

Winter 2017

## At the Dog Park

Derek Updegraff

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### Recommended Citation

Updegraff, Derek (2017) "At the Dog Park," *CutBank*: Vol. 1 : Iss. 86 , Article 11.

Available at: <https://scholarworks.umt.edu/cutbank/vol1/iss86/11>

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DEREK UPDEGRAFF

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## AT THE DOG PARK

- *Runner-Up: Big Sky, Small Prose Flash Contest* -

The crazy lady with the Doberman's back, over by the front gate asking her same question: "Your dog have balls? Hey, does that dog have balls?" Her dog has balls, and he's mean and couldn't care less about what she says. Yesterday I saw him running all around the parking lot with his leash on before chasing a jogger. She's there calling out and he doesn't respond to nothing. I hoped he'd get hit by a car or run off into the mountain, but then again it's not the dog's fault he's such an asshole.

"None of these dogs in here have balls," I shout back.

"What!" she says.

I walk closer to the gate. "No balls. Only your dog has balls. That sign you're standing by, it says, 'No balls.'"

"It doesn't say, 'No balls.'"

"Read it. Dogs need to be spayed or neutered. That means no balls for that guy there."

She lifts the latch and comes in anyway. "It doesn't say that." Her dog wastes no time, runs away from her with his leash on and zeros in on something called a Whoodle. The pretty boy owner told me it was a cross between a Poodle and something else, some small breed that starts with a W. You've got a Shepsky, he told me. German Shepherd and Husky mix,

right? And I said he's just a mutt, no fancy hybrid, just a mutt from the shelter.

I don't worry about my dog in here because he can take care of himself. And he listens. I hike off leash in the mountain, and when he runs off, I give him time, then call him back, and Bam! he's there, right by me on the trail again.

But this Doberman and his dangling balls zeroed in on that boy's Whoodle, and the Whoodle's a hyper thing, thinks the Dobie wants to play. It sticks its ass in the air and lowers its head all playful, its tail wagging like crazy, but the Dobie's tail isn't wagging, and its chest puffs out and it bumps the Whoodle's side, and just like that the Dobie spins the Whoodle to mount it, but the Whoodle flips on its back in submission, so instead of doggie style the Dobie is all up on this dog in the missionary position, and the Whoodle's owner is screaming like crazy from twenty feet away, yelling for the dog to stop humping him, that he's a boy anyway, and to please get your dog off, Ma'am!

The crazy lady's oblivious, filling her water bottle at the drinking fountain, and Whoodle boy won't dare get closer, so I go over there and yank the Dobie off the pup, and he bites my arm hard, and I'm about to punch it in the head when my mutt's right there biting its neck. Then when my arm's out, he wrestles the Dobie down and clamps down on his balls, dragging the poor bastard by his coin purse, deflating any envy.