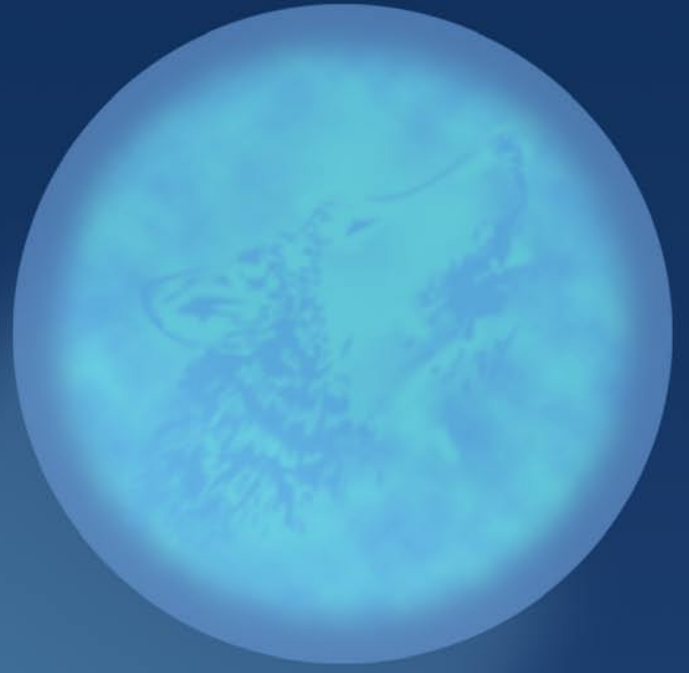




E-mails
from

Shilo

translated by
Susan J. Lustig



*The story of a dog's
quest to figure out
most everything.*



E-mails
from
Shilo

Susan J. Lustig



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Designed by Susan J. Lustig

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*To the animal rescuers who get the lost and
abandoned pets adopted into good homes,*

*To the folks who raise and train service animals and
of course to those brave service animals themselves,*

*To the Veterinarians and Veterinarian aides who look after our
little guys when they are at their worst and when we are too,*

and to

*All who have reached out to an animal and have had them
reach back.*

Introduction

We know from the philosophers the world is organized into two distinct parts—order and chaos. My husband lives in a very orderly world; neat desk, neat car, neat mind. I don't believe he has even had a single stray thought. I, however, live in the land of disarray. I am condemned to walk this earth in search of the misplaced . . . the misplaced sunglasses, keys, shoes, and always the misplaced computer discs, CD's and files. However, once in a great while fortune smiles on those of us that can't see the desk for the mess. Those of us that are clutter-enabled must go into an interval of recovery and willfully dedicate ourselves to obliterate the knot of files, papers, and priceless garbage that is swirling around us. These periods of recovery are always short before we slip into the inevitable relapse, but it was during one of these cleaning respites, I made an historic discovery.

Attempting to organize the myriad of files that had collected in my computer, I robotically sorted through those precious e-mails and photo downloads that were kept, knowing they would be a source of continuous wisdom. What to keep, what to wrenchingly throw away? As the thrash and trash proceeded, I came across one folder I didn't recall and opened it. I just happened to glance over to Shilo, our four-year-old Golden Retriever, who was lying next to me. The strangest expression crossed his face. He quickly looked away but I swear he was trying to see me out of the corner of his eye. I then realized he wasn't looking at me but at the computer screen! He had never looked at the monitor before that I could remember. I thought he didn't register the flat images on the screen just as he doesn't seem to recognize images on the television. Harley, our Abyssinian cat loved the computer as a kitten and tried to capture the cursor with his paw. If there are birds on television, Harley is right there ready to pounce. Shilo, however, seems to resent the time I spend in front of the computer since it keeps me from playing his favorite game of fetch or taking him on the long walks he loves. Anyway, I must have gotten a phone call or had another distraction because I don't remember any further details of this mystery file.

About six months later obsession struck again, as it was time to clean up the files in my computer. Once more I came across a folder I didn't recognize. This time, however, when I opened it there was a huge quantity of files. I looked more closely and was struck that they were all e-mails. Either I was getting obsessively sentimental or there was a virus out there that multiplies files rather than deletes them. I clicked on the first one. It was an e-mail from Shilo to Max, my sister's Bichon Frise! This was bizarre. The body of the e-mail, however, was pure gobbledygook, totally unintelligible. I opened another. . .same hieroglyphics. The e-mail was to Max but the subject content was undecipherable. Shilo was right by my side now. He put his nose under my elbow and gave it a fling, which means, "I need to go out. . .NOW!" I tried to ignore him but he was not taking no for an answer. Again he pushed at my arm but this time quite emphatically. He went and picked up his ring and gave me the doggie GOTCHA! You know the LOOK. . .where their eyes sort of go soft, their ears prick forward, they tilt their head just so, and the tail is a metronome of three/four time. Irresistible. So off we went to the backyard for a long game of fetch. When we came back in it was late

and I needed to start dinner. I closed all the files and shut down the computer. The next day I looked for the folder. I used three different programs to do a search for that folder but no luck. I figured I must have imagined it since I do live in the world of the untidy mind and went on with my work.

Months later I went on another computer cleaning expedition, (twice a year, whether it needs it or not.) Buried inside many other folders I seldom use, I spotted a strange folder and opened it. Again many e-mails from Shilo to Max, but as before they were quite unreadable. Shilo was at the park with my husband, so I decided to do a little sleuthing. I must admit to this day, I am confounded why I even tried to read these e-mails, but something deep down, maybe remembering that strange look Shilo gave me the first time, was the catalyst to make me try. And really, I have friends that don't even know how to save an e-mail, much less send it before they accidentally delete it! So doggie e-mail was quite intriguing! I copied all the "gobbledygook" over to a text document and put it through a translator program I found on the Internet. You can imagine my absolute shock and astonishment to read actual words... complete sentences from my lovely Golden Retriever. How can this be I wondered? Well, that is for you to wonder also. It might also be good to note that Shilo is a LARGE Golden Retriever. He is four inches taller than your average Golden, and then weighed about 120 pounds. Also remember this is a translation of his writing. I'm not sure what he really calls my husband and me, but I left the translation of "mom and dad." We certainly don't think of us being his owner, and since I couldn't come up with a better name, I left it as is.

Shilo is older now (and thinner!). I sincerely hope he continues his correspondence, though there is no trace of it . . . yet. I asked my sister to check her computer for further e-mails from Max, but she says they have four computers at home and how can a dog figure out their e-mail address anyway? Good question. Well, maybe the dog behaviorists can work on this, but in the meantime, I am just happy to know what goes on in my sweet doggie's head and heart. Now if I don't lose this missive in the depths of my computer, I hope you will appreciate his reflections too.

Enjoy!
Shilo's Mom



FROM: Shilo
TO: Max
Subject: Hello, I'm Shilo
Date Sent: Nov 21, 2000 12:45 AM

Hello Max!!!

I'm so glad you found me. I was hoping you would pick up on my clues so you could find and open this email. My name is Shilo and I am a 3-year-old Golden Retriever. I understand that we are somewhat related in that your human mother is my human mother's sister. I thought that it would be nice if we got to know each other. I understand from Mom's conversation with your mom yesterday, that you are a... lap dog. I assume therefore that you see everything that appears on her computer, (bizarre viewing, isn't it?) Obviously my clues to you worked because there you are. It has been quite an ordeal to finally be able to send out e-mails. I did a little investigating while she was asleep and I found this e-mail address already set up so I assume it is for me to use. We can always recognize our own name, right? Obviously that is how you found this e-mail!

Well, I just got here and I must say I couldn't be more delighted. I am so looking forward to our correspondence. Do tell me about yourself so I can get a good picture of you in my head. I learned how to do these e-mail things by the small humans that lived in my previous house. Sigh. I can't yet talk about the transition from my first family to these nice people, but when the feelings become less raw, I would very much like to confide.

I'm not yet sure of Mom and Dad's schedule so I better sign off. I don't want to get in trouble. Getting in any trouble or receiving any sort of reprimand would upset me greatly. I do so hope they like me. Making them happy and having them love me, oh, how wonderful that would be. It is my most earnest wish.

Cheers,
Shilo

FROM: Shilo
TO: Max
Subject: The cat
Date Sent: Nov 22, 2000 9:45 PM

Hi Max,

They introduced me today to Harley T. Pussycat the First. I don't mind cats, and he seemed OK, but my does he have a huge problem with me. I believe he never saw a dog

continue ➔





before. Dad held me by my collar and Mom held the cat, and no sooner did he lay eyes on me, than he was gone. I haven't seen him since.

Do you have a cat? Do you have any advice to offer as how to get the guy to trust that I won't eat him? Though I must admit, he would make a tasty hors d'œuvre.

Kidding.
Shilo

FROM: Shilo
TO: Max
Subject: Incredible smells
Date Sent: Nov 23, 2000 11:27 PM

Hi Max,

Such smells were swirling around the feeding room today. I wish you were here to enjoy them. They started in the morning and continued until evening. My eyes just popped out of my head and the juices fell from my mouth when I saw what came out of one of the hot cabinets. It was a roasted, young hen turkey, I estimate at about 16 pounds. It had such a delicate aroma with hints of pears and apples with just a slight essence of walnuts and raisins. My tail was just swooshing around in joyful expectation.

Harley was out of control. He was meowing at everyone and everything and had no patience to wait his turn for a tasty bite. Harley was so wild. Mom picked him up by the scruff of the neck and placed him in another room to keep him from crawling through everyone's meal. It did keep him out of trouble but it certainly did not stop his loud protestations. I was amazed that such a big noise came from such a diminutive creature.

Well, the humans ate and ate and ate. I wondered if they were going to explode, they had eaten so much. I tried to be patient, but I had to remind them that I was there, anticipating every bite that I hoped would soon find its way to my waiting tummy. Finally, they stood up from the table (I worried they were going to fall over). Mom carried the beautiful turkey to the counter, released the cat, and we feasted. Oh heavenly dog, I was in ecstasy. How tender...how juicy...so finely roasted to a perfect degree. I so hope we have turkey tomorrow.

Shilo

FROM: Shilo
 TO: Max
 Subject: Another hello
 Date Sent: Nov 24, 2000 2:25 AM

Hello again Max,

I think we are getting into somewhat of a routine here which I take as a very good sign of my becoming a permanent part of the family, I hope! I got a walk around the neighborhood, which was a nice chance, however briefly, to meet my neighbors. Have you become good friends with your neighbors? I met Sammy next door and I can already tell we are going to be fast friends. He is a Basset Hound and what a dry sense of humor he has! He told me about the different dogs in the neighborhood. He cautioned to be especially alert to Brutus, the Rottweiler on the corner. Sammy said everyone else is quite harmless, but most do have their idiosyncrasies. I asked Sammy to tell me what their idiosyncrasies were, but he declined. He said what may seem strange to one dog might be quite normal to another. He in no way wanted to bias my perceptions of anyone. Now that is a change for most dogs are more than willing to tell you and everyone else what they are thinking and quite vocally too. I think I just discovered one of Sammy's idiosyncrasies.



Shilo

FROM: Shilo
 TO: Max
 Subject: The walk
 Date Sent: Nov 26, 2000 9:45 PM

Max,

What is your neighborhood like where you live? I understand your neighborhood is called minnesota. My neighborhood is called california. There is one place that just takes my breath away. It is an open field with grass and many hills. Twice on our walks we have seen deer in the field. I was stunned. I knew about them but had never seen

continue →



them for myself. Those strange hats they wear look dangerous so I am not likely to go up and say hello. But you would love this serene field. I feel so at peace when we walk through it. I know Dad loves it mostly because he likes looking at the deer. I smell traces of many other animals too, like raccoons, possum, and yes...skunks, though unexploded.

Shilo



FROM: Shilo
TO: Max
Subject: What did I do?
Date Sent: Nov 27, 2000 1:48 AM

Hi Max,

I think I did something very bad yesterday. Mom and I went for an early walk on a beautiful morning. As we were casually progressing up the hill, I was quite anxious to cover more ground, so I was pulling at the leash quite a bit. Mom doesn't go very fast up hill. Anyway, I spotted this small Cocker Spaniel playing with a ball. I'm afraid I got very excited and the next thing I knew, Mom was lying face down on the sidewalk with the Cocker's parents around her. They looked at me in the most hateful way. What did I do? I didn't hurt their dog, though I must admit I did try out the ball. It took Mom forever to stand and after she finished talking to the other parents, we slowly, very slowly, made our way up the hill to our home. I've seen those looks before and never do I want to see them again. It really frightens me.

Shilo