

Harvey's on the nose

By Andrea Cooper

“Core what’s that smell?” I couldn’t help saying as a putrid odour was emitting somewhere from the confines of our little dining room. Dave shrugged his shoulders, seemingly unaware of the foul stench that was assaulting my olfactory glands.

It had been a busy, active and social weekend, catching up with friends and Dave and I had just sat down to a late Sunday lunch. My morning had been spent in the kitchen, overseeing a hearty stew and doing some weekend reading. Dave and Harvey-the boyfriend and our German Shorthaired Pointer-had returned from their ‘secret boys’ business’ at Centennial Park. It had become a weekend ritual where Dave hooks his bike to the car, loads Harvey in the back and over two hours later they return exhausted. I had come to suspect this Man/ Dog activity involves Dave cycling around the main drive while Harvey runs next to the bike. I don’t trust that Harvey’s the most road savvy dog, so I think that’s why Dave leaves me at home.

Harvey had assumed his position in the dining room, under the table. A quick whiff in his direction confirmed the miasmatic fumes were coming from my dog. “Can’t you smell that? He reeks”, I blurted out. “Smell him Dave, he’s putrid. Did he roll something?”

Dave started to look a little sheepish. “Nope. It’s the eel pond. Harvey took a couple of dives into it while we were going around the track.”

Cranky on two levels is how this admission made me. Firstly, that Dave had Harvey careering off leash around the busy weekend pedestrian and vehicular traffic of Centennial Park and in doing so, Harvey was able to dive in the ‘eel pond’.

The eel pond is a small, yet soupy body of water on the Bondi Junction side of the park. This stagnant and polluted cesspool is full of snapping and slippery eels and other vile additives. On sight of this effluvium mass, my dog goes galloping into it. With all his goofy exuberance, he hurtles through the reeds and into the pond, submerging himself, only to shake himself off and resume his run alongside Dave’s bike.

“Fine, then”, I said, trying not to sound too angry. “You’ll have to wash him, I can’t have Harvey in our house smelling like that. And besides,” trying to sound positive, “it’ll be a nice bonding session for you both.”

Washing Harvey was actually more bondage than bonding. To get the dog anywhere near the shower, Dave had to put Harvey into his car harness and drag him into the bathroom. 22 Kilos of lithe dog quickly became dead weight as soon as Dave made coaxing motions towards Harvey’s tiled room of doom. Harvey’s paws would become stuck to the floor, like the stickiest of geckos. You could almost see the dog’s paws grip the sides of the door to stall the inevitable suds-arama, drama that our poor pooch dreaded.

Dave tried to soothe Harvey with a sing-song voice and encouraging words. Shampoo and conditioner were lathered and frothed all the while my boyfriend cooed to Harvey with the voice of an angel whilst having to restrain him with the monster grip of Godzilla.

Half towel-dried, Harvey would emerge all happy faced and shake himself vigorously. He would romp around the house wiggling his butt and then settle in a quiet spot to lick himself. Every dog wash-day was the same. Harvey would eventually appear elated and Dave exhausted. Trying to get Harvey to accept that wash time could be a positive experience became a mission for Dave.

Dogs have a sense of smell that is one of the keenest in nature. Humans might smell a pot of stew cooking on the stove, but a dog can distinguish the smells of each individual ingredient, from the meat itself to the onions and potatoes.

Dog fact

My Thursday nights are reserved for after work catch-up drinks with my girlfriends so I’m normally not home until well after ten. It was on one Thursday evening that I arrived home earlier than usual. Various girlfriends had to cancel due to ill health, last minute hairdressing vacancies and a baby shower. Normally, as soon as my door keys scrape through the keyhole, I can hear the excited wooflings and snorts of my happy hound. But something was different this evening as there was no Harvey and no Dave to welcome me home.

I was, however, greeted by the faint smell of roast chicken. Curious, I decided to inspect other areas of the house and could hear Dave’s voice coming from the bathroom. I peaked inside and there was Dave and Harvey sitting together on the bathroom floor. Dave had a plate of takeaway roast chicken and Harvey was sitting next to him intently gazing back and forth from Dave to the plate.

From the plate to Dave.

From Dave to the plate.

The sight of an anticipatory, drooling German Shorthaired Pointer and my boyfriend sharing a bathroom, barbeque banquet just seemed so odd. So I opened the door fully and made an ‘ahem’ throat clearing sound.

“Oh hi sweets”, Dave greeted. “Harvey and I are just having dinner. We didn’t expect you until late.”

“Can I ask why you’re in the bathroom”, I enquired, slightly shocked by my boyfriend’s seemingly bizarre dining surrounds.

“We do this every Thursday night. I bring home chicken and Harvey and I have it in here. It’s to make the bathroom a more positive experience for Harvey. It took a few weeks for him not to be too suspicious, but now he’s happy to sit in here and share some chook with his mate. Aren’t you Harvey?”

Dave’s bathroom and dining hygiene aside, this concept did seem to work. In time, Harvey accepted that the bathroom wasn’t so much of a scary place. Wash-days became easier and less stressful for all of us and it was not longer a mission of might for Dave to drag Harvey’s bulk through the bathroom. The other up-shot was that wash-day became takeaway chicken day and that meant less time in the kitchen for me.