TO STRAY OR NOT TO STRAY

By

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WHERE: A Brooklyn Dog Park.

WHO:

MILKSHAKE: Black lab who’s new to the dog park. And really good at fetch.
BONE: Golden retriever, not as good at fetch but really good at getting humans to pet him.
TROUBLE: An English Bulldog who doesn’t know how to growl.
LATTE: Dalmation. The one with a plan.
LUCKY: German Shepherd who wants everyone to be together.
HUBERTINA: Basset-hound with an insanely good sense of smell.


HUMAN 1
HUMAN 1
GUY WITH GROCERIES.

WHEN: 5:30 PM on a weekday.
A Brooklyn dog park.
The dogs mill around.
The humans watch.

**BONE**
Fetch? Fetch? Hey humans!! Hey humans could you throw the ball please!!
Look how cute I am!!

A human throws a ball.

Thanks!! I’m gonna jump for it!! Watch me jump- HEEEEYY!!!

**MILKSHAKE** jumps up and intercepts the ball, getting it before **BONE** can.

That’s my ball!

**MILKSHAKE**
Oh- whoops!

**BONE**
What are you? Where did you come from? Let me sniff you.

**BONE** circles **MILKSHAKE**, sniffing.

Labrador Retriever. Female. 1 year and 2 months, ate Taste of The Wild Ancient
Mountain Canine Recipe for last meal, last peed fifteen minutes ago, recently
experienced a huge life change…

**LATTE** approaches **MILKSHAKE**

**LATTE**
Hello! Where’d you come from?

**MILKSHAKE**
Upper West Side. Just moved last week.

**LATTE**
Well welcome to Brooklyn! We’re the 5:30 PM dog park regulars.
I’m Latte, the oldest and wisest for miles around.

**MILKSHAKE**
Milkshake. I was the reigning fetch champion of the West 72nd St dog run.

**BONE**
My ball, please.
HUBERTINA
Meat? Meat? Do I smell meat?

TROUBLE
Grr Grr, I’m a bulldog! How’s my growl today?

BONE
Weaker than yesterday.

LUCKY
Hey dogs!! Let’s trot in a circle! I am here to herd you!

LATTE
I’m too cool for this.

TROUBLE
Yeah, what if instead of playing the herding game I just lie down here and wait for a human pack leader to scratch my tummy? I could do my longing-eyes. I’ve got really good longing-eyes. See?

BONE
Those are okay. I can do better.

LATTE
Alright enough! My fellow canines- I’d like to call our meeting to order. First agenda item: our new member Milkshake. Second: our campaign for a leash-free world.

LUCKY
Could you all form a tighter formation please? I’m starting to get very anxious. I experience great pleasure when everyone’s together and unreasonable anxiety when we’re apart.

TROUBLE
Have you tried mindfulness?

WEASEL and DIESEL, two snarling stray dogs appear at the fence.

WEASEL
Look at those stupid domestic dogs.

DIESEL
What are you all even doing?

WEASEL
Sitting? Staying? Obedience training for your pack leaders?
DIESEL
We’re our own pack leaders. We can play anywhere. Not just in that dinky little dog park.

WEASEL
Catch ya next time, losers.

DIESEL
See ya around wimpy pups!

They saunter off.

MILKSHAKE
Wow. We don’t have dogs like that in the Upper West Side.

BONE
They make fun of us every day.

LUCKY
I heard one time they ate a domestic dog. Not just beat her up. Ate her.

LATTE
Focus, Everyone! If we truly want to achieve leash abolition we need to sharpen our tactics. Now last week’s focus was gnawing the leash apart with our teeth. Did anyone succeed?

BONE
I tried. But that thing’s tough.

LUCKY
Couldn’t stand the taste.

TROUBLE
They keep the leash on a really high shelf, I couldn’t reach it.

LATTE
Why can’t you jump?

TROUBLE
Because they shout No! and I freeze involuntarily.

BONE
I can’t do anything that displeases my master.

LATTE
Wimps. All of you. If we’re going to win our demands we have to give up these sentimentalities. I, for one, attempted some aggressive gnawing and got halfway through the leash. They sprayed me with water but I was undeterred. These are the struggles of our revolution.

HUBERTINA

Meat.

TROUBLE

Why don’t we attack this problem at the root? Go after the factories.

BONE

Leash factories?

TROUBLE

We could chew them to the ground. Everyone take a section.

LATTE

We’re pacifists, okay?

MILKSHAKE

Dumb question but why do we want to abolish leashes?

BONE

You’re really asking?

LUCKY

So that we can be free!

LATTE

Like Weasel and Diesel!

LUCKY

Didn’t they make it sound good? Being your own pack leader? No more obedience training?

LATTE

Freedom.

MILKSHAKE

Does sound pretty nice.

They all contemplate this for a moment.

In the distance humans talk from 6 feet apart.

HUMAN 1
Yak yak yak yak.

HUMAN 2

Yak yak yak yak.

MILKSHAKE
Do you dogs ever wonder if pack leaders’ yaks might mean something?

LATTE
Nah.

BONE
Just yakking.

HUBERTINA
I smell meat. There’s meat somewhere in this dog park.

TROUBLE
I smell it too.

BONE
Yeah.

LUCKY
It’s definitely here.

MILKSHAKE
Steak.

LATTE
Smells bloody. Fresh.

They all savor the smell of the steak for a moment.

LATTE
Well obviously we’ll have to cut our leash abolition meeting short and shift our objective to getting that meat. Hubertina- you sniff it out.

HUBERTINA
It’s that guy over there.

They all stare at a guy sitting on a bench right outside the dog park with several large grocery bags beside him. He is checking his iphone.

LATTE
Hmm.
LUCKY

Hmm.

TROUBLE

Hmm.

BONE

How are we gonna-

LATTE

Don’t be silly! We’re gonna jump over the fence and attack him.

MILKSHAKE

But it’s outside of the dog park.

TROUBLE

Who here knows how to attack someone?

BONE

We never leave the dog park.

LUCKY

Our pack leaders would be so angry with us.

HUBERTINA

But the meat….

LATTE

Maybe if we all go together we can make a run for it! They won’t be able to separate us if we’re really close together. They have to stay 6 feet apart.

BONE

Ok let’s do it!

HUBERTINA

It’s gonna be hard for me to jump the fence. My legs are three inches long.

LUCKY

I’ll help. No dog left behind.

LATTE

Ok! On the other side we’re gonna growl for all we’re worth! Everyone ready? On your marks. Get set. GOOOOOO—
The dogs take a running leap and jump over the fence. For the littler ones it takes a few tries and the others have to pull them over. The owners freak out.

HUMAN 1

YAK YAK YAK YAK!

HUMAN 2

YAK YAK YAK YAK YAK YAK!

LATTE

C’mon, dogs! Rush the guy!

BONE

I’m putting on my fiercest face!

LUCKY

I’m summoning my most aggressive growl!

TROUBLE

I’m a bulldog!! Yeah!! Bulldog!

The dogs face the man with the grocery bags and growl. The man, bored, stares at his phone.

LATTE

This isn’t working.

BONE

We need a backup plan.

TROUBLE

I’m going in for it, I’m gonna channel my most bulldoggy self!

TROUBLE approaches. TROUBLE growls.

MAN with the groceries smiles at TROUBLE.

MAN

Aww yak yak cute yak!

TROUBLE

Growl growl growl

MAN

Cute yak doggie.

TROUBLE

(through clenched teeth)

MILKSHAKE
You guys! He’s distracting him! Grab the meat!

While the man pets TROUBLE the dogs lunge for the grocery bag.

MAN
Hey, hey, what’s going-

HUBERTINA rips the steak out of its paper. She holds it clenched between her teeth. The pack leader humans approach.

HUMAN 1
Yak Yak Bone!

HUMAN 2
Yak Yak Trouble!

LUCKY
Run!!!

The dogs make a break for it. They run. They run through the park. They run through the basketball court. They run through the playground. They run down the streets and around bodegas and through bougie coffee shops and under highway overpasses and down alleys until-

HUBERTINA
Hey guys?

MILKSHAKE
Hey yeah?

HUBERTINA
My little legs are really tired. I think I accidentally ate a tiny bit of steak.

LUCKY
Maybe we should stop and eat.

LATTE
Are we far enough away?

BONE
Are there any humans on our tail, Lucky?

LUCKY
I think we’re in the clear.
The dogs gather around.

TROUBLE
I can’t believe we got this steak!

HUBERTINA
What an adventure!

BONE
I can already taste it.

MILKSHAKE
So soft and salty.

LUCKY
Are we ready to-

But suddenly WEASEL and DIESEL approach.

WEASEL
Oh hey. It’s you guys.

DIESEL
What do we have here?

WEASEL
Looks like the domestic pups got themselves a treat.

TROUBLE
Oh uh hey Weasel.

WEASEL
Hey Diesel.

You guys are the opposite of cool.

DIESEL
How’d you end up all the way out here? This is our turf.

WEASEL
What a delectable treat.

She swoops in and grabs it in her mouth.

LATTE
Wait!

STOP!

That’s ours!

WEASEL

Go back to your nice warm apartments!

DIESEL

Where are your loving pack leaders now, huh?

WEASEL

Go play in your fenced yards with your fancy toys!

They laugh and saunter away.

 Geez.

Wait!

That’s ours!!

Is it really...gone?

That was awful.

I want to go home.

Where even are we?

This place smells gross.
LATTE
Where are our pack leaders? Are they even looking for us?

BONE
I’m so hungry.

TROUBLE
I’m cold.

LUCKY
What are we gonna do, dogs? Dogs? Anyone? How are we gonna get home? Latte? You always have a plan.

LATTE
I don’t know dogs. I don’t know.

They watch in the distance as WEASEL and DIESEL toss the bloody steak back and forth.

WEASEL
Here, Diesel!

DIESEL
Nice one!

WEASEL
Go long!

DIESEL
Oh yeah!

WEASEL
Great catch!

MILKSHAKE watches them toss the steak back and forth. She has an idea. It’s now or never. She takes a deep breath and…

MILKSHAKE runs!

LATTE
Milkshake where are you going?!

TROUBLE
Stop!

LUCKY
Remember how they ate a dog, once!

MILKSHAKE jumps! MILKSHAKE soars! She intercepts! She catches the meat in her mouth!

WEASEL
DROP IT!

DIESEL
That’s ours now!

MILKSHAKE lands with the meat in her mouth and runs!

WEASEL
Get that dog!

LUCKY
RUN DOGS!!

And the dogs run! The domestic dogs run and the stray dogs run after them. They run through streets and alleys and bodegas and fancy coffeeshops and playgrounds and parks and suddenly-

HUMAN 1
Yak yak yak yak!

HUMAN 2
Yak yak yak yak!

TROUBLE
The pack leaders are on our tail!

LATTE
Let’s eat the steak quickly before they can take us home!

The humans shout from blocks away as they run towards their dogs.

HUMAN 1
Yak drop it! Yak yak not yours Yak Get sick yak!

WEASEL
Hey guys?

WEASEL and DIESEL approach panting with their tails between their legs.

LATTE
GET AWAY!! THIS STEAK IS OURS NOW!!
MILKSHAKE
We’re tough!

TROUBLE
Growl growl!

WEASEL
We were just wondering if you would uh share that with us?

DIESEL
‘Cuz you’re gonna go home to your houses where your pack leaders will serve you pellet food.

WEASEL
And we’re foragers for life so we’re hungry all the time.

DIESEL
Which is probably why we’re so mean.

LATTE
I don’t know, dogs.

TROUBLE
They’re tricking us!

BONE
But their tails are between their legs! Tails never lie!

LUCKY
I think we better hurry up- the pack leaders are approaching!

Humans run towards them!

TROUBLE
Yeah, soon we’ll be leashed and taken home!

LATTE
This might be our last chance to eat bloody steak. Ever.

MILKSHAKE
Why don’t we eat it all at once? All of us? Let’s devour this steak as quickly as we can! Domestics and strays alike!

The dogs look at each other. They nod.
Here goes. One… Two… Three….!

The dogs dig in.
They eat the steak in 3 second flat.

Wow. MILKSHAKE

Wow. HUBERTINA

Wow. LUCKY

Wow. BONE

That was- WEASEL

I’m in awe. LATTE

Heaven. DIESEL

I’ve never felt so full. TROUBLE

The world looks different now. HUBERTINA

Smells stronger. MILKSHAKE

I’m changed.

The humans approach and start to put their dogs back on leash.

Yak yak yak yak- HUBERTINA

This is it, guys. The moment of truth.

LATTE

Do we return to our domestic lives? Are we ready to be leashed up forever?
TROUBLE
We had our sweet moment of freedom.

LUCKY
We lived like strays for a day. It was okay.

MILKSHAKE
I miss unraveling rugs. And scratching at the door.
I like that dry pellet food!

TROUBLE
Fences and chew toys and fetch…
Tummy scratches.

BONE
Gross.

TROUBLE
DIESEL
Yuck. See y’all on the streets.

WEASEL
They leave.

HUMAN 1
Yak yak yak yak oh I’ve missed you! Oh I’m so glad you’re okay, yak!

MILKSHAKE
Hey dogs, is it just me or do the yaks have meaning now?

HUMAN 2
Never run away again yak! I love you so much, yak!

BONE
Wow. Yeah.

LATTE
They love us so much!

TROUBLE
We must be changed by our journey. Or maybe that steak.

LUCKY
See y’all later.

BONE
Catch ya at the dog park tomorrow. 5:30 PM.

MILKSHAKE
Can’t wait.

The humans lead the dogs away.

HUBERTINA
Stop! I smell another steak!

END OF PLAY