

Part 4: Alternatives to Verbal Communication

The instant coffee tasted like wet cigars, but Robert needed it to kill the hangover and to give him the energy to get through his next conversation with Sue. It had been torture sleeping next to her, but he'd been too much of a gentleman to tell her to sleep on the floor and his aching back wouldn't let him sleep there either. He'd tried to put some distance between them in the bed, but sometime in the night she'd rolled over and clutched onto him as if he were a lanky teddy bear. The feel of her warm little body pressed up against him was maddening, but somehow he made it through the night and even managed to get a little rest.

The sun was just beginning to rise when he took the last gulp of coffee and returned inside of the cabin with a hand crank radio he'd found in hand. According to the local news, the authorities were seeking "Detective Robert Jericho" and "Inspector Sue Sharp" for questioning. It was going to be hard making their way to the border as themselves.

Robert watched Sue still sleeping in the bed, looking like a pale, delicate china doll, the swell of her breast just peeking out from the covers. There she was teasing him again without even knowing it.

She was a *virgin*. The fact was titillating as it was concerning. He'd never been with a virgin, but the idea of showing off his experience and introducing her to one of his favorite pastimes was more than a little appealing. Yet, she was already so damn unapproachable, and they worked together too, which made getting involved with her already a pretty bad idea. Her being a virgin made it the worst idea, but it was an idea he couldn't quite shake.

Wishing he had a real breakfast on the table, Robert dumped another packet of instant coffee into the mug and topped it off with some hot water. He stirred the liquid slowly as he contemplated what he might say to his sleeping partner. Finally he settled on, "Good morning, Sue, coffee?"

Her little face scrunched up and her bloodshot eyes slowly creaked open. Her doll-like appearance melted away, but there was still something irresistible and cute about her even as she was glaring at him.

"Coffee?" Her voice cracked.

Robert nodded.

"Thank God!" She took the cup and sipped it. "Yuck, instant..." She wrinkled up her nose, but immediately took another sip.

"Yeah, it's not exactly Taster's Choice is it? But what can you expect from a guy who owns a cap with 'Breeder' written on it? Anyway, hurry up, the rain is gone and we've got some ground to cover today."

Sue pointed at his worn boots. "It's great that you have shoes now, but what am I going to do? Hey, how's your back?"

Robert scratched his head. "Yeah, about that..." He patted the crank radio on the table. "The police are looking for us, Sue. They want us for 'questioning.' It's all over the news. They said both our names along with physical descriptions; we're going to have a big problem if someone recognizes us."

"Well, you don't look like yourself at all in that getup." Sue gestured at him.

"That's exactly what I was thinking, but what about you?" He was praying that she would get his meaning and that he wouldn't have to suggest it.

Sue looked at the bottom drawer of the dresser again, then back at him. When she was sure that she understood his meaning she curled her lip very purposefully. "What? You want to dress me up like your little hunting dog? Is that it?" She tried not to sound excited by the idea and laid on the disgust in her voice as thickly as she could manage.

Given the situation and what little they had to work with, the ridiculous suggestion was the most-practical idea Robert could think of, but he couldn't deny that he wanted to see her that way again. He tried to play it cool. "Can you think of a better idea? If we keep heading south we ought to reach the highway again and we can hitchhike all the way to Suden. To anyone who picks us up we'll just be a stranded hunter and his loyal hound."

"No." Of course, she wanted nothing more than to say, "Yes! God, yes, Master! Woof!"

"Look at it this way, if you're shy fewer people will notice you as a puppy girl than if you're walking around in just your blouse, don't you think?"

Sue pursed her lips and acted as if she were suddenly thinking about it, when she'd already made up her mind.

"I'll still carry you until we get to the road so we can make better time, how about that?"

"...I can't believe I'm even considering this." She paused again, really wanting to sell her reluctance. Finally, she answered, "...Okay, just let me finish my coffee."

A short time later, Robert stood with his back to Sue. His heart was pounding in anticipation as he practiced maintaining a professional, cool exterior. He could hear Sue behind him sigh deeply.

"Okay...I think I'm ready."

Robert took a deep breath and turned around. Sue stood with the blanket still tightly clutched around her as she had the night before. Her hair was brushed down and she wore a pair of floppy, brown dog ears attached to an Alice band.

“Are you...?”

“Yes, I got them on, but...”

“Yeah, uh, I get it. Don’t worry, Sue, I’ll make this as easy on you as I can.”

“Th—thanks.”

Robert reached for the blanket and stopped. “Do you want to...?”

Sue giggled awkwardly. “Oh, no...Actually, it’d be easier for me if you took the blanket off me.”

Robert gently pulled the quilt away, first revealing Sue’s breasts. Her nipples were topped by the small, dark brown, heart-shaped covers that they’d found at the bottom of the dresser. A rush of light pink flush washed over her skin from the top of her milky white chest to her raven hairline. His first impulse was to reach out and cup her, pert, little breasts, to squeeze them and knead them, but he pulled away the rest of her covering instead. Both her hands went to her crotch as the blanket drifted past her smooth belly, over her slender waist, and down her thin legs.

Robert dragged his gaze back up to her face. “Here, let’s get you up on the table. It’ll be easier.”

“Easier for *you* you mean!” Sue joked in a shaky voice.

“Yeah, exactly, who else would I mean?” He quipped back.

He took one of her hands, savoring the feeling of her soft palm against his fingers, and carefully guided her up. Once she was situated, she put one of her hands back between her legs to cover herself.

“I’ll look as little as I can, Sue. Okay?”

She wanted to tell him that he could look as much as he liked. “It’s not like I have anything you *haven’t* seen right?” She laughed nervously. “You’ve probably done this plenty of times!”

Robert picked up one of the dark brown, mud-stained leg restraints, bent her right leg as far as it would go and started binding. “I wasn’t a pet groomer, but I did have to trade out a lot of the training gear in the program.”

Sue winced when he secured the restraint. Being in his gentle, but strong hands as he manipulated her was making her tingle in her belly.

"Too tight?" He asked a little anxiously.

"No, it's fine. Keep going..." Sue tried to keep the huskiness out of her voice.

Robert took her other leg and began to wrap it. "And every girl has something I haven't seen. They're all different." She teetered a bit uncertainly as he set her second bound leg down making her hand slip away from her crotch for a moment. Robert sneaked a peak at her smooth, hairless slit before he could stop himself. It was just slightly parted and looked inviting. He wanted to tell her "Good girl" for being so well-groomed already.

Robert moved to her front and took one of her hands in his. He carefully arranged it into a fist with her thumb on the outside and started wrapping it. Sue flexed and unflexed her hand a bit as she felt the tingling from before start to spread over her whole body.

"Be still." Robert murmured out of the corner of his mouth as he held her hand a little tighter. Then he paused and looked at Sue. "Sorry, force of habit. Are you alright?"

Sue closed her mouth and breathed through her nose quickly in an effort to not sound like a panting dog. She told him that she was fine. She would have been *more* fine if he'd not even asked. When he'd finished with her first "paw" she held it up and flexed against the tight bindings encircling her hand.

"Sue?"

"Huh?"

"Your other hand?"

"Oh, right!" She set her hand in Robert's. She inhaled sharply and squirmed as he began to bind her left hand. The fear and the excitement of being helpless rose with each passing moment.

Robert stood back and admired his own handiwork for a moment. The homemade restraints weren't as attractive as officially licensed pet gear, but they were well-made and certainly did the trick. Sue was quite a sight on all fours with her little breasts hanging down. She was still flushed. The poor thing was probably dying of embarrassment and it was only going to get worse.

Until then, he'd kept the plug tail and lubrication out of Sue's sight knowing how "skittish" puppy girl trainees were about them. He didn't want to cause her any undue stress, and yet at the same time he did.

"Sue, about last night, about you..."

Sue looked at the brown tail with the thick black plug warily. It wasn't the first time she would have something shoved up her butt for something work-related, but she certainly wasn't accustomed to it and she doubted that she ever would be. She opened her mouth to ask Robert if it was really necessary to plug her. She chided herself for even thinking of trying to talk her way out of it. Whether it was her actions, his actions, luck or a combination of all of them she was getting exactly what she really wanted. Wasn't she? What's more, would she ever find herself in such a position again? She tried to push away the fear, the shame, the words of her prudish mother, and even what Robert might think of her. Last night she couldn't even make out like a normal person, even while drunk, but sober she'd submit herself to whatever indignity and *love* it as long as Robert was the one doing it to her.

Their eyes met. Robert wondered why she didn't protest. "I'll be as gentle as I can, alright?"

Sue nodded slowly.

Standing behind her, Robert lubed up the plug more than he thought necessary. When he was satisfied he patted Sue's paw that she'd returned to cover her crotch.

"Move your paw, just for a bit, Sue."

Her hand slowly slid away revealing herself to him again. Robert put his hand on Sue's left hip to steady her and pressed the greased silicone against Sue's tight, pink rosebud. Sue whined loudly and shuddered.

"Are you alright?"

Still trembling, she nodded slowly again.

Robert rubbed his thumb gently back and forth along her soft skin and mumbled, "Just relax, Sue. It's going to be alright."

Her trembling lessened. Even though the facts were contrary to his words, she believed him.

He pushed the plug forward and Sue's bud stretched around the black silicone. Even as she whimpered louder, it took the invader inside of her. When she reared up and tried to push the thing back out, Robert held her firmly and pushed it deeper and deeper into her as if to say, "Take your medicine, sweetheart!" The pain was intense, but Sue found herself growing wet as Robert did his work seemingly so stoically. Robert had managed to stave off an erection since the process had begun, but at that moment he strained against his pants as he gripped her tightly and pushed the plug the rest of the way inside of her.

Glowing with sweat, Sue sobbed quietly with her face to the table. Robert breathed heavily behind her. He felt like a monster, but his desire remained and he greedily took in the sight of her on all fours, nearly naked, with her perky ass turned up to the air. Beneath the

brown tail protruding from her stretched backdoor, he could see Sue's pussy. It was glistening with her juices, swollen, quivering, and grasping at the emptiness in front of it. Could she have been enjoying it all or was it just the byproduct of stimulation?

He touched the back of Sue's head and petted her softly, shushing her as he did. "See, that wasn't so bad now, was it?"

Sue half-sobbed, half-laughed, "I-it w-w-was pretty bad!" She took a deep breath and exhaled. "Maybe you're out of practice." Robert stopped petting her and she regretted trying to be funny.

"Let's get you finished. Sit up for me."

Sue sat up and demurely squeezed her legs together. Robert held the collar in his hand. She couldn't help but stare at it. She'd been waiting for the collar since he'd made the suggestion of them posing as hunter and hound. It had been so upsetting for her when Donna had collared her. The idea that she hadn't escaped degrading pet service after all was almost too much to bear at the time. Yet, when Robert tilted her chin gently up, she shivered with excitement instead of fear—mostly. Countless times she'd imagined the moment and rubbed herself raw on the floor of her apartment at the thought of him taking possession of her. The pressure of the plug inside of her and the growing anticipation made her desire mount and mount. She sat up a little higher to give easier access to her neck, her legs spreading a bit as she did.

Robert couldn't ignore Sue's flushed face, her heavy breathing, or the wetness peeking out from between her slightly parted thighs. It wasn't just an involuntary reaction to the plugging. She was genuinely aroused. Was this the reason she'd given in and accepted his absurd idea? Was *this* the way she meant she was falling in love with him? Suddenly he began to see her previous behaviors in a different light. He felt himself growing harder and without the guilt as he remembered her crawling by his side and wondered if she'd enjoyed it even back then.

Sue just wanted the collar around her neck. Her anticipation had turned into frantic impatience. As she shifted, her eyes dropped down to Robert's lower half. Even with Robert's borrowed jeans being so baggy she could see his bulge pressing against the faded, worn denim. He hadn't said he had feelings for her the night before, even after she'd clumsily admitted her own. Yet, at the time she had just been glad that the awkwardness of talking had been over. Seeing that she had gotten such a reaction from him was better than words.

Their eyes slowly drifted away from each other's nether regions and met. Neither said a thing and neither needed to. Both knew what the other was thinking as Robert slid the cracked, brown leather around Sue's supple neck. Sue panted and Robert struggled to keep his hands steady as he fumbled with the buckle. It was more-intimate than the plugging somehow, and both found it hard to leave the cabin behind after all was said and done.

Part 5: Hitch-hiking Hijinks

Having not eaten since the day before, Robert's step lacked pep as he trudged through the woods with Sue on his back as he'd promised. It wasn't just anger over Ed that was keeping him going at that point, it was also knowing that the road couldn't be too far away. He smiled when he came up a hill and looked down at an old two lane road cutting its way through the pine trees and fields.

"Look, girl!" He nodded towards the beautiful pavement. "We found the road."

Sue scoffed, "Trying to get into character a little early aren't you?"

"Why not, we both should, right, *Muffy*?" Robert referenced the name engraved on the tag attached to her collar. After her display at the cabin, he figured that she wouldn't complain.

"Muffy...God, that's the worst, but at least I'm not wearing that cap!" She batted at the visor with her paw.

Robert frowned.

Sue smiled back and playfully knocked the visor down over his eyes. "Sorry. Oh, I mean, *woof!*"

Robert laughed. "That's better." He put her down on the ground by his feet. "You walk from here, pup!"

Sue made a pouty face up at him and they made their way down the hill. On all fours, Sue was quite a bit slower than him, but she was far less clumsy than she was the first time they'd worked together. Apparently the stint of undercover work at the kennel had done her some good in that area. Robert stopped so she could catch up, but she stopped a few steps behind him.

Robert started to command her to "heel," but he thought that might be pushing his luck. "What are you doing?" He asked.

"Crawling?"

"No, I mean why are you staying so far back?"

Sue sat back on her knees with her thighs together and her paws resting daintily over the top. "There's no c-string attached to the tail to cover my... I'm...I'm embarrassed, okay?"

He wanted to pet her and tell her that she had *nothing* to be embarrassed about, but he knew what she meant. "Don't worry about it, Sue. Your tail helps cover you. Just try to keep your butt low and no one will notice!" Robert lied.

"You really think so?" She asked hopefully.

“Trust me.”

“Well, alright...” Sue hesitantly crawled to his heel.

“Now that that’s settled, let’s go.”

Side by side, they continued down the hill until they reached the side of the deserted road. The road didn’t stay empty for long. Robert spied a car in the distance going the way they were.

He pointed to the ground by his foot. “Stay, Muffy.” Then he walked to the side of the road. “I’ll show you how this is done.”

Sue plunked down on the ground. “Are you some kind of hitchhiking expert?”

“Sue—Muffy!” Robert chided. “Stay in character.” The car was getting closer, but he explained. “I’m not an expert, no, but I did it a few times. Come to think of it, there was one time Ed and I hitchhiked to a concert out of town...”

As the car was about to pass, Robert waved his thumb casually at it. The car sped past him without even slowing down. In fact, it may have sped up. Robert stared at the car rapidly disappearing into the horizon.

“Woof?” If it was possible to bark sarcastically, Sue had done it.

Robert looked back at her and she had a mischievous smile on her face. It was true that he had hitchhiked a bit when he was younger, but not because he had to. He could have asked his father for a new car anytime, but Robert preferred to get along on his own as much as possible. Besides that, Robert really didn’t want Ed or anyone else to think that he was some kind of spoiled rich kid.

Undaunted, by his first failure, and eager to wipe that arrogant little smirk off Sue’s face, Robert got ready as another car approached. He waved his thumb more vigorously, only for it to zip past him also. Knowing she was still watching, Robert felt his cheeks heat up a bit. He took off his hat and waved it for the third passing car. It was fortunate that there’d been so much rain; otherwise he would have had lungs full of road dust from three, then four, then five cars speeding past him.

After the sixth car passed without stopping, Robert threw the stupid cap on the ground and stamped on it.

“Damn it!” He yelled. It had been so much more fun back then. He was with his friend, he had a few beers on board, he wasn’t hungry, he wasn’t dressed in the clothes of an overweight hillbilly, and most importantly he wasn’t spectacularly failing in front of a girl he liked.

Sue crawled up next to him and patted him on the knee to get his attention. She looked up at him with her big brown eyes and asked innocently, "You mind if I try?"

"You?" Robert chuckled, picked up his hat, dusted it off and put it back on his head.

"Well, we are short on time. It couldn't hurt, right? I mean, woof, woof, woof?"

Robert shrugged. What did they have to lose? "Yeah, sure, go ahead." He took a few steps back and stood with his arms crossed as another car, an old pickup truck, clanked down the road towards them.

Sue waited until the truck was close. She tensed and with a visible shudder that ran through her whole body, she popped up onto her "hind legs" and started begging. She was quite a sight with her pink tongue lolling from her open mouth, squatting and bouncing. Robert took note that she only had one "paw" raised, while the other rested on the ground, conveniently covering her bare crotch. Even while she was making such a display, it amazed him how she could be so bashful. It amazed him that she could perform like that at all. He wondered if she was enjoying it. He wondered if behind her covering paw she was as wet and swollen as she was when he was "dressing" her earlier that morning.

The truck whipped past her only to screech to a halt and slowly start to roll back towards her. Sue immediately dropped back down to all fours. Then she looked over her shoulder at Robert. Even though her face was beat red, she still winked at him.

Robert returned to her side. He was genuinely impressed and even a little humbled. "I guess I should say 'good dog,' huh?"

"I just made an idiot out of myself," she grumbled. "It's the least you could do."

"Good dog, Muffy." Robert chuckled and patted her head.

A heavysset man in overalls and an old denim jacket stepped out of the rusty, mud splattered pickup truck. Scratching his stubbly double-chin and smiling at Sue he asked, "You two need a ride?"

"We sure do!" Robert replied in the best backwoods accent his one theater class could provide.

The man opened the tailgate to the makeshift canopy-covered truck bed. "Just load your pup up and we'll get moving."

Robert looked down at Sue and she looked back up at him with a worried look. "Ah, I'd rather she ride up in front with me."

"Sorry, mister, animals ride in back." No sooner did he say that when a large German shepherd stepped out of the back of the truck bed to the open tailgate, its nails clicking on the

metal. The man patted the dog's head. "She'll be fine. Roxy is comfortable enough back here, aren't you, girl?"

Robert knelt down and hoisted Sue up in his arms. "It's a girl dog, you'll be fine," he murmured in her ear. Sue whined a bit, but to his relief, she didn't break character and he set her down next to Roxy.

The dog sniffed at Sue's face and she pulled back a bit.

"Uh, she's new to this!" Robert explained. "She's still a little skittish."

"I'd say so. Don't worry, Roxy is very friendly. Your pup can share her water and kibble dishes if she likes. She won't mind!" The man slammed the tailgate shut and trudged back to the cab.

"Robert," Sue hissed. "I'm not staying back here with a real dog I'm—" She was cut off by Roxy licking her across the face. "Ick!" She exclaimed and wiped the slobber from her cheek.

"It won't be for long. Just be friendly and we'll be there before you know it!" Robert whispered back before dashing to the passenger side of the cabin, leaving her alone with the very affectionate farm dog.

Several twists and turns down the road, Robert melted into the worn out seat of the truck's cab while he chewed on the old farmer's, the driver's, homemade jerky. It had just the right amount of spice and saltiness, and even if it wasn't basically perfect, Robert was too hungry to care what it tasted like. He watched the countryside speeding past the window, while the farmer rambled on about something. With a moment to rest and his belly not grumbling, Robert was finally able to think and take stock of the situation. No gun, no phone, no badge—not that said badge had any real authority to back it up anymore—and dressed like a hick, he wasn't sure how he'd proceed. He had been able to save the small black book with the address, so at least he still had the trail.

"So, why'd you call her Muffy if you don't mind my asking?" The old farmer asked.

"Huh?" Robert straightened up in his seat and pointed back into the covered truck bed. "Oh, you mean the pup?" Ha, she's a real big fan of earmuffs!"

Both men laughed and then fell silent for a few minutes.

"So where did you 'adopt' her?" The old farmer asked.

Robert hesitated to answer.

“Just looking at her I can tell she’s not one of them government animals. She ain’t been tagged or branded. She’s homemade I guess you could say. So, where’d you get her?” When Robert still didn’t answer, the man continued. “Oh, don’t worry about the law, I’m just asking because maybe I’d like to get one like that myself one of these days!” He laughed.

Robert forced a laugh when he finally understood the farmer’s meaning.

“You know, so I can have someone around the farm as quiet and loyal as Roxy, but also something I can dip my wick in every night and maybe get a few litters out of too!”

“Yeah, I know what you mean...” Robert clenched his jaw. Pet girl bootleggers were a real problem in rural areas. If the situation had been different, he would have jumped at the chance to interrogate the farmer on everything he knew about it.

“So, where’d you get her?”

“Oh, yeah, I...I caught her hiking near my cabin a few months ago.”

“Ah, if only I could be so lucky to have a cute little piece-of-ass drop on my doorstep like that!”

Robert nodded. “Yup, it was pretty lucky I guess.”

“You thinking about breeding her? That’s the worst thing about them government pets, they stick them on that birth control so they can’t do what a woman was made to do!”

“Uh...I hadn’t really thought that far ahead.”

“Ha! Well, I don’t blame you, being a young man and all. Remember though, they say it’s the best way to domesticate them. Put a litter in her and she’ll be yours forever!”

Over the clanking of the engine and the rattle of the poor suspension on the old road, Sue could still overhear the conversation between the two men in the cab through the cracked window separating the front of the truck from the back. She’d only been able to sit still long enough to eavesdrop for a short while, however. Roxy had chased Sue around the enclosed space with her very inquisitive snout. Already very achy between her legs from crawling by Robert’s side and humiliating herself to get them a ride, the last thing Sue wanted was for the large dog to come nosing around her. Roxy’s hot breath tickled Sue’s delicate, swollen pink folds making her shudder and then scurry away. Fun was fun, but she wasn’t ready for the emotional burden and confusion that would come with responding to Roxy’s curiosity.

Fortunately, Roxy seemed to have satisfied that curiosity and plunked down on the left side of a smelly, threadbare rug in the middle of the truck bed. Sue hesitantly crawled up next to her and lay down on the opposite side of the rug. As she did, she eyed Roxy warily, afraid that

she may have misinterpreted the extra space on the rug as an offer to lie down. Sue was tired and despite the greasiness and stench of the fabric, she was happy to rest.

When she saw Robert eating the jerky in the cab, her mouth watered. Out of the corner of her eye, Sue noticed Roxy's head had perked up and she was visibly drooling. Sue was shocked to suddenly feel a little camaraderie with her rug-mate. When it got down to it, they were just two hungry little bitches hoping to get scraps of something yummy from a man. Sue squirmed at the thought of it, but willed herself not to think about it any further.

Sue had almost calmed herself down when she heard the farmer ask Robert if he'd considered "breeding her." She perked up and listened anxiously for his response. She furrowed her brow when he responded unenthusiastically that he hadn't thought about it. He was only playing a character, so his answer didn't mean much anyway, but she was still disappointed. The farmer encouraged him, however.

Sue wiggled at the words, "put a litter in her and she'll be yours forever!" To which Robert responded, "Really? Well, I suppose I ought to be able to get one or two or *ten* out of her!"

The heat which she'd tried so desperately to cool rushed through her again, and her pawed hand shot down to her smoldering "puppy parts." A part of her said, "No, not here. You're not really an animal. What if Robert sees you acting this way?" but she could not stop herself. On her stomach, she began to grind against one paw while she bit into the other to keep herself quiet. The wrappings binding her hands were not as soft and fuzzy as ComPet paws, but that didn't stop her as she was soon sopping wet and humping in a steady rhythm.

Roxy watched Sue from the other side of the rug. If Sue didn't know better, she'd say that Roxy was giving her a disapproving look, like a good church woman might give a cheap whore. Sue humped harder and faster knowing that there wasn't camaraderie between her and Roxy. Roxy had more sense, more self-control, and more dignity than her. In some sort of imaginary hierarchy that Sue's spinning mind created, Roxy was higher than her by far. Roxy could probably herd sheep or do something else that was clever and useful, but not Sue. All she was good for was carrying Robert's litters. She'd never thought about being pregnant as sexy, but she couldn't stop seeing herself, with swollen "teats" and belly at Robert's feet. She was utterly owned, utterly helpless and completely dependent on him.

Sue bit down hard on her paw as an orgasm surged through her tiny frame. There were tears in her eyes from the pain she'd caused herself and the wonderful release. Wiping the tears away she noticed Roxy was still looking down on her. Without the soft pink haze of passion, Sue suddenly found Roxy's stare too much. For the rest of the trip, Sue couldn't make eye contact with her.

"Thanks, Mister!" Robert waved as the old farmer took off down the street of Suden.

Robert looked down at Sue and held out some of the farmer's beef jerky. "Here, I saved some from you."

Obviously too hungry to care about the indignity of eating out of his hand, Sue picked up the dried meat with her teeth and chewed on it gratefully.

"I wouldn't normally recommend giving a dog people food, but I guess we can let it slide this time..."

"Damn right!" Sue mumbled.

"We're in town now, Muffy. That means no talking unless you absolutely need to, and if you gotta, then keep it low!" He pulled the leash from his pocket.

Sue swallowed the mouthful of jerky. "Do I have to be leashed?"

"It's the law."

Sue presented her neck. "Yeah, we wouldn't want to break any laws now would we?"

Robert clipped on the leash.

"Just don't choke me, alright?"

"Just keep up and you won't have to worry about it." Robert mumbled and re-read the address. It wasn't far. Walking along the sidewalk almost felt normal for a moment. He could forget about why he was there and just imagine that it was him and Sue, Muffy, not that he would have ever given her such a dumb name, out for a little lunchtime walk before he'd have to go back to work. He watched Muffy's tail wag back and forth enticingly as they went, and held on to the pleasant little fantasy until they eventually reached the address.

Robert looked at the address again and then one more time just to be sure that he'd found the right place. Across the street and in the fading light of evening, he could still clearly make out the brightly painted sign of a steaming coffee mug with an apple cheeked puppy girl's face licking her lips next to it. Beneath the two images the words "Perk and Pup." The F.E.R.A.L people were more-clever than he'd originally thought. No one would think to look for them in a puppy girl-friendly coffee shop.

Making sure that no one was nearby he knelt down next to Sue and whispered to her, "Alright, let's not make this complicated. We'll just go in there and sit and see what we see."

"Wow, Hannibal, aren't we a master strategist?" She quipped.

Robert ignored her. "Whatever happens, if shooting starts or even if things just get physical I want you to get out of there. Do you understand me?"

"I didn't come all this way to run if you need—"

Sue was cut short as a young couple came out of a nearby door holding hands and dressed for a date. Robert took a knee next to Sue and ruffled her hair so violently that it shook her into silence. "Yeah, Muffy's a good doggy, ain't she?" He said in his terrible country accent. "She's just as cute as a button! Yeah, you know you are!"

The couple stopped and watched Robert as he continued to praise and vigorously pet Sue. Robert was running out of things to say and wondered how much longer they would stare.

"Uh..." The young man started. "Hey, man, cute puppy girl."

Robert looked up and smiled. "Thank you kindly!"

The young man glanced back at his date. "Do you mind if we pet her?"

Robert knew that Sue wouldn't like strangers touching her, but he nodded, mostly just so that they'd hopefully go away after, but also because he wanted to see how far he could push her before she broke. "No, go ahead." Sue's cheeks were crimson as the young man petted her head.

His date reached out hesitantly and brushed Sue's bangs. "Poor thing, she smells *really* bad. Just like a real dog!"

The young man laughed, but then chided her and pointed at Robert.

Robert laughed too. "Oh, don't worry; I know she stinks to high heaven. We've been out in the woods for weeks. I'll give her a good scrub later."

The young man looked at his date. "A good scrub, eh? Are you sure you don't want to volunteer for service?" Obviously, it was a joke between the two of them.

The young woman shook her head and stood up. "Uh, I think I have a little more dignity than that. You'd never catch me crawling around on all fours and being led around on a leash!"

The young man stood up also and nodded at Robert before they both continued down the sidewalk.

"Eh, besides, did you see how she was all drippy? Only a total slut would be enjoying being treated like that!"

After they'd turned the corner, Robert grumbled, "Don't listen to her. I've seen her type plenty of times. After a week in the kennels she'd have her flat ass up in the air offering it to anyone who passed within three steps of her."

"Really?" Sue mumbled back.

"Trust me, Sue. She's definitely that kind."

