restrained. "Calm down, girl," the Old Man told her. "You have to take it easy for a little while."

Once parked, the Old Man gently lifted her out of the truck and lowered her to the ground. The operation slowed her from her normally exuberant romp to a gentle walk. She sniffed the air and began to slowly criss cross the yard as if searching for a long lost item. The Old Man watched as her internal radar led her to a mound of dirt under Aloha's favorite tree. Etched on the bark above the mound was a message. "Here Lies Aloha, who willingly laid down his life for a friend." Sara lay down on the fresh dirt and began to mourn as only dogs do. The scene broke the Old Man's heart, but He let her express her grief over the loss of her friend. He wondered if she knew the sacrifice that Aloha had made for her. Somehow, He concluded, she did.

After several minutes, the Old Man coaxed Sara to leave Aloha's resting place, telling her, "You can come back here anytime, girl. But let's go see Eve. She'll be so happy to see you."

The Old Man led her next door where He called out, "Eve, there's someone here who wants to see you!" He heard tiny foot steps in the house running to open the door.

"Sara!" Eve yelled as her face lit up with joy. "Mommy, Sara is alive! Uncle brought Sara home!"

Ruth came running from the kitchen to see the miracle. "Oh my goodness! How can this be?" she exclaimed.

"The doctor performed a miracle," the Old Man answered through tearful eyes.

Ruth looked at the Old Man and understanding came to her. "You didn't ...", she started to ask already knowing the answer. Now tears welled up in her eyes. There was no need for words as she gave the Old Man a grateful hug.

"I can't explain to you how I know this but it was Aloha's decision. Otherwise I would never have been able to make it," the Old Man whispered. "Aloha loved Sara and your daughter more than life itself."

"Mommy, Mommy ... look at Sara. She's all better now," Eve interjected.

"Well, we better go feed her then," Ruth told Eve, her eyes still fixed on the Old Man's. "Go and take her to the kitchen."

Eve hugged Sara as she led her into the house. As the Old Man watched the little girl lead her furry friend away, He informed Ruth to expect a litter of puppies in about a couple of months. Then He smiled and returned home.

Sara grew stronger and bigger with each passing day until, as the Veterinarian said, she gave birth to a litter of seven healthy puppies. The days grew busy caring for them and Sara proved a good mother. When they were eight weeks old, Eve shepherded the litter, with Sara, to the Old Man's house.

"Uncle!" she called to the Old Man. "My mom wanted to know if you would like to pick one for yourself before we find homes for them?"

"Oh, I don't know, Eve," the Old Man replied, imagining how difficult it would be to replace Aloha and all that that dog had come to mean to Him.

Eve scurried to keep all of her puppies from scattering all over the yard ... all except one. It was a rather large, all white male who sat apart, observing his frolicking siblings, until it raised its eyes and caught sight of the Old Man looking at him. It locked its gaze on the Old Man's and something special happened. The Old Man reached down and picked it up, and raised it to His face and gazed into its eyes. They were dark and deep and bright. And when He cradled it against His chest, it gave a sigh, closed its eyes and fell asleep. The Old Man looked down at him and smiled. "I'll pick this One," he finally said.

