

Omen crouched by the rusted bathtub in his cluttered yard, cigarette dangling from his lips. The sun was setting, casting a warm orange glow over the scene, but Omen barely noticed. He had more pressing matters. Prince, his scraggly, perpetually dirty mutt, stared at him with a look of pure betrayal.

“Come on, Prince,” Omen drawled, flicking ash into a nearby flower pot. “It’s just water. You’ll survive.”

Prince responded with a pathetic whimper, tail tucked between his legs. Omen shook his head and turned on the hose, aiming it at the reluctant canine. The water hit Prince with a force that made him jump and shake, sending droplets flying everywhere. Omen laughed, a deep, throaty sound that seemed almost too loud for the quiet evening.

“Yeah, yeah. You look like a drowned rat,” he muttered, more to himself than the dog. He grabbed a half-empty bottle of dog shampoo, squirted some into his palm, and began scrubbing vigorously with his claws through Prince’s matted, patchy fur. The dog squirmed, trying to escape the lathering hands, but Omen held him firm.

“You know, you’d think you’d appreciate this,” Omen tutted, though he knew Prince didn’t understand a word. “Most dogs would kill for a bath like this. Luxury treatment.”

He adored this dog, and typically treated Prince like actual royalty, dressing him up and painting his nails... however, with a week full of fighting and hanging around clubs, his memory had bested him. He had forgotten to wash Prince...

Prince let out a low growl, clearly unimpressed with Omen’s attitude and scrubbing skills. Omen chuckled again, shaking his head once more. He rinsed the suds away, watching the water turn a murky brown as it swirled down the makeshift drain.

“There. All done,” Omen proudly announced, turning off the hose. He stood, stretching his back and wiping his filthy hands on his fur. Prince shook vigorously, spraying Omen with water and remnants of grime.

“Thanks for that,” Omen said dryly. Prince wagged his tail, looking marginally cleaner but still scruffy.

Omen lit another cigarette and sat on the porch steps of his home, watching Prince prance around the yard, feeling victorious as his own tail wagged and thumped against the porch’s wooden flooring. The cat grinned, a rare softening of his usually sarcastic demeanor.

“Alright, Prince. You win this round.”