

Valley of the Dogs

To get you into the atmosphere of what my life is like, I'll take you to a scene earlier in the day it all went down. As dogs know best, shit does roll downhill. And we dogs are at the bottom of that hill. It was an Ash Wednesday morning, and me and my cohorts, Koji and "Miss" Asia (she's the alpha female around these here parts) were getting our ashes from Cowboy. He's a born-again, New Age Catholic, so we have to suffer for it. He even has this giant red cross painted on a rocket ship fuselage hanging up in his room! Asia, of course, is his pride and joy. Because gays must have a thing about female dogs or something. Can you tell I have a bone to pick with fancy-ass bitches? Both of them—human and canine.

Asia sleeps with Lady HaHa, or GaGa, or Raja (never can get human names straight) at night, while Koji and me get stuck with the Cowboy. I call him Cowboy because he wears that dumb Howdy Doody hat and his outfits are color-coordinated by John Wayne Gacy's Pogo the Clown alter ego. Get my drift, buck-o? Our humans are certified whack jobs.

Funny thing. More of us dogs are learning the talking gig every day. Who wouldn't learn to talk, with all of your podcasts blasting out all over the place? CNN at the airports, media everywhere; in your toilets, in the shower stalls, up your asses, if you could get enjoyment out of it. Dogs and cats will be running things down toward the end of times. You wait.

Miss Asia and Koji are mute as stones. As deaf to my world of angst as a dog biscuit or a Cowboy's hat. Or, one of GaGa's steak dresses. Anyway, how long's it been since you've been in the wild, dude? The *real* wild, not back-packing or celebrity hiking. Our species has always had one foot in the wild, even when you dress us up like you do. I'm the only one in this family who can speak and think in educated language, in real, philosophical words.

Back to Miss Asia. The star of this freak show, our wealthy owner LaLa, gives Asia, the prima donna, her own Instagram page. And she holds Asia in her arms on the cover of *Elle* or *Bazaar*. Her small, black, and shined-up body gets greased for the cameras. They even dilate her adorable pupils with drops of Belladonna. She was the first French bulldog bought by YaHa, and Asia told us she used to get baked with our owner back when she got lit up on ganja like a Christmas goose, while she wrote those first hit songs. "Bad Romance" and "Alejandro," which she wrote the first year she bought me.

After that re-make movie about the drunken Cowboy singer, Miss RaRa said she wouldn't get high anymore. Good. She already lets Asia sleep on her Fendi Peek-a-Boo bag, wearing a pearl necklace. Me and Koji, on the other hand, are lucky if we get ten minutes of rack time on the Cowboy's treadmill, or he lets us watch Earthquake Calhoun wrestle on the oldie's computer station. We also got our balls whacked off. Cowboy got that duty. I'll say this for him, he can cry at the drop of a hat. Never see many humanoids do that, especially male ones. But he does. Cried over *us* getting *our* balls whacked off, just because our masters can't respect free sex in nature.

Don't get me started about Asia.

Okay, so you get too much time on your hands when you're owned or employed by a multi-grammy-winning artist, full of money, who has about as much common sense as a soggy dog

biscuit. And you're stuck in lock-down with them during a pandemic. You listen, as she explains to you, waiting to go inside the studio in Hollyweird, to record her albums, and she talks about how "dogs are smarter than people," and then I begin to think that she's coming to her senses. Naw! Because she turns around and buys Ass-kiss a new diamond collar and yoga pants, and we two boys get bupkis. What a life. These two humanoids. They're either crying about how everything sucks, or jumping around and dancing like maniacs. I've never seen these humanoids do anything dog-daring, like sprint after a kid on a bicycle, or chase down a neighbor's cat.

Did I already tell you about the Cowboy's room, especially on the day it all happened? As I said, it was Ash Wednesday, and Cowboy was telling us about how we all—humans and dogs—have to die and that it was all right because we're immediately turned into stardust. Shot right back up there into space, I guess. Now that's not how dogs think about heavy shit like that. We believe our Poet Laureate, Allen Ginsberg, and his masterpiece, and our theme song, "Howl." Now here is some *real* philosophy: "What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes! --and you, Garcia Lorca, what were you doing down by the watermelons?" Not during this lockdown. No way, Jose. Nobody's shopping like that, Allen. We're stuck with GaGa and Cowboy and Thai food home delivery. I hate Thai.

Are you laughing yet? In that humanoid way, you all have, with only two ways of finding humor? One way is any expulsion of air from any of your orifices, which immediately sends you into a laughing frenzy. If we do it, in front of you, it's even funnier! If you take a video of us, and we fart, it goes viral in fifty seconds, upon "Valley of the Dogs," and you send it as a video file to Neil Patrick Harris. The second way humanoids find humor is from the inventions of your super-creative brains, like LaLa's music videos. When she shoots guns out of her boobs or wears steaks on her body. We rather enjoy that one. Here's a suggestion from our dog poet laureate, Ginsberg: You don't have to waste your creative powers on music videos or dog fart sounds. No, you just chill out, listen to your favorite music, and snuggle with your favorite mammal. Us.

That's what I was thinking about on Ash Wednesday, as Cowboy was getting his New Age rocks off with his philosophically meager insights about humanoid and dog life, existing in peaceful coexistence and shooting to the stars when we die. Thank Dog, when he finally finished marking a cross on our foreheads with his organic curry powder, and we got our dumb-ass organic doggie health food treats.

Here's another fact about dogs you may not have learned. We have the world's worst case of ADHD. Attention Deficit Hyperactive Disorder. Do you know? The point, sniff, run, fetch and repeat? So, these obsessions we have cause us to constantly be aware of things. Mindfulness? We invented it. We are so distracted by living in the now that we're like the dog version of your Beatniks. We're like that dude in Poe's story, *Berenice*, that Cowboy read to us one time. We get focused on one thing, like your stupid grins when you watch us doing anything, and we stare back at you, waiting for food, but it never comes, and you still keep smiling at us. And it becomes an obsession with us until we finally want to pull all your stupid, smiling white teeth out. Slowly. With pliers. One by one. But we can't. Because we've got paws. One of your brilliant merchandisers even named a brand of our food after our "paws" disability. What if we named your food "Brains," which is your disability?

Cowboy's room? Did I describe it yet? Lots of pinks. Pink throw pillows. Pink throw rugs. Posters of pink ballet dancer humanoids. But then there's a puke green chair shaped like a humanoid's colon. And posters of the Hollywood Gay Pride Parade. It's like living in Dante's Seventh Circle of fashion Hell. But it is home, of sorts. But not like GaGa's room. Her room is a boudoir of celebration to gayness and nature. When you're in there, man, you don't know whether to take a leak on a hibiscus, eat a baby palm, or dance to YMCA.

And then, that Ash Wednesday, after we got our ashes and treats, it was that time when every canine and humanoid in the world joins together in bliss. Cowboy was so stoked about the experience the first time that he named the Instagram page he put up for us "Valley of the Dogs." Cowboy's kind of artistry. Let me explain. *Valley of the Dolls* was a pulpy, popular book and romance movie about rich women like YoYo and gays like Cowboy, who stay plastered all the time on psychoactive humanoid pep pills, blow your mind pills, slow your mind pills, or shut down your mind pills (both temporary and final shutdowns). Cowboy and YaYa, Asia told us, used to get high together A LOT. That was their favorite book. That was their mantra. After they both got clean together, just before she bought me and Koji, they decided it would be "cute" to put up this Internet page and name it after their favorite novel about drugs in Hollyweird.

Dogs never need that stuff. Know why? I told you. Our ADHD. We're either out like a light dreaming about trees, running, and getting our testicles back for a few fantasies, or we're wide awake like a snake in the bottom of Death Valley, except we're dogs, so our paws get hot easy. Cowboy once took a picture of me. The only one he ever took that was arty. I am laying on the cracked ground, in Death Valley, because Cowboy thought it was cool that the Manson Family once lived there, and I looked in his photo like a desert dog dying in the sun like a humanoid. Like a dog version of *Treasure of the Sierra Madre*. On my back, my hind legs crossed in a crooked way, my tongue lolling out of the side of my smashed-in face.

Do you know why we learn tricks from you? We think it's funny as hell. You want us to be so far into your heart we can both see Paradise, but because we can learn to speak (bark), or roll over, you're supposed to be the master? Ha! We know when we do those stupid tricks of yours that we get closer to you. Hell. You love us. You spend more money on us than any animal in the world. Get a clue, North American humanoid. I watch National Geographic. They eat dogs in China, South Korea, the Philippines, Thailand, Laos, Vietnam, Cambodia, and the region of Nagaland in India. I saw the graph on Cowboy's computer. Yin and Yang. It's dog eats dog or man eats dog. We enjoy the good life, partner, I know, but if you get that dog-eating glow in your eyes one day. Let's just say two can play at that game. Read any *Cujo* lately? Koji's got his *Cujo* act down pat right now. Watch-out! Woof!

I know, you're all thinking we're nothing but three little Frenchies, from a powder-puff humanoid country, France. No French fries. Freedom fries! So, we're supposed to be powder-puff dogs, and we can all live together in this family like wimpy fruitcakes. Look carefully. Really. Don't we look like they took a frying pan to our mugs and poured greaspaint all over us? We aren't over thirty pounds, soaking wet. But we've got you trained.