

CAKE
Sherry Kramer

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CHARACTERS

PACO

A long hair Chihuahua.

SAMSARA

A long hair Chihuahua/miniature Italian greyhound mix.

LILY

A woman in her late 40's

SCOTT

A man in his late 40's

SETTING

The second floor porch of Lily and Scott's house. It's twilight. The light is soft and magical, and slightly dramatic. The sound of crickets—a perfect summer evening.

PACO

(Scott is sitting in an oversized rattan chair with his feet up on a matching, huge comfy rattan ottoman. Paco is sitting on the ottoman at his feet. Lily is standing. Paco often speaks to the Audience.)
Hello. My name is Paco. And I was made for love.

SCOTT

They're my dogs, I can give them to who ever I want.

PACO

Of all the dogs in the world, only one breed was bred for love.

LILY

What are you talking about, they're my dogs too.

PACO

The Chihuahua.

SCOTT

Nope. I brought them to the marriage, so they're mine.

PACO

(Samsara, half Chihuahua, half miniature Italian Greyhound, all trouble, walks onto the porch. She is gorgeous and she knows it.)
It is true that Samsara is only half Chihuahua—her father was a dyspeptic miniature Italian greyhound named Peppi—that's who she got her long, exquisite legs and her short temper from, but still. The breeding for love is deeply etched in her blood and bones.

SAMSARA

And there isn't a damn thing I can do about it.

PACO

Darling—don't talk like that.

(Samsara walks past Paco and preens for a bit.)

SAMSARA

I'd rather be made for retrieving. Or sheep herding.

PACO

You hate sheep.

SAMSARA

So? That would probably make me better at it. All I'm saying is—I wish I'd been bred for something productive. Something honest. Something I could be proud of doing, at the end of the day. What do *I* do? I smell the smell of love 24/7. And when I am not

busy *smelling* love, I smell *like* love. That's something to be proud of? I wish I'd been bred for anything other than love.

(She walks around the ottoman and back into the house.
Paco looks at her long legs with admiration. He sighs.)

PACO

Being bred for love is less convenient than you might imagine.

SCOTT

I'm giving them to my sister. You won't sacrifice enough for them.

LILY

I don't need to sacrifice anything for them, Scott. I love them! When you love someone you don't have to measure what you gave up.

PACO

How is it inconvenient, you ask? Let me count the ways.

LILY

You don't have to measure how much it hurts to prove you love them!

PACO

First, there is no ultimate measure of love. And then there is the way love smells. Which—surprise? Is not always so sweet.

(Sniffs loudly.)

Smell that? Love, when you measure it, stinks. But I have no choice.

LILY

You know I love them as much as you do.

PACO

If love is anywhere, no matter how badly it smells, I must smell it.

(Paco puts his paws over his nose to try to keep from smelling.)

LILY

I might even love them more.

(The smell almost overpowers Paco. He pinches his nose tightly and bravely goes on.)

PACO

Does she or doesn't she love us more, you ask?

(Shrugs)

It's a stupid question. There is no more or less, no as much or as not. It either smells like love, or it doesn't.

LILY

And unlike you, I love them all the time!

SCOTT

I love Paco all the time.

LILY

No you don't, you love him maybe 87 percent of the time.

PACO

(Paco lets go of his nose.)

Sacrilege! Outrage! Not true! His love for me is eternal, like the stars!

LILY

On a good day, you love him, but when he's bad? When he pees on the oriental?

SAMSARA (o.s.)

PACO! NOT AGAIN! Not the oriental.

SCOTT

That's different. That carpet was my grandmother's.

SAMSARA (o.s.)

Paco, you promised!

PACO

You know I can't help it! The oriental is lush and dark and unless they catch me at it they can't tell for sure—but he still loves me when I pee on it! Even when he catches me he loves me! I can smell it! I can always smell love.

SAMSARA

(She walks onto the porch and gets up on the ottoman with Paco.)

And they can smell when you pee on the oriental.

PACO

No, they can't! I have proven that time and time again.

SAMSARA

They try to smell it. They walk on it barefoot to check for wet spots, they crawl on their hands and knees sniffing--

PACO

But the oriental is a true friend. It absorbs everything like a sponge. After all, it's not as if I am a great Dane. I am a Chihuahua--we are talking a delicate rain, not a monsoon. And as for the smell—well, I have a theory—it is something I have given much thought to. It is my theory that they don't smell it because my pee smells like love!

SAMSARA

You have got to be kidding me.

PACO

But how else can you explain it!

SAMSARA

The degree of self delusion here—

PACO

You never give my theories a chance! You just shoot them down! You never once--

SAMSARA

Please! You're just lucky they love you so much. No matter how strong the smell of your pee, their love for you smells stronger. It blocks the pee-smell out.

PACO

That is the conventional wisdom when it comes to peeing in the house. But in my opinion--

SAMSARA

It's the conventional wisdom because in house after house, with ruined carpets and stinking couch legs, all over the world, it has been proven to be the truth. If it weren't true, a thousand dogs would be put in gunny sacks and drowned every day! Those houses reek! But love is stronger. And don't get me started on cats and their owners.

PACO

You reject the possibility that my pee smells like love.

SAMSARA

Your pee smells like pee. Their love is stronger. End of discussion.

SCOTT

Don't you get tired of him peeing on the oriental all the time?

LILY

Tired, yes.

SCOTT

See!

LILY

Tired is not the same as not loving.

SAMSARA

Don't you ever get tired of it? Of smelling all their love?

PACO

We were made for one thing only—to attach to them and never to be unattached! Stop asking me to betray my DNA!

SCOTT

It's not a crime to hate him when he pees on the oriental! Who wouldn't.

LILY

I don't.

SCOTT

Well, that's because it's not your grandmother's priceless rug.

LILY

I'm the one who has to clean it up, aren't I? And I still don't hate him.

SCOTT

Then why do you hate me?

LILY

I don't hate you.

SCOTT

You do, you hate me. You hate me every time you have to clean up after me. Don't deny it.

LILY

Sweetheart, you're upset about this morning, well don't be, I didn't even notice that—

SCOTT

I'm not talking about that, I'm talking about cleaning up things like--the thing with the IRS.

LILY

Oh. Well, that was hard. When they seized the business for back taxes.

SCOTT

The three times I let my health insurance lapse and didn't tell you.
(Samsara puts her paw over Paco's nose, and he puts his paw over hers.)

LILY

Oh, God, Scott, don't remind me about that. That was bad. Really bad.

PACO

(But Samsara and Paco are in agony from the smells.)
Hold your breath, my darling, these things never last long.
(They hold their breath.)

SCOTT

The stock tip I gave your mother that—

LILY

Scott, please. My mother—is fine. She didn't need that big house. It really was too much for her. I didn't hate you for any of those things. The only time I hated you—

SCOTT

Ah ha! I knew you hated me!

LILY

--was the time with the cake.

PACO

(Gasping for air)

Oh, no, not the cake. Why does she bring up the cake!

(He tries to stuff tissue, anything into his nose to keep from smelling it.)

I can't stand the smell of that cake story.

SCOTT

I'm sorry about the cake, Lily. I don't know why I did that.

SAMSARA

Oh, no, Paco. Not this time. This time, it's time to grow up.

(They struggle, but she removes whatever he has managed to stuff up his nose.)

You must take the bitter with the sweet! You insist on loving him, on smelling his love--so wake up and smell the cake story, buster. Even though, in my opinion, it is not possible to love a man who has done a thing like this!

PACO

That is the greyhound in you talking! A full blooded Chihuahua would know! I *must* love him! It is not possible to do anything else.

LILY

Valentines Day. You told me to go pick it up at the bakery. You said you'd ordered it special to say "LILY, I LOVE YOU MORE THAN LIFE ITSELF". And then when I got it home and opened the box—

SCOTT

I'm sorry! I've said I'm sorry. You know I'm sorry.