

Dog Park Afternoon

[Setting: A dog park, mid-afternoon. Seated on a bench is Nicole, mid-30's, reading. A man, Mark, 40-ish enters.]

Mark:

Excuse me. Mind if I sit down?

Nicole: [a bit unwelcoming]

Actually, I'm waiting for someone.

Mark [sitting]:

This is a great dog park, huh?

Nicole:

The dogs seem to like it. But really, like I said...

Mark:

So, which one is yours...no no, don't tell me, let me guess, I can always tell a dog and its owner...now let's see...hmn, I'd say yours is the Irish setter. Am I right?

Nicole:

No.

Mark:

No? The Pomeranian?...no, of course not... the Havanese? The cocker spaniel? The beagle? It's the beagle, isn't it.

Nicole:

You're running out of dogs.

Mark:

Look, I'm sorry we got off on the wrong foot. I'm Mark Elliot.

Nicole:

I'm unavailable.

Jessica [entering, calling, a bit out of breath]:

Nicole! Hi. So sorry I'm late. Portia was having a meltdown. She tried on nine harnesses before she picked one. Isn't it adorable? It's Chewy Vuitton. Oh, sorry, I didn't know you had a date.

Nicole:

It's not a date. God.

Jessica:

Nicole, don't be so coy. Who is this?

Mark:

Mark Elliot. And you are?

Nicole:

Mark Elliot has a hidden talent. He can guess which dog belongs to whom. So which dog does Jessica belong to?

Mark:

Obviously the King Charles.

Jessica:

Excuse me, it's Cavalier King Charles Spaniel.

Mark:

Right. Well, it looks like your Cavalier King Charles Spaniel is about to get shtupped by a bulldog named Duke.

Jessica:

Oh my God. Get away from her, you brute. She's a virgin. Bad dog, put that pink thing away.

Mark:

Just a virgin and never been fixed.

Nicole:

Mr. Elliot, would you mind intruding somewhere else?

Mark:

You know why I like coming here? The dog park is one place I can go where I can forget my troubles. (sighs) My wife walked out on me.

Nicole:

I'm not interested.

Jessica:

God, that randy bulldog. I hope he's had a vasectomy.

Mark:

I have. Believe me, I hope you ladies never have to go through that.

Nicole:

Rest assured.

Jessica:

Oh my God, Portia, stop fighting! I swear, every time we come here that nasty toy poodle starts in on my girl. All because she's jealous of her outfit. (Yelling) Hey lady, why don't you get your little white bitch a decent harness? She looks homeless.

Mark:

Yeah, my wife packed a bag and left, just like that.

Nicole:

Here we go again.

Mark:

She said it was the dog or her. All because he pooped in the bathtub. It wasn't his fault. It was me.

Nicole:

You pooped in the bathtub?

Mark:

I forgot to take him out after dinner.

Jessica:

Poor poochie. So it was just the one time?

Mark:

In the bathtub. But I ask you, is dog poop in the bathtub a good enough reason to walk out on a ten-year marriage?

Nicole [after a pause]:

Were you expecting an answer?

Mark:

But it was more than that. She was with other men almost every night.

Jessica:

And you put up with that?

Mark:

I had to. She was a stripper.

Nicole:

You know, I was just about to pack up and leave, or call 911, but now I am intrigued. So, to recap: Your stripper wife walked out on you because your dog pooped in the bathtub.

Mark:

Well there's more.

Nicole:

Why am I not surprised.

Jessica:

Portia, what are you doing? Baby, please don't drink from that bowl. You don't know who else put their tongue in it. Wait, I have a bottle of Evian somewhere.

Mark:

I guess I fell for her the moment I met her at the laundromat. I'd just put a load of whites in the dryer when our eyes met. I'll never forget her first words: Can I borrow your fabric softener? That's all it took.

Portia:

Now what are you doing? Portia, please take your nose out of that Schnauzer's butt, he just pooped. You're just asking for trouble.

Mark:

Asking for trouble. That's my wife said when I proposed to her. But I couldn't help myself. I loved her so much I had her name tattooed on my bicep. [rolls up sleeve] See?

Nicole:

Her name is *Bith*?

Mark:

It was supposed to say Beth, but I guess I misspelled it for the tattoo guy.

Jessica:

Portia! Now she's letting the schnauzer sniff *her* butt. Well at least she showered before we came here.

Mark:

So I told her.

Nicole:

Bith, you mean.

Mark:

Yeah. I told her Bith...I mean Beth, before we do anything rash, maybe we should go away together, some place special, just the two of us.

Nicole:

Well at least you were trying. What did she say?

Mark:

Oh, she agreed. Said it was a good idea that the two of us should go away together. But she meant me and the dog.

Jessica:

Nicole, do you have any treats? I forgot mine and Portia hasn't had a thing to eat since brunch. She looks famished.

Mark:

I have a couple of Milk Bones. I'm happy to share them.

Jessica:

Milk Bones? You're joking, right? Portia is totally organic. Nicole do you have any of those organic free range grass-fed cage free no antibiotics chicken treats I told you about?

Nicole:

No, but I have some sushi I brought for myself, if you'd like.

Jessica:

She just had sushi last night, but I suppose beggars can't be choosers. Beg, as in here doggie, beg. Ha, did I just make a joke?

Mark:

I finally convinced her to try marriage counseling.

Nicole [after a pause]:

You're still here?

Mark:

But my health insurance would only cover fifty percent.

Nicole:

Which covered more than your wife.

Mark:

Huh?

Nicole:

Covered? Stripper? Oh God why am I encouraging this.

Jessica:

You know, my Portia is divorced.

Mark:

Your dog was married?

Jessica:

Briefly, to another King Charles named Troy. He was gorgeous and came from good blood lines. Unfortunately the cad was already married! Look, I'm as liberal as the next person, but doggie bigamy, that's where I draw the line. I told her, Portia, it wasn't your fault, he was just playing you and besides, who knows how many other bitches he was stringing along. So I had the thing annulled, and of course she was heart-broken but I told her, darling, someday your Prince Charming will come along.

Mark:

My dog's name is Prince. He's single.

Jessica:

You're sweet, and thanks, but it's way too early. She's not over Troy. I wouldn't want her to rush into something while she's on the rebound.

Nicole:

Jessica, I think Portia is pooping.

Jessica:

Again? She just went yesterday. Honey, wait for Mommy. I have toilet paper. Charmin extra soft.

Mark:

Then I get this letter from her lawyer telling me I need to settle out of court or else she'll take me for everything I've got. I didn't want to get into a custody battle over Prince. I told her, you can have everything else but leave me my dog.

Nicole:

I'm going to hate myself for asking, but what did she say?

Mark:

See you in dog court.

Jessica:

Divorces are so draining. When Portia and I were going through hers she gained two pounds. Poor thing. She'd binge on dog treats and sit in front of the television all day, watching *A Dog's Journey* over and over. She went through two boxes of Kleenex. I finally had to cancel my Netflix.

Mark:

I tried those online dating sites, but I don't know, the people I meet never really match up to their profiles.

Nicole:

Tell me about it.

Mark:

O.K.

Nicole:

I was speaking metaphorically.

Mark:

I was supposed to meet a woman that said she was single, loved long walks on the beach, romantic novels and sunsets, sports, good wine and was five feet five and weighed 120 pounds.

Nicole:

And?

Mark:

She was my sister-in-law, who by the way hates me more than my wife.

Jessica:

I've had it with online dating. You should see the pack of flea-bitten losers trying to date Portia on DoggyStyle.com. I should pull her profile.

Mark:

The divorce will be finalized next week. Married ten years and four months, and what do I have to show for it? Thinning hair, a couple of ulcers, a 2009 Dodge Caravan and a dog that needs an orthodontist.

Nicole:

You still have your Bith tattoo.

Jessica:

Portia wants a tattoo but I explained to her, sweetheart, tattoos are so trendy and besides, in a couple of years you may have tattoo regret.

Mark:

My therapist says I should get out more, move on with my life, find new friends, stop worrying so much, the past is the past, be your own best friend.

Nicole:

You actually pay to hear that?

Jessica:

I'm thinking about changing Portia's therapist. \$150 an hour and she still pees all over the house.

Mark:

But you know, the best therapy is my dog. He's always there for me. He always listens to me. Well, not always. Sometimes I say sit and he lies down. Sometimes I say paw and he sits. Sometimes I say beg and he gives me his paw. Sometimes he...

Nicole:

O.K., we get it.

Mark:

I wish my wife had listened as well as Prince does.

Nicole:

Maybe you should have tried your Milk Bones. Oh my, look at the time. I really should be going. Here, Max!

Mark:

You know, all I'm looking for is someone nice that loves dogs.

Nicole:

Well keep looking. I'm sure you'll find someone.

Mark:

You really think so?

Nicole [after a long pause]:

Stranger things have happened. Jessica, we're leaving now.

Jessica:

Us, too. Portia has a three o'clock grooming.

Nicole:

You still taking her to Canine Couture?

Jessica:

Please. Never again. Last time her colorist practically ruined her coat. Portia's suing her for emotional suffering. I thought we'd try Pampered Bitch of Naples. They have complimentary lattes and dental chews.

Mark:

I take Prince to SuperMutts. They have doggy and daddy specials. Two cuts, one price.

Nicole:

Well, it's been...different. Jessica, I'll call you.

Jessica:

Wait, I'll walk out with you. Portia, come! And take that filthy tennis ball out of your mouth.

[Nicole and Jessica exit Bridget enters.]

Bridget:

Hi. Mind if I sit down?

Not at all. Please.

Mark:

I'm Bridget.

Bridget:

Mark. Pleased to meet you.

Mark:

This is a great dog park, huh?

Bridget:

The dogs seem to like it.

Mark:

Bridget:
So which one is yours...no no, don't tell me, let me guess. I can always tell a dog and its owner.

[Lights]