

# Jagged Dog Story

*by* Tantra Bensko

We growled sideways at each other when we heard our owners whisper to each other: "Isn't it awful that dogs and cats who were anesthetized are ground up, flea collar and tag and cancer tumors and poison and all, and put into pet F. O. O. D. ! I wish we could afford something different to give them." This we've heard from so many serious, intelligent humans -- this we know.

But. That's different. That's true. This isn't. This has been awful.

Roberto and I not only licked and bit and chewed each other like other dog couples. We not only wrestled each other down and got the neck, shaking it, ready to bite to kill, showing mercy. We ate each other.

As he ate me very slowly each day, he stayed desirable for a long time, weeks, if I gave him leeway, excuses, because I loved him so much, but he was growing fatter by the day. His tummy lost its lean vigor, its ability to capture my stare, to call my nose to it, to nuzzle him over, rolling him onto his back.

Then, he grew so large, I had to turn my head to look away, which was easy, as half of it was gone, the half towards him usually, as he gnawed. Most of me was gone, most of him was bloated, but still, we played together with the utmost love. But really, you could tell there was some resentment, some need for too much from the other. You just could.

When he finished most of me, my bones growing foggy, my thoughts floating like music, he threw me up. Right in front of me.

Of course, I ate it, right away. Lap lap lap. I belched, and turned my head, as my head gained first one side of flesh, and then the other, once again. Next, by body filled in with itself, and I saw in the mirror of his eyes, I was nearly as beautiful as ever. As I checked the mirror of my owner's hands and voices, who continued to feed me the ground up dogs in the dog food, though you could see their confusion between that and this, I looked at least good enough to be pettable again, to coo at. "Robertahh! OOOO, little Robertaettaettaetta!"

But I had learned from ingesting Roberto's glitter-eyed fear, it could make you never close enough, and then, never far enough away. And both at the same time.

I ate him back. My teeth were a little vaguer, so it took more tugging, shaking. And me, who was so nervous about losing my perfect physique all the time anyway, always noting how often he smelled me, wondering if he was going to leave me because I gained a few ounces--I grew large. Far too large, his growling inside me, and he turned his head, the side he had left, away from me. He learned how it felt. But he acted hurt, like he'd never done it to me. Like doing it to *me* was justified.

We ate each other daily, the process growing faster as we grew more ground up, pre-chewed, softer, more each other. We grew more processed, more like gravy, more like hot dogs. I could understand his vast whining, his endless complaints barked about my behavior, and I owned that I was worthless. And a more even brown color. Soggy.

"I dreamed about you again last night," he said.

I didn't need to ask, but I liked to pretend to give him the benefit of the doubt, to accentuate his paranoia. "Was it nice?"

“No, you left me again. For another dog. As usual.”

I wanted to bite him, so bad. I could feel the intensity stirring, the blood pulsing against my skin. “I would *never* do that to you, of course. Never, never, never. I'm not like that. I've told you over and over, my rover.”

“Yes, you would. My dreams are warnings. Something in you you don't understand would come out in the future, and you'd leave me. You just don't know it.” (This dream happened nearly nightly for a year and a half. He sneered at me as if I had just the awful deeds of his dreams while I nuzzled him, licked his face.)

I leapt on him again, but this time, went straight through him, as he was so porous from being eaten so often. Squish! I am much smaller than he is, so I made a hole in him, a substantial one. I turned around, watching the edges of it start to slowly sag, fray, bits start angling down and flaking off. Verrry slowly, time becoming deliberate. I was hypnotized.

I noticed that everything was different from what it had been on the other side of my rove. I had gone through some sort of dog flavored wormhole reality. I could feel it. On this side of the portal was the world in which he had left me. He was looking at me with a smug sense of having done better for himself, proven something to me about being superior and righteous in comparison to me, because of course, *he* was committed, devoted, the words he used daily. He wasn't the leaving kind like me, and I would have left him, he thought. But I never would have. Ever.

Yet, though we were no longer lovers in that world on the white hole side, he couldn't get away from home. We still relied on our owners to feed us. He was too distracted by the giant hole in his torso to be able to launch out on his own and hunt. He just looked at me with distaste, wouldn't let me talk to him. Complained about me

to the animals instead of hunting them. “That Roberta. She has bad breath all the time now. It smells like dank fur. I don't even want to turn my head that direction any more. She's such a bitch. She's as bad as those dog food manufacturers.”

I started howling. My howls took over the landscape. My legs weakened. I started itching, wondered if I was getting mange.

I had to get back to the other side. The side of him where we were still together, really together, because he wanted to be, not because he couldn't get away from me. Without thinking, I leapt into the hole. But my rover's torso drooped around the hole so much it was too small. I only made it halfway through. We were two dogs stuck together, but not in the traditional way, when having sex, unable to pull apart. We were at right angles to each other. And couldn't eat each other up any more. So, there we were. Half of me on one side of the hole, where he left me. The other half on the side where he hadn't left me. Both sides insisting I was the leaving kind. Which I'm not.

I wanted to bite my fur, but I couldn't get to more than just my shoulders. I had to chase my tail, which meant spinning Roberto in circles

Please don't shoot cayenne pepper water at me from a squirt gun. Please, it's up to all who read it to combine your forces, grinding your meat together into hot dogs of love for me. You, eating my words, understanding what it's like—it's all I have any more. Because Roberto refuses to love me simply. Can you? Can I look in the mirrors of your eyes and see?

