



It's Just a Dog

Russ Ryan

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What if your dog died and then came back as a ghost...that could talk? Would you welcome him back with open arms or run away scared to death?

Charlie Keefe is not just your typical dog lover — he's a world famous dog painter, a.k.a. "The Picasso of Pooch Portraits". Unfortunately, Charlie's muse, Pete, his beloved Jack Russell terrier, has just died. And he's totally devastated by the loss of his furry best friend.

So, after months of grieving over his dearly departed soulmate and wondering if he ever made it to the Rainbow Bridge, Charlie reluctantly agrees to foster a new puppy — a cute Cavalier King Charles spaniel named Brownie from the local shelter. Soon after, Charlie is surprised to find himself falling head over heels with this new puppy girl — his 'Rebound Dog', as he calls her — as well as being romantically attracted to Janelle Jordan, the head hound at the dog rescue.

But then complications arise when the ghost of his old dog, Pete, mysteriously reappears one night and comes back to haunt him and the new puppy — setting off a bizarre chain of events that throw Charlie's life, career, and entire belief system into chaos!

Told with humor and emotion, ***IT'S JUST A DOG*** is a fresh, funny, heart-warming new take in the dogoir genre. If you've enjoyed such recent dog book classics as *The Art of Racing in the Rain*, *A Dog's Purpose*, and *Marley & Me*, then you are bound to find a place in your heart for ***IT'S JUST A DOG***.

IT'S JUST A DOG is not just for dogs. It's for anyone who has ever lost a pet — and learned to love again.

It's Just a Dog Details

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From Reader Review It's Just a Dog for online ebook

Jana says

A rather "quirky" story about a man and his dog. I enjoyed it. Haven't you always wonder what YOUR dog would sound like if he could talk? I have!!! Pete was quite a character! Good job, Russ Ryan!

Kim says

First off, thanks to Russ Ryan for sending me his book. A must read for all dog lovers. A wonderfully charming story of a guy dealing with his dog's passing. Who says guys don't get all choked up when their best friend passes? Loved it! :)

K-koira says

Overall, I really ended up enjoying this book. It's Just A Dog was a good read, plain and simple. Parts of it made me cry as I read them aloud to my dogs (please tell me I'm not the only one who reads out loud to their dogs...). I actually had to stop reading, or read silently for a while, as certain parts of the book made my throat close and tears start leaking from my eyes.

Then, at the same time, there was always some kind of relief. Sometimes, it was a bit of dark humor at just the right place in the story. Other times, it was a funny story about Pete, or the destructive or irritating things that he did during (and after) his life. I think I would call this book a comedy, if I had to choose, though maybe more along the lines of a dark comedy. It deals with the very serious feelings of grief and depression associated with losing your dog, but does so in a fun to read way- without ever making light of the all consuming horribleness of losing your best friend.

Felissa says

It's Just a Dog is an okay story. The problem is that the book tries very hard to be too many things. It is a touching story of a man and his dog that is also a ghost story and a romantic comedy all in one book. The romantic elements could have easily been left out of the story. It's Just a Dog is a book that as a lot of potential to be on the best sellers list but was so jam packed with converging story lines that it could have been multiple books.

James says

"It's just a Dog" is a little hard to place in a category; it's like a book within a book. The first 4 chapters are an accurate and sensitive description of how it feels when a beloved dog dies. (That's actually redundant. All dogs should be beloved; if they're not, it's probably your fault, not the dog's!) The rest of the book is off-the-

wall humor (I think), but it's an entertaining read. Sometimes the language is unnecessarily obscene and his agnostic views of God sad, but I believe that Russ Ryan is a genuine dog lover. As a genuine dog lover myself, it would be hard for me not to like almost any book about dogs written by another dog lover. It's not the best book I ever read about dogs, but neither is it the worst. I'd love to see Russ put his play writing skills to work on this story. It would make a great play if some clever person could come up with an effective way of presenting ghost Pete on the stage. Actually, the book already reads like a script for a stage play.

Grady says

An hilariously wacky sad dog story with more pathos than bathos

Russ Ryan doesn't come to this novel without background or credentials: he has written screenplays with the Hollywood producers of *AMERICAN PIE*, *FINAL DESTINATION*, and *FIREFLIES IN THE GARDEN* and his own *REPLI-KATE* and he has probably absorbed more Hollywood history then most through his sidebar hobby blog meansheets.com that focuses on the art of movie posters going far back in time. From all of this exposure to dealing with dialogue, hearing movie ideas played out in the resource room, and staring at ideas that pop out from the great art of movie posters, he has come up with a very original and very wonderful first novel that should boost his career in the business (someone will doubtless option this book for a movie!) and provide hours of entertainment - and solace - to dog lovers, especially those who have gone through the loss of their `man's best friend. Ryan is a dog widower times two, sadly.

In a very casual conversational manner we meet a young artist who has a history as a child of losing a pet dog Starsky who was euthanized without much explanation. Jump to present time in Malibu, California and after our down and out artist (who goes by the name of Charlie Keefe) is dumped by his live-in girlfriend, he decides to go to the animal shelter and get a dog. And there is Pete - a mutt, but a Jack Russell Terrier who in a very brief time works his way into Charlie's heart and life. Charlie begins to paint dogs (sort of a 'Thomas Kinkade knock-off imagery' of his main model Pete) and with Charlie's artist rep Donny's help the business becomes lucrative - The Picasso of Pooch Portraits - and Charlie and Pete become famous globetrotters. But of course Pete ages and while Charlie is on an exhibition trip to Paris, Pete dies and Donny cremates him. Charlie is completely devastated, unable to function and in the deepest level of grieving for Pete. Charlie meets bouncy Janelle who is committed to finding foster homes for orphaned or unwanted dogs and after the two strike up a 'friendship' Charlie finally adopts Brownie, a Cavalier King Charles female, whose every cell speaks love and affection. Charlie and Brownie and Janelle bond and though Charlie retains the core of his heart for his deceased Pete, he loves Brownie, too.

Business starts to thrive again, and all is moving forward until Pete returns as a talking ghost dog - during a bed tumble featuring Charlie and Janelle. And from that point life becomes "complicated": Pete is a mouthy sass of a ghost, only Charlie can see him, and every one thinks Charlie has lost it. The rest of the story is a path that leads through a new relationship between Charlie and Pete, a disruption with Janelle and her transient paramour Milo, a new kind of painting that features Pete as a heavenly creature (a genre that fails to attracts Charlie Keefe's following) and a couple of car crashes and a temporary loss of Brownie - and to tell more would take away from the very fine ending of this story.

Where Russ Ryan takes us in this extremely impressive debut novel is not only into the realm of comedic writing, but also into that arena of gaining and losing a dog, the effect that dogs have on our lives, and the profound tragedy of becoming a dog widower. He can touch our hearts and compassion as competently as he can weave a fantasy story of the return of talking ghost dogs and never for a moment does he lose us. This is

very fine writing from a very talented and generous artist: he is donating a portion of the proceeds to Muttville Senior Dog Rescue. Buy this book for your own healing, for your entertainment, and for all the Petes out there!

Grady Harp

Kristin says

I love this book. I actually cried a few times while reading this novel, which I did in one sitting. I should preface my review by saying that it's probably a good idea to at least like dogs in order to enjoy this book.

Unfortunately, I could totally relate to the dilemma, the conflict, the overwhelming guilt that Charlie felt when it came to his dog's death. I also could understand when he said, "...it left a huge gaping hole not only in my heart, but in the house as well."

"It's Just a Dog" really captures the emotion and the process of grieving for your pet. Because it's never "just a dog." It's your child, your confidant, your companion, your always-there, never-judgmental true best friend. Sure, there were moments when I chuckled, and when the story took a turn, it made me smile and warmed my heart.

This book never felt gimmicky or silly or preposterous when Charlie's dog came back into his life as a ghost. It never felt insincere or unrealistic -- it was cute...and charming...and, well, it made you wish you could experience the same thing, with the dog you've lost. No matter how long your dog is with you, or how old they get, it doesn't lessen the pain or the grief. It's hard. And Ryan captures the essence of that despair and utter sadness.

And then Charlie opens his heart and his home to a new dog...and what happens (for both of them) is so sweet and uplifting. It took a lot for him to reach that point because, as he put it, "The only dog I wanted was the one dog that I could never, ever have again." That's a tough feeling to move past.

"It's Just a Dog" is a delightful novel, and it has wonderful elements to it, from humor to anger to despair and hope and everything in between. "It's Just a Dog" isn't just a novel. It will make you laugh and possibly cry but, most important, if you have a dog, you'll "get" it.

Virginia Preston says

Not just a dog

For anyone who has loved and lost a dog, they are waiting for us at the gate. Very nice tale.

Sharon Martin says

This book will be adored not only by dog lovers but any animal lover who knows just how much owning a

pet can change our lives. For me what sets this book apart from other dog stories is the author's witty light humour that expertly balances out the emotional side of the story, taking away the sadness as you find yourself laughing out loud.

Pete isn't your normal dog, he's a celebrity with his own personal painter/owner in tow, he even has his own Facebook and Twitter accounts and when he's no longer on this planet they have a doggy memorial party for him so his old pals could show their respect, which really did make me giggle. There is just one problem Pete can't move on until he knows that Charlie, his owner, has come to terms with the loss, so Pete has to return, bringing some great fun into the story. Without giving too much away the story introduces Brownie, a loveable King Charles Cavalier, fostered by Charlie from a dog farm owned by a rather clever and beautiful owner.

The writing of the author's true love, happiness and sadness in the story is fully appreciated and you can totally connect with the sheer joy, frustrations and sadness of owning a pet. Describing the loss of Pete, the emotions felt by not only Charlie but Pete himself and all the little things that you start to notice when a pet dies is absolutely spot on. I loved how Charlie tries to battle against how a man should feel yet knowing that he just can't hide from his true emotions.

There are parts of the book that really gave me a huge lump in my throat as it brought back memories of when we lost our first dog, Bess a Border Collie. She sadly fell asleep in the company of hubbie and the vet in her favourite room of our home, what we didn't expect apart from the obvious loss and sadness was just how much my hubbie would be affected by letting her go. We immediately left the house and went for a lonely walk without her and stumbled on a house for sale, which we actually bought and still live in now, the thought of staying in the same home was just too much for him to bear.

A lovely, light, easy read that flows really well that I thoroughly enjoyed. It will have you feeling sad one minute and laughing the next as you follow Charlie's roller-coaster ride of emotions and events after losing Pete 'the cutest, crankiest Jack Russell Terrier' and his new found love Brownie. A must for a film, I can already hear Pete's gruff voice in it.

Aileen says

Es sólo un perro es un libro que gané en un giveaway gracias a Russ Ryan.

Este libro trata sobre Charlie, un pintor de perros, él cual tiene que lidiar con la muerte de su perro inspirador, Pete. Pero no es solo con su muerte con lo que debe tratar, sino que también con el fantasma de su querido perro que regresa desde el más allá.

Para comenzar debo decir que la nota de este review no está para nada relacionada con el hecho de haberme ganado el libro en un giveaway, ya que creo que los autores esperan honestidad de parte de sus lectores.

Debo decir que conecte con este libro desde las primeras páginas, no sé si se debe a que he perdido a un perro, a que amo a estos animales o que simplemente me gustó. En los primeros capítulos (y durante todo el libro) tuve la sensación de que éste estaba escrito para mí. Todo lo referente a él, desde los actos, los personajes y el humor. Este es el tipo de libro que cuando terminas de leerlo quieras decirle a todo el mundo lo fantástico que es y te gustaría que todos tuvieran la oportunidad de leerlo.

Pete es un personaje maravilloso, que le da el toque justo de sensibilidad y humor hilarante a esta novela. Creo que Pete es mi personaje favorito en conjunto con Brownie, sobre todo sus interacciones. Charlie es con el que más me identifico y creo que se debe a como sobrellevo su pena y como puede abrirse de nuevo para Brownie.

El libro está perfectamente narrado, al igual que los diálogos. Aparte de ser un libro que te entrega muchas enseñanzas y emociones, es un libro muy bien escrito y de no ser por mis exámenes en la universidad lo habría leído en un día.

Si tienen la oportunidad de leer este libro no la pierdan, no se arrepentirán. Lo prometo.

Por último, pero no menos importante, quiero agradecer a Russ Ryan por haberme regalado este gran libro y por su preocupación en el envío.

Lori says

a *3.5* got this on my e-reader. when I saw it on goodreads. i love books with dogs in the storyline. Charlie is a devoted dog lover. He really adored his jack Russel terrier named "Pete" he knows that at 16 years old Pete is in declining health. Charlie is an artist who paints dogs especially his own dog Pete. when in Paris for an art show his beloved dog Pete dies. Charlie is devastated. feeling guilty because he was not there when Pete died. for months Charlie misses his beloved dog and cannot imagine getting another dog. when he dog loving friend Janelle whose volunteers for finding foster homes for dogs, tries to talk Charlie into getting another dog. at first Charlie strongly resists. but soon falls for a cute dog named Brownie and reluctantly agrees to offer a foster home for her.

a couple days after bringing Brownie home, the ghost of Pete the dog comes back. Charlie is the only one who can see him, and to Charlie's surprise, Pete can talk. and boy is he outspoken. friends wonder what is going on with Charlie, since to them he is acting "strange" since they cannot see Pete the ghost dog. Pete seems to only get Charlie in trouble. not to mention Pete does not act like the dog Charlie knew. quarrels happen between Charlie and Pete hurt feelings etc. Will Pete leave and stop "haunting" his owner? why is Charlie acting out by painting off the beaten path portraits of Pete. will his career as an artist suffer? what will become of Charlie, Pete the ghost dog, and what about Brownie? do not want to give away spoilers. but just hope for that happy ending?

I found this to be a clever book. asking the question what if your dog could come back and be able to talk? what would he/she have to say? Is there a doggy heaven? cute and funny book. by Russ Ryan.

Becca says

So I did not know what to expect when I first picked up this book. I love anything that has to do with dogs and the bond between human and animal is so beautiful. My first experience with a truly touching dog story was when I saw the movie, My Dog Skip, when I was only 8 or 9 years old. When I was given the chance to review a book about a ghost dog, I was all in because who would not want that for themselves when they lost a loved and adored pet?

I was not quite sure how the book would go because it is 180 pages of nothing but how a dog is a ghost, but I

was shocked and thrilled that I loved this book so much that I finished it in one day. Other books I set down and read when I have the time if I am not sure about them, but this one had me crying to myself from the beginning. Since I read the majority of it at work during the day, it would have been a little unprofessional to be bawling like a baby at my desk.

I thought at first that the author was going to be light hearted about the dog coming back but he was nothing of the sort. He was real and in touch with what the real actuality would be like if a pet could come back to you. The fact that the dog's perspective was given a lot of weight kept me super interested. I have loved talking animals and their thoughts, take for example Dr. Doolittle. This was something unlike anything else I had ever read. The relationship between Charlie Keefe and Pete is one to treasure and will grip the reader from the start.

It was a quick read, like I said I read it in one day and I was at work for the majority. So if you are looking for a little story to keep you entranced for a little while...this one is it! Animal lovers will crave more books like this one. Well done Russ Ryan :)

Kim says

More than Just Another Dog Story I love dog books, but I admit some are better than others. Russ Ryan's It's Just a Dog is one of those. The thing is I wasn't expecting it to be. Before I turned on my Kindle and began the first page, I had pretty low expectations. You see I knew nothing about the book or its author other than the fact that it was a novel about not only a talking dog, but a talking ghost dog! I seldom turn down a dog book, that's why I'm reviewing them here on the blog, but my taste typically gravitates toward memoir not gimmicky or cutesy talking dog stories.

Ryan's book is neither of these. It is at once heartfelt and hilarious! And, cleverly engaging. I fell in love with the voice of his protagonist dog painter Charlie Keefe from the get-go and would have continued to the end just to listen to him tell his story, but there is more to this book than a charming style and amiable narrator. The plot may be a wee bit light and episodic, but this book has heart and like all the best comedy, a bit of soul as well. Any dog lover will identify with the emotions of Charlie, who loses and grieves for his dog Petey (who must be put down while he is away on vacation) until said dog reappears as a ghost. Charlie welcomes him back with open arms as any dog owner would. Ryan, who admits in the acknowledgments to having had a Petey of his own, manages to deal with grief and the loss of a beloved pet without getting schmaltzy, in a way that is both fresh and fun. The actual plot is secondary and maybe a little light for some readers, but as an artist myself I had to admit I identified and enjoyed Charlie's career challenges. I also thought his romantic entanglement to ring true, but what delighted me the most were the emotions familiar to all dog owners that managed to make me both smile and empathize with Charlie's plight. Ryan may have entitled his book "It's Just a Dog," but this novel is anything but your typical dog story. It's a fast and fun read with hidden depths.

Mary (BookHounds) says

MY THOUGHTS
ABSOLUTELY LOVED IT

Charlie Keefe has made a good living keeping his Jack Russell terrier in the best of kibble. So when Pete crosses the Rainbow Bridge and Charlie isn't there, he sinks into depression and finds he can no longer paint without his muse. Even though Pete wasn't quite the most friendly and personable dog, the two shared a connection but Charlie didn't realize how deep that connection was until Pete was gone. As Charlie walks by the dog park, he meets Janelle, head of the local rescue group, who promptly signs him up as a foster parent to an adorable spaniel named Brownie. Brownie is the complete opposite of Pete, charming and adorable instead of a grumbley curmudgeon.

Instead of making me cry like any book where a dog dies, I was actually laughing when Pete reappears as a ghost and the pair start arguing like an old married couple. Pete tells Charlie that Brownie is just a rebound dog and that he will always be first in his heart, there is major disagreement with Pete storming off and Charlie regretting his words once again. Charlie realizing that he has been given a chance to properly say good bye starts to paint again. The pictures of Pete alternating between heaven and hell aren't exactly a hit with his audience.

This story is for anyone who has loved and lost a dog. It will give you those warm fuzzies that you feel when poked by a cold nose and hit with a wagging tail. Fans of Enzo, Chet, and Jimmy (you know who you are) are going to love adding Pete to your family. This is also the first time that there is a happy ending to losing a beloved pet. It is a quick read and perfect dialogue, one I can't recommend highly enough for dog lovers.

Paula says

I received this book from the Goodreads Firstreads giveaway program. The author was very quick at getting this book out in the mail. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to read and review your book.

It's Just a Dog is Russ Ryan's first novel. Russ has firsthand experience with love and loss of multiple dogs. He really seems to understand all things related to dogs and owners including plastic poop bags (which are in every pocket of my clothes).

The book is about a man (Charlie) who adopts a shelter dog (Pete) and for the next several years develops a love and bond that most people do not understand unless they themselves have a dog. Pete the Jack Russell Terrier has an important role in Charlie's professional and personal life. Pete gets suddenly ill and has to be put to sleep. Charlie grieves the loss of his best friend. Months later he adopts another rescue dog (Brownie) and he starts to learn to love again. Until Pete returns as a talking dog ghost.. and things get a little crazy.

This book was a very enjoyable read. I will be recommending It's Just a Dog to my fellow dog lovers and friends.

The author is very generously donating a portion of his book sales to an animal organization.
