

BARKING AT BUTTERFLIES

Written by

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Approx. 10 minutes.

Two Spanish Water Dogs reflect on life, relationships, people and butterflies.

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Barking at butterflies

Two Spanish Water Dogs are sitting in their yard. Marco wears Tommy Bahama clothing with a black and white motif. Bella wears a brown Juicy Couture sweatsuit. Marco sits on a lounge chair. Bella stands staring through a fence.

Bella

(intensely heartfelt)

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark, bark.

Marco

(baritone, classical,
aristocratic enunciation al la
Christopher Plummer)

Bella, you're darn good company, a great deal of the time, but sometimes I just wish you would settle down.

BELLA

Settle down? Settle down? How can I settle down? Look at that beautiful butterfly!

MARCO

I believe it's a moth.

BELLA

. . . Butterflies are the most poetic creatures in the universe. They start out as creepy crawling caterpillars and then transform themselves into these most delicate, elegant, colorful flying creatures. . .

MARCO

Which you can't wait to pounce on and crush to bits.

BeLLA

(passionate)

You said it brother!

MARCO

Sometimes I find it hard to believe we came out of the same litter.

Bella sits in rapt attention. Focused on the unseen bug beyond the fence. Marco sniffs the air.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Bella?

Bella ignores him, following with her nose every movement of the insect on the other side.

MARCO (CONT'D)

Bella?

BELLA

(irritated at the distraction)

What is it?

MaRCO

Do you ever wonder if there's something more?

Bella

More? More than what?

MARCO

(tinge of melancholy)

I don't know exactly. Just more. More than this.

BELLA

Of course there's more. There's that butterfly, representing metamorphoses, transformation, the sublime of the unknown.

MARCO

Which you desire to capture, dismember, and slowly devour.

Bella starts walking down the fence.

BELLA

Oh no! (upset)

MARCO

What? (alarmed)

BELLA

Oh no. Oh no.

MARCO

What is it, Bella?

BELLA

(mournful)
The most beautiful butterfly in all creation is fluttering away without my ever having laid so much as a paw on it.

MARCO

Is that all?

BELLA

Is there anything else?

MARCO

Well I believe that's the question I was attempting to frame a moment ago.

Bella returns disappointed and deflated to her lawn chair.

MARCO (CONT'D)

We're very different, you and I.

BELLA

(bored)
Here we go again.

MARCO

I'll give you a perfect example.

Bella

Example of what? I don't want an example, I want a butterfly.

MARCO

When we get up in the morning, and get let out, first thing, I trot my little half circle out on the lawn, which gets me in the perfect position and frame of mind to do my business. But you, you can't wait to greet the others, so you practically pee yourself hopping around like you do.

BELLA

Really? I never think about.

MARCO

Those that forget history are doomed to repeat it.

BELLA

(looks at him)

What's history?

MARCO

(pauses)

I don't actually know.

BELLA

But you said those that forget history are doomed to repeat it.

MARCO

I know.

BELLA

Well, what did you mean?

MARCO

Let me see now, we were talking about butterflies and then we were talking about how we do our business first thing in the morning . . .

BELLA

Morning, that make me think of breakfast. I love breakfast!

MARCO

Bella, I find it almost impossible to organize my thoughts around you.

BELLA

(excited)

I love dinner too. I love treats.

(MORE)

BELLA (CONT'D)

I love the stuff I sniff on the floor and lick up without ever really knowing what it was.

MARCO

(musing warmly)

Ah yes -- embracing the culinary unknown.

Bella jumps up and runs to the fence.

BELLA

(as if reciting a line of
iambic pentameter)

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark.

MARCO

Another moth? Is it a pretty one at least?

BELLA

It's a butterfly and its a beauty! I just wish I could get my canines on that one. I'd munch it slowly. I'd savor every bite.

MARCO

I doubt that. Self control isn't exactly your strong suit.

BELLA

Oh yes I would. Oh yes I would. I'd nip off its delicate little wings bit by bit, and let it flutter at my feet for hours. I wouldn't rush a thing, no I would not.

MARCO

My goodness you put me in the mood for a good chew.

BELLA

(heartbroken)

Oh no, it's gone, never to return.

Bella slumps back to the lawn chair dejected. Marco is munching happily on a chew toy.

BELLA (CONT'D)

Marco?

MaRCO

(between chews)

Yes Bella?

BELLA

I'm afraid.

MARCO

Afraid of what?

BELLA

Afraid of living a life of regret.

MARCO

Is this about the butterflies?

BELLA

It is.

MARCO

Why don't you chew on one of these chewy things. They really are chewy in a most satisfying manner.

BELLA

I'd rather chew the furniture.

They both chew for a few seconds with great fervor and satisfaction, until a person appears from off stage.

Person

Bella, stop that! Stop that right now! You'll ruin another set of patio furniture. Stop it!

Bella and Marco hop excitedly around the person.

PERSON (CONT'D)

(smiling)

OK, OK, I love you too. Yes I do. I love you too.

Person pats the dogs, then walks off stage.

BELLA

I love the others. I really love the others.

MARCO

You'll get no argument from me there -- they are fantastic.

BELLA

I love it when we walk them around.

MARCO

The exercise is so good for them. By the by, you know you're supposed to do your business when you're out and about like that.

BELLA

(not interested)

I know, I know.

MARCO

But you never do it.

BELLA

My business is none of your business.

She jumps up again, runs to the fence.

BELLA

What a butterfly! Oh, baby!

(lovingly)

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark, bark.

MARCO

There you go again.

BELLA

But this one is a beauty! It's got wings, it's got flutter. It's got that oh-so-slow, can't-make-up-my mind-about-which-flower-to-land-on float. It's got the whole package. You gotta see it!

MARCO

Bella, don't you see, you're simply setting yourself up for another disappointment, and I for one refuse to be an enabler in this matter any longer. I am now going to ignore you in order to turn my full and total attention to the far more satisfying business of gnawing on this chew toy.

BELLA

(ecstatic)

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark, bark.

She glances back at Marco.

MARCO

(ignoring her)

Outstanding chew toy. It's got everything one looks for really -- texture, complexity, a certain almost erotic give and resistance that inspires an emotion in me that may very well be love ...

BELLA

(more at Marco and less at the
bug)

Bark, bark, bark, bark. Bark, bark, bark, bark.

MARCO

(ignoring her)

I am fully focused on chewing, and in so doing, am tapping into my full personal potential for joy . . . By god do I feel fulfilled.

BELLA

(getting desperate for Marco's
attention)

Bark, bark, bark, bark, bark, bark.

Person comes out again.

pERSON

(commanding)

What is all the ruckus about? Now, Bella you need to settle down.

Bella and Marco rush to the person and hop around them in excitement.

PERSON (CONT'D)

(sweetly now)

Yes, you need to settle down, you need to settle down.

(MORE)

PERSON (CONT'D)

Did you see something interesting out there? I bet you did, I bet you did.

Person goes back inside.

MARCO

I love the others. They are truly a dog's best friend, aren't they?

Bella approaches Marco.

BeLLA

(hurt)

Don't ever do that again, Marco, please.

MARCO

Bella, you and your non-sequiturs . . . what are you referring to?

BELLA

(vulnerable)

When you ignore me like that I get a terrible feeling inside, like maybe I don't even exist, and I'm just a random collection of molecules, cocoa colored fur, and a faintly detectable waddle when I walk, blowing around in this world.

MARCO

(moved)

Why Bella, how very thoughtful you can be, how very expressive.

BELLA

(serious)

Just don't ignore me. Please. I can't stand that feeling of . . . of randomness, of not being, like I'm maybe me, maybe someone else, maybe here, maybe not.

MARCO

But you don't have to worry. If you feel, you must exist -- how else how could you be feeling, right? *I feel, therefore I am*, as it were. In its very specificity, your feeling of randomness is not random . . .

BELLA

(interrupting, growling, angry,
aggressive)

Don't do that, don't you dare do that.

MARCO

(growling, defensive)

Don't do what? What on earth has gotten into you?

BELLA

(gnashing her teeth at him)

Don't do it, Marco.

MARCO

(growling in response)

What? What? Philosophize with you instead of engaging
emotionally?

Bella nips him on the ear. Marco yelps.

mARCO (CONT'D)

OK, OK. I won't ignore you. I won't ignore you.

BELLA

(relaxing)

I need your attention, is that so wrong?

MARCO

(comforting)

Not at all, not at all. What if we are codependent, we're all
we've got, right?

They snuggle together a moment.

BELLA

Marco?

MARCO
Yes, Bella?

BELLA
What's codependent?

MARCO
I don't know.

BELLA
You just said, 'what if we are codependent'.

MARCO
I know I did, I know I did . . . Now let me see, what were we talking about? We were talking about randomness . . . and emotional engagement . . . and manifesting our full potential for joy ... and walking the others . . .

Suddenly Bella jumps up and runs to the fence.

BELLA

(rapture)
What a specimen! I've never seen one quite like it. It's perfection incarnate, a beauty of a butterfly in every aspect, the perfect snack, or afternoon-long dissection, utterly pouncable and munchable in every way . . .

MARCO

(sniffs the air)
Please Bella, not now! I'm trying to think!

BELLA
Think? What is there to think about? The answer to all desire floats just beyond this fence.

END OF PLAY