

Pet

“I don’t think I like the way he looks at you.”

“Who? Barkley?” Jennie asked distractedly. “What are you talking about?”

“The way he’ll stand there, behind you in the kitchen, just...just staring. It’s not right. There’s something about it that’s not right.”

“He just wants something to eat.”

“Well, I don’t like it.”

“You’re crazy.”

Patrick paused the T.V. and looked earnestly at his wife. “While I’m in Florida I think we should put him in a kennel. Or have someone else watch him.”

“What are you talking about?”

“I just think it would be better...Safer!”

“Barkley loves me!”

“I’ve noticed,” he said knowingly. “I just don’t think I’ll feel comfortable leaving you alone with him,” he looked cautiously out into the hall, “before we’ve gotten him fixed.”

She wrinkled her eyes at him. “*Are you insane?* What do you think will happen?”

“I’m just saying, I’ve seen the way he looks at you!”

“Well I’m sorry for how he *looks* at me!” and before she could stop herself she spat, “You know it wasn’t a *dog* I wanted!”

For a moment Patrick was taken aback. Then bitterly, he parried, “Well, I’d never know the way you *touch* him.”

Her mouth hung artificially wide. “Oh my God.” She stretched the last word into two syllables. “What are you accusing me of?”

He looked up at her, red eared, unable to speak.

She silently evaluated him then laughed strangely and turned back to the T.V. “I can’t believe you. Jealous of the dog?” She laughed again. “You are out of your mind.”

Soon after, Barkley entered from the hall, four feet at the shoulder, sinewy and vascular beneath his wrinkled skin, muscular and potent. He walked languorously up to Jennie and rested his chin between her thighs.

“Do you see this?” She raised her eyebrows at Patrick. “Barkley at least shows me that he cares. *He* gives me affection. *He* brings me gifts!”

“Are you talking about that *crow*? If you want a dead bird, I’ll get you one! And *mine* won’t leave feathers all over the living room!”

Barkley looked from Jennie to Patrick, his brow furrowed thoughtfully. “Perhaps its not my place, but if I might interject...” He paused briefly waiting for protest. “You see, Patrick, for Jennie, it’s not about the bird. It’s about the *gesture*.”

