Miller Family Tries

by andlat

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The Costume Box
2024

Chapter 1

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“Nice job, everyone!” Mom said, giving her kids a hug.

“I don't think I ever want to eat an Oreo again.” Riley moaned, rubbing his tummy.

“Too bad, bud. We've got” Dad pretended to count the stacks of Oreo packages. “A million Oreos, looks like.”

“We'll just have you two bring them to school like we usually do.” Mom said decisively. “For now, Riley, go check the mail. I think we've got a new brand sponsor coming any day now.”

“Which one?”

“You'll have to wait and see.” Mom said with a knowing smile. Riley dashed off to the front door. Sure enough, a large cardboard box sat right by the door. He picked it up and charged back to the kitchen excitedly.

“Are we getting a dog!?”

“Huh?” Mom took the box from him.

“Well, it says Puppy Pak.” He pointed to the large blue letters on the side of the box. Mom frowned.

“Huh. I thought we were getting a promotion for that new cartoon movie. What’s it called, Dave?”

“I can’t remember. What’s the address?”

“It’s ours. 93 Oakdale, see?”

“Well, open it up, I guess?”

The family moved to the living room and gathered around as Mom cut the box open. She pulled out a letter, but closed the rest of the box.

“You know how we do it.” She said.

“Even though it’s a mistake?” Riley asked. Mom nodded.

“Who wants to read the letter?”

“I will!” Abigail grabbed the letter and scanned it over. “Oh, my god. Listen to this!” She grinned as she began to read out loud. “Dear Millers, we love your videos, blah, blah, blah, our family at Puppy Pak heard you have a new arrival.”

“So we are getting a dog?”

“Shush.” Dad said.

“In this box, you’ll find everything a new puppy like Riley needs.” She laughed uproariously. “They think Riley’s a dog!”

“What? It can’t-” he snatched the letter from Abigail. “What? Mom!”

“It’s just a mistake, sweetie.”

“And it’s kinda funny. You are like a rambunctious puppy sometimes.”

“Dave.” Mom clucked. “Well, it all seems like they sent it to us on purpose. I’ll give them a call and see what we can do.”

“Puppy Riley.” Abigail teased.

“Go eat an Oreo.” Riley hissed. Why did they think he was a dog?

“It says they love our videos. How’d they think… make that mistake?”

“Oh, they probably just print the same letter for everyone they send things to.” Dad said. “It was just a silly mistake. We know you’re not a dog!” He tousled his son’s blond hair before kissing his forehead.

“Ew! Dad!”

“What? You don’t like kisses?” He began to tickle and playfully wrestle with Riley until Mom came back into the room.

“Well, they said it was a mistake, but we can keep everything.”

“What's even in there?” Asked Abigail.

Riley sat on the living room floor, still feeling inexplicably uncomfortable with this whole thing as his family unpacked everything.

“Red's your favorite color, Riley!” Mom said, holding up the

new leash.

“And the collar matches. It even has a tag with your name on it, bud.” Riley forced a smile. Why did no one else think this was weird? He was almost certain he would have found it weird even if everything had had Abigail's name on it instead of his.

“Look at these nice bowls.” Mom held up a pair of shiny silver metallic bowls, both with his name flanked by paw prints.

“More red.” He tried to have fun, though he jerked away when Abigail tried to brush his hair with the fur brush.

“A whole tube of tennis balls. Nice.” Dad said.

“And of course a chew toy.” Riley recognized the smile on Mom's face. Here came a new video idea.

“You're not.” He whined.

“You don't even know what I'm thinking.” Mom said. “Just a couple of joke photos.”

Riley tried to plead his case, but the rest of his family seemed to think it would be fun. He frowned, sitting on the couch with the collar around his neck.

“Quit pouting.” Abigail said, grinning at him. She was loving this. “What breed of dog do you think Riley would be?”

“One of those quick little dogs.” Dad said. “Jack Russell Terriers? I think?”

“Maybe.” Mom seemed to be thinking about it.

“I'm not a dog at-”

“He'd be one of those ugly bulldogs.” Abigail decreed. Riley stuck his tongue out at her.

“You'd be one of those like prissy poodle dogs.” He retorted.

“Would not!”

“Or like one of those barky chihuahuas.” Dad teased.

“Riley?”

“No, you.” Dad said with a laugh. Now both of the kids were pouting.

“Riles, how about you hold the dog toy?” Mom said.

“Should he sit like a dog?” Abigail asked as Riley held the squeaky cheeseburger in his hand. He did like cheeseburgers, but this was still so weird!

“No.” Mom said. “He's fine the way he is.”

“At least try to smile!” Dad urged. Riley again forced his smile as they took a few photos.

“Alright, let's put the chew toy in your mouth.”

“What? Ew.” They exchanged a look.

“It's brand new and clean.” Mom said.

“And you used to put your toes in your mouth.” Added Dad. “Those have to be grosser.”

“No.”

“Just for a quick shot.” Riley gave in and bit down on the cheeseburger. Squeak! He kind of liked that sound.

“Oh, perfect. See? That got you smiling!”

“Did not.” Riley mumbled around the chew toy. He spat it out a moment later, though caught it just to give it one last squeeze. It was a fun sound. A good squeak, though he did not know what exactly made it a good squeak. He gave it another squeeze and giggled.

“What's next?” Abigail asked. Riley reached up to the collar, but could not quite figure out how to get it off. He had heard Dad buckle it behind his neck, but he could not seem to get it to release.

“Can you help me?” He asked Abigail.

“With what?”

“My” his cheeks burned. “My collar.” Wasn't it obvious?

“Leave it on.” Mom said. “We've got another photo op in the kitchen.”

“What? Mom, isn't this-”

“Don't whine. It'll be fun.”

“It says your name on it.” Abigail observed.

“Yeah, I saw the dog tag.”

“No, on the side here. It's like embroidered.”

“Em what?”

“Sewn on kinda.” She rubbed his head.

“Stop that.”

“What? You're playing puppy, aren't you?” Riley didn't think he was playing puppy. It was more like everyone else was and he was just forced to go along with it. What was he worried about? Boys couldn't turn into puppies, after all. It was just supposed to be a fun joke video or photoshoot or whatever.

Riley's stomach grumbled as he shuffled into the kitchen. What was for lunch? It smelled so delicious, he almost licked his lips. Confusion crossed his face, closely followed by irritation as he saw the dog bowl on the floor.

“What even is that?” He asked, looking at the brown balls in the silver bowl. If he could not smell them, he would assume they were Cocoa Puffs, but they smelled more meaty.

“Try it.” Dad said, holding up the camera.

“But”

“It'll be a funny photo!” Mom said. Riley did not really want to eat from a dog dish on the floor, but everyone seemed so eager for him to do it. He did not really care about making Abigial happy, but it made him feel good when he saw Mom and Dad's smiles as he dropped to his knees.

He looked down, almost certain that this was actually dog food. Where had it come from? There hadn't been any in the box, right? Why would Mom and Dad have dog food?

“Taste it.”

“You want me to actually” his voice trailed off as his stomach grumbled again. He was definitely hungry and it did smell good, but… he sighed.

Wait a second. If they want me to be a dog… he smiled slyly. I guess I better give them what they want, right? With an excited yip, he dropped down onto his hands and buried his face into the kibble. He ate a few pieces of it, but he was mostly focused on making as big of a mess as possible.

“Whoa there!” Dad exclaimed, handing the camera to Mom. “If you're gonna be that messy, bud, we better get this shirt off.”

“Pants too.” Mom remarked as Dad kneeled down and worked Riley's shirt over his head. He shivered at first, almost out of habit, before realizing he wasn't cold, even as Dad stripped him down to his underwear. He looked down at his chest and tummy, frowning. Something seemed off.

“Ok, you're clear to eat again, pup.” Dad said. Did he say pup or bud? Riley couldn't be sure and he was far too hungry to worry about that or the fact he was in nothing but his undies in the kitchen. He shoved his face back into the lunch, chewing loudly, crumbs catching in his fur on both his hands and his chest.

“Oh, that's adorable.” Mom said with a smile.

“Glad you're finally playing along.” Dad said, rubbing Riley's head roughly so that his ears flopped. He barked a tiny bark

of confusion and Dad chuckled. “Good boy!” Riley really liked that! He beamed before going back to eating. No one was taking photos anymore, but he was hungry and whatever it was in his bowl tasted good. His bowl? That didn't seem right. It had his name on it though, so it must be his. My very own bowl, he thought as he noisily slurped from the bowl of water next to his food. I'm so lucky.

“Are you finished with your lunch, Abigail?” Mom asked, setting the camera on the kitchen counter. She could upload the photos later. “A new puppy means post-lunch” Riley heard her spell something, but he did not know what. He looked up at her and felt something flick his floppy ear. With a challenging ruff, he turned to look at it and realized it was his own foot. He didn't even know he could do that! He gave his foot a nip just to remind it not to surprise him like that again.

“Come here, Riley.” Abigail called from the living room. “Here boy!” Riley crawled along, moving far faster on his hands and knees than he ever had. He was in the living room before he even realized his legs were fully extended. He wasn't on his knees at all, he was on his hands and feet!

“Are we going outside?” Riley asked, seeing the leash in Abigail's hands. “Mom! Dad! You can't let me go outside like this. A leash?” he stammered. “I'm… I'm in my underwear!” Normally, he would have rather died than even let his family see him in his undies, but somehow, that did not bother him. Going outside though?

“Someone's excited for his walk.”

“Walk? No, no, no.” Riley insisted.

“How about you bring a toy with you, pup?” Dad suggested.

“Toy?” Riley spied the chew toy. He had liked it earlier. He went over and tried to grab it, but something was wrong. His fingers refused to bend the way they should. They were rigid or something. He frowned, tilting his head to consider things. Duh! He could carry it in his mouth! He bit down on the toy, giggling as it squeaked.

“Guess that's a yes.” Dad said. Riley looked at his family, hoping they could see his cool toy in his mouth, but also puzzled. Something was wrong. They were… he gave his head a little shake. His thoughts seemed all foggy, like his head was filled with cotton. Something was wrong, but what was it?

“Listen to that whimper.” Mom said, rushing over. “Here, pup.” She lifted his butt up and tugged down on his underwear. Riley was about to protest. He did not want to be naked in front of his family, but his tail popped free of its cotton prison, the toy fell from his mouth, and he chased it around and around, trying to catch the silly wagging thing.

“So much energy!” Dad exclaimed.

“Walk him around the block a few times.” Mom suggested as Abigail wrestled with the golden lab puppy to get his leash clipped to his collar. “And you” she looked at her husband. “Should fix that fence so Riley can have the backyard.” Riley

looked at them all, terribly confused. He wasn't a dog! Was he? He was a boy! Wasn't he? He lay down on his tummy and tried to rub his face, but ended up running his paws along his snout. What was going on?

“Let's go, Riley!” Abigail said. Riley grabbed his squeaky toy and ran after her. He knew why he was so confused! He was a good boy, duh! Good boy wasn't a human boy! Puppies couldn't turn into boys, after all.