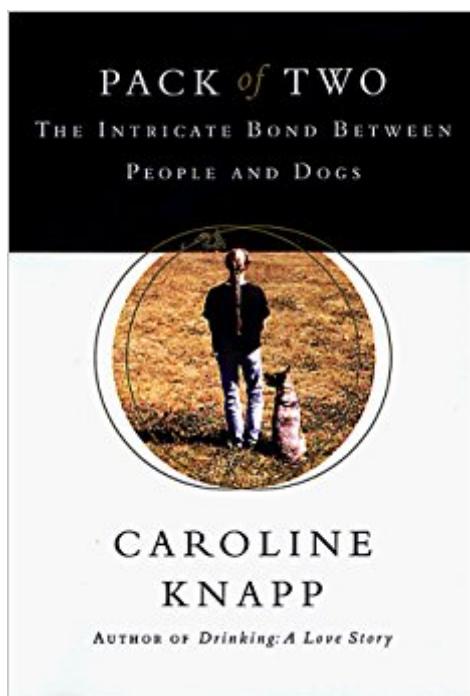


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# Pack Of Two: The Intricate Bond Between People And Dogs



## Synopsis

At the age of 36, Caroline Knapp, author of the acclaimed bestseller *Drinking: A Love Story*, found herself confronted with a monumental task: redefining her world. She had faced the loss of both her parents, given up a twenty-year relationship with alcohol, and, as she writes, "I was wandering around in a haze of uncertainty, blinking up at the biggest questions: Who am I without parents and without alcohol? How to form attachments, and where to find comfort, in the face of such daunting vulnerability?" An answer materialized in the most unlikely form: that of a dog. Eighteen months to the day after she quit drinking, Knapp stumbled upon an eight-week-old puppy at a local animal shelter, took her home, and named her Lucille. Now two years old, Lucille has become a central force in Knapp's life: "In her," she writes, "I have found solace, joy, a bridge to the world." Caroline Knapp has been celebrated as much for her fresh insight into emotional and psychological issues as she has been for her gifts as a writer. In *Pack of Two*, she brings the same perception and talent to bear on the rich, complicated terrain of human-animal relationships. In addition to mining her own experience with Lucille, Knapp speaks to a wide variety of dog people--from animal behaviorists and psychologists to other owners whose dogs have deeply affected their lives--about this emotionally complex, sometimes daunting, often profoundly healing alliance. Throughout, she explores the shift in canine roles from working partners to intimate companions and looks, too, at how this new kinship, this wordless bond, becomes a template for what we most desire ourselves. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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## Customer Reviews

Caroline Knapp is head over heels in love--not with a human being, but with her mixed-breed dog, Lucille. From the moment Lucille first locked eyes with Knapp through the bars of an animal shelter cage, the intelligent, pointy-eared mutt began to transform Knapp's life. Reeling from the deaths of both her parents, a breakup with a long-term boyfriend, and her newly won sobriety after a 20-year battle with the bottle (which was skillfully chronicled in a previous memoir, *Drinking: A Love Story*), Knapp found in Lucille not only companionship, but "consistency, continuity, connection. In a word, love." Although she doesn't regard Lucille as a replacement for alcohol and lost loved ones, Knapp does believe "that in loving her I have had that sense of being filled anew and essentially redirected, an old identity shattered and a new one emerging in its stead." In *Pack of Two* Knapp, with the help of dog psychiatrists, trainers, breeders, and owners, explores the partnership between human and dog and the mysteries of the canine mind--how dogs love, how they think, and how they see human beings. And despite her findings that the dog will remain essentially "mysterious ... unknowable," Knapp is ultimately at peace with this, still devouring the moments when dog and human can "transcend the language barrier" to "understand what the other wants and feels." This book pays homage to the wonderful and complex relationship between one woman and her dog. --Naomi Gesinger --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Following her bestselling memoir, *Drinking: A Love Story*, Knapp's account of her "mutual and unambiguous and exceptionally private" relationship with Lucille, a small German shepherd mix, illuminates beautifully how the dog's unconditional love filled the gaping hole in Knapp's emotional life after her parents died and she quit drinking. Drawing on charming but alpha-tough anecdotes from her own experience and those of her dog-loving friends (primarily single and female), Knapp describes with affectionate amusement the great, often expensive lengths to which owners go to insure that their pets are well trained and well balanced. As a pup, Lucille goes with Knapp to obedience school for education, to day care for baby-sitting and to play dates with other dogs for recreation. They visit dog psychics and therapists to explain mysterious, troubled behavior, and a canine behaviorist for a few weeks of discipline. Throughout, Knapp has a canny nose for emotional detail: "Living with a dog is like being followed around 24 hours a day by a mute psychoanalyst," Knapp writes. "Feelings float up from inside and attach themselves to the dog, who will not question their validity, or hold up your behavior to scrutiny, or challenge your perceptions." Lucille's arrival is followed by boyfriend Michael's departure, and Knapp intelligently plumbs criticism from outside the dog world that she and others "use their pets as surrogates, to retreat into the world of animals in

order to bypass more problematic and complex human relationships." Anyone who loves dogs, and particularly prospective first-time owners, will delight in this exploration of man's (or in this case, woman's) best friend and of the "significant other" role a dog often plays in a one-person household. First serial to Glamour. Copyright 1998 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

It pains me to admit that, years ago, I was one of those misinformed souls who used harsh methods and equipment in my dog training. I competed in AKC Obedience and Schutzhund, using choke chains, prong collars and correction. I worked as a professional pet dog trainer for several years. Positive dog training was just emerging as a powerful force and I was still poo-pooing the idea, focused on the outdated notion of dominance. Then I met a very patient motivational dog trainer, who allowed for in depth and non-judgemental discussion of the topic. Thank you, Jeannie Collins! I began to realize that partnership and communication was the answer, not force and domination. Sometime later, I picked up this book and it completely changed my life as a trainer. I realized the error of my ways with great guilt. This spoke to me of the intelligence, cooperative nature and under-acknowledged mental and emotional capacity of dogs. This is not a training book, but it touched me so profoundly that I trashed my old-school training books, threw out the choke collars and began anew. Guess what happened? My dogs and I started having a lot more fun, training became easier, and we started raking in the trial ribbons and titles! Without force, my dogs were far more cooperative. We understood each other instead of being anxious about each other's actions. The story of Knapp's relationship with her dog is nothing spectacular, a great many books have been written about a certain author's certain life-changing dog. After working in the veterinary and dog rescue field for 25 years, I am somewhat immune to this type of memoir's emotional effects. But Knapp's writing is not overwrought, and her description of what this relationship meant is powerful without being melodramatic. It focuses on her growth as a person. It made me realize I was missing something, even though my life already revolved around my dogs. Other than my love of dogs and the beauty of her writing, I can't exactly say why it touched me so deeply. Sometimes these memoirs get on my last nerve because of bad writing, obvious lack of knowledge about dogs, or extraneous information. Not so with Pack of Two. If you have read Knapp's other books, you know she is one hell of a writer, a real pro with a lot of style. Something about her gritty humor combined with honest emotion is so relatable. Whatever it was, it sealed the deal for me and I went on to forge a much deeper, more satisfying and more effective way of relating to my dogs. As a dominance oriented owner, my dog was, on some level, viewed as an adversary looking for a coup. I missed

out on so much amazing communication, so much "dogness". Knapp has a knack for describing this relationship vividly. I will always be grateful that this book appeared in my life just when I needed it. I feel a pang just seeing it on my bookshelf, because it confirmed so much about dogs that I had kept out of my life for so long. Donald McCaig, another great dog writer, has said something like, "Dog training is all about regret". So true for me! But, since Pack of Two, so many years ago, I have communicated with my dogs better than most people in my life, and for that, I thank you, Caroline. I mourn your passing from this planet.

The review system for required that I choose adjectives for the characters and the pace of this book, as if it were a fictional book. But it is not, it is a non-fiction book. So those adjectives don't really apply. It is a thoughtfully written book in which the author describes her own experiences with her animals. I would highly recommend it if you want a better understanding of the bond between pets and their owners.

Carolyn Knapp is a beautiful writer. I've read all her books and also Gail Caldwell's (a good friend who tells us what happens to Carolyn after her books were written). This book alternated between being tedious and interesting. I am not currently, nor have I ever been a dog owner, so it may have not resonated with me as much as someone who is. The portions of the book I liked best were those that included her relationship with her boyfriend (as I met him in her book titled: Drinking). I felt her relationship with her dog bordered on obsession, but then so did her relationship with alcohol and food. That said, I think this book would be most appreciated by anyone who loves dogs to excess. I am not being critical of being obsessed with one's pet, I have cats and love them beyond words. But a relationship with a cat can never equal one with a dog, even if I wanted it to (which I don't at this point in my life).

I am not a recovering alcoholic as is the author, but I am a woman who has known the love and devotion of a dog. If cockapoo Ralphie had never been in my life, then I would have had a very different reaction to this book. I would probably think the author was just a little bit coo coo, but because I loved Ralphie as much as I could love anyone, I think I know exactly how she feels about Lucille. Ralphie came to me at a time when I needed him and he filled a tremendous void that I didn't even know existed. Interesting, well written book.

The author shares a lot of her life story and how getting a dog from the shelter put her back on the

right path. She talks about dog ownership and other dog owners and how they interact with dogs. She touches on the way many people go through various stages with their dogs and how to be a pack.

last month, my maltese dog, priscilla, died. i had gotten her when she was 6 weeks old, fell in love with her instantly, and stayed in love with her for the next 16 years. my husband bought Pack of Two after reading a book review. in the review, the relationship between caroline knapp and lucille reminded him of myself and priscilla. my husband's concern was that my reading it might be too upsetting for me. on the contrary, knapp's insights into the interdependence between people and their dogs was enlightening, entertaining, and heartwarming. the strength of the book lies in the psychological assessment of why we bond so strongly to these animals. knapp has really done her homework, citing interviews with psychiatrists, psychologists, veterinarians, and pet owners, as well as reporting research done on the human companion-animal bond. what results is a book that explores the connection we make with dogs. we fall in love with our dogs and they accept us for who we are. we relive our past lives through our dogs and they bring out the best in us. they provide us with constancy and companionship. as i read through the pages, i kept repeating "yes, oh yes, i know how you feel". i will grieve for my priscilla for a long time to come, but the comfort i derive from these shared experiences found in the pages of this book help ease my pain. bravo to knapp!! this book is bound to become a classic for dog lovers everywhere.

If you have loved a dog and been loved by one, you will relate to this book. If you haven't had the joy of living with a dog that thinks the sun rises and sets because of you - you will want to get one. No one should miss out on a sweet experience like the author shares with us.

A fine book from the late author Knapp who wrote from the heart about addiction and recovery. RIP Caroline.

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