



# Withers Thou Goest

By Kimberly Gadette

He was muscular and strong, model-hand-some with long, golden hair. He came from a very good family.

She was cute in a scruffy sort of way, with an unruly mass of black curls that desperately cried out for attention. Her mother had abandoned her at a very young age, and she never even knew who her father was.

He assumed he could have any female in the place.

But she was persistent. Whenever he turned, she was there. Whenever he went to get a drink, she was waiting for him.

And then, when it seemed that all her efforts were in vain, he finally looked in her direction. Gave her the once over. Heck, gave her the twice over. He tried to back off, but something about her beckoned. And then, to her great joy ... he sniffed her behind.

John-John III, the prize-winning golden retriever, fell head over tail for Cookie, a Heinz 57 mix of cocker, border collie and who-knows-what, her ancestors' passions too strong to be confined by any backyard fence. Love at the dog park was a beautiful sight to behold—if you didn't mind

watching that particular sort of action in broad daylight.

Cookie's owner, Martha, wished that love could be just as easy for her. But hindsight being what it was, she'd concluded that she'd always managed to bark up the wrong tree.

But that afternoon, from the moment she and Cookie heard the clang of the chain link fence announcing the entrance of potential playmates, she'd been as smitten as Cookie.

John-John's master looked as if he, too, had a pedigree. His eyes were as friendly and intelligent as his dog's, his body echoing the same lean athleticism. A gorgeous blond, with slightly tousled hair, from the way he strode into the park sporting a high-tech mylar Frisbee and the smallest of cell phones, Martha knew he was a cut above the rest.

"It looks like our two dogs don't need a coffee date to get acquainted," he said, flashing a smile that made Martha clutch her poop baggie a little tighter. He looked over at the moving mound of blond on black. "Hey! John-John, a little respect."

"It's OK. I haven't seen my Cookie look this happy in dog years."

"Don't worry—mine is neutered."

"So am I ... I mean, so's Cookie. Spayed, I mean ..." said Martha, wishing she'd put on lipstick that morning. "I'm Martha."

"I'm George." He offered his hand. His handshake, confident and knowing, gave Martha immediate goosebumps—which can be a tricky condition in dogpark.

Quick learners, George and John-John sensed Martha's and Cookie's true pedigrees, and instantly became dogged in their pursuit. And after many months of lovely long hikes, strenuous runs on the beach, tables for two and water for four, none of them could imagine life without the other three.

It was a simple ceremony, held under a flowered bow-er at the dogpark. During the reception, they ran out of snausages faster than the champagne.

For the honeymoon? A trip off the northwest coast of Florida, to Dog Island, of course.

Sometimes all it takes is just a slight belief in paws-ibilities. In keeping your head up, your eyes alert and your breath fairly fresh. And then sometimes, just sometimes, fairy-tails can come true. **NY**

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