



Dog Day Afternoon: Happiness, Hula Hoops, Huskies

By LousyNick

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Some days you dance for the amusement of a drone, while bemused puppies watch. These things

happen.

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It's called Puppy Park for a reason. And today, that reason is obvious.

There are canines of all kinds roaming around. English bulldogs and French bulldogs loping around lazily. A Jack Russell terrier is running around at a furious pace, a tiny brown-and-white blur nudging a kiddie soccer ball, growling at other dogs who want to join the fun. A gigantic golden retriever fighting to hold onto a huge plank while his little buddies watch on jealously. French Poodles (black, white and brown, because some owners are really serious about the Rainbow Nation, I guess) mangling their fancy hairdos by playing in the (working way too well today) fountain. A Scottish terrier who can't make it to the fountain playing in the muddy puddle that always forms a little down the way.

So many furry friends - where to pay attention first?

"Look, it's Maxie!"

She always gets excited when she sees him - understandably, since he's one of the most gorgeous Siberian Huskies around, with clear blue eyes and a sleek grey-and-white coat, and he's basically the definition of playful. And he proves it, too, jumping in the fountain, running through the mud, and heading straight for her.

She laughs, musically, and rolls around wrestling him for a bit. I'm left making small talk with Maxie's mom (the human one). She's always so happy (but then, who wouldn't be)?

Days like this are hard to come by and all too precious for those of us who spend too much time cooped up in tiny cubicles in offices, confined by four neutrally-coloured walls. Bright sunshine, barely a cloud in the deep blue sky. A picnic blanket (two, actually, because you never can be too careful in a park where puppies aren't always properly potty-trained). A pillow (so we can lie back and enjoy the sights and sounds). A pretty girl by my side. What's not to like?

Sometimes I wonder what they think of us - these two-legged creatures that watch them while they play, babble incomprehensibly and throw balls around all willy-nilly.

Today, the people are even stranger than usual.

There are fellow picnickers on benches and blankets, yes, and joggers trying to make their way through the crowds (and being chased by dogs that may or may not belong to them), and kids playing

on swings and ultra-colourful jungle gyms or riding bikes or trikes or skateboards, and lovers strolling arm-in-arm.

But there are also brightly-clad jugglers tossing even more bright coloured balls and bats. Tightrope-walkers doing their thing on line strung between trees. A drum circle pounding away. A bearded man with a kilt and bagpipes that has been exiled to the fringes of civilization.

And...Wait, is that a drone? It looks alien - a little flying saucer with four helicopter blade feet whirling away, and a tiny dome for the camera (or possibly a tiny little alien watching what's going on). It circles the action zone, observing jugglers and hula hoopers alike, silently judging.

Okay, this is a really weird day.

It's about to get weirder.

"Those kids could teach you a thing or two," my companion laughs, nudging me.

"Challenge accepted."

With those words, I move towards the hula hoopers. A little girl offers me a hula hoop while never stopping her own hooping, blonde pigtails flying.

I take it.

I move. I twirl, I swing, I gyrate.

I fail.

The hoop falls to the ground.

The drone watches on, recording my failure.

"Try again?" the girl smiles. The crowd cheers.

I nod, pick up my hoop, and my pride, and I dance again.

Ten seconds later, the hoop is on the floor, and the crowd is laughing good-naturedly. I look for the drone.

Maxie has it on the ground, and he's biting it and clawing it and generally showing it who's boss.

Such a good dog.