

# A Dog's Life

By

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# *Chapter 1*

It was a beautiful early cloudless day in May in the city of New Castle located in the western area of Pennsylvania.

On the eastern outskirts of New Castle, was a new housing development being built by the Hanson's Construction Company. This new development was called Highland Estates with thirty new homes constructed and planned to have a lovely woodsy country landscape.

At the entrance of the construction site just passed the fenced gate was the office for Hanson's Construction, which consisted of a single wide old trailer.

The owner of this company was Mike Hanson; was of average height and average-sized potbelly for men of his age group. Mike was still a handsome man with a sprinkle of gray hairs that started to peek through his full head of brown hair. Mike inherited the business from his father, Ernst, who founded it in 1960.

It was now 4:30 in the afternoon and the music of power saws and air hammers pounding nails in those thirty homes just ceased to indicate the end of another workday.

Mike stepped out of his office trailer and watched while his workers headed off to their cars and pick up trucks parked in the dirt parking lot. They were all smiles, as most of them planned on meeting for a few beers before heading home.

"Great progress today, guys. See you tomorrow morning bright and early," he called out to some of the

workers while they got into their vehicles.

A few of the workers acknowledged Mike with some waves or nods of their heads.

"We're going out for a few beers over at The Pounding Hammer bar. Want to join us, Mike?" one of his workers offered.

"Nah, I have tons of paperwork to finish, you know, paychecks," Mike responded.

"Well, then, I think you should get back to work," another worker replied jokingly then got inside his pick up truck.

Mike went back inside his trailer and walked over to the coffee pot. He poured a cup of coffee then walked over to his desk scattered with paperwork and a checkbook. He frowned when he stared at the large checkbook and hated office work. Sometimes he wished he were out there pounding nails into two by fours. He took a sip of coffee and returned to his duties.

The trailer door opened and entered foreman, Russ Gates. Russ was a tall and lanky man whose skin had seen years of working construction out in the sun. Russ was hired by Mike's father back in 1975 and had continued to be a valuable asset with helping Mike's company make a comfortable profit.

"Progress is looking great with the units," Russ said while he removed the hard hat off his head and sat down at his desk. He kicked his black Steel Toed boots up on his desk. He ran his hand through his thinning gray hair while he yawned.

"Good, are there any concerns with making our August deadline?" Mike asked, then sipped some coffee.

"No indications yet," Russ replied, then placed his boots on the floor and stood up. "I'm going out for a few beers with the guys at The Pounding

Hammer. Want to join me?" he offered.

"Thanks, but I need to get the payroll finished," Mike answered, then sipped some more coffee.

"Well, don't stay here all night," Russ replied then walked to the door. "I'll see you in the morning," he said, then stepped out of the trailer.

Mike went back to work, writing out paychecks for his workers.

Russ walked over to his Chevy Silverado pickup truck.

Twenty feet away, a mangy looking female reddish haired terrier mix mutt named Ginger, snuck out of the construction site through a hole she dug under the chain-link fence.

Russ got into his pickup truck and drove out of the construction site and onto the two-lane country road.

Ginger moped away from the fence and headed toward the two-lane country road.

Fifteen minutes later, Mike walked out of his trailer and locked the door.

He walked over to his Ford F-250 pickup and got inside. He started it up and drove out of the construction site. He stopped, got out of his truck, and locked the fence gate to the site. He got back in his pickup and drove off down the two-lane country road.

A little while later, he turned on his radio and the Aerosmith's Walk This Way song played.

Mike sang along with Steven Tyler and played some air guitar while he steered with his knees. He felt like a rock star.

Then he spotted Ginger while she moped down the road on the right-hand side. An evil smirk grew on his face while he accelerated his pickup. He raced after the stray dog.

Then the second the front of his pickup was by

Ginger, he blew his horn.

Ginger got startled and jumped off the road and landed in a big mud puddle on the side of the road.

Mike glanced in his rearview mirror and saw Ginger while she stepped out of the puddle, soaking wet. She shook off the water. She continued to mope down the road.

He chuckled and felt proud of himself. "Stupid ugly mutt," he said then returned to his song and sang along with Steven Tyler while he drove down the road.

In Mike's neighborhood, down on Kiscoe Avenue was Louise LeBlanc. She had long white hair with a couple of purple-dyed streaks down the side. She walked down the sidewalk with a limp and a hand-carved wooden cane. She was a spooky woman from New Orleans and spoke with a thick Cajun accent. A monstrous male black Mastiff dog named Boodro walked alongside Louise connected to a leash.

Louise and Boodro walked down the sidewalk and walked across Mike's driveway.

Mike pulled his pickup into his driveway and blew his horn.

Louise felt threatened by his pickup, so she bolted across his front yard dragging Boodro by the leash choking him. She stopped and glared back at Mike with her hatred in her eyes.

"I hope that stupid Boodro didn't use my front yard as a bathroom!" Mike said the second he got out of his pickup and walked to his front door.

"You shouldn't treat your neighbors that way!" Louise scolded Mike with her right index finger.

"I don't consider a dog or a weird voodoo lady neighbors. If I had my way, I would give him to that new Chinese restaurant down the street. And deport you back to New Orleans!" Mike replied with a mean tone.

Louise hissed at him like a mad cat. Boodro snarled and showed his teeth.

"Give me five seconds alone with him. Just five seconds," Boodro quietly said to himself.

Louise walked Boodro across Mike's yard to her light purple painted house, which was next door.

Mike walked to his front door.

The Hanson home was nicely furnished.

The living room had a mahogany wood entertainment center with a 52-inch HDTV on a stand, lovely expensive beige couch, and plush lazy boy chair on oak wood floors.

"I want that voodoo queen and her ugly mutt to stay off my grass!" Mike said the second he stepped foot into his living room.

Jenny Hanson, Mike's young daughter, rushed into the living room. "Daddy!" she cried out with a huge smile.

Then Chris Hanson, Mike's young son rushed into the living room after Jenny. He had a baseball glove in his hand.

Mike knelt and hugged Jenny the second she rushed up to him.

"Daddy, will you have a catch with me?" Chris said while he held up his glove and baseball with hopeful eyes.

"Daddy, will you join my tea party?" Jenny asked with a gleam in her eye.

"Maybe another day kids, daddy's exhausted from a hard day at work," he said while he walked over and plopped down on his lazy boy chair. He grabbed the remote off a small table next to the chair and turned on his TV.

Debbie Hanson, Mike's lovely blonde haired wife with soft brown eyes, entered in a jogging outfit and stood at the archway.

Chris and Jenny moped out of the living room rejected.

Debbie watched while Jenny and Chris moped down the hallway and went inside their bedrooms.

"What did you say to them, Mike?" she asked a little concerned.

"That creepy, voodoo lady," he answered.

"Her name is Louise LeBlanc, and please don't make her mad," Debbie quickly interrupted him.

"Whatever, anyway, she had her huge ugly dog in our yard again," he replied while he surfed through the channels.

Debbie eyed the hallway. "No, I want to know what you said to Chris and Jenny to upset them?" she asked but knew the answer.

"They wanted to play, but I'm too exhausted Debbie," he replied while he stopped on the ESPN channel.

"You better get some energy before the kids are all grown up and will eventually want nothing to do with you," she snapped back.

"I hear you," Mike replied, but he could care less, as all he wanted to do was relax and watch TV.

She rolled her eyes, knowing she was fighting a losing battle against his thick head. "I'm going jogging; I'll make dinner after my five-mile run. Try and get up some energy and give them some attention," she said then walked to the front door and went outside.

Mike kicked back in his lazy boy chair the second the front door closed. He and watched the ESPN channel.

A little while later, Mike sat in another lazy boy chair in their fourth bedroom, which was his playroom. On the wall of Mike's man cave were pictures of his life. They were mainly construction jobs he was proud of completing. One was his first house

he helped his father build. And another image was of Mike when he was a lad. That picture was a fond memory of Mike with a hammer in hand and a grin on his face. He was in the process of building a dog house and was nailing on the roof planks. Over the opening was painted "Scruffles."

Mike banged out the rhythm to Aerosmith's Train Keep A Rollin song on his pristine and pride and joy Sunburst Les Paul guitar. He was an accomplished guitarist. He had cherished memories of those days more than twenty years ago when he played in the band called The Rockers. It was during high school, and they thought they were the tops.

Debbie entered the den all sweaty in her jogging outfit. She glanced over at Mike and frowned. "I guess you're not too tired to play your guitar?"

"When's dinner?" Mike replied, ignoring her question while he continued to bang out that rhythm.

"After I take a shower and hopefully in twenty minutes if I'm not too tired," she replied imitating Michael.

She walked away, upset with him.

Mike could care less while he continued to bang out his rhythm song on his Les Paul.

Later that evening, the Hanson family sat around the dining room table and ate their spaghetti with meatballs dinner.

"Chris has a little league game this Saturday and Jenny has a ballet recital," Debbie told Mike.

He frowned while he sipped his ice tea. "I can't Debbie, the crew's working Saturday. I could get a nice bonus for finishing this project early," Mike replied then he munched on a meatball.

"You're always working on Saturdays. Can't you spend a weekend having some fun with the family for once?" Debbie, in a raised tone he knew all too well

that he was in trouble.

"I'm sorry, honey, somebody has to work to pay for our lifestyle," he quickly replied then looked at Jenny and Chris. "So kids, how was your day at school?" he asked to get Debbie off his back.

"Carey Whitestone barfed in class, so we had to stand in the hallway while the janitor cleaned the room. It stunk!" Jenny said then she slurped up some spaghetti noodles adding to her tomato paste lipstick.

"Don't use the word barf, Jenny. Just say Carey go sick in class," said Debbie.

"Joey Brooke showed us his new puppy. Can we get a puppy?" Chris said with hopeful eyes.

Mike frowned at his request. "You know how I feel about dogs. All they do is use the house as a bathroom and chew toy."

"But Mommy talked with Uncle Kenny, and he has a new puppy at the shelter," Chris added with a gleam in his eyes at the prospect of playing ball with a puppy.

Mike gave Debbie a stern look. "I don't think so; they're a waste of precious money."

"But they're so cute!" Jenny added.

"Remember Scruffles?" Debbie asked Mike knowing this would touch a sore spot.

Mike ignored everybody and continued to eat his dinner.

Debbie discreetly winked at Chris and Jenny.

They both smiled and knew what her winks meant.

## *Chapter 2*

It was another beautiful morning in New Castle. The Hanson household woke up, ate their breakfast, and then Mike was off to work.

Debbie did her usual routine of getting the kids ready for school.

Then she went off to work as a bank teller in town.

At his construction site, Mike wore his hard hat while he walked with Russ down the main street of the new neighborhood.

The music of nail guns and saws filled the air while the workers worked on the homes in various phases of construction.

"Looks like our load of plywood for the roofs of units twenty-five thru thirty will be arriving a little late," said Russ.

"When will it arrive?" Mike asked a little concerned.

"In five days," Russ replied then he cringed a little.

"Five days? I can't wait five days," Mike said, worried that the excellent progress will slow down.

"I know."

Then something caught Mike's attention while he looked at a framed house while they turned and headed down another street.

While he looked at this framed house, he did not notice the white Chevy government car that just parked at one of the homes down the end of that street.

Mike walked Russ to the framed house, and they saw Ginger in the living room area. She was munched down on the part of a sandwich on the plywood floor.

"Get out of here you ugly mangy mutt!" Mike yelled at Ginger while he ran over to the framed house. He picked up a sawed-off piece of 2x4 board then ran through the framed front door opening.

They didn't notice the government Chevy while it drove down that street and turned onto the main street.

Ginger saw Mike with the board in his hand, and she knew this meant trouble - again. She grabbed the sandwich and ran between the openings of the framed outside wall.

Mike ran back through the front door opening and ran across the dirt yard after her.

He threw the 2x4 piece of board, and it bounced on the ground a foot behind Ginger's running paws.

Mike walked back to Russ, who stood in the front yard and saw the whole event.

"Tell the crew I don't want them leaving food around the site. And check the perimeter fence for any gaping holes in the fence or under it," Mike ordered while he watched Ginger run away to the perimeter fence. "Also have someone check the property to make sure that dog is gone," he added.

"Got it, boss," Russ replied while he saw a worker walk out of the framed house. "Hey, Jack, boss man wants you to check the perimeter and make sure that stray dog is gone. Then check it for holes in the fence or under it," Russ called out.

"Okay boss," Jack replied, but he was the one that had been leaving Ginger food. He will pretend he fulfilled his order from Russ.

Mike and Russ walked back to the main street and headed toward the office trailer.

A few minutes later, they walked back to the trailer where that government Chevy was parked.

"This is just great. OSHA is here," Mike replied as he recognized the car from previous visits.

They walked to the trailer with some hesitation.

Mike and Russ entered the trailer where Danny Malone, an OSHA Compliance Officer, sat at Mike's desk and wrote on a pad that contained a government form.

Danny saw Mike at the door of the trailer.

"Good morning, Mister Hanson," Danny said while he stood up and tore off the form from the pad. "I found four of your guys not wearing eye protection when using some power saws while cutting two by fours," he said then handed Mike the citations. "I saw this three months ago and gave you a verbal warning," Danny said then walked to the door then left the trailer.

Mike slammed the form down on his desk.

"Now I have to deal with these OSHA citations. Can my day get any worse?" he said, very upset. "I want a meeting right now with everybody," Mike ordered Russ in a raised tone.

"Yes boss," Russ replied then walked to the door and left the trailer.

Mike ran a hand through his hair in frustration.

Ten minutes later, Mike had his entire crew out by the trailer and gave them proper chewing out at them for violating safety rules. He dismissed them back to work, and he went back inside the trailer along with Russ.

Fifteen minutes later, the trailer door opened and Howard Langley, a fifty-year-old homeless man with long stringy, dirty hair and a long beard, stepped inside.

Howard reeked of body odor, and his clothes were filthy and tattered and stood by the door with a dirty old brown Fedora hat in hand.

"Excuse me, sir, my name is Howard Langley, and I'm looking for work. Any work even if it's picking up trash," Howard asked with hungry eyes.

Mike and Russ looked over at Howard.

Russ cringed the second he smelled his body odor.

Mike couldn't smell due to some sinus problems twenty years ago.

Mike got up from his desk and walked over to Howard a little sickened by his appearance.

"Like I've told you before, we don't have a job that's suited for you. So you better get off my property, or I'll call the police," Mike told Howard and looked serious.

"Sorry sir and bless you," Howard replied, then opened up the door and stepped outside.

Mike walked over to his desk and sat down.

"Man, it's a good thing you can't smell. That was some strong body odor," Russ said while he sighed a sigh of relief Howard was gone.

The phone on Mike's desk rang. "Hanson's construction," he answered the call.

"Hi, honey. How's your day going?" Debbie asked from the phone.

"Lousy, OSHA was just here and left me a fine," he replied.

"That's too bad, listen, I was talking with Kenny and was curious with your decision with helping him expand his animal shelter?" she asked.

Mike frowned at her request from the phone.

Inside Kenny's I Luv Animals shelter, Debbie sat by Kenny at his desk.

Kenny Hamilton was Debby's thirty-seven-year-old younger brother. He held Rascal, a one-year-old white-haired Weshi puppy with a unique patch of brown hair on his left side, in his arms. Kenny looked hopeful while Debbie talked into her cell phone.

"I can't ask my guys to work for free on the weekend," Mike replied from her cell phone.

"You write it off as charity," she said while she petted Rascal's head.

"I'll think about it some more. I gotta go," Mike replied, then disconnected his end of the call.

Kenny looked at Debbie with hopeful eyes.

Debbie shook her head and indicated Mike was not going to build his expansion.

"Oh well," Kenny replied, very disappointed.

Debbie looked at Rascal in Kenny's arms, and her eyes lit up. "He sure is adorable," she said while she petted his head.

"His previous owners left him out in the woods when they didn't want to care for him. So the little guy needs a good loving home," Kenny said while he kissed the top of Rascal's head.

Debbie looked at Rascal, and she smiled while she had an idea, as she could not resist his adorable brown eyes.

Back in Mike's trailer, he got up and walked over to the coffee pot. He poured another cup of coffee.

"Another request on expanding Kenny's shelter job?" Russ asked while Mike sat down at this desk.

"I need to come up with a good excuse to get out of it forever," Mike replied, then sipped his coffee.

"I think we could handle a little charity work," Russ quietly replied to himself while he went back to ordering some lumber.

Mike ignored him and went back to his paperwork.

It was later that evening, and Mike pulled his pickup truck into his driveway. He frowned when he had to park behind Kenny's Toyota Prius.

"I just don't feel like dealing with him tonight," Mike said with a whiny tone while he got out of his truck.

He walked across the grass and headed to the front door. Then his face suddenly cringed when something didn't feel right. He looked down at the bottom of his right boot and saw dog poop smeared all over the bottom. "That stupid voodoo woman!" he cursed while he wiped the bottom of his boot on the grass.

After his boot was cleaned, Mike went inside his house, and he didn't notice Louise, who stood by her front door.

She heard the mean comment he made about her and went inside her home furious.

"I'm home," Mike called out while he closed the front door. He heard the laughter that came from the bedrooms. He smiled at the thought of Jenny and Chris having fun.

Then Rascal raced into the living room. He stopped five feet from Mike and wagged his tail. He ran up to Mike and jumped up on his legs, wagging his tail.

"Get this dog out of here!" Mike yelled out.

Rascal raced out of the room, scared with his tail between his legs.

Jenny and Chris ran into the room.

"Daddy, you scared Rascal," Jenny scolded her father.

"Rascal? Why is there a dog in my house?" Mike asked a little upset.

Kenny and Debbie entered the living room.

Mike frowned. "Kenny, don't bring your animals in my house. Keep them at the shelter where they belong," he said.

"But daddy, Uncle Kenny gave us Rascal," Chris told him.

Rascal poked his head around the wall from the hallway to see if it was safe. He gave Mike the sweetest brown eyes he could muster. He crawled on his belly at Mike to become friends.

"I told you, I don't want a stupid dog. They're useless!" Mike yelled while he glared down at Rascal on his belly.

Rascal sensed his hatred and got up on all fours. He made a quick turn around and ran out of the room and down the hallway.

"How could you not want a beautiful dog like Rascal?" Kenny asked a little upset with Mike.

"Jenny and Chris, go play with Rascal in one of your rooms," Debbie told them while she glared at Mike.

Jenny and Chris ran out of the living room and then down the hallway.

Debbie looked mad with Mike while she walked up to him, "What's wrong with you? You had a dog when you were a kid," she said in a raised tone.

"Yeah and the stupid thing got rabies, bit me and I had to get all those shots along with six stitches," Mike replied. "Then dad shot it," he added.

"Not all dogs get rabies, Mike," Kenny said and felt sorry for Mike feeling the way he does about dogs.

"Did you see how much those kids love him?" Debbie asked.

"He'll stink up the house," Mike quickly replied.

"You can't smell, and besides, this is my decision and Rascal stays!" Debbie said and gave Mike a look that meant she wasn't going to back down.

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