

My Little Brother

At 3 the bus drops off the high-schoolers and they walk with their heads down in their phones back to their homes. From a distance I see one approaching that looks somewhat like my sister. I'm ahead of her on the sidewalk, and Remy takes frequent stops, being a fervent sniffer, and she catches up to me just as he's found his spot and circled it and squatted down. She crosses the street at the sight of me, probably thinking I'm some sort of creep, but on seeing Remy squatted over the grass and me pulling out a black plastic bag with the words "Poop Happens" printed across it, she drops her guard and walks ahead of me along the sidewalk. So strange, these girls. It's nothing new, happened in my generation too, they're all afraid and high and mighty and mighty indignant about it too. As if anyone cares about you. How unfriendly.

There's several SUV's leisurely pulling around stop-signs in the neighbourhood. Perhaps it's the teachers going home. Whoever it is, I hope they count their blessings that they get to miss the rush. In a couple of hours even these side-streets are uncomfortably congested, to say nothing of the main veins that carry the busy-bodied workers to and fro. I see another group of high-schoolers approaching me from ahead. A group of 4 boys, of varying heights and body-weights; puberty is hitting them all differently. Across the street walking parallel to them is a lone girl with her head down in her phone. Funny how they can't walk together. Then again, you can hear the boys from a block away, spewing out obscenities in deep pubescent voices. I wonder about the group dynamic. The loudest is trying to get someone's attention, surely. As I walk by I pull in Remy's leash tight as he raises his soft and wet muzzle up to sniff them. They look down at my little brother, but not at me. I say to them "What's up, guys?" as I pass by. They do not respond.

Me and Remy pass a corner and there is a pudgy old lady with a face like a pug and Einsteinian hair coming out of her garage. Her grandson is in an SUV parked on the driveway, seriously engaged in his handheld device. I smile and nod at the lady and she smiles and nods back. That's a bit better.

We get to the park and I remove Remy's leash and he stands there looking confused. This is all a ploy. Remy's social know-how is much more advanced than even my own, despite all his emo-like tendencies. He's waiting for me to turn my back before he casts off in the other direction all-innocent like. Whatever. Let him do what he likes. I go by the soccer net that I've been using as a pull-up bar and hang there for a few minutes. Stretch out the sinews. Lengthen the body. It is a really good and pure and free feeling, being able to hang. In the distance on the sidewalk that runs adjacent to the park I see another old lady walking her dog. Knowing Remy, if he happens to catch sight of that dog he is going to run and start barking and generally be a nuisance. I drop from the bar and start calling out to him "Remy! Here, Remy, come here! Hey! Over here Remy!" I'm shouting out to him and pointing to the floor by my feet and he looks at me with a dumb look on his face like he doesn't understand what I'm saying. Like I said, he's very socially adept. He keeps casting glances over his shoulder towards where the lady and her dog are walking. Luckily there's a little grassy knoll that blocks his line of sight. As I'm walking towards Remy – he's standing in the sunshine, the sun glowing fiercely over his curly white hair – I'm struck with the image of a proud lion. Despite his condition as a house dog, condemned to eat food out of a tin bowl and pass his days meandering about the house, he stands proud. This fills me with a sense of pride as well. I place the collar around Remy's neck and shoulders and we start back.

I keep a tight leash on Remy. I feel sorry for my little brother. Seems like I'm the only one in the house who seems to think the little guy needs exercise and sun every once in a while. And the odd times the others bring him they let him run amok, and so of course he's got no discipline. That's why I keep the leash tight. "You are to walk by my side Remy, and at my pace, do you understand this?". He understands, I am sure of that. Just let him try to rebel against me, his big brother. He has never, nor would he ever dare. He loves me too much, and understands deep down in his dog heart that I love him too.

As we cross the street I see a pubescent girl with dangly legs riding a bike that is too small for her growth spurt. Before I am given the chance to make any form of introduction the girl smiles at Remy and then up at me. A nice unassuming innocent little girl smile. This brings a sense of hope back into me and I am reinvigorated for the second half of the walk.

We're back on our street now. Our street that Remy knows so well. We're walking now, getting ever closer, the walk almost done. My body feels a little jerked in every direction. My jaw feels lopsided. I slow down my pace a bit and try to let my body respond to the earth around me. If only I could adapt as well as Remy. There's something in his dog brain that is much better suited to facing reality than mine.

Close now to the house I've released a bit of slack on Remy's leash. A white SUV is slowly rolling down the street. I am vaguely aware of the distance between me and Remy and can sense that he's ventured out somewhat into the street, and I make a small effort to tug him back in towards me, but it is too late and the car passes by. If Remy had been a few feet closer he would have been run over. I can just imagine the tire of this big heavy SUV crushing Remy's spine down onto the pavement, obliterating it, pulverizing his spine, shooting his guts out to the sides. How horrible. My family would have been very mad at me if that were to happen. I would have a lot to answer for. My sisters would probably be crying. I, more than likely, would be vilified. Of course it is a fate I would never wish upon Remy in a hundred years, but then again, someone would have to take the blame, right? Good thing my Remy stays close to me, my dear, my little brother Remy.