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KIRBY AND THE CAMERA

by Ray Granade

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Kirby had watched the ritual many times, but repetition had done nothing to enlighten him. His mistress would get out a small black-and-silver object. Then She would chase members of his pack, or force them to sit still in particular places or perform peculiar tricks while she held the object to her face.

She had often done the same thing to him, though without the odd black-and-silver object. Generally when he performed the tricks She asked, he had been rewarded with a treat. He had observed that the others in his pack never got those gooey, sweet small white treats, even when they performed flawlessly.

Kirby also began to notice that other pack members ran when She brought out the black-and-silver thing. If they thought they could escape her notice, they would quietly edge away. If they could begin moving before She said something, they refused to heed her call as if they couldn't hear. If they were entering and caught sight of the object, they would veer away without breaking stride.

Lately, She had begun bringing in lots of stuff he didn't recognize. She would put a box on the floor, then take out things and put pieces with each other, only to reconfigure them again and again. Like any good companion, he patiently sat or lay and watched—though he did so in puzzlement. He noticed others of the pack practicing the same avoidance as they did when She got out the black-and-silver object.

Finally the day came when he heard She barking to herself. “Every time I get out my camera now, the kids disappear. Even Arliss suddenly vanishes. How can I practice with my camera if they won't let me take their picture?”

With an uneasy feeling, Kirby realized that She was looking appraisingly at him. “What am I going to do, Kirby?” She queried.

Like any good companion, Kirby didn't respond. But he did get up, stretch, and amble over to his yarn ball. “Maybe this will cheer her up,” he thought. With a wag of his tail, Kirby picked up the ball and bounded

over to She. He dropped the ball at her feet. Nothing happened, though She kept watching him. So, he picked it up again, gave it a shake, and tossed it in her direction.

As he tossed the ball, Kirby heard a click. Though he looked all around, he couldn't locate the source of the sound. First he looked to the left, then to the right. He started in one direction, paused and looked that way with his right paw slightly raised. Then he wheeled toward the other direction, stopped, then sat with his ears perked. Finally he went back to his ball. As soon as he picked it up, he heard the click again.

Kirby quickly realized that She held the strange black-and-silver object, and that She had knelt and was holding it to her face like She did with the others in the pack. She didn't say anything to him again. She just knelt there, with the object to her face. When he moved, he heard another click. Then he understood that the object must be the camera about which She had talked.

As he pondered the situation, Kirby did what terriers often do. He cocked his head to the right. Click. Quizzically he cocked it to the left. Click.

"Hmmm," he thought. "This isn't so bad. Wonder why the others in the pack run away?"

He stretched out his feet behind him and lay down. Click. He put his head on his front paws and watched She. Click. He closed his eyes. Click. He lay very still. Nothing. Cautiously he opened one eye. Click. He quickly closed the eye again and lay still. He heard a scuffling noise. Warily he eased his lids up slightly. Then he popped his eyes wide open. CLICK! She had moved up close to him. Very close indeed. In fact, he felt that he could reach her with his tongue. Only, the black-and-silver thing was in the way. He sniffed at it. CLICK! CLICK!

Now Kirby understood why his pack-mates hid. So, being a sensible dog, Kirby acted sensibly. He stretched, got up, and stretched some more. CLICK! CLICK! CLICK! Kirby left. He went to his bed, circled two times, and lay down. She followed. Click, click, click.

There was only one thing left to do. Kirby jumped from his bed, bolted past She, and scurried under the sofa. There, safe from the camera, Kirby went to sleep.