

Tennille

By Nicholas Escobar

It was early morning when the dog arrived.

I had just finished making scrambled eggs. To be fancy, I put some green bell pepper in there with a bit of day-old bacon and a dash of dried mint. The results were fair. Not astounding. Probably didn't need the dried mint. I was being too adventurous.

I ate my so-so meal while watching Sportscenter. Highlights from a Cubs and Cardinals game. Then a commercial for insurance blasted onto the screen and I turned off the TV in disgust. I hated insurance ads. They sent me into a rage if I didn't turn off the TV immediately. Luckily my reflexes were on fire that morning. Maybe it was all the protein from the eggs. I'm no doctor, but I'll go with that.

Out of the corner of my eye, I saw the backside of a massive German Shepard walk by the backdoor. Or at least I thought it was a German Shepard. I did a research essay on different dog breeds back in elementary school. I surprisingly recalled a lot of my research for that paper, even thought it was, now regrettably, decades ago. And the tail looked like a G Shep to me. (That's my nickname for them. I'm trying to get it to catch on).

Some dried-mint-egg fell out of my mouth. I stared at the dog's behind with surprise. How odd. A large German Shepard just walking in my backyard.

I stood up, walking to the glass door. The dog was sniffing in some of my planters in the back. Some quick background for the uninitiated: I thought I would be ingenious and grow my own vegetables and herbs in my backyard. That way I didn't need to ever go to the grocery store. Unfortunately, you can't grow frozen pizza bites, so I still had to get those. And then I forgot to water the plants so everything died and now I had planters filled with weeds which I guess were better than nothing.

The dog was currently biting some of the weeds with interest. Maybe it read my nice hand-written sign that said "Heirloom Tomatoes" and thought it would have a nice salad. Alas, it was disappointed. It turned its head and looked straight at me, and made its way towards the glass door.

I backed up. Suddenly concerned. The dog was quite large. Not a fluffy little lap dog. It was intimidating. And probably if it wanted to it could bite off my face. I mean it had big teeth a strong jaw, and they are, like, police dogs right? This one might not be trained in that work, but it could be passed down in the DNA. I'm no scientist, but I'll go with that.

The dog looked at me with intense interest. It barked. Loudly. Its head cocked to the side. Sort of cute but also terrifying. I noticed that it didn't have a collar on. Now I was really concerned. It probably didn't have its shots. This was all around a bad situation.

I closed the wooden door and ran to my phone. I looked up the Seaside Police Department and called the hotline.

“Hello, Seaside Police what is your emergency?”

“There is a large German Shepard in my yard. It doesn’t have a collar.”

“Where are you sir?”

“372 Wood Oak Lane.”

“Ok, we are sending an officer out.”

I put down the phone. Feeling like I’d done my neighborly duty. I went back to the door and peeked through. The dog was gone.

“Shit.”

I ran from the kitchen into the the living room. Large windows looked out on a semi-sad-looking yard. The grass was filled with weeds. I didn’t really mow that often. So it sort of looked like a weed jungle out there. But no dog. Just weeds.

“Shit.”

I ran to the front door of the house, which overlooked my front yard and the street. Nothing. No dog. Just Carole in her Prius driving by. I fucking hated her.

I had to find Tennille. That was what I had named the dog. For some reason I always had Captain and Tennille’s 1975 hit “Love Will Keep Us Together” in my head at all times. Tennille as a name seemed to fit the dog well. Better than Captain. I think you can tell if a name works by picturing the person (or in this case, dog’s) eyes. When you think of the name, and picture the eyes, does a spark occur? An imaginary spark, not a real one. If the imaginary green sparks occur when you think of the name and picture the eyes, then the name is the right one. I nothing occurs, you have picked a shit name. When I thought of Tennille’s (semi-terrifying) eyes and said its name, there was a green spark. So its name was now Tennille. Named after Toni Tennille.

I went into my dining room. It wasn’t really a dining room in my current living situation. It was more like a “home-office-laundry-storage-microwave-toaster-oven-supply-closet”. It had some windows that looked out on the side part of the exterior of the house which was mostly weeds and also housed the old hose that I never used to water the plants. No Tennille.

I paused. Considering my options. I had already notified the authorities. If they came here, and there was no dog, I would look like an idiot. And...could I be *arrested*? I mean, it would look like I was lying. Would that be considered *perjury*? I started to panic. I had to find this dog. Or I’d be going to prison. And I wouldn’t do well in prison.

I went to my kitchen door, put on a pair of swimming goggles and oven mitts, took a deep breath, and walked out onto my porch like Neil Armstrong stepping foot onto Mars (I think).

The outside air carried the scent of danger. A bird screeched in the distance. Was that a...parrot? I couldn't be sure. I did a research paper on dogs, not birds. I looked left and right, up and down my driveway. Only my beat up Toyota Corolla (in white, I wanted the blue one but for some reason they were asking 10,000 more for it, and I couldn't pay for it at the time. Heck, couldn't pay for it now. So I was stuck with the white one.)

I started walking down my driveway to my front yard, fully aware of how ridiculous I looked. I embraced it. This is how people will dress in 200 years. When we are all underwater creatures who need to grasp hot things conveniently because I guess we haven't evolved to have heat resistant hands yet.

The front yard was still empty. I walked out into the street, looking left and right. No sign of Tennille. Just quiet suburban houses in the early summer sun. The humidity was already palpable. I felt wet and stressed.

I looked back down my driveway and saw Tennille. And Tennille saw me. It was at the far end by the dead planters. It started to jog towards me.

I panicked, running sideways across my yard, going into the side area by the hose and into my backyard. I looked behind me and saw the dog following at quite a clip. I mean, this thing was *fast*. I ran track in high school, so...there you go. I almost broke a school record. Like, I was 3 seconds off. No lie.

I was hyperventilating and felt like my heart was in my left foot and I was stomping on it with full force. I pushed my way through the weeds and rounded the backside of my house, finally arriving at my back door only to find it...locked?

What!? Why!? I literally *never* locked my door. Even when I left the house to go on errands. I always forgot. Probably not a good habit. And I didn't even *lock* the door this time. I didn't have my keys. They were in a box in the basement labeled "childhood bath toys". At least I think they were.

I heard panting behind me. Tennille's eyes were wide, ready to pounce, its panting heavy, probably chock full of rabies. Rabies was practically oozing out of it. I would definitely need to get a rabies shot and I hated shots. Even as an adult I couldn't look at the needle and I'd ask for a fun Band-aid and a lollipop. It was always an awkward exchange with the nurse.

Right as I saw my life flash before my eyes, Tennille stopped. Right in front of me. Looking at me expectantly. It drops an item on the ground. My keys.

"Thanks."

I looked closely at the dog. It was dry, even though it thunderstormed last night. So it hadn't been out all night. It looked like it had just been to the groomer. It was actually a really pretty dog.

"Hey...Tennille."

The dog cocked its head. Panting a little bit. It's pink tongue showing.

"Did you lock my door?"

The dog continued to pant. Eyes watching me intently.

"Are you thirsty?"

Another cock of the head.

I gingerly pet the top of its head with my oven mitt. It seems confused but happy at the gesture.

I opened my kitchen door and grabbed a soup bowl and filled it with water. Tennille lapped it up vigorously. I played "Love Will Keep Us Together" on my phone. Tennille, not surprisingly, seemed to like listening to it.

"Are you hungry?"

I looked in my fridge. Nothing. I looked in my freezer. Pizza rolls.

"Pizza rolls?"

The dog looked up from the bowl. Then started to drink again.

"I guess not."

I took off my swimming goggles, but kept the oven mitts on because I was pretty sure rabies spreads through skin contact (at least that was what I read on an online forum).

KNOCK KNOCK.

"Shit."

I answered the door. Oven mitts still on. "Love Will Keep Us Together" still playing.

A police officer stood there. I glanced at my oven mitts, self-conscious.

"Just was about to get some banana bread out of the oven."

The police officer looked confused.

"We got a report about a lost dog?"

"Uh. Yah."

"And?"

"Well...it's here."

"Ok. I can take it with me."

"Ok."

I didn't move.

"You have to get out of the way now."

"Ok. Yah."

I shuffled to the side. The police officer walked in. Sniffed the air.

"It doesn't smell like banana bread."

The police officer looked around the kitchen. Confused.

"Where is the dog?"

I looked up. I was staring at a crack in my countertop. Hadn't noticed that before.

"What?"

"Where is the dog?"

"It's right- "

I pointed to where Tennille was drinking. No Tennille and no bowl.

"Uh."

"Are you ok sir?"

"Yeah. I'm fine."

The police officer looked down at my cold so-so breakfast.

"Did you put dried mint in your eggs? With bacon?"

"Yah."

"Doesn't sound very good."

"It wasn't the greatest."

"I'd arrest you for that, but I can't."

"I understand."

"So no dog?"

"There was a dog. Now there isn't a dog."

"Ok."

The police officer started to leave. Stopped. Nodded their head up and down to Captain and Tennille.

"Great song."

Then they walked out the door.

I looked back at the crack in the countertop. How long has that been there?

The End