

DOGGONE

Rachel's Story

“Mack!” I shouted. “Here, boy!”

It was useless. He was gone. And who knew how long it had been since he had escaped from my yard.

“Mack!” I yelled again and again.

I was becoming a little frantic. Mack was my three-year-old yellow lab. He wasn’t used to being outside, but since the weather was beautiful and I would be later than usual, I’d left him in the fenced backyard with food, toys, and plenty of water. I would be home as soon as my meeting was over, which was in less than six hours.

Now I returned to find a hole under the gate and no sign of Mack. After driving the streets for hours, I posted signs within several blocks. Hopefully, someone would see the photo of Mack, along with my big bold MISSING poster, and return him for the reward. I also included my phone number.

The next day, a guy named Greg contacted me. He had seen my signs, and said he thought he recognized Mack as the dog he had found. Greg offered to bring him over right then. I was thrilled—until I saw them walking up the driveway. The dog with him wasn’t Mack.

My hopes had been so high, and now I began to think it was possible that I'd never see Mack again. Greg was sympathetic. He told me not to give up and even offered to help with my search.

I had already called the neighbors, but we each took one side of the street and went door to door. I was touched that this total stranger would take time to help me.

The streetlights were coming on and we had to suspend the find Mack operation. I thanked my new friend for his effort. When he smiled and said he'd be happy to help me look for Mack again the next night, it was the first time I'd noticed how cute he was. I told him if he wanted to come over right after work, I'd provide dinner to repay his kindness, and we'd continue the search. As he left, I mentioned that he still had to find the rightful owner of the lab he had brought to my house.

"What? Oh, yeah. I do," he answered. "That won't be a problem. I bet I know who he belongs to."

I had no idea what that meant, but I was so overwrought by my own situation, I didn't think about how odd the comment was for months.

The rest of the evening, I checked all the usual internet sites for Found Dog listings or sightings, but there was no mention of a pup sounding like mine.

The next afternoon, someone five blocks away called with great news; they had found Mack. They volunteered to bring him home and as I was paying the reward, Greg drove up. In the excitement I'd forgotten he was coming over. My groceries were still

in my car, and he helped me bring them inside. We ended up celebrating with a bottle of nice wine he'd brought, and I prepared my best spaghetti. Mack had a meatball in honor of his return.

All the while, I kept thinking how funny it was that Mack's disappearance had spawned this new relationship. About the time that thought had run through my mind, Greg commented, "Isn't it hilarious we would meet like this? I'll have to come up with a way to thank Mack for introducing me to his beautiful owner."

I felt my face flush, but I liked what Greg had said. It opened the door to a new slant on our friendship. Greg told me he had dated around but never met the right girl. I told Greg a similar story. It seemed our lives had been parallel. I felt that it was possible, very possible, that I had met Mr. Right.

Greg and I dated for a year, and he proposed by tying my ring on Mack's collar and making sure I found it before he ran off again. I accepted. I had found the guy I'd looked for all my life, and Mack had helped me.

During the whirlwind of parties thrown by family and friends, everyone loved Greg and asked to hear the story of how we had met again and again. It was all so romantic. This stranger brought me the wrong lost dog and helped me look for Mack. Then we had fallen in love.

The night of our rehearsal dinner, Greg had too much to drink. We were getting ready to say good-night, and I knew I wouldn't see him again until the following afternoon, when I would walk down the

aisle and become Mrs. Greg Allen. That's when Greg started to laugh. He got so hysterical that he could barely talk. I asked him what could be that comical and he said, "You have to promise not to be mad." I hesitantly agreed. I couldn't believe the story he told me over the next few minutes.

Greg admitted that the night he brought the dog to my house, he knew it wasn't my dog. He had used a friend's lab to provide a way to meet me when he saw me putting up the posters. The crowning blow was that Greg then admitted he had done things like this before, as a way to meet women.

I was speechless. What else had he lied to me about? I had been played for a fool by a complete phony.

I told him I needed to get some sleep, but all I could do was cry. My relationship was a sham. There had been nothing spontaneous about our meeting. Everything had been deceitfully orchestrated.

I called Judy, my matron of honor, and we talked half the night. The next morning, I was in my car on the way to her lake cabin, driving in the opposite direction of the wedding. Mack was in the back seat.

Judy called Greg around ten that morning on what would have been our wedding day and informed him that I wouldn't be able to make it. My friends and family got the next calls, and soon the word spread that the wedding was off. My mom said I was overreacting, but it seemed to me if Greg would scheme and lie to meet me, I should be concerned about what else he might do to manipulate facts in the future.

Like my grandmother used to say, “Tell a lie once, and all of your truths will become questionable.”

I left my groom at the altar after finding out he had deceived me from the first day we met.

Did I do the right thing?

- Yes
- No
- Undecided