



DAILYGOOD

News that Inspires

## Rescue of Burned Puppy Comes Full Circle

by Laura Simpson

□ Anyone who has ever saved an animal will tell you that it's the kind of experience that shakes up your DNA. You won't regrow hair on a balding head or suddenly run a four-minute-mile, but there is a pulse of positive energy that churns through the human body much like a twister. In some cases, fragments of that emotional explosion are powerful enough to be credited with modern medical miracles. And for one Texas woman, the experience was profound enough to help wake her from a coma.

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□ My Name is Danielle...

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□ "My name is Danielle and it's been over a year since something terrible happened to me. I am ready now to share my story," explained the letter we received recently from veterinary technician Danielle Torgerson of Killeen, Texas. "Four years ago somebody brought a puppy to the clinic. I was not assigned to that room but I was in the second room when I felt something pull me into the hallway. It was strange, but I glanced into the other exam room and saw a puppy on the table. He looked at me with so much pain and despair. A man had brought him in for a 'sting' but I knew instantly that was not the case. The puppy was horribly burned on the head like somebody had poured gasoline over him and set him on fire. He was there to be euthanized."

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□ But Danielle's conscience began to wrestle down the injustice of extinguishing this young life before it had known the simple joys that every dog should know. She wondered if he might be able to have a bed of his own. Could there be walks through the park in the cool evening air? Was it possible that this puppy might wake up each morning beside a person whose first words were his name?

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□ "I asked the vet if something could be done," Danielle recalls. "He said that treatment could be carried out, but only with lots of money."

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□ The Rescue Begins

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□And that was all Danielle needed to hear. She wasn't wealthy, but she was determined and if there was a chance at recovery, she'd already made up her mind to take it. So Danielle had the man who brought in the puppy sign over custody to her. She then contacted Dr. Elaine Caplin in Austin and the puppy was brought in for a surgical consultation to see what could be done.

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□“He was not able to eat or drink because part of his mouth was melted,” Danielle recalls.

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□Skin graft surgery was undertaken to reconstruct the mouth and soon the puppy's condition improved dramatically and he began to function on his own.

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□Danielle named the puppy D'Artagnan (who served Louis XIV as captain of the Musketeers of the Guard) or Mister D for short and introduced him to other dogs and cats who welcomed him.

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□Mister D began to grow into a large dog and earned a reputation for his generous nature. “He allows all the cats to sleep with him and we have actually seen him share food with other dogs. He picks out pieces of food and gives it to them.”

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□But in the street, Mister D is sometimes regarded as a beast.

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□“He looks like a werewolf with his skin grafts and people are kind of scared,” Danielle explains. “But he truly is my loving angel and I know that saving him is what helped save me.”

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□You see, last year, Danielle was in a terrible motorcycle accident when she tried to avoid a collision with a car. Within seconds, she was on the ground bleeding with a broken skull and awaiting a lifelight helicopter to a trauma center where doctors would find no brain function.

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□For 12 days, Danielle lay motionless in her pale blue hospital gown while her mother, who flew in from Germany, went back and forth between the hospital and Danielle's home to take care of not only her dying daughter, but of the animals who meant the world to her.

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□ At night, Danielle's ex-husband would help look after the pets so that her mother could spend more time with Danielle, and try to get some rest, but everyone feared the worst.

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□ But in the silence of the mind, a louder voice came from Danielle's soul.

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□ "I had to get back to Mister D and my other 'kids' because they needed me and I needed them," Danielle says of her sense that she carried that desperate need to be reunited with her pets, despite the lack of medical evidence that she was processing those emotions during her coma.

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□ I Had to Wake Up for My Animals

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□ "After 12 days, a miracle happened," Danielle says tearfully. "I woke up. The doctors and nurses have told me that the first words that I uttered were 'Mister D.'"

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□ For several weeks, Danielle remained in rehabilitation while she learned to walk and to fully speak again. It seemed so painfully long for her to be away from the ones she loved and that motivated her to work harder each day.

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□ "When I finally got home, Mister D was so happy," Danielle said. "He checked on me all the time. When he felt that I was hurting, he would put his paw very carefully on my head and sigh. I truly know that if it was not for Mister D, I would not be here. He has become my musketeer, my protector and has given me the security and protection that I never had from people."

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□ Now fully recovered, Danielle's greatest hope is that her story will inspire others to rescue animals. She asks people to consider rescuing, rather than buying pets and explains that "the bond between you is one that can never be broken."