




From

THE
DARWIN
DECATHLON 

around 10 tales about a dog on the dash





First Shopping Trip

The Darwin Decathlog;

around 10 tales about a dog on the dash



□ By Edana Lir

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- This body of work is meant as a short memoir. Names have been changed but characters are real. The author also reserves the right to have not remembered the past exactly and may have filled in the gaps with recollection more than fact. But all steps have been taken to keep any non-facts down to a minimum.

FIRST SHOPPING TRIP

The first full evening after I brought Darwin home, I decided I needed to get him more stuff. Since there was a large franchised pet store in the town where a friend lived, I thought I'd bring Darwin over and introduce them. It was a cute meeting. My friend Darryl, who does graphic design for a living, took out his high-powered camera and we used cheese to get some really sweet expressions out of the little dog. (Ok, maybe it was desperation and longing for the cheese but the effect was cute and adorable.)

"We need to go," I finally said.

"Oh?"

"Yeah. I gotta get to the store before it closes. I have nothing in the house for him. Nothing! This morning I fed him a can of roast beef I had in the cabinet for almost a year."

"Nice. Expired?"

"Nope. Still within the date."

Darryl shrugged. "Then it's all good."

We got to the store and I decided since I had this wonderful collar around his neck with this new leash, I would take him inside with me. And things went well as we shopped. I had to watch to make sure he didn't pee on the store's shelves or displays but after picking up a few containers of food, some treats, and a couple of toys, we headed for the check-out register.

A woman who had rang me up the night before when I chirped about soon adopting a dog as I bought the leash and collar was there again. This time there was more activity and I had managed to beat a couple of folks to the register. So now there was a line. "This is my dog!" I said, as she continued to ring up items and coo, perhaps as the trained personnel that she was. I paid with a credit card and when it came time to sign, I was planning how I would handle the logistics of hanging onto Darwin's leash while holding the paper in place as I endorsed it.

Darwin provided a solution. After I signed for my purchases, I realized the leash didn't have the same tug that I had felt just a second before. I looked down imagining that I would suddenly find a featherweight dog when instead I found no dog. I looked up to catch the backend of the dachshund as he trotted straight into the nearby aquarium aisle.

I quickly turned to the cashier, I guess hoping to

get some new dog mom advice. **Fast.**

Cue cricket sounds. What had been what I thought was one and a half nights of camaraderie through purchase transactions had quickly changed to pure and utter annoyance. I got more warmth and visual sympathy from the folks who had been waiting behind me. Quickly realizing I wasn't going to get any advice, much less any words of encouragement, I put Darwin's collar and leash on the bag stand, mentioned something to her about please "watching" that for me, and darted off to catch up to the little canine.

With ears pulled back, Darwin continued his sly strut through the aquarium section, now rounding the end display of fish food to scout out the next aisle. "He went that way," came confirmation from a woman holding a tank filter. Out of fear that I may trip over him or overshoot him and send him darting in an unpredictable direction, I couldn't chase after him at full speed. So the best I could do was keep pace. When I tried getting closer, however, the little snot had enough awareness to speed it up. He didn't break into a medium hippity-hop or a full-on bolt, what I would acquaint as his next two levels of speed, respectively.

"Oh!
She's gaining
on me. Better
step it up a
notch!"

He simply turned his head a little to check my distance and seemingly decided, "Oh! *She's gaining on me. Better step it up a notch,*" and moved his trot into third gear.

He turned right out of that aisle and headed up the middle of the store towards the back. Being easily entertained, a part of me really wished even then that I could have stopped to bend over and laugh. You know, give in to a sense of humor, unlike the clerk at the front of the store. But I had a real worry that he would keep going and find a loading dock which would have a loading dock door and that loading dock door being open. And that worry doubled as he made his way through an open service entry that lead to the back of the facility.

All of the color and brightness of the front of the store turned into this dimly lit, wide area of brown and gray as it became apparent we were now in a pseudo-warehouse in the back. Darwin had managed to take it to fourth gear, though I can't remember, or care, whether he was still trotting or now hippity-hopping. In any event, he was managing to gain some real distance from me as he could better maneuver around the dismantled shelving piled to various degrees in this wide area. And looking ahead, he was headed for another door that was open, from which a light emitted.

From what I could see, my best logical guess was that this was probably an office, although I couldn't see anyone or any office furniture. My panicky guess was that this was probably a hallway that lead to an exit and leading to my worst fears.

I couldn't risk it being the latter. Somehow, Darwin was smart enough to know not to turn and go down one of these dead end spaces between the shelving stock pile, so he continued his escapade along the outside. Hoping I could rely on his keeping this trajectory, I sped up big time, jumping over two piles of unused, metal shelving, to leap in front of him, and grab him as he turned a corner to head towards this open door leading to the unknown. I imagine at his height, not being able to see over the piles of shelving, it must have seemed like I dropped out of nowhere.

I picked him up and carried him to the front of the store. My hope for any congratulatory recognition from the clerk went unfulfilled. She had more customers she was checking out and didn't even bother to make eye contact when I came back up to grab my purchases and his things. Good thing I'm impervious to vibrational thoughts of "dumbass," otherwise my feelings might have been hurt. But I did miss the option of bonding early with an establishment for which, I suspected, I would be spending a lot of time and money.

I carried Darwin and all things out to the car, dumped everybody and everything in, and then spent the next 5 minutes making adjustments to Darwin's collar. Seeing that coming near with the damn thing normally frightened him, I was actually quite proud how he seemed to help me with this. Of course I wasn't mad or embarrassed over the incident. And in return, he cooperated as I would put the collar at a setting, fasten it onto his neck, and then see how easily I could pull it over his head. For about 3 or 4 tries, when I managed to sit there, yet again, holding a dog-less collar in my hand, his expression was like, "Ok, try again?" When I finally couldn't easily pull it over his head and ears, I started the car and we headed home.

Dumbass...
just kidding.



*My thanks to you for your interest
in Darwin and for letting me share
my love of him with you.*

All the best and most sincerely,

Edana 

