

Cleo the Crafty

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Previously on the Canine Hour, Odin the Large and Lazy had passed on to that big doggy bed in the sky, and his absence had left Zoey the Small and Annoying confused and saddened. So, not long after the tragic event, Daughter One and I went to the local animal shelter to start perusing breeds and planning our next adoption. We made it about halfway down the line of cages before I could tell by the angelic glow surrounding One's head that we were taking home our new dog that day.

I have also let you in on the fact that having lost a Great Dane / Black Lab mix, One elected to fill the void with none other than a Chihuahua, one of the five or six breeds concerning the adoption of which I had famously and - as it turns out, ineffectually - said, "Never!" (Side note: When a father of daughters says 'never,' that translates roughly as '...until the women in my life inform me otherwise.')

Ahem, moving on...

So Cleo, as she came to be called set about winning the hearts of the humans of the house and gradually wormed her way into Zoey's heart, as well. She really is a cute little thing, runs like a bandy-legged gazelle (if gazelles were the size and shape of root beer mugs) and loves nothing so much as to be in physical contact with one of her peeps, preferably in a position of repose on a convenient lap.

But lately, she has fallen into habits that are somewhat less adorable. For a while, she decided that she was too dainty to go out in the rain so she took to conducting her fluid adjustment activities on the dining room rug. We humans were slow to figure out her subterfuge, which accounts for the fact that said rug is now rolled up outside, awaiting my next trip to the dump.

She is a master at pulling crapola out of any trash or recycling receptacle she comes across and has developed an acrobatic routine that involves leaping up, hooking front paws over the lip of the trash can, then leaning back so that her weight tips the can over, the better to access the contents, my dear. It is not unusual for me to come upstairs from my writing room to find the family room strewn with an assortment of discarded mail, wrappers of various descriptions, and the occasional used cotton swab. (I agree – ew!)

We wondered why the lid to the dog food bin was repeatedly left askew until one day One came into the kitchen to discover a pair of itty bitty doggy legs sticking up over the rim, blissfully dancing to the rhythm of the munching sounds emanating from inside.

Now, I don't want you to think we're silly enough to leave her alone in the house so she can commit her burglaries unobserved. No-o-o-o! The brazen little monster carries out her criminal actions right in front of us! The other day I heard a rustling and went into the kitchen – barely around the corner from where I sat working in the dining room – to discover her doing her darnedest to chew a hole in the kibble bag, having already managed somehow to slide the full bin out of her way. For at least twenty years, through the various dogs and combinations of dogs the bag containing extra dog food has resided in the cubby behind the ready bin. Twenty years it went unmolested.

Until now.

Until Cleo.

So now our home décor includes a half empty bag of dog munch sitting on top of the sideboard. It won't be there for long. We'll find a more protected – and we hope out of sight – place to store it. And not entirely for reasons aesthetic.

Yesterday I came around the corner to discover a Chihuahua sitting in the hallway in front of the sideboard staring up at her erstwhile prize. Since she was entirely unconcerned at my presence, I was able to stand there and study her for a moment. And I saw the look on her little face.

This was not the forlorn countenance of a tiny animal recognizing defeat. No, what I saw there was a world class climber, dispassionately calculating the route for her free climb up the face of El Capitan.

Gawd help us.

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