

Dogs are the Best by Anna Golubev

Little Johnny wanted to have a dog. Johnny's friend Kevin approved. "Dogs are the best", he told Johnny, - "Cats, for example...they don't know how to love. A dog will love you unconditionally." Johnny asked: "What's unconditionally?" and Kevin said, "Unconditionally means no matter what".

Johnny thought it would be wonderful to be loved unconditionally. Johnny's mom loved him, but she also got mad at him quite often, and as for Johnny's dad, the only thing he ever said to Johnny was "I am reading...go ask your mom". He said it this time too, when Johnny came to him after dinner and asked: "Daddy, can we get a dog?". Johnny felt it was just as well because his mom was a woman and women are supposed to like animals. But Johnny's mom probably didn't like animals, because she said no way and if Johnny wanted a pet, they could buy him a goldfish. Johnny said "Mom, I don't want a goldfish. Goldfish don't know how to love. But Johnny's mom just laughed, and Johnny went to his room and sulked for the rest of the day.

Some time after the dog conversation, Johnny's class started the unit about metamorphosis. They got a big fish tank full of tadpoles. Tadpoles were tiny and very fast... A few of them died, but most lived and grew, and eventually started sprouting tiny legs. That was the metamorphosis... In May, the teacher sent home a letter that all tadpoles need to be taken home, and if the kids want to take one or two then parents must send in a letter, and kids should bring a jar with a lid, to take them home. After Johnny's mom read the letter, she said "Wonderful! See, Johnny, you can have a pet and it's free!". Johnny said, - ok, sure, if he cannot have a dog let's at least get a frog, even though it wouldn't know how to love.

The tadpoles were distributed by lottery, and Johnny got a small scrawny one, whose legs were just starting to develop. It wasn't very active either, and looked sick, with murky eyes. Johnny worried that it might die. But Johnny's mom said not to worry and just take good care of it. They got a fish bowl and filled it with filtered water and added some water plants and a shell, so the tadpole will have a place to hide. Johnny fed him, and changed his water and talked to him, telling him "You look bigger today" or "I love you, please don't die." And indeed, tadpole didn't die but grew and changed into a small frog with a tail, and then into a bigger frog without a tail. It still wasn't much fun and haven't shown much love to Johnny, but Johnny didn't care. He learned that the most important thing about love is to love somebody – even if that somebody is just a water frog.