

Bitter ExPETS

By: Robin Pascoe

“So you finally decided to come back from Home Leave. Well, don’t think our relationship is going to resume so easily. I have a bone to pick with you guys.”

The Shetland sheepdog was speaking metaphorically and not gastronomically to three of his expat owners as they struggled through the front door of their home, exhausted from their long return journey. He tried to deliberately snub their efforts to embrace and pet him, but even he couldn’t resist the children. The mother was another story. He would avoid all eye contact until it drove her crazy.

“Did we ever miss you!” said the young girl. He believed her and licked her hand.

“It’s so good to see you again, boy!” said the young lad and he believed him too.

“I thought about you all the time!” said the mother.

“Oh ya? Did you think about me when your husband over there had to take me back to the vet to have my teeth cleaned? I think not,” thought the Sheltie, walking away in a sulk but not before getting underfoot while she tried to drag a heavy black suitcase across the wooden floor.

“And I bet there’s not even a present in that bag for me either.”

“What’s with the pooch?” the Sheltie overheard the expat wife ask her husband as they started to catch up after four weeks apart. “I know you will tell me I’m crazy, but I swear he’s avoiding me. Thank goodness he’s being nice to the kids.”

The Sheltie settled unobtrusively into his favourite listening post on the floor. And they thought he didn’t understand them. Owners can be such fools!

“He might be a little resentful of you,” said the husband.

“What? I can understand YOU being resentful of my having a longer holiday than you, but the dog? Come on.”

“Well, you weren’t there for him when he needed you. I had to take him to the vet by myself to get his teeth cleaned and believe me, it was not a pleasant experience.”

“Worse than when our last dog was sprayed in the face by a porcupine at eleven o’clock on a Saturday night and I had to hold his head away from your lap while we drove him to the vet?”

“Pretty close.”

“At least we were able to have another child after that experience.” They both laughed at the memory of that night.

“Forget about that other dog,” thought the Sheltie. “This is about me! Tell her already what happened!”

“So what happened with his teeth?”

“Well you remember that vet’s office,” began the husband.

"Ya, the one with all the little yappie dogs in it," put in the Sheltie even though he knew it was pointless to throw in his two cents.

"Driving there was all right, but I had to leave him for several hours while the vet knocked him out and did his work. When I got back, and it was all over, he was so disoriented that his head wobbled around like one of those toy dogs you used to see in the back of a car. He was really out of it from the anesthetic."

"That wasn't what happened!" The Sheltie jumped up suddenly and started barking.

"What's with him?" asked the wife. "Are you trying to tell us something boy?"

"Don't patronize me, lady," thought the Sheltie. "The truth is I wasn't disoriented at all. I had a splitting headache. You would be too if you had a dog that wouldn't shut up in the next cage!"

He had been barking for several minutes. "He really seems agitated," said the wife. "Is he OK now? There's no lingering effects or anything?"

"How does trauma sound?" barked the Sheltie.

"No, I think he's OK now," said the husband. "But from now on we have to brush his teeth very carefully once a week."

"Nobody mentioned that!" thought the dog.

"I would be hopeless at that," said the wife. "Will you take that on?"

"There you go deserting me again!"

"Where did you put my black bag?" the wife suddenly asked her husband.

"You aren't going to start to unpack right now are you?"

"No, I just want to find the treat I brought back for our favourite puppy. It sounds to me like he deserves it."

The Sheltie looked her in the eye for the first time. OK, maybe he had been a little hasty. Maybe it was nice to have the entire family back together again. But next time he had to see the vet, he was going to set a few ground rules.

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