



April 30, 2018

Dear Oona

My persons are stingy. I am given treats only hourly and only during times they are awake. I am driven to sniffing around for cooling pot roasts, sandwiches on the counter, and snacks in pockets of strangers. The squirrels in the yard are looking tasty. What

should I do to change their ways!!????

Lisa

Dear Lisa,

Humans are an unreliable lot. But, as luck would have it, they're easy to train. You're headed in the right direction with those squirrels. Here's what you do:

Catch a squirrel. Careful, they're sneaky and quick. It may take a little practice. It's easier if you have another dog chase them to one side of the tree. Where *you* are waiting. Viola! You've got yourself a squirrel.

You don't have to actually eat the thing. Just bring it into the house. If it's still flopping around, all the better. Be sure your humans see you with it. Let them flap their arms, scream and snatch it from you. Look surprised and vaguely offended. Try not to smirk.

Now come the treats. Your humans are going to train you not to eat squirrels. They'll mutter words like "rabies" and "nasty" a lot. Just smile and nod and keep eyeing those squirrels. Their goal: To get you not to chase (and devour) squirrels. Your goal: Get more treats on *your* schedule. You've got this.

They're going to take you into the yard and let you see a squirrel. You're going to lunge at it. They'll say "no" or "leave it." You stop and they give you a treat. Look at the squirrel again and creep forward. They'll scream "leave it." You stop and get a treat. See how this works?

Later when your humans settle into their easy chairs and talk about how easy that was, you rush to the window and bark like mad. Look up, down and all around like you're watching squirrels. They'll start with the "leave it" business again. You stop and get a treat. You can push this button as much as you want.

The squirrel game will get old after a while. So start chasing the cat. Out come the treats again. When they "train" you not to chase cats, start barking at the dog next door like a maniac. It's sort of like a shell game. Keep

moving the pea. Enjoy your treats.

Finally, at night when your humans are sacked out, bark or paw at their bedroom door. They'll have to "train" you not to do this. Can you say "midnight snacks"?

Stay creative. Treats are sort of like payoff for Mafia protection. They keep 'em coming and nothing bad happens. Otherwise, it's goodbye sandwich, sayonara pot roast.

And remember, they'd better be *good* treats. Cheese, rotisserie chicken, bits of sirloin even. They call these "high value treats." You call it "hush money." Raise the rent whenever necessary.

Use your imagination and a little work and pretty soon they'll be so addled they'll pop you treats just for looking mischievous. And you can do *that* lolling on the couch. You're a wolfhound. You rule.

Bon appetit,

Oona

Got a question? Send it to bob@thewildstare.com and Oona will get back to you as soon as she gets her nails done or she can prod the old guy to take dictation.