**Ellaheh Gohari**

**The Day of The Dog**

I woke up in a pool of sweat, breathing heavily. It had been a hard night. My girlfriend of three years broke up with me, and I drank myself to sleep. My head was pounding, and I couldn't see very well, the telltale signs of a hangover. I needed some sort of relief, and I needed it fast. With significant effort, I hefted myself out of bed, wanting some water, when I fell to the ground.

     Ughhhh, I thought, trying to push myself off the wooden floor. No luck, I couldn't stand upright. What the hell? Did my legs break or something? I looked down for the first time, trying to focus my vision to see what was wrong when I noticed fur. Lots and lots of fur.

     "AHHHH!" I shouted, or tried to. It came out as a yap instead. For some reason, I could hear it echoing a mile away, my ears shockingly keen. I gasped for air and was overcome by hundreds of scents, from gasoline to chicken to sweat to sewage to-

     I shuddered. I needed to find out what was happening. I hobbled over to the bathroom blindly, using my sense of smell to guide me, and stared at the mirror. Though my vision was hazy, what reflected back at me was undeniable. I was a dog.

     Spiraling into a panic, I scurried away as fast as I could, my four stubby legs moving surprisingly quick for their size. This couldn't be real. It couldn't. I was probably just dreaming, right? Deep in my heart, I knew that wasn't the case. I was a dog, somehow.

     Great. Just great. First Beatrice breaks up with me, then I get drunk, and now this? Can my life get any worse? I ranted in my head as I made my way to the kitchen. It was easy to find, my sense of smell better than it had ever been before, and I craved sustenance. I had no clue how I was going to get it though.

     Think, James, think. What do dogs do when they don't have food? I paused, considering this. They steal it. I frowned, or tried to, before jumping onto the counter. There was minimal food, all of it belonging to my roommate, but it was all I got. I used my head to knock an opened bag of tortilla chips onto the ground.

     I hesitated at the sight of the salty tortilla chips sitting innocently on the floor. Eating food from the floor was disgusting, but with no other alternative, I jumped from the counter and crunched down. Even though I loved tortilla chips, what I was eating tasted utterly awful. I tried to keep it in my stomach, but it was too late, and I vomited all over the floor and on my belly.

     "James? Is that you?" someone asked from a different room. I instantly recognized it as my roommate, Luke, who sounded just as woozy as I felt.

     "Uh, yes, it's me," I said, but all that came out were yaps. Crap. That'll definitely confuse Luke. I heard him get out of bed and walk to where I was sitting, each step pounding like a hammer in my brain. Though I was small and fast in my dog form, I couldn't hide in time.

     He finally stood right in front of me, almost stepping in my puke. I couldn't make out his expression, but knowing him, he probably wasn't pleased. "James?" he called, eyeing me warily. I couldn't respond. "James, this isn't funny. If you got a dog, you should've told me." The room was dead silent and I shook involuntarily. Luke sighed. "Of course James goes to work and leaves me with this ugly-ass chihuahua. Why am I even surprised?" He picked me up and studied me. "Well, I guess I should get you cleaned up. Can't have James yelling at me for letting his dog stay caked in vomit."

     Luke was nice for helping, of course, but I didn't want him to bathe me. It was too weird. I tried to escape Luke's strong grip, but he just laughed and pet me slowly. "It's okay," he paused, looking at my bottom-half, "boy. Uncle Luke's gonna help you get all cleaned up. And then, he's gonna call your dad, James, and scream at him. Doesn't that sound fun?"

     I shook my head as fast as I could. If Luke called me, he would realize my phone was still at the house. Luke didn't seem to notice my concern and plopped me into his still-empty bathtub. He turned on the faucet slowly. Instinctively, I shot out of the tub, oddly afraid of the liquid.

     "Woah there, boy. Calm down. It's just water." He ran his hand underneath the faucet. "See? Not too bad." He picked me up and placed me on the tile floor. "I'll keep you here for now, but don't go anywhere. You're dirty."

     Damn my chihuahua form, I thought angrily as the bathtub filled with water. And damn this whole day. Without warning, Luke dropped me into the bath, now filled to the brim with cool water. If I was human, I would even describe it as refreshing. Unfortunately, I was not the correct species.

     "AHHHHHHHHHHHH!" I tried to scream, my yaps growing frantic. Luke turned toward me in shock at my outburst.

     "It's okay," he said comfortingly, petting my shivering form. I had never seen such a sweet side of him before. "Man, the things I do for James…"

     I growled at him, baring my teeth. This was not what I wanted to do after a breakup. I was planning on playing video games, maybe eating a tub of ice cream, not being stuck as a chihuahua.

     Luke sighed, trying his best to scrub the clumped-up vomit from my brown fur. "Look, dog, I don't wanna do this either, but if we both stay calm it'll be done a lot faster." The human side of my brain knew he was right, and I bowed my head, letting the water run down my back.

     It wasn't long before Luke started talking again. "To be honest, I don't even know where you came from. I mean, James was drunk out of his mind yesterday, there's no way he would've been able to take you in. He's not normally one to lose control like that, but he said something about Beatrice dumping him. Honestly, good riddance. That asshole doesn't deserve him." I hissed angrily at him, but my heart wasn't in it. Beatrice broke my heart, and Luke was just looking out for me like a good friend was supposed to.

     He continued to pet my wet fur. "This may sound weird, but since you can't understand me, I guess you won't care. You kind of remind me of James. I don't know what it is about you… but you do. Your fur is the exact color of his hair, it's so strange."

     My eyes widened as much as they could in my dog skull. If he found out I was a dog, it would get awkward real fast. Luke didn't seem to notice and kept washing my small body, whistling all the while. Before I knew it, he was done.

     "See? Was that so bad?" I shook my head and he chuckled. "It's as if you understand me or something." He grabbed a small towel from the rack — I couldn't determine the color due to my awful vision — and dried me off. "Now, I'm going to keep an eye on you. Don't want you getting into more of my food." At the mention of food, my stomach grumbled uncomfortably. "Ah, right. You're hungry."

     Luke scooped me in his arms and strode over to the kitchen, side-stepping the rancid-smelling vomit. He opened the cupboards and was predictably greeted with nothing. "Man…" he muttered, "this is some BS. James really left this dog without anything?" He grabbed his keys from the counter, the noise much louder due to my enhanced hearing. "C'mon, we're going for a drive."

     He walked into the garage, my tiny chihuahua body still trembling in his hands, and placed me in the passenger seat of his car. "You better not throw up again, dog. This car is brand new." I gave him the best death glare I could. It wasn't my fault I threw up the first time. Luke shrugged and started the engine, placing his foot on the pedal and driving uncharacteristically slow. He probably didn't want to upset my weak stomach.

     As we drove, I looked wistfully out of the window, my mind focused on one woman: Beatrice. She was the love of my life. I thought I was going to marry her, but apparently, she wanted a husband who was willing to take risks.

     I can take risks! I thought in my head, trying to convince myself of something that simply wasn't true. She doesn't know what she's talking about. By accident, I whimpered out loud, and Luke absentmindedly stroked my back with his free hand not on the steering wheel. It felt nice, though I wasn't about to admit it.

     After a few minutes, the car stopped. Luke got out of the car and opened the passenger door. "Alright boy. We're here." I stepped out and promptly crashed into the pavement, forgetting that I was significantly shorter than before. Luke tried to hide his smile, but I knew him too well. He was definitely laughing. "You're one confused dog. It's okay." He paused, deciding to pick me up once again. He lifted me above his head and proclaimed, "Welcome to the pet store!"

     I huffed. I just wanted to eat, there was no need for unnecessary introductions. Luckily, Luke was a tall man, and was able to reach the entrance in a few strides.

     We entered and I was greeted by a wave of new smells, though one was dominating the entire room. Inexplicably, the scent of Beatrice was extremely strong. I looked around eagerly for her, but with my bad vision I couldn't tell the difference between one woman and the next.

     "James? Is that you?" I heard someone bark. Bark? Was I understanding dog language?

     Confused, I looked down, wondering how someone knew my name. There, right before my nearly-blind eyes, was a bow-wearing chihuahua with fur the same color as Beatrice's iconic blonde hair.

     "Beatrice! Oh my god Beatrice! It's so good to see you!" I yapped, trying to wrestle my way out of Luke's grip. My tail started wagging excitedly of its own accord.

     Luke chuckled. "Well, boy, is this little lady someone you know?" He placed me down on the ground. "I'll be back, just gonna get you some food. Be good!"

     I was barely paying attention. The only thing I cared about was Beatrice, though it was obvious she didn't share the same sentiment. Her back was turned to me and she looked about as annoyed as a dog possibly could.

     "James, I don't know what you did, but you need to stop this. Now. I don't want to be a dog anymore, kay?" Beatrice demanded, her barks somehow sounding exactly like her human voice used to.

     I was taken aback. "I didn't do anything! I just woke up like this."

     Beatrice bared her teeth angrily. "Suuuuure. Ya know, James, you've always been a screw-up. And now you have to go and screw this up too. I'm glad we're over."

     My heart nearly dropped in my chest. Though my eyes physically couldn't fill with tears, I knew if I was in human form I would be sobbing on the floor like a maniac. Instead all that came out were some pitiful whimpers. "W- what?"

     "You heard me. It's bad enough that you turned me into a dog, but I was at someone else's apartment when this happened, which makes it even worse. He won't want to go on a second date with me after I supposedly ghosted him," my ex ranted.

     "Wait, you moved on that quickly? We only broke up last night…"

     Beatrice scoffed, though it came out as more of a weak cough. "What, you expect me to wait months to let my heart heal or something? Give me a break. Now, change me back to my human form so I can get the hell out of here."

     I opened my dog mouth, about to apologize profusely for something I hadn't even done, when I stopped. Who was she to demand I do anything when she obviously couldn't even spare me a single thought?

     She looked at me expectantly, as if already knowing I would do what she asked without question. Why does she think so little of me? I thought. The answer hit me almost instantly. I had been spineless our entire relationship, always begging her to pay attention to me and bending to her every want. No wonder she tried to boss me around, she had been controlling me for three years.

     "Well? I'm waiting, James. Turn me back."

     I glared at her as best as I could, inching closer to her furiously. "No."

     Her tiny chihuahua mouth dropped open in surprise as I basked in the power that two-letter word had given me. I couldn't recall a time where I had ever told her no, and it felt amazing to finally do it.

     All of a sudden, I felt a tingling sensation in my lower back. The feeling spread quickly, engulfing me in a warm glow. I felt my limbs transforming, growing taller by the second, as my fur receded into fresh skin. Before my very eyes, I had turned human again.

     "Yip! Yip! Yip!" Beatrice yapped, still a dog. I rolled my eyes, my vision much better, and brushed excess dog hairs off of my skin… only to realize I was stark naked. A crowd formed around me, chattering as they pointed at my nether regions.

     "James?!" Luke screamed incredulously, rushing over. He was pointedly not looking at my bottom half. "What're you doing? And where's the dog?!"

     I laughed giddily, a bit high on adrenaline after the long day. "Let's just say he won't be coming back anytime soon."