

Kelsi and Kaya

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Chapter 1: Leaving Home

Kelsi and Kaya were all nervous and excited. They knew the next day would be one of the most important days of their lives. They were going to find out if they were suitable to be trained as Guide Dogs.

Kelsi and Kaya were about a year old. A few weeks after they were born, they were given to their Puppy Raiser to be looked after until they were ready to begin Guide Dog training.

It was their last evening at home before going to the Guide Dog training academy to be assessed. Their Puppy Raiser, Jill was watching Kelsi and Kaya in their living room. They were both very good puppies and she hoped they would pass.

Kelsi was sitting quietly trying to behave as best he could. Jill could tell he was worried about the next day. When Kelsi worried he kept very still and moved his eyes left and right, checking that everything was OK.

Jill called him to her. It was one of the commands he had learnt from her.

‘It's OK, Kelsi,’ she said while she gave him a big cuddle, ‘you'll be fine tomorrow!’

Kaya was pacing around the living room looking for her squeaky rubber bone. It was her absolute top favourite toy. She looked behind the sofa. It wasn't there. She looked under the armchair. Still no luck. Suddenly she remembered that sometimes, when the rubber bone vanished, it reappeared magically in her basket. She trotted to her basket in the kitchen and there it was.

‘Squeak, Squeak’ she chewed on the toy and made the noise. She wanted to bark for joy but she knew she wasn't supposed to do that. She was on her best behaviour ready for tomorrow's big test.

Kaya brought the rubber bone back into the living so Jill could see it. When she saw that cuddles were being given, Kaya dropped the toy and ran forward wagging her tail hoping for a cuddle too.

‘Yes Kaya, cuddles for you too!’

Jill gave them both lots of attention. Whatever happened, she knew that the puppies would not be coming back to live with her. This made her sad, but she was proud of how much they wanted to be able to help people with impaired vision.

‘Kelsi and Kaya, I’ve got a surprise for you,’ Jill announced. Her friend, Pete was coming round to say good-bye. Kelsi and Kaya loved Pete. He played with them, took them for walks and gave them treats.

‘Now remember what you learnt. No jumping up on Pete when he comes in the room. You can go up to him to say hello, but no barking, no paws on his thighs.’

Not jumping up at people was one of things they had been learning while they lived with Jill. Kaya found it very hard. She was just so pleased to see people she couldn’t help but jump up and down, wag her tail and bark hello.

Kelsi controlled himself better. The hardest thing he’d had to learn was not to chew the TV remote control. It looked so much like a bone and it was such fun feeling the buttons under his teeth that he just had to put it in his mouth.

Jill didn’t like when he did that. It made it all wet and stopped the button for Channel 6 working. Kelsi learned to leave it alone.

Kelsi was staring at the remote on the arm of the sofa, thinking how nice it looked, when suddenly Kaya’s ears pricked up. Kelsi heard the noise too. It was Pete’s

footsteps. The doorbell was going to ring at any moment.

Kelsi and Kaya braced themselves. The bell rang. Kaya was bursting to jump up and bark but she controlled herself. She stood still wagging her tail instead.

‘Good girl Kaya. Good boy Kelsi.’ Jill gave them both a pat as she got up to answer the door and let Pete in.

‘Now, stay.’

That was another command they had learnt. When Jill said, 'stay' they had to stand as still as they could.

It was so hard. Any second Pete would walk through the door and they wanted to say hello and jump up.

When the living room door opened and Pete walked in, Kaya was just too thrilled to see him. She leaped forward barking, wagging her tail and up went her paws, straight onto his thighs. She looked up at him with her tongue hanging out.

Kelsi controlled himself better, worried that he would get told off. He walked up to Pete and waited to be patted.

‘Oh Kaya!’ Pete said, ‘I’m pleased to see you too, but you can’t do that tomorrow or you’ll never become a Guide Dog.’

He put Kaya's paws down and didn't pat her.

'Good Boy,' he said to Kelsi, 'weren't you well behaved.' Pete gave him a big friendly pat and Kelsi felt very proud of himself for behaving so well.

Kaya looked sad because she didn't get a pat. Pete knew he wasn't supposed to reward bad behaviour, but Kaya looked so cute and he might not see her again, so he gave her a little pat too.

'There, that's just because you're so cute, not because you jumped up.'

Jill smiled at Pete. She knew both puppies could make great Guide Dogs, but she just hoped Kaya would calm down and Kelsi stop worrying so much.

'It's not going to be easy for them,' she said to him, 'only about half of the puppies get through.'

Chapter 2: The First Hurdle



Kaya leapt up barking for joy and for once she didn't get into trouble. She couldn't believe how many new friends they were about to meet. All the puppies that were going to try to become Guide Dogs were at the training centre and Kaya wanted to make friends with all of them. Even Kelsi was excited.

'Woof!' He gave a little bark and looked around to see if he was in trouble. He wasn't.

'Woof!' He barked louder and soon he was off playing with other dogs, jumping and chasing round. He thought this day was going to be hard work but it was actually fun!

After a few minutes of play it was time to explore their new kennels. Jill, their Puppy Raiser was there to help them settle in.

'I've stayed in hotels that aren't as nice as this place!' she joked to Kaya.

'Look, that's where you will be groomed. It won't be me chasing you round the living room with the brush any more!' Jill pointed to the special bench designed just for grooming the dogs.

When Kaya saw her very own kennel, she couldn't believe her eyes; her favourite squeaky rubber bone was there. She had left it under the armchair and somehow it had got here all by itself.

In reality Jill had brought it. It was important that the puppies had their favourite toys to help them settle in.

Kelsi explored his kennel. There was a funny metal button on the wall. He wondered what it was, so he

sniffed it. It smelled damp. He touched it with his tongue and it got wet. It reminded him that he was quite thirsty. He licked it again and more water came out. It was his very own doggy tap for him to help himself to water. Soon he was licking away. It was so cool!

'I think that's the fastest any dog has worked the tap out!' Katherine, the Guide Dog Instructor, said to Jill. 'He's a very smart young pup!' Jill said proudly.

Jill said goodbye to the puppies. It was time for them to settle into their new home. They had two weeks ahead of them to show whether or not they would make good Guide Dogs. Jill gave them both a hug and left, hoping they would settle down and get a good night's sleep.

In the morning Katherine took Kaya for a walk. She wasn't training her, just finding out what sort of dog she was. She took her into a busy shopping area. Kaya liked people. She also looked very cute which encouraged lots of people to pat her. However she would have to learn to do without pats while she was working.

Kaya was doing her best to behave well. When Katherine told her to stay, she stayed very still, but try as she might she couldn't stop her tail from thumping the ground. She looked up at Katherine with her tongue

hanging out hoping that if she looked cute enough, her trainer wouldn't notice her tail.

As they walked along Kaya saw another dog on a lead. He looked very friendly and seemed to be coming over to say hello to her. She barked and then next thing she knew, the other dog had put his paws on her. She just had to do the same back.

'Down Kaya, down,' said Katherine. Kaya immediately sat still. She realised she'd made a mistake and hoped it wasn't a big one.

When Katherine took Kelsi for a walk, she noted how easily the puppy fell in with her pace of walking. He was a much quieter dog than his sister and sniffed around carefully as if on the lookout all the time. He might be quite good at anticipating problems for a person with vision impairment thought Katherine.

Katherine decided to try crossing the road to see how Kelsi coped with the traffic. As they stood by the kerb, Kelsi didn't like the fast cars charging past, but he stayed still.

Katherine saw a big truck coming very fast so held on tight to Kelsi's leash. Just as the truck passed them the driver honked his horn really loudly. Even Katherine

got a fright. They both leapt back as it thundered past blaring its horn.

‘There, there Kelsi, it's OK,’ Katherine calmed the frightened puppy down. After a few minutes of patting and calming Kelsi felt better and they crossed the road safely.

Kelsi was worried that he had been too scared, but Katherine didn't think so. Big trucks and loud noises were scary for everyone. She noted that Kelsi was a bit timid, but it had not taken him too long to recover from the shock.

Back at the training centre, Kelsi was allowed to join Kaya and their new friends for a play before they went to the kennels.

It was only the start of their assessment but Katherine was already getting a sense of what Kelsi and Kaya were like. They were both bright dogs with lovely characters but were they both suited to become Guide Dogs? Katherine had two weeks to find out.

Chapter 3 - The Hardest Work Ever



Kaya was walking with Kerry, one of the Guide Dog Instructors, along a footpath. It was part of the obstacle course where the puppies learned to spot things in their path and walk around them. Ahead of her Kaya could see a metal bar. It was out half way across the path.

‘Find the way Kaya,’ said Kerry, ‘find the way.’

Kaya wasn’t sure of the best plan of action. It wasn’t completely blocking the path so she decided it would be a good idea to jump over it and let Kerry walk around the outside. She started to run, leaped up and cleared the bar completely. She looked round for Kerry, eyes alert, tail wagging ready to be patted.

As she looked, Kaya got a surprise; she had sped off so suddenly that Kerry had lost hold of her leash and was left behind. Kaya began to suspect that she might have done the wrong thing. She wagged her tail some more, but Kerry ignored it. There was no pat. Kerry picked up her leash and carried on walking down the path.

Kaya then realised that she’d done something wrong. She had worked out that whenever she did anything wrong Kerry simply ignored it.

She had learned that when she had once tried to squeeze herself under one of the poles.

When Kaya had walked around a traffic cone, she got a pat, was told she was a ‘good girl’ and given a treat. She didn’t quite know why. Like just now she thought jumping over the bar was much more exciting than walking around it.

They walked on towards a branch that had blown off a tree and was lying on the path. It wasn't that big so Kaya thought the easiest way would be to walk over it. Then she remembered walking around the traffic cone and how she had received a pat and a treat. Perhaps she'd get one this time too.

Kaya walked around the branch.

'Good girl!' Kerry said as she gave her pat, 'Good girl. I think you've done enough for today. We've made a little bit of progress, but don't worry it takes a long time to learn these things.'

For the dogs to qualify as Guide Dogs, they would have to learn to guide a vision-impaired person around objects in their path. It is one of a Guide Dog's most important jobs.

The next day it was Kelsi's turn with an instructor. Another important lesson they had to learn was how to walk in a line without sniffing at things. This was not easy for Kelsi because he loved sniffing things. He loved finding out what things smelled like and if he sniffed something in the air, he just had to find out where the scent came from.

Katherine, the instructor, was walking with Kelsi along a path at the training centre. There were no obstacles to get past but there was a lovely big tree next to it. The last time he was on the path, Kelsi had gone straight up to the tree and sniffed around it, checking that all the smells were safe. This time when he was near the tree he could smell the wet bark. He thought he could even smell one of the other puppies from his kennel. Part of him was dying to go and check whether his friend had been there, but he didn't. He ignored the smell and walked right past. He made it all the way along the path without sniffing at anything.

‘Well done Kelsi, that was excellent,’ Katherine rewarded him with a big pat.

Kelsi's next lesson was a lot harder. He had to learn what to do when he came to some steps. It was very difficult because at the bottom of any steps he had to stand very still with his paws on the first step and then wait for the trainer to tell him to go forward, before he walked up the steps.

The first time Kelsi stopped just in front of the step with his paws on the ground, that wasn't right. The second

time he stopped about half a metre before the step. Next he tried stopping with his nose pressed to the step.

He tried again and again and just couldn't get it right. Each time Katherine ignored it. She didn't tell Kelsi off but just told him to have another go. Poor Kelsi got more confused with every try.

'I think we better stop there for today Kelsi,' said Katherine, 'you've tried very hard, well done.'

Kelsi didn't think he had done well at all. If he could not guide a person with vision impairment up a kerb or a step, he was not going to ever become a Guide Dog, he thought to himself. This training was very hard work.

Katherine wasn't worried. All the dogs found their first go at steps very difficult but they all got there in the end. Learning to perform all the tasks on busy streets was the really hard part.

Chapter 4 - The Big Wide World



Kelsi and Kaya have been training hard and are now ready to practice on the streets for the first time.

Kaya was racing to go. The instructors were taking some of the trainee Guide Dogs out for their first walk in their harnesses on the street. In the back of the van with some of her friends from the training course, Kaya was making plenty of noise, barking and trying to look

out of the window. They were all being a bit too loud for Kerry, one of the Guide Dog Instructors, as she tried to concentrate on her driving.

'Be quiet back there! Kaya, get down.'

Kaya took her paws down from the window and tried to be quiet for the rest of the trip.

Once they reached the town, each of the instructors took one of the dogs and put them in their harness. Kaya always felt special when her harness went on. She knew now that meant she was working and so couldn't bark sniff or run up to people and say hello. She was a working dog when the harness was on.

As she walked Kerry through the busy streets around the local shops, Kaya moved around all sorts of objects and didn't try jumping up onto anything. She was expecting lots of people to come up and try to pat her and she was ready to ignore them and get on with her job. But nobody did! She couldn't help feeling a bit sad that no one wanted to pat her, even if they weren't supposed to. She didn't know that the people in the area were all used to Guide Dogs being trained and knew how to behave.

'Good girl Kaya, you did very well,' Kerry told her at the finish. She was very impressed with how Kaya had settled into training. She loved crowds and busy streets and would be well suited to an active person.

When it was Kelsi's turn to be taken out Katherine, one of the other instructors took him to the shopping mall. It was a weekday afternoon so it wasn't too busy. Perfect for a first walk in public with the harness.

They were enjoying their walk. Kelsi was carefully looking out for any objects in the way and trying hard not to sniff. Suddenly Katherine could hear some shouting. Kelsi started.

'Stop him, he's a thief!' somebody shouted from behind them.

The next thing they knew a man ran right into them from behind. He was running so fast, he knocked Katherine to the ground, tripped over Kelsi, staggered and ran even harder.

Just as Kelsi began to recover, two security guards ran at him as fast as they could. They were charging after the thief. Kelsi saw them coming and dashed out of the way as quickly as he could.

Once Katherine realised what had happened, she immediately looked around for Kelsi. She had lost hold of Kelsi's harness and now she couldn't see the puppy at all.

A shopper helped Katherine to her feet. She asked if anyone had seen Kelsi and told them his name. She knew poor Kelsi would be very scared and even more frightened if he couldn't see anyone he knew.

They asked in the shops around them, but Kelsi wasn't there. Soon everyone was helping in the search.

'Kelsi!' people cried out, hoping he would respond.

Kelsi could hear his name being called but was too scared to move. He didn't know where he was. He didn't know where Katherine was and he was afraid someone else would charge at him. He crouched in his hiding place, hoping he was safe.

Katherine knew that Kelsi was likely to find a small spot hidden somewhere, a place that would be like a kennel. She looked around him, wondering where Kelsi could be hiding.

As she searched Katherine saw a table covered in books. It was a special sale outside the bookstore. The table

had cloth all around the edge of the table right down to the floor. Katherine reckoned it might be a safe hiding place.

Kelsi could hear someone approaching his spot. The person lifted up the cloth. Kelsi crept as far back as he could.

'Kelsi are you in there?'

The puppy recognised Katherine's voice speaking gently. Kelsi let out a little whimper.

'Kelsi, it's OK. It's safe now. You can come out.'

Kelsi still didn't move. He was glad Katherine was there but he didn't know whether it was safe to come out.

Katherine crawled under the table and sat with Kelsi. She removed his harness and gave him a gentle cuddle. She could feel Kelsi's heart beating very fast indeed.

Eventually, Katherine coaxed Kelsi out from under the table. She walked him through the shopping mall back to the van as quickly and as quietly as they could.

On the way back to the training centre, Katherine could see that Kelsi was getting better. The van was familiar to him and he knew he would soon be in his kennel.

It was a horrible scare for any puppy, but Katherine knew for a nervous dog, like Kelsi, it was even worse. For some puppies, an incident like that meant they couldn't complete their training. It all depended on how quickly Kelsi recovered and how he would react if they took him back to the same spot. Only time would tell if Kelsi could continue his training.

Chapter 5 - Kelsi Finds a Home



Kelsi seemed to have recovered from being so frightened in the mall but his training was not going well at all. Try as he might to walk round the objects on the obstacle course and put his front feet on the edge of steps, he just couldn't remember all things he had

learned in training. It got more and more difficult for him and he got more and more confused.

The biggest test was going back to where he had been so scared in the shopping centre. He walked out of the van calmly and entered the shopping mall with Katherine, but once they reached the spot where they had been knocked over, all the scary memories came flooding back and Kelsi started to whimper. He didn't want to. He knew that his future as a Guide Dog depended on him being able to recover from his shock, but he just couldn't do it.

'There, there Kelsi,' Katherine gave him a cuddle, 'don't worry, we'll get you out of here.'

Back at the training centre, the instructors had a meeting and all decided that although Kelsi was a wonderful and intelligent dog, the scare had been too much for him. They decided it was best if he didn't continue with Guide Dog training.

Kelsi was given time to play outside with Kaya and his friends. Kaya did her best to cheer him up, but nothing could make his tail wag. In his kennel, he sat in the far corner without moving. He didn't even eat much of his dinner.

Next morning, when the doors of the kennels opened, Kaya bounded out to look for Kelsi. Kelsi was the last dog out and he didn't really feel like running around.

As the other dogs had their turn to go off training, Kelsi stayed behind. In the evening he was taken to a new kennel in a different building. His favourite toys were there but he couldn't hear the other dogs. He felt lonely.

'This is where you go when you get promoted,' the instructor told him.

Kelsi wondered what that meant. What was going to happen to him? Why was he in a new kennel and where would he be taken from here?

He found out the very next day when Katherine came to see him.

'I've good news for you, Kelsi,' she said. 'You have earned a very important job with the Pets As Therapy Program. You have to look after someone who isn't very well. They need a companion to cheer them up and make them feel better. You don't have to wear a harness, you don't have to go around obstacles courses, you can get pats whenever you want and you can sniff trees as much as you like! How does that sound?'

That's why the instructors called joining Pets As Therapy a 'promotion' because it was an important job, just with different sorts of responsibilities.

'Come on, there's someone I want you to meet,' Katherine took him out of the kennel and put a lead on him.

Kelsi wasn't sure what to make of this. He didn't know there were lots of other things that puppies who trained to be Guide Dogs could do. It sounded too good to be true. What would this person be like? Would they want him as their Pets As Therapy Dog?

Katherine walked Kelsi out towards one of their play areas. Kelsi could see a woman standing with a boy. He was twelve years old. He was wearing a baseball cap. When the boy turned around and saw Kelsi, a huge smile came to his face.

Kelsi saw the smile and knew it was for him.

'Kelsi I want you to meet Gareth. He's a very brave young man and we'd like you to be friends.'

Gareth wanted to give Kelsi a pat straight away.

'You can pat him Gareth!'

Gareth stroked Kelsi's fur.

'It's soft!' he said excitedly to his mother. Kelsi felt Gareth's hand in his back and his tailed wagged for the first time in days.

'I think he likes you Gareth,' said Katherine, 'here, try this.'

Katherine produced a rubber ball from her pocket.

Gareth threw the ball, shouted, 'Fetch' and Kelsi shot after it and brought it back.

'Good boy!'

Gareth's mother looked at her son playing with the dog.

'I think they're going to be very good friends. Thank you.'

Gareth's mum had a tear in her eye. Gareth had been fighting a form of cancer called Lymphoma. He had been very ill and was doing a little better now. They all hoped he would get better and Kelsi had a big role to play in keeping him company.

When it was time for Gareth and his mother to leave, they all knew Kelsi and Gareth were a perfect match.

'He's such a gentle sensitive dog,' said Katherine, 'I think they'll get on very well.'

Pets As Therapy Dogs have their own training program, but because Kelsi had done so much Guide Dog training he already had all the obedience skills required for the job. Gareth would have a few more visits with Kelsi and he and his mother would also be trained how to look after Kelsi. After that they would all go home together.

That night in his kennel, Kelsi felt very pleased. He might not become a Guide Dog, but he knew now that he had a very important job with Gareth. He slept well that night, looking forward to when his new friend would come back to see him.

Chapter 6 - A Partner for Kaya



Kaya was feeling very proud of herself. She could walk in a straight line, knew exactly where to stop by a kerb or a step and was very good at walking around obstacles. She didn't try to jump over them any more.

She knew that when her harness was on, she was at work and had to be on her best behaviour, concentrating

hard on helping her client. When the harness came off, then she could have fun just like other dogs.

Kaya was sad that she didn't see Kelsi everyday, but she knew he was happy and doing very important work living with Gareth and keeping him company.

The Guide Dog Instructors soon decided it was time to find the right client for Kaya to live with.

'She's settled down so well,' said Katherine, 'no jumping up at all when she's in her harness.'

'She's still a lively dog,' said Kerry, one of the other instructors, 'she'll need a client with a suitable temperament.'

The instructors tried to match dogs and clients as best they could, but the only way to really tell if they were suited was for them to spend time together.

Kaya was excited about meeting her first potential client. It meant she was close to her graduation. The first one she met was called Daniel. He lived in a country town and had been retired for a few years. Daniel enjoyed his peaceful life. His dog was going to help him walk around the town. In particular Daniel looked forward to being able to walk to his favourite café for his morning coffee, all on his own. Right now,

because of his vision impairment, he had to rely on a friend to take him.

Daniel took hold of Kaya's harness and they went for a walk with Kerry, the instructor, around the training centre. He walked very slowly, stopping as he talked to Kerry. He would take a few steps, stop, talk for a while and then take a few more.

Kaya had been trained always to walk at her client's pace, but with Daniel, it wasn't easy. He was so slow! As they walked around the grounds of the training centre, she was itching to go faster. The thought of spending her life walking this slowly filled Kaya with panic.

At the end of the walk, Kaya was pleased to be out of the harness.

'Well done, Kaya,' said Kerry. She smiled at the dog knowing how difficult it had been for her to walk with Daniel.

'I think we'll have to find you someone a bit more lively,' she added.

Another possible client was also at the centre. Michelle lived in the city, worked in an office and got the train everyday to work.

'I think that's just the sort of busy life Kaya would enjoy,' Katherine the instructor said. 'Let's see if Michelle and Kaya get on.'

The minute the two of them started walking together Katherine knew they were a good match. Kaya seemed calm and relaxed. Michelle seemed to trust her straight away. They were perfect together.

Kaya was very excited. She hoped Michelle would chose her. She walked much faster than Daniel and didn't stop every two metres.

The next day when Kaya was being groomed in the kennels, Katherine had some good news for her.

'We're going to go with Michelle from her home to her work today.'

It was important for all the Guide Dogs to learn the journeys their client made so they knew what to expect.

As they started the journey, Kaya was very happy but she controlled herself well. No tail wagging, no jumping up. She sat very still on the railway platform in her

harness as she and Michelle waited for the train. Katherine was with them too.

'Do you think Kaya will be scared of the train?' Michelle asked Katherine.

'You never know for sure but I think she'll cope just fine.'

Soon the train came along and stopped at the platform.

'Find the door Kaya,' Michelle told her, once she heard the train's door open.

Kaya saw the door of the train open. Some people got off. She thought it was best to wait for them to get off. As Michelle moved, Kaya guided her towards the door, paused at the gap and waited for her to step onto the train. She did it perfectly, first time.

Katherine was very proud that Kaya had taken it all in her stride. She had no doubt Kaya would really enjoy living with Michelle and helping her.

Michelle was just as delighted.

'This is wonderful. I'll be able to make my own way to work now, thanks to you, Kaya!'

Kaya would bring some real independence to her life.

There was still some time to go. Just like Kaya had been through months of training, Michelle had to be trained as well, but both she and Kaya were looking forward to the day they graduated and could begin their lives together.