

QUICK READS

Chito and Pocho

A short story by Cooper Baltis



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Crocodiles are very big. They can be over five meters long and weigh up to 1000 kilos. Also, crocodiles are ugly and their teeth are sharp enough to snap a bone in half. They can swim at a speed of thirty-two kilometers per hour, and they are really dangerous. I guess what I'm trying to say is this: I was really angry when my husband, Chito, brought a live crocodile home one day.

'Honey, I have something to show you,' he said, opening the front door.

'What is it?' I asked from the kitchen.

'Do you promise you won't scream?'

'Chito, you know I can't promise that!'

'OK, try and relax.'

A few minutes later, Chito and a few of his friends carried a crocodile into our living room.

'Why do you have a crocodile?' I screamed.

Chito explained that he saw the skinny crocodile while he was fishing that morning. It was on the side of the river, and it wasn't moving. Chito came by later and found the crocodile in the same place. The crocodile was injured. My husband called a few of his friends over, and together they put the crocodile in his boat.

'Chito! Are you crazy? Get that ugly crocodile out of my house!' I cried, lifting my broom in the air.

'Honey, relax. He won't hurt anybody, he's injured. Look,' he said, pointing at the crocodile's face, 'someone shot him.'

'I don't care! Get it out of here!' I said.

The crocodile turned to me and made a growling sound.

I screamed, and fainted on the kitchen floor.

I woke up an hour later in my bed. Chito was sitting next to me with his hat in his lap.

‘Do you still have that ugly crocodile?’ I asked.

‘Yes, but he’s not in the living room anymore. I put him in the shed in the backyard.’

‘Chito! Why are you doing this to your family? Crocodiles are dangerous!’ I said, starting to cry. ‘You have a one year old daughter!’

‘It’s OK, honey. I’ll take care of the crocodile. It’s no problem. He’s injured. I don’t want to take him back to the river.’

‘Chito, you listen to me: it’s me or the crocodile,’ I told him. ‘You choose now.’

He thought for a moment.

‘Why are you thinking?’ I cried, looking away from him.

‘OK, honey, I choose you.’

But he didn’t really choose me. That night, he took the crocodile outside and hid it along the side of the river next to our home. Every night, after I fell asleep, Chito took food to the crocodile. At first, the crocodile was too weak to eat. After a week though, it started to eat whatever Chito gave him. After a month, the crocodile even let Chito stroke him.

One day, I went down to the river and heard my husband speaking. ‘Relax, relax. Let her touch you,’ he said. ‘Just be nice, and you won’t have any problems. Everyone will love you. See? It’s OK.’

‘Chito!’ I screamed. I ran out from behind a tree. ‘What are you doing?’

I was very angry. My husband was sitting with our baby daughter and stroking the crocodile. I picked up a large rock and aimed it at the crocodile.

‘Honey, shhhhhhh,’ he said. ‘Put the rock down. It’s OK, the crocodile likes us. Watch.’

Chito sat on the ground. He reached forward and stroked the crocodile’s head. Then our baby daughter reached forward and touched the crocodile’s nose. ‘At first, I only touched his tail. A week later, I touched his belly. Now, he lets me touch his head,’ my husband said, smiling at me. ‘His name is Pocho.’

Chito bent forward and kissed the crocodile on the forehead. ‘See? It makes him feel happy. You like kisses, don’t you, Pocho?’

I dropped the rock, and fainted. I woke up hours later in my bedroom with Chito and our daughter. ‘I can’t believe you let our daughter near that crocodile,’ I said to Chito.

‘Honey, it’s OK, Pocho is not dangerous.’

‘Are you sure?’ I asked.

‘I promise.’

The next day, Chito took me down to the water. Pocho was lying by the lake with his mouth wide open. Pocho was almost three meters long, and he looked hungry.

‘Watch, honey,’ Chito said, crouching in front of the crocodile. Slowly, Chito put his hand in Pocho’s mouth. Pocho remained still, and never closed his jaws.

I didn't like the idea of my husband becoming friends with a crocodile, but I stopped arguing with him about it. He continued to go to the lake every day to meet Pocho. I could hear Chito call from our house, 'Pocho! Pocho! Pocho!'

One day, I went down to the lake with my daughter. It was a cloudy day, and as we came to the lake, we saw Chito swimming with Pocho. I was so shocked that I almost dropped our baby daughter.

'Are you crazy?' I shouted to my husband. 'You can't swim with a crocodile!'

'It's OK, honey!' he said. He came out of the water, balancing on Pocho's back like it was a surfboard. Our daughter laughed and started clapping. 'Watch this!' Chito jumped off Pocho's back into the water. Moments later, he came out of the water with his head right under Pocho's jaw. I didn't faint this time, but I wanted to!

My husband hurt his leg and had minor surgery at the start of summer. The doctor told him that he shouldn't leave the house, and that he shouldn't swim in the lake. For a few months, Chito listened to the doctor and never left the house. But one day, he got bored and decided to go down to the lake. I followed him down there.

'Don't go into the water!' I said. 'Remember what the doctor told you.' I was afraid that Pocho would forget who Chito was. I was afraid that Pocho was going to eat my husband.

‘Pocho! Pocho! Pocho!’ he called out across the lake. Pocho came out of the water and ran up to Chito. ‘See? He remembers me.’

Chito lay down on the ground on his belly. Pocho crawled over to him and touched my husband’s face with his big, scaly jaw. Chito kissed the crocodile on the mouth and said, ‘I missed you, Pocho!’

‘Stop kissing that crocodile and kiss me!’ I called over to my husband. I wasn’t jealous, but it was a little annoying. After all, who wants to kiss a man after he’s kissed a crocodile?

Chito and Pocho were friends for twenty years. People from all over the world visited Costa Rica to see the man who was friends with a crocodile. In October 2011, Pocho died. He was fifty years old. Recently, Chito met another crocodile. He hopes to become friends with this crocodile as well.

