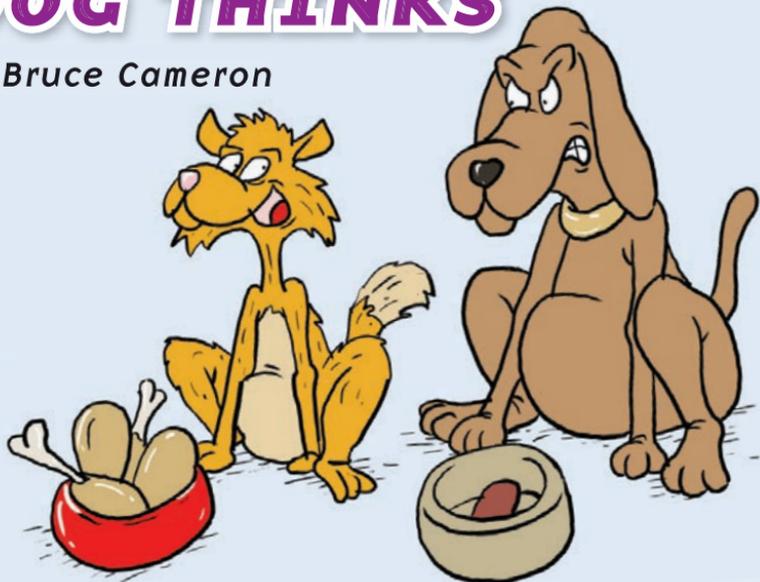


WHAT THE DOG THINKS

by Bruce Cameron



My dog believes it is starving and that I'm the only person who can do anything about it. My vet says my dog needs to go on a diet. My dog thinks I shouldn't listen to the vet, who is the man who "fixed" a certain part of canine anatomy that, in my dog's opinion, was never broken in the first place. Instead, I should listen to my pet, who sits and stares at me during meals, quivering whenever I raise a fork to my mouth, licking his lips as I swallow ...

When I glance at him, his expression is unmistakable. *I'm dying here, my dog's eyes tell me. I need some lasagne.* Guests seem to find it disconcerting when they reach into their laps for their napkins and encounter my dog's head instead, particularly when he gives them a quick wet wipe on the fingers.

"Uh, Bruce, your dog just slobbered all over me," they'll say.

"That's it, out you go," I'll say to my dog.

My pet will be offended. *What? But why? Her hands are clean now!*

Once outside, my dog will sit at the door, peering in through the glass with a distressed expression. Clearly

his expulsion from the dining room is all due to some huge misunderstanding, and I'm a bad person who should be taken to the vet to be fixed. The dog will paw at the door like a boxer determined to end the fight.

"Hey! Stop that!" I'll yell. The dog will be bewildered – if I know he's out there, why don't I open the door?

I can tell by my pet's face that he thinks he knows what we're all talking about at the table. Here's what the dog thinks we're saying:

Me: *This sure is a good meal! Let's not leave any for the dog.*

Son: *Ha ha.*

Daughter: *Later, we'll give the dog some food made from compressed cardboard. It's the same stuff we've fed him for only about 600 times in a row, so to him it's still special. The vet says it is far better for the dog than anything that tastes good. And you know how much we like the vet for fixing the dog!*

Son: *I'll give the dog the compressed cardboard!*

Me: *But not the cat.*

Daughter: *Of course not. We'll give the cat a moist, succulent dinner made from wild salmon and poached lobster.*

Son: *The dog's in trouble for going to the bathroom in the house.*

Daughter: *But not the cat. The cat can do whatever it wants, but the dog has to do his business outside, even if it is raining and cold.*

Me: *Later, I'm going to go for a car ride without the dog!*

Daughter: *Car rides are so much fun. Why share them with the dog?*

Son: *Hey look, the cat is jumping on the table.*

Daughter: *She's so adorable when she does that.*

Me: *If the dog ever tried something like that, we'd yell and be very angry.*

Daughter: *Bad dog!*

Son: *Ha ha.*

Me: *I love the cat.*

Daughter: *The cat can't obey commands to sit or lie down, and it doesn't come when you call it. The cat's disgusting smell is all over the place, and it sleeps on the bed even though that's bad-dog behaviour.*

Me: *I don't care. I still love the cat.*

Son: *Me too.*

Daughter: *Me too.*

Son: *Say, when I give the dog his cardboard dinner, should I, at the very least, provide a nice-sized meal for him?*

Me: *I wouldn't.*

Daughter: *No, don't do that. It's better when the dog is hungry.*

Me: *But not the cat.*

When I let the dog back in, his accusing stare says it all: *I know what you've been saying about me ... He'll forgive me, though, as soon as I feed him.* ❖



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