

Another Day, another bone: Saviour

by

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It was morning when Charlie woke up, smelling something. It smelled sweet... Kinda strong. He lifted up his head and sniffed the air, then turned on his couch, facing the wall where Itchy's pipe was, the one he went through to get to his room. He hopped down and stretched, yawning widely. He went to the pipe and started sniffing.

The smell, whatever it was, was coming from there, from Itchy's room. Wanting to figure out what it was, the mutt left the room and started heading downstairs where the Dachshund's room was located. When he got there the door was ajar, so he pressed himself against the door jam, peeking in. What he saw was Itchy putting cologne on. Trying not to snicker, Charlie gave the door a knock.

"Hey Itch? It's Charlie, can I come in?" He called. Itchy was so startled that he fell off the stool he had been standing on to see the mirror. Charlie chuckled quietly, shaking his head.

"Sure Charlie, come on in." He heard from the dog inside, then he entered. Itchy hopped back on the stool and started brushing down his head fur.

"Whatcha up to Itchy?" Charlie asked. He figured he had an idea, because Itchy only got all spiffed up for one thing: when he was going on a date. But just in case it was something else he decided to hear it.

"I got a date planned with Bess." Itchy said. "We planned a breakfast at the fanciest place in

town."

Called it. Charlie thought. "So you're making yourself look spiffy?" He asked as Itchy finished brushing his fur down and hopped off the stool, going to find a nice looking shirt other than his usual green one in his closet. "A breakfast date isn't worth getting nice-looking you know."

"So you think Charlie. It makes someone look more sophisticated." Itchy replied.

And makes you look like a dork.

"Anyway Charlie," Itchy continued as he came out of the closet, wearing a dark blue shirt, and grabbed Charlie's chest fur and yanked him down to his eye level. "I want, no, I need you to promise me that you won't mess up the place while I'm not here." The mutt rolled his eyes, then Itchy dragged him a bit closer until they were nosetip to nosetip. "Charlie, I mean it."

"Fine Itch. I promise not to mess anything up. Now do me one little favor." Charlie said.

"What kind of favor Charlie?"

"Off." Was all Charlie said as he gave Itchy a little shove, harder than he meant to, which sent the small dog rolling slightly. This made Charlie laugh a bit. Itchy promptly stood up and dusted his shirt off, staring at Charlie.

"Well... See ya later Charlie. Remember your promise and try not to get into any trouble."

"Got it Itch. Have fun." Charlie said, giving a mock salute. Itchy shook his head, as if to say what have I done, then went out the door, going downstairs. Charlie poked his head out and watched his best pal go and smiled.

Not gonna mess anything up, however I am gonna do some redecorating with a little bit of help. The mutt thought as he followed down minutes after. He had been planning to fix the place up, which was surprising considering how lazy he was. However, he was more in it for the bones he could rake in with more customers. He was gonna head to the Fleabite to see if Joey was open.

With a big job like this, he was gonna need some muscle, so he was going to get a big group together. Maybe he could get Joey and Zak to help...

"Lessee... Joey, Zak, Zero, Itchy's on a date, maybe that nice guy Rollie could be helpful..."

Charlie muttered as he walked. "Andrew could be of use also, but I'd have to keep him in line..." Since he wasn't paying attention, he bumped right into someone's back.

"Oof! Oh, hey Charlie, what's up. I was just coming to get myself some breakfast, but its a bit dark down here so I stopped to let my eyes adjust." Charlie looked at the speaker, a black German Shepherd with a white 0 shape right on his noggin.

"Hey Zero, your just one of the guys I wanted to see." Charlie said, grinning. "I gotta ask you something: have you ever wanted this place to look better or have a kind of pizzaz to it?" Zero looked thoughtful as he walked into the kitchen with Charlie following.

"Yeah, a little... A bit of color or something wouldn't kill the place. Its all gray down here." Zero replied as he gave a nod.

"Well I was thinking of getting a few other dogs to give me a hand of making this place look nice so more dogs would wanna move in." Charlie said. "And you're one of the guys I need to help." Zero scratched his chin thoughtfully as he found something to eat.

"Who did you have in mind to help you?" The black dog asked.

"You, Joey, Zak, maybe Rollie, my son Andrew, a pretty nice big crew."

"What about Itchy?" Zero asked.

"Itch is out on a date, and I figured we could fix the place to..." The mutt scratched the back of his head. "Y'know, surprise him, let him know we appreciate all he does around here." Though when he looked back at the younger dog he had a look of suspicion on his face.

"What bought about this sudden bit of kindness Charlie?" The Shepherd asked, the suspicion clear in his voice. Charlie quickly tried to think something up, and the idea suddenly popped into his head. "Well?"

"Zero, though it may not seem like it I care for Itchy very much. And I figured I might as well do something nice for him for once cause he does so much for me, and you too. He's the one who recommended a job at the Fleabite remember?" Charlie said. The part about caring for Itchy was true, the rest was all just trying to convince Zero, since all he wanted was more bones.

He was using his con-man's charm, and he hoped that he wasn't getting rusty. He was

still in his prime, so he was sure he could do it. The mutt watched Zero's face, seeing him thinking very hard about it. The black dog gave a slow nod.

"True... Alright Charlie, I'll help you with your project." Zero gave a grin. "Itchy won't recognize the place when we're finished." The younger dog's tail was wagging.

Jackpot... Charlie thought. "Could you go get Zak up for me? I know Joey's working this morning, and Zak'll be snoozing in his room. I don't think Joey would mind helping his old boss fixing up home."

"Sure Charlie." Zero said, food forgotten as he raced back upstairs. Charlie, on the other paw, went out the front door and headed to the Fleabite. His pockets would be full of bones by the end of the month...

On the roof of the building someone else heard thumping on the lower floors. A few bangs, faint voices he couldn't understand, and softer thumping as someone continued downstairs. He was used to it, but not so early in the morning. Then he heard more thumping, someone coming up. He was too tired to be curious about what the commotion was and fell back asleep.

"Hey, Zak get up!" Zero said when he reached the tan dog's room. He was curled up on a bed, his nephew Duncan nearby. "Charlie's got a project for us!" Zak raised his head groggily, blinking slowly at Zero.

"What time is it?" He asked, but since he had just woken up his words got all twisted and muffled, and it came out as "Whaimst," which made Zero laugh. The big guy shook his head to try and clear it from sleepiness. Duncan was still asleep, and one of his large ears gave a twitch as he rolled over. Zak smiled down at him before looking back at Zero.

"Sorry... What time is it?" He asked again, a bit more clear.

"It's 9:18 AM." Zero said, having glanced at a clock nearby. The tan Doberman looked at him like he was insane, mouth agape.

"You have gotta be kidding me..." He said slowly, rubbing one of his claws in his ear to see if it needed to be cleared. "Did you just say you got me up at 9:18 in the morning?!"

"Well, 9:19 now." The black Shepherd replied matter-of-factly. He had to duck as Zak threw his pillow at his head. "Take it easy Zak, you'll break your back y'old-timer." He said jokingly, knowing Zak was only 24, and not even gray around the muzzle yet.

Zak just rolled his eyes as he hopped down off the bed and stretched, yawning. When his mouth shut his tongue was lolling out the front of his mouth, making him look silly. Zero laughed at him again.

"Nice face Zak." Zero said, chuckling. Zak felt his tongue tip getting dry and pulled it back in, grinning a bit. Even if it was morning, the guy had a sense of humor. That's why Zero liked him as a friend, he was energetic in a flash.

"So what's this project the old mutt has us set to do?"

"We're supposed to be refurnishing and fixing up the place. You know, invite more dogs to stay." Zero said. His friend scratched his chin thoughtfully with a front paw.

"And what do we get out of this?"

"Its supposed to be a surprise for Itchy, to also show what a good job he's been doing for us." Zero explained. "That's why Charlie needs us to help." Zak gave an understanding nod, stretching again.

"Well, guess I'll go get myself some breakfast, I have a feeling we have a long morning ahead of us." The tan dog said, getting a nod of agreement from Zero. "I'll bring something up for Duncan in awhile, probably around 10. Lil' guy loves to sleep in." He grinned.

The two headed down together, each with their own thoughts about Charlie's project, both hungry enough to eat a horse. Zak kept a constant mental reminder to grab something for his nephew, knowing he'd want something as soon as he woke up. Not only that, but he didn't want Duncan to be worried about him, or wonder where he was.

Joey was sitting in front of the Fleabite entrance, having a cigarette. Business was always slow in the morning, so he figured nobody would mind if he had one. He blew one of his smoke rings in the air, looking at the sky. Nice, clear day, no signs of rain. One of his ears twitched as a small breeze blew into the alleyway. That's when Charlie showed up, and the pure-breed looked at him.

"Hey boss. What's up?" Joey asked jokingly.

"Not much, not much." Charlie said. "I got a favor to ask ya Joey."

"I may help, I may not. It depends." The Doberman said as he finished his cigarette and flicked the butt away, blowing a last smoke ring Charlie's direction. "Whatcha got in mind Charlie?"

"A small rebuilding project," Charlie scratched the back of his head, "a bit of refurnishing at the apartment." Joey looked interested, so Charlie continued. "We'll be doing some redecorating, trying to bring more dogs in to stay. The more rent we get the more we can do."

"Hm... Sounds like it'd be something interesting to do. They really don't need me here, not many dogs get a drink this early, so I guess I could take a break." Joey said thoughtfully. "If they need me they can send somebody to come fetch me."

Charlie gave a nod.

"How 'bout while we're here we get something to eat?"

"I'm not really that hungry Ch-." Joey started, as all of a sudden his stomach gave a growl equal to his size. He glanced down at it then back at Charlie, shrugging. "Guess I could snag a bite or two in me."

A bite or two... Right... Charlie thought as he followed the Doberman in to get some food. You're a huge Doberman, and you think a bite or two will fill you up. You're crazy.

The noise was very lulled down, everyone in their corners with their friends and family, chatting in low voices so other tables couldn't hear. Another typical morning at the Fleabite. The mutt looked around a bit.

"Where's the noise?" He asked Joey as they took a seat at a table.

"Dogs aren't talkative in the morning. They wanna be fed first." Joey answered, stretching his front legs and putting his paws behind his head, leaning his chair back. "Sheesh, I know I sure as heck wouldn't want it loud in the morning. This lull is nice."

"You're lucky you're with me Charlie, cause you get a discount since I'm an employee. I see that look in your eye that you want my opinion on how the place should look. Well I'm not telling until we eat." Joey said, looking around for a waiter or waitress. Charlie gave a sigh, wanting to at least get some input on how to attract more dogs.

When the waiter came, they gave their orders and watched him go. They sat quietly, each with their own thoughts. Charlie wondering how much time they had to work with, Joey about how the place should look. The Doberman usually only did the gambling work, but he figured he could try style also. The two dogs soon got their meal and ate fairly quick, then started talking business...

Andrew wasn't a stay-with-the-parents dog. He liked to be by himself, live alone, and live on the streets, not caring for anybody but himself. He liked hanging with Joey every now and again, but he was a bit of a loner at heart. And he was a lady's man always trying to get the girls. Sometimes he was slapped, other times girls went out with him, some rejected him flat out.

But there was someone always following him under these circumstances to keep him from making a mistake. Christian J. Sheperd, his unknown uncle. He always followed behind every corner, making sure Andrew didn't make a mistake that would hurt him. He was following him to the usual spot, the Fleabite. He his around a corner and peaked around, seeing Andrew catching Charlie and Joey just leaving.

He could see them talking, but couldn't hear them. He could see them nodding, a few shakes &no; from Andrew, but then eventually a semi-reluctant nod from the young dog as they went off towards the apartment. Now Chris was curious. He followed along, from a decent distance, wondering what was going on.

"Hey guys, three dozy mutts coming in!" Charlie called when he came inside the apartment. Zak and Zero were just finishing breakfast. "Who's ready to work?" He asked, grinning.

"I am." Zero said, smiling.

"I will be in a moment. Gotta go get Duncan up so he can eat and know what's going on." Zak said, picking up a plate of food and balancing it on his head as he went upstairs. Joey shook his head, smiling slightly.

"I'm glad that Zak is being a good parental figure to Duncan. He's had a lot more confidence while around his Uncle." The Doberman said, twitching his stub. "Duncan's slowly starting to become braver, and Zak's drinking less." Charlie nodded in agreement.

"So... Where are we gonna start first dad?" Andrew asked boredly, leaning against a wall and yawning. It was obvious that this was the last place he wanted to be.

"Well when Zak gets back down we're going to put up a nice big sign that I had made awhile ago. The only problem was that I could never get anyone to help me get it up. But now that we got some dim, doofus muscle-dogs around this'll be a cinch." Charlie said, then seeing Joey's eyes narrow and crossing his front paws over his chest. "Kidding Joey..."

Andrew rolled his eyes a bit.

"So at least you have a plan." He said, stretching then rolling his shoulders until they cracked. "Not the best in the world but whatever." Charlie rolled his eyes back.

Disrespectful mutt...He thought. They all took a seat to wait for Zak to come back down, all silent. It was quite awhile before the tan Doberman was back, his nephew riding as usual on his back, tail wagging. The duo smiled at the others.

"Alright, ready to go." Zak said, wagging his stub. Duncan, in his usual puppy playfulness, reached back and batted his Uncle's stub-tail as it wagged. "I got Rollie up also, he should be down in a moment. He's not really a breakfast guy so we don't need to wait for him to eat."

Just as he finished, the Rottweiler-Golden Retriever mix came down, yawning. He looked around, blinking slowly.

"So... When're we gonna start?" He asked, sitting and scratching behind his ear with a hind paw. Charlie looked around at everyone.

"You guys ready?" And this got him several versions of yes from everybody besides Andrew, who gave a 'whatever' as his answer. Charlie rolled his eyes at his son then headed outside,

being followed by everybody. The mutt attempted to pull his sign from behind a dumpster, but since it was huge he could only move it little by little. The two Dobermans went up and started to help him, muscles showing through their thin fur as they pulled (Duncan perched on Zak's head while he worked).

It moved a bit faster, and soon the three dogs had it out. They leaned it against the side of the building. They were all panting, but grinning.

"Zero, you go get the ropes from the shed." Charlie said, Zero giving a mock salute then going off to the shed. "Rollie, check the roof, see if there is anything we can use as a support up there." Rollie nodded and headed back inside, starting to go upstairs. "The rest of you, I hope you're ready to pull."

On the roof, the dog on top had woken up and was listening to Charlie barking orders at the others so they could start. When he heard Charlie tell Rollie to head to the roof, he went back to hiding in the corner. He wasn't ready to be seen yet. He saw the mix go and look all around, and eventually finding something.

"Hey Charlie, I think I found a nice spot to tie the rope around." Rollie said, looking over his shoulder at a pipe.

"Come back down and get the rope, you'll throw it down to us. Looks long enough for us to pull down here while it goes up there." The mutt called back, then Rollie ran back down.

What are they up to...? The dog on the roof wondered.

"Lupus." The dog's ears perked and he looked over at a wide pipe with a reflective surface. "Lupus, come over here." Lupus, a semi-unusual Siberian Husky due to his amber eyes, walked over to it, and saw Annabelle.

"What is it Annabelle?" He asked, seeming suspicious. He had already gotten a few missions before that had given him bad points, so he knew to be cautious. "What's the mission of the day?"

"No mission Lupus, but I need you to keep an eye on what Charles and the others are doing. I have a feeling that something bad might happen so stay up here and keep your eyes and ears

open." The pink Whippet angel said. "And be careful yourself."

"Gotcha." Lupus said, watching the Whippet fade and staring at his own reflection. He sighed a bit and headed back to his corner as he heard Rollie racing back up, and a few minor thumps that seemed out of place. Must be him with the rope...

"Here it comes!" Rollie called down as he threw one end of the rope down. "Still plenty up here!"

"Alright, wrap it around whatever's up there and throw the rest down." Charlie called back up, then Rollie did as he was asked. "Hey watch out! You almost hit Zero!"

"Sorry. Alright, I'm coming back down." The mix called then went back down.

While Rollie was back on his way down Charlie was busy tying the rope to the back of his sign. He glanced back at Zak and Joey, who were cracking their paws in preparation to start lifting. Duncan was sitting nearby and watching, trying to mimic what they were doing. He then looked over at Zero and Andrew, who were conversing a bit. Andrew vaguely seemed to be listening or adding to the conversation they were having.

Rollie was soon down and the two Doberman's rubbed their paws together, ready to pull.

"Alright guys, get ready to pull." The mutt barked, grabbing the ropes end. Joey and Zak joined him, Zero and Andrew following soon after. "Alright guys, on three we start pulling!" Charlie growled, his grip tightening a bit.

"One... Two... Three!" All the dogs started pulling. Duncan just sat on the sidelines, watching them. Progress went well for a few minutes, and they got it a bit more than half-way up. Then Duncan saw something that caught his attention.

He didn't realize it was under the sign due to his curiosity. He went and checked it out. The older dogs didn't see him... Nobody but Lupus.

"C'mon kid don't go under there it's not safe..." He growled. Then four things happened at once. The rope snapped, Lupus quickly took the rope in his teeth and was dragged until he ran right into the pole but kept a grip on it, Chris quickly came and pushed Duncan out of the way, and the dogs that were pulling the rope fell over. The sign hung in mid-air, five feet above where Duncan and Chris were as Lupus kept his grip on it in his teeth.

"Someone go up there and see what's going on up there, see what's holding the sign up!" Charlie barked as Zak, Joey, and Andrew went to check on the two dogs. Zak and Joey to check to see if Duncan was alright, and Andrew to ask Chris why he was there. Chris, before Andrew could get to him, took off. Rollie and Zero quickly ran up to the roof in case the sign fell.

Hurry up... I can't keep hold of this thing much longer, and I dunno if everyone is safe down there... Lupus thought. He heard them behind him.

"Charlie there's a dog up here!" Zero barked. "He's holding on to the rope, we're gonna help him out!" Then Zero and Rollie grabbed the rope, starting to help Lupus pull. After making sure Duncan was okay, Zak and Joey ran up to lend a paw.

The dogs soon had the sign up and got it flat on the roof. Charlie had come up to see who it was Zero was talking about, but in the confusion of getting the sign on the roof Lupus had vanished. He had gone back to hiding in his corner, not wanting to be seen by the mutt yet. Maybe after awhile longer...

The rest of the clean-up went by uneventful, everything going smoothly. Plenty of rooms were cleaned, old and beat up furniture moved in, and the entrance area cleaned up. They put TV's in rooms they could, and hoped they wouldn't mind the slightly bad reception.

The work was finished by 11, and just in time. Itchy came home, looking happy as his tail was wagging. When he came in he thought he was gonna have a heart attack. The main entry-way was actually cleaned. He went and looked at some of the other rooms that were messed up, then went to locate the other dogs.

When he found the others in the kitchen, they were all smiling.

"Surprised Itch?" Charlie asked, wagging his scruffy tail. Itchy could only nod.

"We thought you'd like it." Zero said. "It was all Charlie's idea to get things cleaned up. Y'know, to give you a nice surprise." Itchy looked at Zero then back at Charlie, then walked up to the mutt.

"Thanks for thinking about me Charlie. I'm sure that if more dogs come they'll love it." The Dachshund said, offering his paw for Charlie to shake, which he did. They all then celebrated by

going to the Fleabite.

On the roof, Lupus watched them go.

"Another day, another mission to decide where I go. Doing what I did has hopefully uped my 'score' with the higher-ups." He growled as he went to go sleep. After the excitement of today, he was tired. In his home, he found something shining.

It was a miracle dog tag. There was a note attached to it.

Use this wisely, you deserve it. The Husky looked at the sky and gave a nod of thanks before going into his home to sleep.