

Bad Stanley—Patience

The caption read, “Thank you, Bad Stanley, for ventilating yet another pair of my favorite yoga pants and reminding me that modesty is an overrated virtue.” The new picture on her Facebook wall showed a pair of gray yoga pants with a gaping, ragged hole at the crotch.

As I read her post, I snorted and typed a response in the scrolling commentary: “OMG, Yvette, he’s hysterical. Thank you for my first laugh of the day.”

She responded back. “Not really, Dobie. He’s so destructive. It gets old.”

I could almost feel the despondence in her words. And I was reminded of an episode one of my dear friends had with one of her foster dogs who ate a remote control, an expensive pair of sunglasses, and her brand new GPS, among other things. It’s only funny when it isn’t happening to you. And while some dogs destroy items out of boredom, others are prone to destructive behavior stemming from their anxieties or past trauma.

This was Stanley’s case. A scrawny, eight-month-old tricolor Basset Hound with enormous ears, he was found roaming the streets as a stray. Hungry, frightened, and anxious, he was then taken to a high-kill shelter where, thankfully, a rescue scooped him up.

Yvette had fallen in love with the breed years ago when a pair of Basset Hound puppies followed her daughter home. She promised her daughter that they would keep the pair if no one showed up to claim them. Within days, though, the owners knocked on their door, and the puppies were returned to their original home. But her daughter’s passion was ignited, and she

was adamant that they get a pair of Basset Hounds. She posted photo after photo on Yvette's refrigerator, hoping that this alone might manifest her dream.

When they moved to California, Yvette adopted a pair of Bassets, Sadie and Sam, from a family who had lost their home. But after a year-long battle, Sam succumbed to cancer. The entire family was grief-stricken. But it hit Sadie the hardest. She'd lost her brother and her playmate. Yvette's two German Shepherds, Maggie and Max, were too big to play with her. And Sadie fell into a deep depression. Yvette knew she needed to find Sadie a companion, so she began searching on a Basset rescue website. One day, a photo popped up in her inbox. The dog was the spitting image of Sam.

"I know that no two dogs are alike, even when they look identical," Yvette said. "And I didn't expect Stanley to be just like Sam. But seeing another Basset Hound that looked so much like Sam made me think he was the one I needed to save, if Sadie approved. I was waiting for a sign to tell me to make the leap and adopt another Basset. Stanley was my sign."

Yvette loaded Sadie in the car and made the drive from San Diego to Huntington Beach to meet Stanley. They walked into the meeting area, and Stanley was waiting. Sadie perked up and began to gallop to meet him and he to her, like lovers reuniting after years apart.

"It was like one of those slow-motion scenes from a romantic movie, where the star-crossed lovers are reunited, running to each other through a misty field," Yvette said. "These two stubby dogs running toward each other as fast as their short little legs could carry them, ears flapping like wings. It was love at first sight."

Yvette adopted Stanley, and the new family began the drive home. Stanley howled the entire way home. For two full hours. By the time they reached Yvette's home in San Diego,

Stanley was hoarse. And she knew that his resemblance to Sam was going to be limited to his looks only.

When Yvette walked into the house with the two dogs, Stanley jerked free from the leash, tore through the house, jumped over both sofas, and chased the cats up the stairs. Max and Maggie looked at one another as if to say, “Good lord, what has Mom brought home?”

Yvette chased him up the stairs and lured him away from the cats with a stuffed fox. Stanley took it in his jaws and bore down on it, and it made a squeaky noise. Delighted by the noise, he chomped and chomped until the squeaker broke and then tore it to shreds, strewing the stuffing around the room. Yvette shook her head and got out a broom and dustpan to clean the mess.

At bedtime the first night, Yvette crated Stanley, not knowing what mischief he might get into while she slept. He snuggled into the fluffy cushions in his crate. A huge improvement from sleeping alone on the cold concrete in the rescue kennels. Now he had his own soft bed and other dogs in his presence to comfort him.

Promptly at 1:00 a.m., Stanley decided he didn't like crates. He started to whine. Yvette ignored him, hoping he'd settle. Stanley started to bark. Yvette ignored him. Stanley started to howl. Yvette went downstairs to check on him and reassured him with soothing words and a pat on the head. Then she turned out the light and walked back up the stairs. Stanley felt she'd misunderstood his request. He'd wanted out of the crate, not just a pat on the head. He started howling in earnest now, a bellowing, soulful howl that reverberated in his lungs. And he kept at it for the next five hours, hoping his mom would give in and let him out.

By morning, everyone was exhausted. Yvette got up to let Stanley out of his crate. As she walked into his view, he began barking from sheer excitement. He'd won his freedom! But he was so hoarse that the only sound he could make was like a cat hacking up a hairball. Yvette was spent, but she opened the door, and Stanley dashed out to play with his siblings.

Stanley's integration into the pack went relatively smoothly, but he had developed some bad habits from his time in the shelter. He became a hoarder. Especially with toys. It didn't matter how many he had; it was never enough, and he'd steal from his brother and sisters. And while he had a playmate in Sadie and Maggie, Max became annoyed with Stanley's frequent attempts to steal his toys and his constant pestering for attention and eventually refused to play with him and ignored Stanley's attempts to engage him. As a result, Stanley became obsessed with gaining Max's attention.

"He's like an attention-hungry child," Yvette said. "The kind that pokes you incessantly, whining *mom...mom...mom*. Generally, Max rises above the nagging, but sometimes Stanley pushes him to the limit, and Max will snarl and issue a warning growl. I'm always there to make sure it doesn't escalate beyond that."

In addition to hoarding toys, Stanley had other challenges. He hoarded food and treats and stole food from his siblings. Yvette crated him during meal time to keep him from shoving Sadie and Maggie aside and gulping their food. And to keep the cats' food safe, Yvette fed them on a table just out of Stanley's reach.

"Before he came to the rescue," Yvette said, "I don't think anyone ever did anything with him. I think he was just shoved in the backyard with no toys, no socialization, and very little food. He hasn't learned to trust that he'll never want for anything again."

Stanley's biggest challenge was separation anxiety. Yvette couldn't even exit a room without Stanley glued to her heels. And leaving for work was a major ordeal. Even a simple stroll to the mailbox triggered him to howl in the baritone yodel that defines the Basset breed. When she was at work, he'd howl all day.

"My neighbors are either hard of hearing, have great insulation, or have the patience of Job," Yvette said.

Eventually, Yvette nicknamed him Bad Stanley due to his constant howling and mischief. And she even started writing a blog a blog titled "The Misadventures of Bad Stanley," which she narrates in his voice.

I stumbled upon one of her posts on Facebook. It had been written the day after Stanley was diagnosed with separation anxiety. Yvette had tried everything—homeopathic treatments, ThunderShirt, traditional medications. Nothing worked, and they were back to square one. After months of experimentation, Yvette began to chronicle their journey through Stanley's blog.

Hello! I'm Bad Stanley. And I howl. A lot. I'm just trying to get my mom's attention. And generally this works. So imagine my surprise when, the other day, my mom decided to take me to the doctor to discuss my "issues" and see if there was something that could be done to help calm my nerves. What issues? I don't have issues!

The doctor diagnosed me with SEPARATION ANXIETY DISORDER! Sepa what?! Anxiety ha! Disorder? That's nonsense. I'm just a happy, exuberant dog who likes to be the center of attention and discover new uses for things! As for me, I'm off to tear up the garden now ...or perhaps one of my siblings' toys.

As far as Stanley was concerned, life was good. He had a warm, loving home—plenty of food, tons of toys, siblings to play with, and a doting mom. He spent his days outside with Sadie in one portion of the fenced yard, while Max and Maggie hung out in the other portion of the yard. Weekends were spent at the ranch where Yvette boarded her horses. Here, Stanley could run free, play with the horses, and chase rabbits and squirrels.

One day, Stanley discovered Yvette's baby parrot. For safety reasons, she kept it in a net tethered to the ceiling, where it could walk freely and play with things. The next day, Stanley posted a blog about his run-in with the parrot.

I love squeaky toys and stuffed animals. My mom bought a bunch of them for me, and they are scattered all over the house. Every night, she picks them up and puts them in the basket, and I spend the entire next day pulling them out and scattering them around again. I know she likes being busy, so I try to make sure she has things to do. But for some reason, she puts one of my toys high above my head where I can't reach it. This toy must be battery-operated. It squeaks on its own and moves all over a big rope net hanging from the ceiling. Sometimes it even talks to me, saying, "Stanley, no! Bad Stanley!" while dropping little pieces of food from its mouth onto my head. I am mesmerized by this strange toy! And I want to play with it! But I am baffled about how to climb up there with my short stubby legs! So I tried to stare it down. Nothing. I ran around in circles. That didn't work either. I thought about climbing up the wall, but dogs can't climb walls. Suddenly it hit me. I'll do what I do best and howl it down! AH-WHOOOOOO!!! BINGO! Off the net the mechanical toy flew, sailing over my head and landing on the floor between me and Mom. Mom and I both pounced on the toy. I got to it first. Mom screeched. A frantic, blood-curdling shriek! She pounced on me, grabbed my muzzle, and pried it open. But the toy was gone. My mom was terrified. But just as she was about to reach a state of

adrenaline-induced hysteria, she felt something climbing up the back of her leg. There it was! She let go of me, picked up the little green-orange-yellow blob, cradled it to her chest, and sat down to compose herself. It turns out this was not a toy after all. It was a parrot. Oops!

When I asked Yvette how Stanley behaved around the parrot now, she laughed and said, “The playing field’s been leveled. The parrot grew up, and Stanley knows that his beak and talons are sharp. There’s a healthy level of respect for the parrot now. Stanley’s still intrigued by him, but let’s just say the bird rules.”

And the misadventures of Bad Stanley continued. One day, he discovered the ice dispenser in the refrigerator door. Standing on his hind paws, he could just reach the lever with his front paws. While Yvette was in the shower, Stanley dispensed a truckload of ice, which shattered all over the floor. When she got out of the shower and came downstairs, she found him running around, nose to the floor shuffling ice cubes in front of him like his snout was hockey stick. Way to roll, Bad Stanley. Way to roll.

One morning, I logged onto Facebook, and Yvette’s most recent post was the first in my home feed. She’d posted a photo of a pair of mangled window drapes, fabric tattered and hanging in shreds. Curtain rods chewed and snapped. It looked like someone had taken a hedge trimmer to them. The caption read, “Thank you, Bad Stanley, for pointing out my lack of decorating prowess. Those new curtains were indeed hideous, and it would have been supremely humiliating if any of my friends bore witness to my incredible lack of taste. Bad Stanley to the rescue.”

Stanley got into a lot of his scrapes while Yvette was in the shower or tub; she even left the bathroom door open so she could hear him. But as destructive as he was, she couldn’t bear to

crate him unless it was bedtime. One evening, after Stanley got out of the house and ran rampant around the neighborhood with Yvette in hot pursuit for about twenty minutes, Yvette drew a bath and got into the tub to unwind. Stanley followed her into the bathroom, watching her sink into the warm soapy water. He sat with his chin resting on the side of the tub. Then his keen Basset eyes spied a square yellow object that looked suspiciously like his favorite cheese. Stanley looked at Yvette, whose eyes were closed, head resting on a rolled towel propped on the edge of the tub. She opened one eye just in time to see him grab the bar of soap in his mouth.

“Stanley! Drop it!” she screamed.

Stanley took off with the bar of soap in his mouth. Yvette sprang from the tub, dripping with water and bubbles. Stanley scampered around the house with Yvette chasing him and slipping on the now-wet hardwood floors. Suddenly, Stanley stopped, dropped the soap, and hacked up a mouthful of bubbles. Yvette retrieved the soap, carried him to the kitchen sink, rinsed his mouth, and resumed her bath. The next morning, Stanley regaled his fans by recounting the story in his blog. His nickname would be his forevermore.

One of Stanley’s favorite games is something he invented. Yvette calls it “teach my human to fetch.” It goes something like this: Stanley gets a ball, rolls it under the sofa, and then barks and howls nonstop until Yvette retrieves it for him. And the game commences. Once she returns the ball to him, he immediately pushes it back under the sofa and begins howling again. Sometimes, Yvette plays along because Stanley takes such delight in it. Sometimes, she ignores him. But Stanley is stubborn and keeps at her until she reengages. One day, Yvette stuck a treat in the center of his toy and placed it under the sofa. Stanley barked and barked. Then the howling commenced. Yvette ignored him, making a point. The next day, Bad Stanley’s blog post read...

Mom turned the tables on me. Hid a treat-filled toy where I could not get it. I did NOT see that one coming. Well played, Mom. Well played.

Days later, Yvette had a bad case of the flu. She warmed a bowl of chicken soup. Put it high on the nightstand. Drew a warm bath. Set out a pair of fleece-lined yoga pants and a sweatshirt to change into. Then eased her fevered body into the tub. Half an hour later, she emerged from the tub. Stanley had shredded her yoga pants and eaten her chicken soup.

One day, however, Stanley redeemed himself. Yvette had taken Sadie and Stanley to the ranch. While Yvette groomed her horses, the dogs played and chased each other and then went behind one of the manure piles to investigate. They had been gone longer than usual, and Yvette set out to look for them. Suddenly, she heard Stanley's undeniable bray. Then she saw him racing toward her. She ran to him and clipped the leash to his collar and headed back the direction he'd come from. But he kept pulling her in the opposite direction. She tried to go the other way, but he kept pulling her until she followed him. They jogged around the back of the manure pile. Sadie was frozen, nose to nose with the largest coyote Yvette had ever seen. Yvette screamed at it to go. It gazed nonchalantly at Yvette and stood its ground. Stanley charged him, growling ferociously. The coyote casually jogged away. Had they been seconds later or had Yvette ignored Stanley's fervent attempts to drag her elsewhere, the coyote would have claimed Sadie.

For the most part, Yvette's pack lives in peace. I asked how she did it, how she created an environment in which ten animals of different species all coexisted in relative harmony. She told me she used to be a zookeeper.

“I’m used to keeping peace. And I don’t sit down much. Never have. So that’s how I keep the peace. Yes, there’s a lot to do. But I wouldn’t have it any other way.

Lots to do indeed. Yvette’s morning routine is hectic. In addition to four dogs and two cats, Yvette has several large birds. Once she’s awake, she sets the birds up for the day in a larger enclosure and prepares their food. Then the cats and dogs are fed (Bad Stanley in his crate). After breakfast, Sadie and Stanley go into their yard, Max and Maggie into theirs, separated by a wrought iron fence. Then Yvette can shower and ready herself for work. The nighttime routine happens in reverse. The morning ritual takes almost two hours, the evening even more. And on weekends there are her two horses to factor in. And her weekly shopping for the parrots alone looks like a vegetarian on a juicing spree purchase, with pounds of greens, melons, pineapple, and seeds mounded up on the countertops. And while there’s generally peace in her compound, the one trouble spot is between Max and Stanley, primarily because Stanley won’t back off.

“He continues to egg Max on until Max has had it and either snaps at him or issues a warning growl. But he never does more than that. I don’t know how it happened,” she said, “but one day I came home and the bottom third of Stanley’s ear had been sliced off. Almost like someone had cut it with scissors. But the dogs were enclosed away from each other and separated by a fence.”

The wound was clean and straight. Yvette cleaned and bandaged the wound and then reviewed the tape from her outside surveillance cameras that she’d installed so she could keep tabs on the dogs while she was gone. The footage revealed nothing. Whatever had happened to Stanley’s ear was just out of range of the camera’s view. All she found was a bloody trail. The

missing ear portion was never found. While she suspected Max had reached through the fence and chomped Stanley's ear, Stanley had another theory that he revealed in his blog the next day.

So my ear was chopped off. Mom suspected an irate neighbor, pushed to the edge by my vocal stylings, might have lopped off my ear, but my brother and sister are huge German Shepherds, and no one in their right mind is gonna jump our fence. Besides, who would want to harm me? I'm the canine crooner of the neighborhood. Mom searched the entire yard for clues but found nothing, not even my ear piece. And there's a very good reason for that, I tell you. Because I know who ate my ear. ZOMBIES! I was attacked by zombies, and they ate my ear! Now I know what you're thinking, and I wouldn't have believed it myself had I not experienced it first-hand. But let me assure you, the Zombie Apocalypse is real! And your best defense against a zombie attack is a pair of German Shepherds! I may have lost part of my ear, but I gained zombie street cred that day.

Just the other day, Yvette posted yet another photo of a pair of yoga pants with the crotch ripped out. The caption read simply, "Bad Stanley strikes again."

I asked Stanley why he shreds things, especially his mom's clothes. His response:

I have teeth. I might as well use them.

"But why the crotch area?" I asked.

Leverage.

He uttered only that one word but then showed me a picture of yoga pants flat on the floor. He placed a paw firmly on each leg and bit the crotch, ripping it and shaking the fabric patch in his jaws.

Then I asked him why he continues to goad Max even after Max bit his ear off.

He said, *No pain, no gain. I like taunting him, and I'm not letting him get the best of me.*

When I asked him what he loved about living at Yvette's, he responded:

This place is like adventure land. So many things to see. So many things to do. There's always something new to be discovered.

When I shared this with Yvette, she laughed and said, "Sounds like Stanley. He's basically just a happy-go-lucky guy. Like a mischievous canine Dennis the Menace. Stanley's always looking for a good time. He just gets worried and upset when I leave. I think that, because of his past, he's afraid that each time I walk out the door I'm never coming back. And that's devastating to him.

Later I asked him to get serious with me. I asked him what it had meant to him to be able to have a home with Yvette.

He showed me a box with a heart in it.

There, he said. I live there, in her heart. Her heart, her love...that eclipses everything.

It does indeed.

I asked Yvette what she thought Stanley was here to teach her, and she was quiet for a long while. When she did speak, her tone was unsure.

"I'm puzzled by that," she said and then paused. "I suppose you could say he's here to teach me patience. That's the obvious answer. But I'm not a patient person, and I haven't learned to be patient yet." Then she paused again. "Perhaps that's why he's still who he is."

Moments later, she added, “I think one of the things I’ve learned from him, especially when he destroys things, is that it’s just stuff. I love my stuff, but it is just stuff. And I know that if I don’t take the time to lock it up, Stanley will find it. He shreds everything that carries my scent. But I think he’s in my life to remind me not to get too connected to material things. And the reality is I can’t blame him. I mean, I know he’s going to shred stuff. It’s my fault if I don’t put things out of reach.”

Yvette will tell you that Stanley is the reason for and the antidote to her stress. While he can be destructive, Yvette is quick to point out that from her point of view he’s simply an explorer and an adventure seeker. And despite his insistence that any object is a toy to be played with, and possibly destroyed in the process, her love for him far overshadows even his most devious shenanigans.

“If I have a bad day,” Yvette said, “I take him in my arms, and he leans into me, and I just hold him for five minutes. I can feel my blood pressure drop.”

Ultimately, the love they share knows no bounds. Stanley is glued to Yvette’s side for life, and his tie to her is as strong as hers to him. He melts her heart, he makes her day, and for those reasons, Yvette couldn’t live without him.