



Off the Leash: A Year at the Dog Park

Matthew Gilbert

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OFF THE LEASH is a group portrait of dog people, specifically the strange, wonderful, neurotic, and eccentric dog people who gather at Amory Park, overlooking Boston near Fenway Park. And it's about author Matthew Gilbert's transformation, after much fear and loathing of dogs and social groups, into one of those dog people with fur on their jackets, squeaky toys in their hands, and biscuits in their pockets.

Gilbert, longtime TV critic at *The Boston Globe*, describes his reluctant trip into the dog park subculture, as the first-time owner of a stubbornly social Yellow Lab puppy named Toby. Like many Americans, he was happily accustomed to the safe distance of TV viewing and cell-phone web surfing, tethered to the digital leash. But the headstrong, play-obsessed Toby pulls him to Amory, and Amory becomes an exhilarating dose of presence for him. The joyous chaos of wrestling dogs and the park's cast of offbeat dog owners - the "pack of freaks" - gradually draw him into the here and now. At the dog park, the dog owners go off the leash, too.

Dog-park life can be tense. When dogs fight, their owners - such as the reckless Charlotte - bare their teeth at each other, too. Amid the rollicking dog play, feelings tend to surface faster, unedited. But Gilbert shows how Amory is an idyllic microcosm, too, the home of enduring friendships and, as the droll but vulnerable Hayley knows, romantic crushes. Meeting daily, a gathering of dog owners can be like group therapy, or *The Office*, or a standup concert.

As a TV critic, Matthew Gilbert is well-known by his readership for his humorous and wry writing style. A charming narrative that will appeal to anyone who has ever enjoyed watching a puppy scamper through a park, OFF THE LEASH is a paean to dog lovers and their pets everywhere, perfect for fans of *Marley & Me* and *Merle's Door*.

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From reader reviews:

Elizabeth Rodrigues:

Spent a free time for you to be fun activity to perform! A lot of people spent their leisure time with their family, or all their friends. Usually they carrying out activity like watching television, planning to beach, or picnic in the park. They actually doing ditto every week. Do you feel it? Do you need to something different to fill your personal free time/ holiday? Could possibly be reading a book may be option to fill your no cost time/ holiday. The first thing you ask may be what kinds of publication that you should read. If you want to test look for book, may be the reserve untitled Off the Leash: A Year at the Dog Park can be very good book to read. May be it can be best activity to you.

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