

## Black and white or PVC pipe wrapped in razor wire

by J.D. Rogers

I haven't written anything yet about the new addition to our family. Good heavens no, not that kind of addition. We got a new black and white. Are you thinking police car? Wrong. Border collie is the correct answer.

I had walked into our kitchen after a hard day of something—don't remember what. Standing by the sink, my bride Sioux was just beaming. The first thing she said to me was, "Notice anything new?" as she smiled from ear to ear.

Oh, man, this could be big trouble if I guess wrong. I could easily be in deep doo-doo, where I've been known to spend a lot of time. I'm sure you guys know what I mean.

Let's see, there's nothing new that I could see hanging on the kitchen walls. Her hair looked the same color, doesn't it? Think! Come on, yes, it's the same color. Her eyes are still a sparkly doe brown. She's not any taller, my little dwarf amazon woman. Did she lose weight? She wasn't heavy to begin with. Guys know that the wrong answer to this question can lead to weeks in the doghouse. God, what do I say?

"Do you see it yet?" she asked again. That's when I noticed that under the kitchen table was a young border collie that wasn't there when I left the house this morning.

"Are we pet sitting?" I asked Sioux hopefully.

"No, no, she's ours."

That's what I thought, yet another mouth to feed.

Sioux said, "I answered an ad on Jo's List (our local kind of craigslist sort of thing). This sweetie pie needed a home."

The new black and white had already befriended our two other black and whites. The oldest, Utah, is blind in one eye, barely sees out of the other eye, his hips are shot so he does that walking-in-circles thing a dozen or more times before plopping on the floor with a groan. His breath is foul, but his disposition is always good. He can still smell food from the far reaches of the earth, or at least from anywhere in our house because he always magically appears when you have food. I know it's the nose because he's deafer than me. He still likes to walk around with us out in our heritage apple orchard though he moves slightly faster than a tortoise. Why should he? He's 16-plus years old.

Then there's Barney McGee aka Monster Boy One, or in 21st-century language, MB1. Barney is still a jumping fool, especially onto folks in clean, going-to-town clothes. I've failed miserably at breaking him of that bad habit. Wasn't there a song by Joan Jett and the Blackhearts called "Bad Habit"? Or was it "Bad Attitude"?

McGee doesn't have a bad attitude—he's "Mr. Friendly," as in "Let me lick you again and again." He loves racing cars from one end of the property to the other. He won't waste his time on a school bus or other slow-moving vehicle. He has a beautiful gate when he's racing toward the finish line he's established at each end of our property. He does get kind of crazy in the car so he wears a doggy seat belt to keep him in the back seat. He is all boy, almost four years old.

“Her name is Lily Rose” Sioux said. “She’s as sweet as a lily. Look how cute she is.”

Lily is wagging her tail as she walks over and sits right in front of me, looking up with those eyes that every guy likes to see that says, “You’re the boss.” But I know and she knows that as soon as I say, “Oh, she’s so cute” (which also means she’ll be living with us), she’ll never recognize me as the boss again. Plus upper management aka wife has already decided that Lily is going to be living with us. I was just a formality they had to get out of the way.

Let’s be honest here. It took only five minutes or so and I was hooked on her anyway. Well, it really took a few nights because she’d chew up my socks while I slept. I know I’m slow—it took four or five, maybe six nights before Lily had me trained. “Do not leave your socks on the floor. Geez, moron, were you ever going to learn this lesson?” she probably thought.

She hadn’t been living in the wilds long as our vet said she’s perfectly fit. From her teeth, she guessed Lily to be between two and three years old.

Barney does like playing with Lily. They play chase, let’s bite each other’s rear heels, stop, sniff butt to make sure some new strange dog didn’t trade places with their playmate, then they start it all over again.

If Lily tries to wiggle past Barney to place her head under my hand, he’ll curl his lips back to where all you see are teeth and gums. He does this high-pitched alto-soprano growl that changes pitch the closer she get to me. Not to worry. Lily just starts licking Barney’s teeth and he sulks off to his favorite corner—the same one he spends time in when he’s been a bad boy. Lily is happy with the head pats.

Let’s not forget Chloe, the calico kitty we’ve been pet-sitting for, what is it, ten years now? She gets along fine with Lily. But Barney, she swats at him all the time because he won’t leave her alone. Funny, when Barney does quit being a pest to Chloe she’ll walk right up and swat his butt.

She can be an aggressive kitty. She’ll roll around on her back purring “I’m so cute, won’t you pet me.” If you do, look out—you’ve been suckered. She’ll bite a steak-size chunk of flesh right out of your hand.

My good outlaw buddy Ricky Lee Costanza, from the punk rock band Ricky Lee Costanza and the Plutoniums—you probably remember their song, “Shake your Glow Stick” from his disco phase, was in town for a visit just prior to his tour bus burning to the ground, but that’s another story. One night, sweet little Chloe jumped into bed with Ricky Lee. So much for Chloe’s reputation. (That’s it! The Joan Jett song is called “Bad Reputation.”) She starts licking his arm about the time he thought, “Oh, she’s so cute she reminds me of...ahhhhhh,” followed by a blood-curdling scream. Well, maybe it was really a muffled curse that came from his room upstairs. All Chloe was doing was washing her food before eating.

Back to the black and whites or border collies. All three of our dogs were looking for new homes when we took them in. They’ve all worked out extremely well—except for the time that Barney ate my hearing aids, or the time he chewed the console in my big Ram pickup, or the time he chewed our antique red leather chair, or the time...let’s just say that we love him despite all his shenanigans.

For me there is something relaxing and stress reducing about petting, playing with or being entertained by our pack of black and whites. I could be having a porcupine-quill-in-the-butt kind of morning. You know, splinters under the fingernail sort of day, or maybe it’s one of those PVC pipes wrapped in razor wire being rammed...you get the picture. The black and whites can usually cheer me up, ease my stress, which is relaxing.

In our 24/7 overloaded, psyched out, high blood pressure, heart attack stalking world we live in, one needs to find a pressure valve release. For me, it’s our black and whites.

I think I’ll head out to the orchard, check on my golden russets, Davy and Swiss Limbertwig apple trees, throw a few sticks for the dogs, and relax from all the pressure of writing this story. Time for a dog day afternoon—if I had a hammock. Wasn’t that a song by...no, not Ozzy Osbourne, not Pink, not Velvet Revolver. I don’t remember. This is just too stressful.

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