

Frenchy's Great Escape: The Problem With Designer Dogs

Designer dog: \$2,500, check ... "Juicy" dog sweater: \$45, check ... Leather collar with matching leash from Muttropolis: \$130, check ... Dog tag to identify your dog in case she gets lost: \$5, but wait...ummm, can't find it.

I was shopping with my family at The Spectrum one night and we eyed this adorable teacup Yorkie sniffing a potted palm. She was dragging her designer leash as she walked stiff and slow due to the thick pink hoodie "Juicy" sweater she was wearing. She was all by her lonesome.

"Where is her mommy?" asked my dog-crazed daughter. Everyone passing by the fancy dog looked at her, then we all looked at one another. I went right over and picked up the two-pound pooch and fumbled around for her tag. Yes, of course, I wanted to find her "mommy," but more importantly, I secretly couldn't WAIT to find out what her name was: Frenchy? Muffin buns? Couture?

Feeling around her neck...no...that's a necklace. No...that's her rhinestone charm. Incredible, she wasn't wearing an ID tag. The whole package – dog and accessories – hovering around the three grand mark and she didn't have on a five-buck tag?

Now I was getting peeved. This is exactly what's wrong with the whole Paris Hilton & Tinkerbell dog thing. Dogs are looked at as accessories, not wet-nosed, bacon stealers that come with a load of responsibility.

Adding to the potential of further feckless behavior, would-be owners can finance their pup purchase, really! Wells Fargo offers financing according to the sign in the window of Russo's. Wonder if they have a fore(paws)closures problem? "Repo-Pet?" Totally pitching that as a reality show.

I felt like putting poor Frenchy (that's the name I chose) in my pocket and taking her home with me. True, I have an upgraded "King Charles Spaniel" and she has been known to get dolled-up in a spring dress, but she has her tag, her shots, her daily vitamin and... um, okay, her own stroller. It's not the pampering that is in question here, it's the capricious, slave-to-fashion attitude some take when purchasing a trendy dog.

Looking around for her "mommy," I spotted a gal casually peering out from the doorway of a nearby store. Surely this couldn't be her dog. She looked as concerned as someone who misplaced their used tissue.

"Is she yours?" I asked.

"Oh, yes. I didn't see her slip away," said the not-even-attempting-to-act-concerned owner. She had price tags sticking out of her shirt and pants. Obviously clever Frenchy saw her chance at freedom while her mom was slipping on a pair of jeans and ran as fast as her four-inch legs would take her.

"You might want to get her an ID tag..." I said, oh-so indignantly as I reluctantly handed her over.

No answer came.

No "thank you" either, now that I think about it. She simply scooped Frenchy up and walked back to her dressing room to continue her business, most likely stuffing the dog into her handbag.

Attention Frenchy! If you read Smartly OC (and who doesn't?), I will be sitting outside The Coffee Bean & Tea Leaf at The Spectrum at 4:00 p.m. on Sunday waiting for you. Try to make another run for it...I have bacon....