He Looks Like a Burrito

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Cast:
Meg—middle age
Carol—middle age
The dogs must be imagined.
Setting: a park in a large New England town.
Time: the present

As the play opens, two women enter from opposite sides of the stage, walking dogs. One (MEG) has two fairly good-sized dogs, the other (CAROL) has a small, raggedy looking dog. She carries a large, professional camera. She also has a marked Southern accent.

MEG: [To her dogs.] Easy, Max. It’s just another dog! You’ve seen them before, plenty of ‘em. Easy, both of you. [To Carol] Don’t worry; they’re friendly.

CAROL: [Smiling, talks to MEG’s dogs] Well, hello. Come on, do your sniffing. [To MEG] It’s okay. He may be little but he can hold his own.

MEG: [Getting a good look at CAROL’s dog] Oh! Look at him! He looks like shredded wheat! No, no, he looks like the cake I had for dessert last night . . . Oh, sorry. It’s not like he’s funny looking or anything . . . it was an expensive restaurant . . . real expensive.

CAROL: [Laughing, pleasant] That’s OK. Everybody we meet compares him to something. As a matter of fact, I collect descriptions of what people compare him to: Tater Tots, furry slippers.

MEG: How about . . . a dust mop . . . or . . . a bale of hay . . . well, a small bale of hay . . .

CAROL: Woody has a lot of disguises. [Pause] Have we met before? Your dogs sure look familiar.

MEG: Don’t think so. I usually take them up the river where I can let them run loose.

CAROL: [Overlapping] Woody likes your dogs. Do you mind if they play for a few minutes? Are you in a hurry?


[They release their dogs and sit down on a bench. Throughout their conversation, they pantomime petting the dogs or whistling to them until the dogs get tired of playing and come to lie down by the bench—also indicated by pantomime.]
CAROL: It must be nice to have two. Woody doesn’t get to play that much. Go get ‘em, Woody!

MEG: Two are actually easier than one. Look at them run!

CAROL: But I just know I’ve seen those dogs. Somewhere.

MEG: Well, I’d sure remember Woody. I remember dogs more than their owners.

CAROL: [Laughs] I know what you mean. [Pause.] Now this is bothering me. Where have I seen them. . .

MEG: You meet a lot of people walking dogs.

CAROL: Yeah, I have this friend who wants to meet men, I tell her: Honey, get yourself a dog. You’ll meet more men than you even thought were out there! Nice ones, too.

MEG: Dog lovers.

CAROL: Yeah. You know right away that they’re good people.

MEG: You know, that’s funny. [Pause] I met the love of my life walking these old dogs. Tell that to your girlfriend.

CAROL: You did? Now, isn’t that something! So did I!

MEG: No kidding.

CAROL: Yes! Well, you know, I’m new here, and there I was, on my own, freelancing for the first time, worried about meeting new people. And sure enough didn’t I meet a really nice man.

MEG: Amazing things can happen. . . just walking a dog. . .

CAROL: I tell you that was lucky. Otherwise I might have packed up and gone home, I was that homesick. [Hugs Woody] Good ole Woody, I have a lot to thank you for! Now, go play some. Go on. [Sighs] Such a mama’s boy.

MEG: I hope your story ended better than mine.


MEG: Yep. I guess I wasn’t the love of his life.

CAROL: I’m so sorry.
MEG: It’s all right. What did he compare Woody to?

CAROL: He said Woody looked like a burrito.


CAROL: Yeah. I can’t really see him as a burrito.

MEG: Maybe if you put him on a plate. . .

CAROL: . . .and add some avocado. [They continue the joke as long as they want, laughing longer than expected by the audience.]

MEG: Where are you from? You must be from the South with that accent.

CAROL: Kentucky. And you?

MEG: North Carolina, originally.

CAROL: I thought I caught a southern accent. Just a tiny bit of it.

MEG: Yeah, just a little bit. I’ve been here longer than I was there. So—are you getting used to the frozen North?

CAROL: Well, it has been a kind of a shock. People are, uh, kinda different from what I’m used to.

MEG: Let me tell you, I was horrified when I first got here. First of all, it was the coldest day I’d ever been through in my life. I was wearing a mini-skirt, looking for a job . . . it was only November! But I also had a hard time getting used to people here.

CAROL: Yes, their ways are so different. They seem sort of distant. Hard to get to know.

MEG: They’re down right rude if you ask me.

CAROL: [Laughs] I know it!! I can’t believe how they treat you in . . . in the stores! You want some help and . . .

MEG: Awful, awful! They don’t even look at you—too busy gabbing on a cell phone. [Pause.] You get used to it. Took me about seventeen years, but . . .

CAROL: [Overlapping] Seventeen years! Oh, no! Don’t tell me that!
MEG: . . . you get used to it. They don’t mean to be rude, it’s just a different way. . . well, there’s a shell around people here and it’s probably from always being in a hurry. But there is something to be said for it. You get your privacy. I can kind of see it.

CAROL: Well, I reckon so.

MEG: Sometimes I think I’m turning into one of ‘em.

CAROL: I doubt it! [Catching herself] Of course, I have met some nice people. Through my new, uh, friend. Some interesting people.

MEG: Oh, yes. Interesting people. From all over the world, really.

CAROL: [Bursting out with it] But I can say this to you because you know. They are nowhere near as . . . pleasant. . . as easy to be with—nowhere near the manners of ordinary Southerners!

MEG: Ah, you’re so right. You are so right! Here’s to the South! [They do a high-five.] Where even buying groceries is easy, not something that adds more stress to an already stressed out day.

CAROL: That’s exactly it. It’s the day-to-day stuff. They make it hard here. And the traffic!

MEG: [Overlapping] Oh, you know it! It’s a different country altogether, the South. And the southern men are different; they’re better.

CAROL: Well . . . not always.

MEG: Oh, give me a southerner any day. [Laughs.] Except of course when they’re being racist pigs. There is that.

CAROL: Yeah. They can be real evil. [Pause] But people like that aren’t real southerners. That’s not the real thing.

MEG: Right you are.

CAROL: My name’s Carol. What is your name?

MEG: I’m Meg. Back home I was Maggie.

CAROL: Well, back home I am Carol Ann.

MEG: Oh, one of those wonderful double names! So what brings you up here? [Glancing at CAROL’S camera] Are you a photographer?
CAROL: Yeah. I gave up graphic design to freelance. And it’s going well enough that I can concentrate on photography. That’s my real love.

MEG: Good for you!

CAROL: Yes, it is. I’m taking some courses and trying to put a show together.

[By now, Meg’s dogs have stopped running around and have returned to settle at her feet. She strokes them through the rest of the play.]

MEG: OK, lie down. Come on, be still, you guys. A show?

CAROL: I’m working on this project photographing women and their pets. As a matter of face, I was just going to ask you if I could get some pictures of you with your dogs.

MEG: Well, of course you can. We’d be flattered, wouldn’t we, guys?

CAROL: I am fascinated by the relationships women form with their pets.

MEG: You mean like those crazy cat women? Did you hear about that one with all those frozen cats in the freezer? Fifteen of ‘em.

CAROL: [laughs] Well, that is kind of fascinating. But, no, regular women and their pets. Something . . . interesting gets revealed—there’s a different relationship than when women are with their men or with their friends.

MEG: Well, I can give you material for the whole project. I have a lot of pets.

CAROL: Do you? [The next four lines are overlapped.]

MEG: Yep.

CAROL: How lucky for me!

MEG: I’ve got a couple of parrots, four cats, and three other dogs at home.

CAROL: You are pulling my leg!

MEG: I kid you not. I walk the dogs in groups. The big ones, then the little ones.

CAROL: How do you do it? I mean, take care of them and all?

MEG: Maybe I’m one of those weirdos who likes animals better than people.

CAROL: Well, I don’t believe that. But seriously. You must be so dedicated.
MEG: I guess I am. It was a lot easier when, well, you know, before. . . . He used to walk the big dogs. But really, I love them all. They’re so loyal. . . but of course, you know all that.

CAROL: Oh, I most certainly do. Listen. What do you think of this idea. If it’s not an imposition, I would just love to take pictures of you with all your pets . . . where you live. But I don’t want to be a bother. . .

MEG: Well . . .

CAROL: . . . and I can’t compensate you much for your time but I’ll give you the prints. Maybe I could take you to dinner somewhere.

MEG: Well, it’s got to be Mexican. So we can eat burritos that look like Woody.

CAROL: I would so appreciate it. I really would.

MEG: OK. But first I need to get the house, uh, in order. I’ve been doing some rearranging. . .

CAROL: Oh, don’t worry about that. I’d rather photograph you in a real setting. This is so exciting!

MEG: No, I’m afraid I have to insist. I’ve . . . uh, kind of let things go lately. Boxes to unpack . . .

CAROL: Oh, dear. Well, I don’t want to be a bother . . .

MEG: [Pause:] Truth is, I’ve been kind of low lately.

CAROL: Oh. I’m sorry.

[Pause]

MEG: Well, it could be good for me to . . . inspire me to get myself together. Nothing like a project to work on.

CAROL: Yes, we can do a whole series! Now, if it’s not an imposition . . . this could be great!

MEG: The worst of it is I can’t even hate him.

CAROL: Oh, no. Not that.

MEG: Yep.
CAROL: How awful for you.

MEG: And I can’t hate her! Frankly if he loves her, she’s probably a saint.

CAROL: Well, yes, I suppose so.

MEG: And everybody says, aren’t you angry? Don’t you hate her? Hate her? I’ve never even seen her!

CAROL: I guess it helps you get over someone if you can be angry instead of depressed.

MEG: You cannot make someone love you. So what has he done that’s wrong? Nothing. And hate her? What’s that got to do with it? He’s a good man and that’s just the way things turned out. [She is very low, possibly cries.] I’m so sorry to break down like this. Acting like a baby . . getting you down and we don’t even know each other . .

CAROL: . . . I know what you’re going through. I really do. I left the South to get out of a bad relationship. A real nasty one.

MEG: I’m sorry.

CAROL: I’m happy now. I wasn’t then. I was miserable for a long time, too. [Pause] I got lucky.

MEG: You’re right. It’s luck. Pure luck of the draw. Things don’t happen for a reason. They just happen.

CAROL: Yes. They just happen. Why, shit happens! [Startled.] Oh, gosh, I don’t think I’ve ever said that to anyone!

MEG: I really appreciate what you’re saying to me. Where we come from that’s not the kind of thing you’re allowed to say. Or think.

CAROL: Here. Let me give you my phone number. Then you can call me whenever you feel like it. [Pause] I would really like to work with you.

MEG: Yes, and you take mine, too. Let’s do this project. I can’t hibernate forever.

CAROL: Here’s my number. Or would you rather go through email?

MEG: [Looks at Carol’s number.] This is Jack’s phone number.

[Carol is horrified.]

CAROL: [Blurts out]: The dogs! They were your dogs! [To herself] He was walking her dogs. Oh, my god!
[Softly] Oh, no . . . Oh, Meg, what can I do? I feel horrible about this. Is there anything I can do?

[Awkward pause.]

MEG: You can give me your dog.

End of play.