

Discovery in the Garden

The heightened sense of smell that I was granted at birth always leads me to great discoveries. Adventures in my backyard occupy my outdoor time, which is regulated by Lauren and her willingness to open the door. I spend the hours chasing butterflies, bunnies, anything that leaps out of the grass. I can't resist the urge to nip at the dandelions and send all the fuzzies flying into the breeze. I track down scents that lead to amazing things, like the fallen bird's nest that resides broken and empty next to the tree trunk; the rabbit's hole, that always seems to be empty, which I have lost many hot pursuits to; or a pile of twigs that ingeniously marks the spot of buried treasure. I've never uncovered the treasure beneath the twigs for fear that it is merely a pile of sticks, with treasure that is only a figment of my imagination.

Lauren, remember, the girl that opens the door for me? Well, she's actually more than that. She's been my best friend for as long as I can remember. Ever since I was a puppy, she has always been there to play with me, feed me, take me on walks, and she even took me with her when she left her parents' house to live on her own. I kind of miss Granny Lynn and Ted, but I really like living with Lauren. She never kicks me out of her bed, and she doesn't ever forget to give me a treat in the morning.

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Back to my adventures: my greatest one yet is settled by the back fence behind the elephant ear plant. It's a smell that lingers over the flowers, and covers up their sweet aroma. I must admit though, this smell is one hundred times better than sniffing the flowers. Maybe it's a squirrel that fell out of the neighbor's tree, died on impact, and was buried by the soil Lauren brought in to build her garden. That's just one possibility; this essence could be anything. I want so badly to dig it up and roll around in it, but I would hate to ruin the beautiful garden that Lauren worked so hard on. Instead of risking getting my snout hit with a rolled up newspaper, I simply visit the smell whenever I feel the craving. I lie in the garden and inhale the air around me, like Lauren inhales her cigarettes. Every time I visit the garden, I have to fight the urge to tear the earth and relieve my mind of its curiosity.

At night, when I'm curled up in bed at Lauren's feet, the smell invades my dreams. I dream of digging and digging, but I never find the perfume that entrances me. I awaken to the movement of my own feet scratching rapidly at the sheets. No matter what I did before bed time, my dreams were only about the garden and the mystery beneath it. My mouth waters uncontrollably, and I often wake up in the morning in a pool of slobber. The longer I resist the urge to dig up the garden and whatever it is that is hidden beneath it, the harder it is for me not to do so.

In the mornings when I am let out to relieve myself, I venture to the back fence, debating with myself the whole way if this day will be the day I risk a whacked nose, an angry Lauren, and a huge let down of possibly finding nothing.

Finally, Saturday morning, Lauren let me out and left for her jog in the park. Usually she is gone for a few hours because she catches a light lunch afterwards. I can always smell it on her breath when I meet her at the door. She always bends down so I can give her a kiss.

I've made up my mind. Today I am going to risk it all and take the dive into the dirt. With a sigh and a contemplative tilt of my head, I stare at the dirt and flowers before me. Is there any way I could possibly satisfy my curiosity without destroying the garden? Suddenly a huge gust of wind picked up the scent and carried it straight through my nostrils. Within that single moment, all the respect I was upholding for Lauren's garden fell to the ground and was buried by the dirt I was already kicking up.

Flowers wilted beneath the rain of dirt that I was sending into the air. So much excitement had surrounded me that for that moment in time I had completely forgotten about Lauren, the definite anger that was to come from her, the garden, the fact that I was destroying this garden... the only thing I was thinking about was finding that enticing odor. It wasn't long before I hit something that slowed my pace. The garden soil turned out to be only about one or two feet deep, and it wasn't packed down very hard. Directly behind the elephant ears, where the smell originated from, was a flat rock. I uncovered the face of it and realized there were words on it. I didn't know what it said, but I had seen rocks like these before when I was riding in the car with Lauren. She always turned her music down when we passed these wordy rocks.

I stared at it for a moment wondering what it meant, and what lay beneath it. Obviously, it was there for a reason, marking something of significance. Once again the wind picked up and sent me back into the frenzy that made me forget everything except digging. The dirt got harder to break through, but a few inches deeper was a box. It was damp and filmy, but as soon as I uncovered it, that tantalizing scent invaded my airway, and it took everything I had not to lay on the box and roll around. It wasn't long before I gave in to temptation though. The soggy cover easily tore and revealed the contents of the box.

It was a bit shocking, but I was so overjoyed to have finally figured it out. A small skeleton resided inside the box; along with a very little collar. I couldn't figure out exactly what it was: a small dog, young puppy or possibly a cat. It was so hard to tell.

Frozen and puzzled, my mind jumped back and forth between reburying the creature and gnawing on the bones. Every basic instinct I had left me itching to tear into the remains and satisfy my screaming taste buds. But, there was one instinct that I had acquired... the instinct of Lauren. I could hear her voice trying to reach me behind all the other urgent voices in my head. "Don't do it," she tells me, but her voice is just a whisper. In response to the yelling voices, a rib finds its way between my chops. All reasoning is now lost.

Time flew by me unnoticed. I was so wrapped up in the fastness of the bones that I didn't realize that Lauren had walked up behind me. Very suddenly I was whacked and rolled over with a purse. Unfortunately, Lauren couldn't help but notice the huge hole I had just dug, so her anger found me instantly. I released

the bone from my jaws as my tail simultaneously hid between my legs. Lauren's arm came hurtling towards me, scooped me up, and locked me beneath her armpit. She carried me very roughly back to the house grunting at me the whole way. She told me I was a bad dog and that she was very upset with me. I was then thrown onto the bed, and left in the room while she went back out to examine the damage. I watched her from the window, with my tail still too scared to emerge from its hiding place.

Lauren stood, staring very cross at the hole in her garden. Motionless, she stood for what felt like a long time. Suddenly her arms fell to her sides and her entire body seemed to slump; she then knelt to the ground. That's when I realized she had discovered the rock. She held it for a moment and then returned to the house clutching it to her chest. It seemed as if she was so overwhelmed with sadness that she had forgotten the anger. Her body dropped to the bed, and her feet dangled off the edge. I jumped up beside her and rested my chin on her stomach. Her hand found its way to my head, and softly stroked my ear. Tears rolled off of her cheeks as she sobbed through the words on the stone. "I'll miss you Mindy," she cried. Right then I knew what I had uncovered.

Lauren rolled over and took a picture off of her bedside table. She held it in front of both of us and said, "This is your mother."

I was instantly sick to my stomach.