



## The Puppy and the 'Vette

*by Craig Bouquin*

I validate nice comments made by wives in our social circle by doing nice things. “Oh, he’s such a nice guy” or “He’s so sweet” are some examples. Ill conceived at its roots, perhaps, but I do try to live up to this opinion with my actions. One way of showing my tender side is to take our cute little Yorkshire terrier puppy for a walk.

I drive us to the beach, my usual choice—strictly for its fresh air and cool breezes. I stand in the parking lot overlooking the crowd to determine the best route to take with the puppy. I see the usual clusters of kids—girls almost wearing bathing suits, with the usual circle of young men lingering around them. The “Yo dudes!” and “sup bro?” language is supplemented with bizarre hand signals and a lot of bopping up and down as they prowl around the girls.

These guys are in great shape. Muscular, sun-tanned, and wearing the coolest swim trunks. I think about how I used to look like that. I suck in my gut—just enough to nearly pass out, and look at my reflection in the car window. My eyes refocus to see the puppy on the other side of the glass. She looks at my red-blue face and blood shot eyes like a kid at a horror movie and backs away. I exhale and my color returns to normal.

This reminded me of the commercials on TV selling fat reducing machines and miracle drugs that wipe out pounds in seconds. I must admit I could use some time on a Swill Master, or maybe buy a bucket of “Gut-B-Gone!” tablets. “Order one today, for a hundred easy payments of ...” I don’t think so. My biggest problem is the age of my clothes. My swimming trunks are at least ten pounds old.

I see the coolest stud on the beach walking toward the crowd. He ambles confidently from his Corvette convertible over toward the on-looking kids. The boys back away to allow his entry to the inner circle of girls. He doesn’t even look at them, but looks around the beach casually. All attention is on him.

By now I have quit seeing stars, and can stand up without supporting myself on the car hood. The puppy looks less afraid. I open the door and hook her up to the leash. I find the little mini hair scrunchie I keep hidden in the glove box, and put it in her hair, making a cute little topknot. She is adorable.

I don my screwy looking crushable beach hat. I open the bottom three buttons of my short-sleeved faded dress shirt, allowing my milk white belly to show. I tuck the back of the shirt into my baggy swim trunks, leaving the front out. The finishing touch is my clip-on, flip-up sunglasses, (Left in the flipped up position, of course), and a pair of \$1.29 flip-flops. Nothing matches. I look perfect. I look like a dope.

We walk directly toward the assembled hormone proving grounds, and stop. Every one of the girls lets out a squeal, and a barrage of “Oh, how cute!” They run through the circle of boys, and swarm me. I am surrounded with squeals of delight.

The young muscle men are stunned and bewildered. They begin to follow the girls, but wander off reluctantly, muttering to each other. These boys are learning. A puppy trumps a

**'Vette—every time.**

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