

Death in the Morning

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A work of fiction, meant for adults. Read something else if you are not an adult, or are offended by stories with sexual content. Then again, if all you're looking for is in-out, in-out, in-out, you should probably read something else. I welcome constructive comments. Enjoy.

Wendy took the ribbon off the little box I'd given her and opened it. She looked inside and chuckled. "Oh! What's this?" A pair of earrings, sterling silver. One was a bunny body minus the head, the other was the head. "How romantic..." she said with a smirk.

"Happy anniversary, darling," I whispered, leaning closer for a kiss (and a fondle). I got the second little box out of my pocket...

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Let me tell you about Dog. Dog operates on very simple rules. First: dogs are pack animals. If you live with a dog, you are part of a pack. Simple. Second: every pack has a leader. If *you* are not the pack leader, the dog *will* be, because every pack has a leader. If you understand these rules, you have a basic understanding of Dog and how Dog works. Oh, the position of pack leader is always up for discussion; another important rule.

Princess and I are a two-dog pack. Used to be five of us in the pack, but that's another story. Not the best situation for Princess, who is mostly standard Beagle, being alone outside during the day when I'm at work, but I'm a good pack leader when I'm home.

A pack leader provides for the rest of the pack, and exhibits dominance behavior towards pack members. When the pack leader is doing pack leader things, clearly establishing and maintaining dominance, the rest of the pack knows their places and life is good.

Some aspects of dominance can be subtle to humans, like who goes through a doorway first -- the pack leader! If Princess tries to go through a doorway before me, I try my damndest to slam her into the door frame, door, or wall, not to be nasty, but to reinforce that I'm the pack leader and I go first! She doesn't try all the time, but she will every so often. She tries, I bounce her into the wall and go through first, call her through, then tell her she's a good girl. She'll turn over on her back and I'll scratch her tummy -- she's showing me she knows I'm the pack leader and she isn't. Making her wait at dinner time is another biggie -- making her sit and wait before I put her bowl down. That's dominance! The boss dog controls when you eat!

Different breeds have different traits. Beagles can be good family dogs, but only if you have others in the pack, and a yard. Think about it -- what were beagles designed to do? They

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were designed to work in packs to chase and give voice. People that get a beagle to be a solo apartment dog, and get upset when the animal barks and tears things up are not very bright. They do not understand Dog.

Beagles are also wanderers. Peripatetic. If I leave a gate unlatched, the gardeners screw up, or a board on the fence is loose, Princess *will* wander the neighborhood. She has her routine -- she wanders the neighborhood, ending up at Chris and Phil's place a couple of blocks away. She goes through the cat door on the side of their garage, into the house, eats their dog's dry food, and then curls up in a particular leather chair. Usually Chris, who is home during the day, gives me a call at work to let me know Princess has dropped by and I should pick her up on the way home.

An important part of Dog is walks -- with us it's a daily walk, usually when I get home from work. Very important for beagles, getting enough exercise. Also good for me, to control my weight, attitude, and blood pressure. Yeah, on cold wet winter days, we tend to cut things a bit shorter, but we still get in a nominal walk.

Weekends with good weather -- Saturday mornings we have good walks! One Fall Saturday, cool but not cold yet, we took off, heading to the trail that leads to the Open Space preserve. Through much work, we have an area where it's actually legal to let dogs off leash. And being on the edge of the preserve, there's lots of interesting things to sniff.

Another rule of Dog: if something runs past, you *must* chase! It's not a matter of choice - it's genetic, wired in -- particularly if the something is small and furry.

Princess and I were walking the preserve. I'm looking around, enjoying the morning air (and watching where I walk -- *we* pick up after ourselves, but others don't). Princess has nose to ground, tail in the air wagging.

Off to the side, a brown streak followed by a beagle streak giving chase! Princess sees this, and the genetics kick in -- she's off giving chase!

I headed that way as well -- a jackrabbit with another beagle in hot pursuit! Pretty evenly matched, but... The jack started a zig to the left -- should have done a zag to the right. For as the jack zigged left, in came Princess, Furry Jaws of Death. The jack didn't see her until it was too late, tried to go right, and that was the end of the chase.

Princess got the first bite. The other beagle joined in, tug-of-war with the jack.

"Good girl!" I called out, trotting over.

Tails wagging happily, growling happily, playing with the bunny...

"Good girl!" I called again. Both were females. "What good girls!" I praised them. Tails wagging happily, growling and tugging on the bunny, the only one not enjoying the process.

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“Oh my God!,” called a woman running up. “Sarah! What are you doing?”

“She’s being a successful hunter! Good girls!” I praised them. The bunny was looking the worse for all the fun. I looked to the gal who’d come up. “I’m Rob -- Princess, the one on the head and neck, is mine. Good girls!”

She giggled. Nice figure, too. “Sarah is mine, and I’m Wendy. Ooh, that doesn’t look good...”

A tug, a tug, and jack’s head went with Princess, the body going with Sarah. Princess gave the head a shake or three, but dropped it in favor of the body. Sarah gave the body a few good shakes, flinging fluids all over. I took a few steps back. “What good girls!” I encouraged as Princess grabbed a front quarter. They went back to tug-of-war with the jack’s body.

“Should they be eating that?” Wendy asked.

“I don’t think they’re really eating it, just tasting. Let them have some fun... You live near here?”

“We come over on the weekend; I live on Rainbow over by Miller. You?”

“We’re a few blocks from here -- we could clean them up at my place.”

“Yeah, I think that’s a good idea -- they’re getting into it, aren’t they?”

“I think the game is about over. Shall we?”

“Give it a try.”

“Princess!” I called.

“Sarah! Come here!” Wendy called.

That worked about as well as I’d expected; not at all. I reached into my back pocket for a pair of gloves and started putting them on.

“You always carry nitrile gloves with you?” Wendy asked.

“Sure, don’t you?” I replied, getting the clasp for the leash ready.

Wendy unzipped the little case around her waist and pulled out a pair of gloves! “As a matter of fact, I do...”

“Okay, I figure we go in, clip on the leashes, and pull them back,” I suggested.

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“On three,” agreed Wendy. “One, two ... three!”

We positioned ourselves behind our respective beasts. Bend down, get the collar, clip the leash to the collar, yell and pull -- “Princess! Sarah!”

Miracle! They both let go of the remains! But they both figured that out and lunged for it again. Can’t let the *other* dog get it! We reeled them in. There was a trash barrel about ten yards away. “Hold Princess while I dispose of the remains?”

“Sure,” she said, taking over my leash.

“Stay,” I told Princess, who gave me a funny look.

Both dogs lunged forward when I picked up the pieces of their toy. But Wendy called out, “Sit!” quite authoritatively and both animals responded nicely.

“Thanks for playing,” I told the parts of the jack as I dumped them into the barrel.

As I approached the three ladies, Princess stamped her front paws and bayed, tail wagging. Sarah joined in.

I stood in front of them. “Yes, I threw it away -- it didn’t want to play anymore!” I looked at my gloves -- the right one was clean. I squatted down and gave Sarah some attention. “Oh yes, you are a wonderful beast and I love you, but I love the other dog more, yes I do...” She wagged and gave me a happy beagle look. “Some on the muzzle, a few spots on the chest, right front paw. Not too bad, considering.”

Moved to Princess, who was trying to be good. “You’re my favorite beast! You did such a good job catching that jack! What a good girl! Looks like she picked up some in her mouth and left side of the muzzle when the head disconnected, left ear, yeah, left forequarters. Oh you did such a good job!”

I stood up.

Wendy smiled and said, “What about me?”

I went on in the same tone of voice. “You’re much better looking than the other two -- and I bet you’re really good at snuggling, although Princess likes to snuggle, but she has her own bed to sleep in.” I took a breath. “I’m sorry -- didn’t mean to get too familiar.”

She laughed. “That’s okay... And I really like snuggling...” She looked me in the eye, and handed me Princess’ leash.

“Shall we?” I asked, pointing to home.

“Let’s go.”

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“Home, Princess!” I told her, and she turned and headed off. Sarah followed, as did we.

“Weak bleach solution for their coats, but what for muzzles and mouths? I’ve got some peroxide,” I suggested.

“That should work. Do you have a wash bottle?”

“Yep. When we get to the back gate, you should hold both of them again -- Princess will go right for the water dish. I’ll get things set up and we can rinse them on the driveway. I’ll grab spare gloves, too. Will large work for you?”

“That will be fine -- why do you have gloves, if I may ask?”

“No fingerprints?” I offered. She gave me a strange look, which I’d expected. “I’m an emergency medical responder at work, and a county disaster worker. I always have at least one pair of gloves with me. You never know. And you?”

She shook her head, smiling. The dogs paused for important dog business, sniffing bushes. “I’m a nurse at CMG.”

“At Rainbow, or El Camino?”

“Rainbow -- I can walk to work,” she said with a smile.

“That’s great!”

She shrugged. “Some times better than others,” she sighed. “This is an interesting area,” she added after a bit.

“It’s changed immensely since we moved here in the early 80’s -- it was mostly rentals then, unincorporated county, lots of little houses. With the schools, it’s taken off, all those little places turning into overbuilt ... you know the way it goes. No sidewalks though. Keeps some of the character of the area.”

“It’s almost rural...”

“We have skunk, possum, rodents, the occasional raccoon -- last winter I woke up in the middle of the night; Princess caught a juvenile possum, played with it, and brought it in the house. It got away from her and ended up cornered behind the china cabinet. Princess was barking like mad and it was bleeding and hissing. Took us the better part of an hour to catch the bastard, and then I wouldn’t let her have it again.”

She laughed. “What did you do with it?”

“Flung it over the fence into the neighbor’s pool.”

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She laughed some more. "We don't have any excitement like that."

"That can be good, too. Here we are -- I'll get the goodies -- hold on to Princess. Sit!"

I handed the leash over. Princess sat, but gave me a very confused look.

I stripped off my gloves into the trash can, then ran into the house, going upstairs for the peroxide, to the office for the wash bottle I keep full of water for the soldering iron sponge, then to the laundry room where I started the water running to get warm, and grabbed a plastic bucket from under the sink.

Grab the box of gloves, pick up the rest of the things, and through the garage, hitting the button to open the big door.

"Oh what good girls!" I called out. They looked happy to see me. I set the first batch down and got two plastic stools off a shelf in the garage.

"Oh, that's great!" Wendy said, taking a stool and having a seat.

I grabbed a trash can and sat on the other stool. I had paper towels and a sponge from the laundry room. "Laundry room sponge, so I don't care if it gets contaminated -- I'll toss it after."

We praised the animals as we cleaned them. It didn't take too long. Neither liked having their mouths rinsed with peroxide. We turned them loose into the back yard and cleaned up our debris. "We can wash up inside," I suggested.

We headed in, washing in the downstairs bathroom.

"I don't drink coffee, but I can offer you hot tea, or there are soft drinks in the fridge."

"Tea would be wonderful!" Wendy said, looking around.

"Your family?" she asked.

I shook my head. "Widower -- just Princess and me."

"Oh, I'm sorry..."

"That's okay; we make do. What did they find?" I was looking out into the yard; the dogs were doing tug-of-war with something.

"Looks green," Wendy said.

I started the kettle going, then stepped to the back window. "That's Lazy River!" I exclaimed. "It was a stuffed music-box toy, a snake or something -- you pull on it and it played

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‘Down a Lazy River’ -- the kids never liked it, but the dogs loved it to death! I haven’t seen it for weeks! It usually lives in the basket near the door with the rest of the dog toys.”

“It’s greatly appreciated!” Wendy agreed.

“How old is yours?” I asked.

“About five -- yours?”

“Almost eight.”

We fixed our tea and sat again, together on the couch so we could look out the window and watch the dogs play. We talked about the area -- Wendy had been here about four years. I’d been here over twenty. The way she talked about finding the duplex she was living in, being able to walk to work, I felt there was more to the story, but I wasn’t sure I wanted to know it.

“Was that the door?” Wendy asked, hearing a chime.

“The dog door -- it’s blocked and somebody wants in,” I said as I got up. I pulled the wood piece out of the inside of the dog door, and through the flap promptly came two beagles, panting and tails wagging. “What happy beasts!” I greeted them.

They said hello to me, hello to Wendy, then curled up together in Princess’ basket.

Wendy gave me a sly smile. “Looks comfy...”

I chuckled. “I have to agree.”

A bit later she asked, “Could you take me to get my car?”

I nodded. “But I’m holding your beast hostage so you come back for lunch, at least.”

She smiled. “That sounds wonderful. I’m going to swing by my place? Half an hour?”

“That’s fine -- it’s early for lunch. Let me get my keys. Oh, and make sure you have the address and my phone number.” I put that on the back of one of my biz cards.

She liked my little car; when I pulled into the parking lot and behind her car, an older Honda, she leaned over and gave me a hug and a kiss on the cheek before getting out!

I waited until she got her car started before I headed home. When I pulled into the garage, I heard a dog welcoming me home; no, two dogs.

They were happy to see me, greeting me on the back porch and zipping in through the doggie door as I used the people entrance. Inside, they were happy to see me again! I sat on the floor with them for a while, being dogs together. It’s important. We’d cleaned them up well.

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“You guys are getting along really well. Let’s hope...”

I got up and looked over the fridge for lunch. As soon as I opened the fridge door, I had two beagles by me. “And what would *you* like?” I asked. I think they’d take anything...

Decided to wait before I started anything. Puttered about picking things up a bit.

I started worrying after a while -- where was she? She had the address and phone; I’d written them on the back of my card.

Sarah gave a yip and bolted for the doggie door, Princess following. “Guess someone’s back,” I agreed, heading for the back door.

I heard the back gate, and excited happy dogs. I opened the back door. “You’re back!” I called, joining the rest of the pack.

Oh she was back -- she’d changed clothes. Before she’d been dressed for walking the dog, with her hair pulled back. She’d brushed out her hair, changed from denim and a sweatshirt to a devastating velour outfit... “You’re back,” I repeated, “and you’re beautiful!” I blurted out.

She smiled as she walked past me, trailing perfume and leading the mob back into the house.

“Care for lunch? Grilled ham and cheese?” I offered.

She smiled. “That would be nice.”

I offered her a seat at the bar, which is just on the other side of the cooktop. As soon as I moved to the fridge, the dogs came around to me. “Your rules on snacks?” I asked as I sliced and trimmed the cheese.

“If it’s good enough for me, it’s good enough for her,” Wendy offered.

“Good news for you,” I told the dogs. They were sitting beside me, the epitome of furry optimism. Their optimism was rewarded with trimmings from the block of cheese.

We ate our lunch in the dining room, the first time I’d used the table in a while. Princess took her spot in the hallway, and Sarah soon caught on. After lunch and loading dishes into the dishwasher (with some crusts for the dogs), Wendy asked, “Give me the tour?”

She’d seen most of the downstairs already. I showed her the office (a mess, as usual). She liked the fireplace in the living room. I admitted I hadn’t used it in a while, but would welcome an excuse...

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As soon as I put a foot on the stairs, the two dogs ran to the top, wagging and waiting for us. As we walked up, I told Wendy of Princess as a pup, remembering those early days when the stairs were such an obstacle, and then so soon she was flashing up and down them. I didn't tell her of Princess's mom, getting too old to do the stairs anymore...

Upstairs, the two smaller bedrooms and the shared bath, then the master suite with the large bathroom and the bedroom. Sarah sniffed the whole place over, and in the master bedroom soon curled up in the dog bed near the door to the bathroom. Princess nudged her over and snuggled in.

Wendy smiled, looking at the room, the big bed... "Very pretty! Why don't we go back downstairs?"

Sure -- down we went, the dogs racing down the stairs. At the bottom of the stairs, Princess gave a yip, and headed for the doggie door, Sarah in close pursuit. They ran barking into the back yard.

"It's out there!" I said for Wendy's benefit.

But when I turned, her eyes were half closed, her head tilted, and she slid an arm up mine to my shoulder.

I sighed and joined her, sharing our first kiss. We moved to the couch, sharing, touching, feeling. She smelled so good, and felt better. I was hungry, yet content to let her set the pace.

We paused, with her sitting in my lap. With a big sigh, she said, "Rob, I have some questions for you..." She proceeded to grill me on my sexual history.

I was monogamous, and all too celibate. She chuckled when I told her that after our second child had been born, my wife got me fixed for my birthday. I didn't have any condoms in the house, but we could get some, or I was willing to wait.

She moved in my lap, hands on my shoulders, and told me she *wasn't* willing to wait...

In that case, could I interest her in a trip upstairs, with a snuggle and a nap afterwards, and then dinner?

Another kiss.

We made it upstairs to the bedroom. After slipping off our shoes, Wendy started pulling off her top.

"Wait," I asked, moving her to sitting with me at the edge of the bed. As we kissed again, I moved one hand behind her back and the other to her face, touching her gently, feeling, exploring. Soon she was doing the same with me. So nice, running my hands over the soft

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fabric and the luscious woman under it. We moved closer, legs touching from hip to knee as we kissed and caressed.

I kissed across to her neck, enjoying her scent and the softness of her hair. I moved to my knees on the floor and kissed between her breasts. She wrapped her arms around me and held me where I wanted to be. After a bit I moved down, picking up her legs and putting them on my shoulders, putting my arms under her to her bottom, pulling myself to her core. I could feel the heat radiating from her as I kissed her through her clothing. She put a hand on my head, holding me to her as she let out a moaning sigh. I moved my hands to the outsides of her legs and pushed in; she got the hint and squeezed me between her thighs. I moaned, letting her know how that felt -- delicious.

We moved more up the bed. I slid an arm under her waist, sliding up to her at breast level, mouthing the side of a cloth-covered breast as I ran my free hand over her. When I touched her other breast, she put a hand over mine, holding it in place. She soon rolled to her side, pulling me more to her. I continued rolling us, pulling her on top of me. She pushed up on her arms, and I pulled her back down. She laughed and got the idea, getting a hand to the back of my head and holding me tight, letting her entire weight down on me. I ran my hands over her, spending time rubbing her back.

She sat up, putting her hands on my shoulders and pulling her knees forward. She gave her hips a rock and a swirl, and I moaned, moving my hands to her breasts. She sat up, out of my reach, and pulled off her top and bra. She leaned over with a big smile, straightening her legs and taking me to a nipple. She gasped at the initial contact and her hips started moving again.

I let go and pushed her to the side so I could get my clothes off before she got me off! She helped with my pants and boxers, and before I knew it I was on my back again, with her on top of me, guiding me into heaven.

So good -- "Take your time," I told her, holding her hips. She leaned forward, her elbows on my shoulders, looking into my eyes and told me, "No..."

Our eyes locked on each other, my hands holding her breasts as she rocked us to heaven, squeezing her breasts when her eyes wavered, rewarded with more moaning and her quivering around me. But that was followed by a determined look as she held my head and bore down on me with her hips, showing no mercy, not letting up until I was drained. We kissed and moved a bit, winding around each other.

I woke with my head between her breasts, that soothing sound of a heart beating. That and her chortling.

"What?" I whispered.

She gave me a squeeze and whispered back, "Look at the chair..."

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She rolled on to me more so I could get a look at the chair by the window. It's an overstuffed recliner, with a sheet covering it as it's used by Princess for at least part of the night. She starts the night in her basket, but most nights moves to the chair by morning.

And there in the chair were two beagles looking at us, heads down but tails wagging.

I moved Wendy back to the side, taking a nipple and taking a deep breath, as if for the first time. I held her, closing my eyes, concentrating on her, hoping the dogs would give us a few minutes.

They left us alone for a few minutes; I squeezed her, she stretched and sighed, and we had two happy beagles on the bed with us. "Down!" "Off!" both of us were calling out, but we were too happy to be really upset with them. We heard a "Rff!" from one of them, then the sounds of two dogs running down the stairs, followed by the sounds of barking in the back yard.

Wendy had pulled me on top of her, her arms around my neck.

"What a wonderful smile!" I told her, and gave her a kiss. "And what a wonderful nap," I told her, kissing her neck.

She smiled and nodded, "Very nice -- I should do that more often."

"Have you ever raised puppies?" I asked.

She shook her head.

"We had one littler -- Princess is the pup we kept; Maxine was her mom. The puppies always used to sleep in a pile..." My eyes clouded up suddenly, and I felt it in my throat. "They knew," I managed to whisper, "that sleeping alone isn't good for you."

We held each other fiercely.

It wasn't hard to talk her into staying for dinner. I showed her (and Sarah) the other dog dish I still kept, telling both of them that the dish knew how to feed dogs, and I would be honored if she would use it. Seemed acceptable to them!

They ate, and we ate. While we ate dinner at the dining room table, they stayed out, mostly. Dogs don't get after-dinner conversation. If they don't hear utensils clinking in plates and bowls, time's up! We moved from the table to the kitchen to clean up, with furry assistance.

One of our other rituals -- before going upstairs to bed, I walked out to the back yard, leaving the patio and yard lights off. The dogs of course followed, and so did Wendy. Standing on the brick edging to the lawn, I gave Princess the ceremonial command: "Princess, leak!"

Like a good girl, she went out onto the grass, sniffed for a suitable spot, and lowered her rear end. Sarah got the idea and did the same.

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Stepping off the grass, we both praised them. What good girls!

Then it was inside, close up the downstairs (but leave the doggie door available), and head upstairs for the night.

We shared the bathroom getting ready for bed. So simple, yet ... so hard to explain the emotions, having someone next to me again.

Standing in the bathroom doorway, getting ready to turn off the light, seeing two beagles already curled up in the dog bed. Turning off the light and curling up together in bed, holding and kissing, unwinding from the day, moving closer, exploring with hands, with lips and with bodies as we joined. Unhurried at first, pausing at times during our exploration, eventually letting go to our bodies, and snuggling up afterwards. Snuggling up against the delicious bottom I'd been riding earlier, one arm under her neck, my hand being held between her soft breasts, the other arm over her waist, kissing her neck and resting my lips against her smooth skin.

Waking in the morning, sliding together, holding and snoozing more.

Mistake -- sighing and getting up to pee. Suddenly I had two beagles, eager and awake, dancing around my feet! Eager, awake, and talking to me! I heard Wendy chuckle from behind me. I turned to glance at her.

"Oh you look so cozy -- I'll go give them their biscuits and lock them out for a while. Please be as warm and inviting when I get back upstairs?"

"If you hurry," she growled.

I leaned over and whispered, "Dog biscuit!"

Princess yorped and took off down the stairs, Sarah and I following.

I used the downstairs bathroom after I tricked them, first locking the doggie door, then opening the sliding door to give them their biscuits on the back porch. Graciously accepted, they took them off to devour, and I closed and locked the door!

Upstairs, getting into bed to open arms. "I missed you," she whispered.

In her arms again, so warm, feeling and hearing her heart beating. "I slept so well last night," I sighed, holding her.

She wrapped her arms around me. "You held me nearly all night long!" she said, kissing me on top of the head. "And that was so nice!"

I started to reply, but she pulled me to a nipple. Who am I to argue?

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I didn't argue a few minutes later when she pushed me to my back and slid down me, pressing into me with her breasts. When I stopped moaning long enough to look at her, she looked at me with a big smile. She pressed in a little and moved her shoulders, sending tremors through me. "Now I'm going to pay you back for last night," she growled.

"W... What?" I managed to sigh out, to be interrupted by her doing it again.

She opened her mouth, I thought to give me a clue, but instead she pounced on my cock. Not gonna argue! That torment didn't last long, as she let me go, moving up and starting me in.

Rocking on top of me, I held her waist, then tried to get her to lean closer. She grinned at me and reached for a pillow, folding it in half. "Lift up," she suggested. Holding her waist, I lifted my shoulders up, trying to get a nipple. She leaned forward, mostly to tuck the pillow under my head and shoulders, but it was enough, and I captured a nipple.

She moaned, and suddenly she was squeezing me and the pillow, her hips moving again. "Oh God," she moaned. We managed to get things in synch, and I started moving my hips as best I could. "Oh yes, yes," she moaned, squeezing me. "Oh ..." She started moving her hips differently, making me moan as well. "Oh good, oh good, suck baby," she encouraged.

I was trying to help, but as I got closer to the edge I started stiffening up, not able to move as much. She moved her hips more, cooing, "So close, baby, oh so... Oh... Oh!!!" She started quivering, her internal muscles clamping down on me, throwing me over the edge as she let out a sighing moan.

She let go of me suddenly, calling, "Oh, I'm sorry! Are you all right?" she asked me.

I pulled her closer.

She sighed and gave me a squeeze. "Like this?" she whispered. I moaned my reply, enjoying her nipple. "Oh so good," she whispered, kissing me on the head.

We ended up on our sides, still holding on. We got the comforter pulled over us and snuggled in.

I woke in her arms to her moaning and shuddering around me, still attached to her nipple. I squeezed her waist, holding her closer.

She moved some, and I rested my head between her breasts, listening to her heart. She sighed and held me, rocking us gently.

"Thank you for holding me," I whispered.

She sighed. "Oh, you... I woke up with you sucking on me still, coming and coming and coming..."

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I held her, feeling better. "What a wonderful place this is."

She kissed my head again; I think she agreed.

But a while later, she sighed. "I think I hear the two loneliest dogs in the world..."

I nodded, moving a little, still holding her close. "They've been abandoned. I guess we should rescue them. I might even have something that dogs eat."

"What's that?" she asked with another kiss on the head.

"Bacon," I replied.

She laughed, jiggling me nicely. "I think they might accept it," she agreed.

"We should get up then."

She sighed again. "If you insist..."

We got up, and eventually made it downstairs. I opened the doggie door, and they came in, so happy to see us again!

"This is part of our Sunday ritual," I told Wendy, getting out the big frying pan and turning on the warming oven. "I have a bacon sandwich, she has some bacon, we clean up the kitchen, and after I get dressed we go o - u - t."

"That sounds good... What can I do?"

I set her up with the toaster, sliced sourdough, and butter.

We had a nice breakfast; Wendy decided to do eggs to go with our toast and bacon. As we expected, the dogs graciously accepted the bacon we saved for them. As we cleaned up the kitchen, I poured the bacon grease into a cup. In response to the questioning look, I told Wendy a little in with the dog food was a nice treat. They seemed to like it, anyway. Upstairs to clean up and get ready.

Hugging in the bedroom, the dogs curled up in the dog bed. "Ready for the ordeal?" I asked quietly.

She chuckled. "Sure."

"When we go downstairs, the l-e-a-s-h-e-s are in the drawer above the dog food. As soon as I open that, Princess will know. There are used plastic bags in the back of the drawer for us to use. Okay?"

She snuggled closer. "Get coats first?"

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“Doesn’t matter -- if I get my coat, Princess will hope that it’s time. You could get both - I can decoy them by walking to the sliding door and making sure it and the back door are locked.”

“Sounds like a plan.”

That pretty much worked. When Wendy handed me my coat, Princess yipped and headed for the dog drawers. When I opened the drawer, she did her dance, with Sarah picking up on it quite quickly. We got coats on, leashes attached, and were out the door.

We took a shorter walk, what I described to Wendy as our nominal evening walk over to the school and around. It was slower than usual; must have something to do with holding hands and walking with arms around each other.

Letting the beasts in the back yard and going in ourselves, we went in the back door, with the dogs still at the water dish.

“You need to keep me warm,” Wendy told me.

I held her hands in mine, then held the rest of her as we kissed. We moved to the couch to warm up together.

Sunday afternoon, cuddling together on the couch, a football game on the TV but the sound turned off and music playing in the background. So nice holding and being held. Princess came in through the doggie door with Lazy River and dragged it in front of Sarah, daring her... Sarah hopped out of the basket and grabbed on; two dogs tugging and growling, their tails wagging.

It felt so good, watching them, holding Wendy.

So why in the hell did she burst into tears? Crying, sobbing, a major cloudburst!

It took me almost half an hour to coax the details out of her. The townhouse she lived in, she’d been sharing with a roommate, but she’d lost her job and moved out three weeks ago. Wendy didn’t know how she was going to afford the place on her own, and one of her neighbors hated Sarah, and the lease was up in another six weeks and she didn’t know what she was going to do and this had been so nice she hadn’t thought about those problems all weekend until just now, and, and, and...

From working as an emergency responder, I know that when someone gets into a highly emotional state, they can’t think clearly -- logic goes out the window. First step was to get her calmed down. That took a while. Walking around, washing her face, a glass of water, walking some more, moving to a different room and sitting down.

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“Wendy, move in with me -- both of you. I’d love to have you. Sarah enjoys it here, and Princess is happy as well. You’re happy. Stay with us this week, at least, to see if things can work between us. I want you to stay -- I’m very biased! Sleeping alone is bad for you -- Princess and Sarah know that, and I know it too, believe me! Keep looking for roomies if you want, but as far as I’m concerned, you can move in whenever you want, and I’ll help.”

More crying, but a different kind, with her arms around me. I ended up holding her with her head on my shoulder, rocking her gently. With a sniffle, she sat up and wiped her eyes. She took a breath and managed a partial smile. She nodded her head. I took that as assent.

“Okay, would you like to bring a few loads of things over? We can take both cars and load them up. I can actually take more than two pairs of shoes in the Mini Cooper if I flop the rear seats down...”

That got a little more of a smile... She nodded again. I guessed she wasn’t ready to talk yet, and I wasn’t going to push it. We got up. She got her shoes, so I got mine as well. I followed her over in my car.

A nice little townhouse in a group of townhouses, an easy walk from the clinic where she worked. Inside was pretty well kept up, as I’d expect. But she grabbed things, pretty much emptying a closet and loading those things into my car, then filling laundry hampers with stuff from drawers. My car full, she sent me off.

I hung up her clothes in the closet; I’m glad she wasn’t there to see me drying my eyes and sniffing as I did. It felt good to have clothes in that side of the closet again.

Wendy arrived and I helped her unload; she’d brought Sara’s dishes with her. I think that spoke strongly of her decision. We put Sarah’s food bowl with Princess’s bowl; Wendy liked the automagically refilling water dish I had outside. I think the dogs like it as well, always full of water, and all we had to do was dump it out and it would fill up again with fresh.

We made two more trips; I think we got everything but the furniture...

She was looking around, holding a box, looking here, looking there... I took the box from her and put it down. I held her close. Her arms went around me and she held on tight. “It’s okay,” I told her. “We’re one pack now.” She looked at me with a big smile and burrowed her head into my shoulder.

We had a simple dinner and talked about schedules. We’d leave for work about the same time, around seven thirty. Yes, she had to drive now, but it was a short drive on surface streets. She wouldn’t need to take off at lunch time to walk Sarah, and that would help. During the day I locked up the house and the doggie door. They could seek refuge in the dog house outside if need be. She would be home before me; when I got home we’d take our walk.

She suggested an alarm clock time. I nodded and told her I’d set the second alarm for half an hour earlier so we could snuggle. She smiled, her chin wobbling, and held my hand.

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We went to bed early. "It's so much quieter here," she told me as we were cleaning up in the bathroom.

As we went into the bedroom, we were greeted by the sight of two beagles curled up in Princess's doggie bed, heads down, tails wagging. "Good night, girls," I whispered as I turned off the light.

We got into bed. I slid into Wendy's arms; she'd already pulled down one side of her nightie and held me to a nipple. I went to sleep in her arms.

The first alarm going off in the morning; I turned it off and pulled her closer. So nice to snooze holding on to someone! When the second alarm went off, we were greeted by two enthusiastic beagles. "Down!" Wendy called, chasing them off the bed.

I went downstairs to give them their morning biscuits; Wendy started showering. I joined her briefly in the shower. We both moved efficiently yet adapting our routines to help each other. I gave her a housekey. We shooed the dogs out and closed the doggie door. Secured the house, out the back, and off to our respective salt mines.

Taking our first after-work walk together -- I had to pee first, greatly distressing Princess. Like Sunday, walking slower than we usually walked when it was just Princess and me. Holding hands, Wendy smiling and talking. Such a good day! It took her a while, but she started relaxing, because she didn't have to worry about running home at lunch to walk Sarah, or Mrs. Chen calling, but around eleven she managed to relax, and the rest of the day was great! We had a great walk together, even though it was getting colder. Back to the house, feed the dogs, feed us. Upstairs I showed Wendy more of where she could put things so she could empty her boxes. Some of it was hard, so many ghosts. We went to bed early, held each other, made love gently, and held each other more.

Tuesday afternoon I got a weird call at work -- a sergeant from the local sheriffs department! What can I do for you? Had I spoken to Wendy today? No, is something wrong? No, just checking. She's been at your place since Saturday? Yup, that's right. And her dog, too? Oh yeah, the dog, too. All the time? Us, or the dogs? The dogs. Except for when we've gone out on walks, the dogs have been there since Saturday. Would I be willing to put that in writing? Sure, what's up. He might get back to me. Okay, I gave him my home phone number.

I made sure to do a pit stop before I left work! When I got home, Wendy threw her arms around me and gave me one hell of a kiss! We gathered our goodies and headed out for our walk.

"What happened today? I got a weird call from a cop?" I asked her.

She laughed. "Good! He said he might call!" She sighed and squeezed me. "I had a great day! But at lunch time, one of the sheriffs showed up and wanted to talk to me. Okay, I had a feeling what it would be about, and boy was I right! That damn Mrs. Chen called them

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like a dozen times in the last 18 hours complaining about Sarah barking, Sarah kept her up all night, Sarah making all this noise! And I told him Sarah and I hadn't been at the house since Saturday morning! I gave him your name and work phone number and told him to give you a call! And he smiled and said he'd take care of it!" She stopped us and turned so we were facing each other. "After lunch, I called the owner and told him I wasn't renewing the lease, and I'd be out completely within a week. He thanked me, and said he'd gotten another earful from Mrs Chen who leases the other half a little while earlier. I gave him the cop's name and told him to give the guy a call. I've told him before that Mrs. Chen makes things up, but now... I hope you don't mind if I've burned bridges?"

I kissed her, holding her tight.

Eventually the dogs got us moving again.

Back at the house, the doorbell rang while Wendy was working on dinner. "I'll get it," I told her, even though the dogs were already at the door to greet whoever it was that had come to visit them.

Opened the door and there's a cop standing there. I stepped out and closed the door behind me.

When I stepped back into the house, Wendy gave me a hug and a kiss and asked, "Who was that?"

"Did you know that Mrs. Chen has a broken wagon?" I offered.

"What?" she said, looking at me strangely.

I smiled, hugging her. "That was our sheriff friend. He said he really wants to fix Mrs. Chen's wagon. When he got through talking to you, she'd called again, and when he went to see her, she claimed the dog had been barking constantly until just before he arrived. He told her to keep a written log of when she hears it barking. And he asked me if I'd be willing to sign a statement that Sarah has been here since Saturday."

She hugged me. "Oh how nice!"

After dinner, we went to her old place and got everything but the furniture. I told her we could store her stuff in my garage for the time being. She smiled and told me the doctor she works for finally mentioned it -- that she seemed so much happier and more relaxed, more focused. I think that was another night spent sleeping snuggled together.

One of my buddies at work has a kid in junior college who is always looking for odd jobs. I told him I'd pay him two hundred bucks to move all the furniture out of Wendy's old place and into my garage Thursday morning, hitting her place at nine and get it done as quickly, safely, and non-destructively as possible! Wednesday night I told Wendy I needed her key.

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When she asked me why, I told her I'd contracted with a band of elves... She gave me the key, and Dave picked it up along with \$200 around 8 PM; he'd call me when they were done.

He called around eleven thirty Thursday morning -- they'd just returned the truck. Everything was sitting in my garage, arranged and covered, and the key was on the drill press. I thanked him and told him to have a good time. Hey, call him when I had more for him to do!

Wendy was dancing around when I got home! She'd seen stuff in the garage, and when she took a look, it was her furniture! When I told her they'd started at nine and were done around eleven, she started laughing so hard she had to hold on to me.

She explained that Mrs. Chen stayed home pretty much all the time, except for Thursday mornings when she played Mahjong and did her shopping. That and Saturday morning taking the kids to Chinese school.

That night in bed, she dallied in the bathroom for a while after I was already in the sack. When she came to bed, she wasn't wearing her nightie -- just perfume. She held me until I melted in her arms, then inflamed me and rode us both to heaven. I went to sleep in her arms.

I scheduled carpet cleaners for Saturday morning. Wendy and I met them when they arrived, at about nine fifteen, about twenty minutes after Mrs. Chen left. Wonderful timing. We were cleaning the kitchen when an Indian guy showed up around ten. Turned out he was the owner. Before I even had a chance to introduce myself, he apologized to Wendy for not believing her all along. He sighed as he held her hand. He looked at the carpet cleaners and shook his head. He'd send her deposits back -- he wished he had more tenants like her, and fewer like... Where should he send things?

I stepped up and introduced myself. We took one of Wendy's biz cards and wrote my address on the back. He took off.

We got the bathrooms and kitchen done by the time the carpet guys were done -- and they did the linoleum areas at no extra charge. I paid them and they headed off.

We stopped for a gourmet repast at Taco Bell, then went home to gather our furry friends for a good Saturday walk!

Back to the scene of the crime. "Furry Jaws of Death!" I proclaimed over Princess as I took her off lead. We let the two of them take off. Holding hands, we walked behind them slower.

"What a wonderful week," I sighed, putting an arm around Wendy.

She turned and wrapped her arms around my neck. She sighed and put her head on my shoulder, speaking volumes. I held her, kissing her head and smelling her hair. "You are so warm and wonderful in the morning," I whispered.

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She looked up at me with more energy, with a definite attitude. "I'm pretty good in the afternoon, too," she challenged.

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Wendy gave me a puzzled look, holding the box with the earrings. "Anniversary?"

I smiled and nodded. "If a people year is seven dog years, then we've been living together for a dog year. That makes it an anniversary." She smiled and nodded. She tells me I'm silly some times... I handed her the second box.

"I know you can't really wear rings while you're working, so I thought..."

She opened the box and gasped at a silver chain with a silver rabbit's head with diamonds.

"Wendy, will you be part of my pack? Will you marry me?"

Oh the look on her face, the smile, the wobbly chin as her eyes filled up...

She threw her arms around my neck, pulling me close. "Oh you silly... Of course I will!" she managed to say.

FIN

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