McCann

continued from PREVIOUS PAGE

person. I've already informed his vet that if we ever have to put him down, I'm going to need the animal hospital to prepare enough euthanasia for an adult man as well.

This dog is such an angel that I sort of forgot all dogs are not like this. That's the reason, I guess, I thought it might be a good idea to get a second puppy.

On second thought...

It was November 2021, when I made one of the biggest mistakes one can make in a marriage: I bought a dog on the internet without consulting my spouse.

I blame COVID-19 for this. I had just tested positive and found myself one evening lying on the couch with a 102-degree fever. Realizing Christmas was around the corner, my fatigued brain began running through a list of gift ideas and, after a minute, I decided it might be fun to surprise my husband, Skylar, with a puppy.

For context, I had good reason to think he would generally want one. My in-laws are dog people to a degree I didn't know was possible until I met them. A few years ago, Skylar's sister informed us her aging husky mix had died during the night. I spent the rest of the day listening to my husband have sobbing phone calls with each member of his extended family over this.

I have an uncle who lives in California and had two dogs Skylar never met. One day, Skylar walked into the house with tears streaming down his cheeks. I asked what happened, expecting him to respond with news of a tragedy involving a close friend. But no.

"I just saw on social media your uncle has to put down his sweet baby, Sid."

"You don't even know this dog," I responded.

"I know," he sniffled, and his voice trailed off into high-pitched emotion. "And now I never will."

So, yes, in my COVID fog, I just assumed Skylar would think this was a grand idea simply because he loves dogs.

After a quick Google search, which I swear said "bern a doooooodle Utah pupy" (I checked later), I put down a large nonrefundable deposit on a Bernese Mountain Dog poodle mix to be picked up in eight weeks and went to bed.

I awoke around 2 a.m., laughing at the bizarre dream I just had in which I purchased a dog on the internet without meeting it or checking with my husband first. A minute later, a small panic rushed through me and I reached for my phone to verify that it had, in fact, been a dream.

After I saw the confirmation email, I lay in bed for the rest of the night rehearsing over and over how I was going to tell Skylar.

That morning we took Duncan for a walk around the neighborhood, and I thought I'd gently try to feel out Skylar on this for my own peace of mind. I thought I could maybe trick him into giving me retroactive permission.

"Do you ever worry Duncan is lonely?" I asked Skylar.

"No," he responded.

"But . . . what if we got him a brother one day," I added. "Like, maybe a Bernedoodle?"

Skylar winced. "I don't want a Bernedoodle, and this is a really bad time to get a second dog anyway," he said, noting that he was in the middle of his medical residency, and we were both working long hours.

At this point any plan to keep this a Christmas surprise was abandoned and I panic-dumped a confession onto Skylar, who instantly forgave me. (I do not deserve this man.)

Louie's tale

Eight weeks later, we brought an absolute terror into our lives, named him Louie, and then watched him bite us, scratch us, chew through furniture, and sprint out the front door and down the street on a daily basis. At six months, he taught himself how to open gates and doors so he could no longer be easily corralled. At eight months, he was tall enough to help himself to whatever he wanted on countertops and upper cabinets.

Duncan would stand at the edge of the room, watching us try to train this monster, with a look in his eyes that said "when is he leaving?"

Whenever anyone we passed on walks commented on how cute Louie was, we'd respond, monotonically, "Thanks. Do you want him?"

It's been 2½ years since we first brought Louie home and even after expensive extensive training, he still doesn't listen to us. Just last week we had to chase him through the house to wrestle from him a loaf of bread he had stolen during the two seconds we had our backs to him.

Once we pulled the mangled carbs from his salivating mouth, he stomped to the center of the room and collapsed onto the floor in a frustrated huff. A second later, he let out a long, annoyed sigh.

I caught Skylar staring at Louie just then, a smirk on his face.

"What?" I asked him.

"I'm so glad you got COVID and bought him. I love him so much," Skylar said.

I looked at Louie, who glared back at me just as Duncan began licking his face.

"Remarkably," I said, rubbing my right arm where a new set of scratches had just formed, "so do I."

Eli McCann *is an attorney, writer and podcaster in Salt Lake City, where he lives with his husband and their two naughty (yet worshiped) dogs. You can find Eli on X, formerly known as Twitter, at* **@EliMcCann** *or at his personal website,* **www.itjustgetsstranger.com**, *where he tries to keep the swearing to a minimum so as not to upset his mother.*

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