



Ménage à Trois

She wouldn't leave him alone, grinning up at him, her eyes hot. She pawed at him and nibbled his cheek. She rolled onto her back and nuzzled him, her perfect teeth leaving a damp trail across his naked thigh. He patted her butt and kneaded her little belly. He ran his palm across her breast and stroked her legs.

But he didn't put down the book he was reading. *Still Life With Woodpecker*. Tom Robbins. He'd waited nearly three weeks for it to be delivered, but he was about to finish it in less than four hours. *Oh, well*. There were more books in the tottering pile on the night stand.

His girlfriend propped herself up on one arm, a few strands of auburn hair stuck to her cheek. Jess looked up from his book long enough to admire her for the ten-millionth time. It had taken days to persuade her to stay the weekend with him.

"Jess, if you're going to have a dog, you can't just ignore her," she said. "Put down that damn book and pay attention to her, then make her get down. She's drooling all over the pillow."

Monique had talked him into adopting the dog from the shelter where she volunteered. How could he say no? *Girls love dogs, right?* After a few weeks he wouldn't have parted with Sadie even if she mangled another pair of Chuck Taylors. *She's just stressed by the change*, Monique told him. It must have been so, because it was days since she'd chewed anything but one of the toys Monique purloined from the shelter.

"You know what your problem is, Jess," she said. "You love books and movies and imaginary shit more than you care about someone real, right in front of you, who loves you more than she loves anything."

"Fine," he said, and rolled off the bed. He tossed the book on the floor and snapped his fingers.

“C’mon Sadie,” he said, “let’s you and me blow this dive and the lady can stay here and contemplate the folly of her snarky ways.” He pulled on his jeans and socks, but the dog didn’t move. He stood in the bedroom doorway and whistled. “C’mon, goofy girl, let’s roll.”

The dog leaped off the bed and trotted with him to the apartment door. He looped her harness around her and grabbed a plastic bag from the roll hanging on a nail in his window sill, in case she decided to take care of business while they were out walking.

“Back in a bit, ‘Nique,” he called out before closing the door.

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When they got back to the apartment, she was gone.

He flopped on the couch he and Monique had hauled away from a garage sale out in Ballard, the perfect “dog couch.” *Of course* Sadie would be allowed to be on it, because there was nothing she could do to it that hadn’t already been done by the three raucous kids who helped them load it into Monique’s pickup truck.

The dog crawled up on the couch and leaned into him. He pulled out his phone and focused the camera on the two of them, then waited for Sadie to stop wagging her tail and jostling him, before tapping the button. He tapped in Monique’s number and sent the photo flying.

“Come back, Monique,” he texted. “there’s a warm spot on the couch for you. Oh, wait, it may be a little damp. Bad doggie! JUST KIDDING.”

He went into the bedroom and retrieved his book, but before he could get back to the couch his phone chimed.

It was a text from Monique. A photo of the cover of a book popped up on the screen. He squinted to read the title. *Maybe it was time for reading glasses.* Maybe Monique would think it was sexy if he got some of those black frames that made you look like Woody Allen or Johnny Depp.

He’s Just Not That Into You the cover of the book said.

He looked over at the dog, who leaned in again and rested her head on his shoulder.

“Don’t worry, Sadie,” he said. “She’ll be back. The glasses will do it, Sadie. She’ll love the glasses.”