

## Interview Monday, April 20, 1998

Maureen planned her day on the ride into her office—a training session with Riches and Softy in the morning and a short one with Katie in the afternoon. She hoped to catch up on her paperwork—review training progress and put it in the dog reports. She was getting behind on the dog reports. Always work to do on the dog reports.

Maureen just sat down and turned on her computer. She was logging on when the phone rang. “Hello?” She looked for a pencil and a pad of writing paper on her cluttered desk. “May I help you?”

“Yes, I just spoke with your receptionist and she said that I should talk to Maureen Morelli. Are you Ms. Morelli?”

“Yes, I am.”

“I’m Ricky Ricardo with Miami cob, WKOB-TV, and I’ve heard of the work that the Marrek Khristov Institute is doing talking with animals and I would like to do a story on it. It would be a five minute feature for the news. We would like to show our audience the new research that is being done with dogs.”

“Well that sounds wonderful but before I can discuss anything with you, I’ll have to talk to my boss. I don’t know if he would want any publicity at this time. It’s still very early in the project. How did you find out about our work?” She tapped her pencil's eraser on the desk.

“I was at a seminar on terrorism and airport safety. Dr. Khristoff talked about how dogs could be used in different police operations and he mentioned that he was working on communicating with dogs.”

“I see.”

“Well, we would like to start on this as soon as we could. Do you know when you would be able to talk to your boss?”

“I’ll talk to him today. Call me tomorrow, after nine, I should know by then.” Maureen said as she fiddled with her pencil.

“Well, thank you for your help Ms. Morelli, and I’m looking forward to meeting you.”

“Thank you. I’ll be waiting for your call.”

“Good by Ms. Morelli.”

“Good by Mr. Ricardo.”

She hung up and went to Tom’s office.

“Question for the Boss,” she said as she walked into his office. The desk was covered with files, books, and catalogs. She picked up the files from a chair and put them on the front of his desk, along side his computer.

“Hey, careful, you’ll destroy my organization.” He said in response to seeing the new files that she added.

“I just got a call from Ricky Ricardo, and he wants to do a story on our communication program.”  
Maureen said.

“Who? Lucy’s Husband?”

“No silly, you know, the TV guy.”

“Oh, you mean the one that looks like Michael J Fox on a bad hair day? The guy they send out when there’s a storm. He looks serious and tells us its raining. That guy?”

“That’s the one.”

“What about him?”

“I just said. He wants to do a story on our communication project. Is it OK?”

“You’ll have to ask the boss.”

“I thought you were the boss.”

He moved his arms from the desk, folded them behind his head, and leaned back in his chair. The newly moved files started to topple. He jumped forward, almost falling out of his chair, and grabbed them before they could spill onto the floor. Maureen shook her head and smiled.

He sat back again. “I’m only the boss for insignificant things. The Boss of Insignificant Things.” He said while sitting down. “You’ll have to talk to Marrek about this, The Boss of Significant Things.”

“Could you do it for me? You’re so much better at this.”

“Yeah, OK. Anything for you, sweetheart.” He said in his Bogie accent. He dialed, waited for a moment and then said, “Marrek, It’s Tom. How are you?”

“Good. Yeah, me to.” Tom leaned back again. “I’ve got a quick question for you. Maureen got a call from Ricky Ricardo today. He wants to do a story on our communication project. What do you think? Is it OK?”

“I asked her that too. It’s not Lucy’s husband it’s the little guy. Tom was smiling. Then he nodded his head a couple of times.

“OK. I’ll tell her.” He put down the phone and looked at her with a very serious look.

“What did he say?”

“He said it’s OK for him to do the story but don’t sleep with him.” He smiled at her.

“No, seriously, what did he say?”

“He said that he’ll call No-Fret this afternoon and see what they think. He believes No-Fret would love the free air time. Is this going to be national or just local?”

“I don’t know, Tom. I only spoke with Ricky for a minute.”

“First name basis already? That’s good. If it’s national, you’ll be a media star. You won’t be able to travel anywhere without people saying, ‘Look their goes the talking dog girl, let’s get her autograph. Better yet, let’s stalk her!’”

“I’m sure,” she smiled. “Well, I’ve got to do some work before lunch. I’ll see you then.”

She left Tom’s office and looked around the lab for Riches. She was working with the command “jump” with her and poor Riches wasn’t getting it. She always brought Riches into her office before her lesson so she could settle down and be more receptive to the training.

There was Riches, under the table by the back door, sound asleep. Talk about a dog's life she thought.

"Hey, baby. Wake up. Come to Mama," Maureen said as she patted the front of her thighs to make a little sound to wake up Riches.

Riches opened her eyes, raised her head and yawned. She was four months old and had been undergoing training since she arrived eight weeks ago. She was a gray female German Shepherd, like the rest of the dogs, and was doing well in her training.

However, she was having trouble with "jump."

"He said that it's all right to do the story but use your discretion. Don't tell him too many details, like the screening techniques that we use, or funding or any other projects that we are working on, OK?" Tom told this to Maureen in her office as soon as he arrived at work.

"And your friend and mine, our sponsor No-Fret Pet Food loved it. They think that they are going to be all over the airwaves." Tom added. "Try to sneak their name in whenever you can. It might mean a free dog biscuit for you."

"Gee," she said, "this sounds like my big break."

That night Maureen watched TV for a while and then went to bed with an Agatha Christie mystery.

Tuesday, Maureen drove into work from her apartment in Miami Beach the usual way—across the MacArthur Causeway to the Dolphin Expressway, getting off at 12<sup>th</sup> and going south almost a block past Flagler to the Marrek Khristoff Institute. She set her purse down on her desk and went straight to the lab storage area for some doggie treats for Riches and Kate. She had a lot of paper work to do on Riches' and Kate's files today so she hoped that she wouldn't need to go to the store. Fortunately, she found two packages of treats. "That should last till noon. I'll be able to pick some up during lunch."

Just like school kids, each animal had a file. "Behave now or it will go on your Permanent Record, and it will follow you for the rest of your life!" She said to herself, remembering St. Mary's grade school.

The dog reports contained their physical descriptions, medical histories and their progress on the communication project. Everything about the animal was in that file. Any medication they needed or special dietary needs were all there. Maureen was working on the communicator project part of the file. Everyday she would add what was taught and how the dog responded. All the files would be discussed Thursday afternoon at the progress meeting. Marrek, Tom, and Maureen would talk about how things were going and what need changing.

She had Riches' file up and was reading what she had written yesterday when she was startled by the phone's ring.

"Hi, it's Ricky Ricardo. How are you today?"

"Fine, thanks. And how are you?"

"Doing good. Listen, I'm calling to ask if you've heard from the powers that be."

"Yes. Yes I have. My boss said that we would be delighted to be on your show."

"Well, that's great. When could we come over to do the piece?" He paused. "Would tomorrow be too soon?"

"Tomorrow would be fine."

“OK. I’ll be there tomorrow, Wednesday, around ten. I’ll schedule the film crew for eleven or so. Now if something comes up, we’ll have to reschedule. But we’re shooting for tomorrow.”

“OK, we’ll be ready. I’ll see you then,” she said, and then hung up the phone and dialed The Bonnie Hair Experience.

“What should I wear?”

Maureen was the first person in the office. She wanted to have her desk and her mind cleared so that she would be free to give all of her time to Ricky Ricardo today. Actually she woke up very early and couldn’t get back to sleep because of her nervousness, or was it excitement about her TV debut. Or was it being close to a “star?”

In her sleeplessness, she imagined the TV crew to be men in their twenties. Big guys with tight black Metallica tee shirts, ripped jeans and pony tails. All looking serious as they carried in big things like lights and the other equipment needed for TV broadcasting. All business, and all thinking that she is too old. Oh well, can’t have everything, international fame, and youth. And, hey, twenty-eight isn’t that old.

When she finally did get up, she made coffee and took a shower. No need to hurry since she was up so early. She found a tan silk blouse and a khaki skirt to wear. She wore her small gold sitting-dog pin that her dad gave her and a gold bracelet on each wrist. With tan flats and the tiny backpack that she picked up on sale last week, she looked fabulous. She brought her favorite mug from the cabinet above the sink and set it on the table. It was the one her dad got her at the Monkey Jungle -- orange with a smiling monkey in a palm tree. The palm tree formed the cup’s handle. This was probably her favorite possession by far. She and her dad took a driving vacation to Florida when she was ten. She loved every minute of it, waking up before dawn, eating in diners, grits, bananas and cream, pancakes—even coffee sometimes.

She poured coffee into the mug and some of it spilled over the side. She took a sponge from the sink and wiped the table. She sat down and took a sip of coffee. Ah, it was good.

She looked down at her blouse. The cup had dripped and left a stain on the front. “Rats! And double rats!”

She took it off immediately, went into the bedroom, set it on the bed and looked in the closet. “What now?”

“This should do.” She took her light blue blouse, put the sitting-dog pin on the collar and slipped it on. It looked OK. “Maybe it’s better because there is a little color here. Color that will pick up the blue from my eyes.” She continued looking in the mirror on the back of the bedroom door while slowly turning with a Jackie Kennedy type of hand gesture. “Yes, this will be better for my world premiere,” she purred. She put the stained blouse with the clothes that needed dry cleaning. She stopped at Kim Kleeners before she joined the crowd of cars on the Causeway into Miami. In spite of the blouse disaster, she was in good spirits, ready for TV stardom.

She had cleared her desk of everything except her phone, rolodex, a pad of paper, and her computer. Yesterday, she talked with Tom and Gerry and they were going to do her afternoon routine. The dogs would miss their afternoon training session with her but they would still be on schedule because Tom would work with Riches and Gerry would work with Kate. Maureen would do her regular morning work until Ricky Ricardo’s crew arrived.

Marrek and Tom wanted to have the dogs able to respond to any trainer. When a dog’s trainer was not available, they wanted the training to continue uninterrupted, so this was a good exercise for everyone.

Gerry didn't usually train the dogs. He was the man in charge of the facilities and was involved with everything. He was going to watch Tom when he was giving Riches her session so he'd know what to do. There shouldn't be any problems. Her mind was at ease.

She took notes on the points she wanted to cover with Ricky Ricardo, history, goals of the program, and why they selected dogs, also how the program would benefit dog owners, ranchers, and wild animals. Her confidence was building. "Hey, I know this stuff." She said to herself.

She wrote down what she would show him, what pictures and statistics that would be helpful. She looked good and she felt good. "This will be fun today." She said to herself.

"Hey, Lady Di, are you ready for your fifteen minutes of fame? Gerry said, sticking his head in her office. Gerry was her other luncheon buddy, along with Tom.

"As ready as I'll ever be. How do I look, Gerry?"

"You look gorgeous and smell great. You'll knock America dead when they see you," he said while smiling at his buddy, Maureen.

"Thanks, I needed that. I'm getting a little nervous."

"Well don't be. You'll do great, and make us all proud." Gerry left, giving her the high five sign, and Maureen continued with her tour notes.

Carmen rushed into Maureen's office at five after ten and said excitedly, "He's here! He's out there in the lobby and he asked for you!" She came closer to Maureen and said in hushed tones, "He looks just like he looks on TV but a little smaller. What a little cutie. I'd like to squeeze him, pinch his little butt."

"Thanks Carmen, I'll be sure to mention to him to watch his backside when he's near the lobby."

"No, please don't!" Carmen said stepping backward and putting her hands over her mouth.

"Carmen, I was just kidding." Maureen put her hand on Carmen's back and they walked out of the office side by side.

"Hello, I'm Maureen Morelli." She walked toward him smiling with her hand preceding her. "Welcome to the Marrek Khristoff Institute."

"Ricky Ricardo." He shook her hand and gave her his business card and smiled back.

Maureen read the card and didn't know what to do with it. She looked down and saw that she had a pocket in her skirt. She stuffed it in there. "First, let's go to my office. Want some coffee?" Carmen and Janet were not concealing the fact that they were staring at Ricky Ricardo, and were not at their desks, and were not answering the ringing phone.

"Yes, thank you. That would be nice."

"Carmen, would you bring some to my office, please?"

"OK, Maureen," Carmen said as both she and Janet realized that the phone was ringing and no one was answering it. They both turned and scurried through the doorway in the wall that separated their work area from the lobby.

It was also the way to the lab and the rest of the offices so they all went into the front office. At a right angle to that door, on the right, was another door which Maureen opened and let Ricky Ricardo pass through. This was the entrance to the lab. Ricky could see the entire lab from the doorway. On the left was a wall with windows that almost reached from the floor to the ceiling. They were about three feet

wide and four feet apart. In front of them were large plants, palms, like in the lobby. They were in three foot round clay pots. Half of the plants almost scraped the wooden beams of the third floor. There was no finished ceiling—you could see the bottom of the floor above, just like in the lobby. The rest of the plants ranged from three to six feet high. On the windowsills were pots and trays of small and medium sized plants, ferns and some small palms. The floor was terra cotta ceramic tile. Maureen explained that it was very costly to put in tile on the existing wood floor but it had to be done for sanitation reasons. Ricky remarked, “It looks nice and homey.”

She led him into the lab past cages of mice and lab rats. Most of them looked up at them when they passed. The offices were to their right; each with a large window that looked into the lab. The walls were painted a color similar to the floor and the vertical blinds matched the walls.

Near the back of the lab was Maureen’s office. The fire exit door was open as were the windows. A breeze filtered through the lab with a hint of a tropical garden smell. The place was immaculate. You wouldn’t know that twenty animals lived there if you hadn’t seen them.

They went into her office. Next to the door, there was a Shifillara in a Navajo pot with black and sky blue zig-zag lines around it.

Maureen sat down behind her desk and motioned with her hand for Ricky to sit in the folding chair that was in front of her desk. She thought that she should have borrowed a better chair from Gerry. Too late now.

“That’s a nice pin, Mr. Ricardo said pointing to her collar.”

“Oh, this?” She said looking at the pin and holding her collar. “Thank you.” She smiled at him and said, “How do you want to do this, Mr. Ricardo?”

“Wait. Call me Ricky.”

“OK, and you can call me Maureen.

“So, how shall we do this? I was planning to give you an overview and then a tour, showing you our equipment and introducing you to my associates?”

“That sounds good to me.”

“OK. First, I have my MS degree in Clinical Psychology. I minored in Education in undergrad school, and I have worked with young children with learning disabilities. We’ve been working with our dogs for only two months, but Dr. Kristoff has been planning and researching this project for almost four years. I’ve been here for two years and I was hired pretty much to work exclusively on this project.

“Marrek, the owner and founder, did all of the preliminary work and feasibility studies. He did some experiments that came out pretty good. Then he searched around for funding. I don’t have to tell you how hard that is.”

Ricky nodded as he looked at his note pad and listened.

“Marrek was working for another company when he got the idea for this project. He put all of his time and money into this and so far, it is going nicely.”

“Excuse me, but where did he get the funding and how much was it?”

“Presently, this project is funded by one sponsor: the No-Fret Pet Food Company. Their headquarters are in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and they are a wonderful company to work for. I can’t say the size of our budget or the amount that the sponsors have given us, but I can say that No-Fret’s contribution is a sizable amount.”

“Please go on,” Ricky Ricardo smiled while he wrote Maureen’s reply on a yellow legal notepad.”

“All right. The goal of the project is to understand better the needs of the animals.

“We want to know when we treat an animal if the procedure is painful and if it does really make the animal feel better. We will be able to know specific symptoms that an animal has just by asking, “Does your head hurt, or, what is it that hurts, or, how did you hurt yourself? This is the direction that we are heading toward, here at the institute.

“Do you mean to say that you’ll have conversations with the animals?”

“No, not really conversations, dogs aren’t capable of that. They can’t make sentences, gorillas and monkeys can though.

“There have been experiments training monkeys from birth and the results were unbelievable.” Maureen talked with sparkle in her voice. “They taught them sign language because the monkeys were so good with finger movements. The monkeys would say things like, ‘Mary tickle Kona.’ ‘Kona want drink.’ ‘Kona sorry.’ Most of the things that the monkeys said were about their personal needs. It doesn’t sound too exciting, but that is exactly what we are looking for.

“Anyway, the dogs’ best way of recognizing a person, or a thing, is by smell. Their ability to smell and to remember smells is probably the best in the animal kingdom, that is, the German shepherd and the Bloodhound. And they can remember for a long period of time.” Maureen cleared her throat and continued. “I was talking to a man who bred hunting dogs. He said that he sold a dog to a hunter in the next town. He didn’t see the dog for a year and when he finally did visit the farm where the dog lived, the dog saw him coming and barked at him as if he were a stranger. He was upwind of the dog. When the breeder came close enough to be smelled by the dog, the dog stopped barking and began wagging his tail like he was seeing an old friend.”

“So dogs remember smells?”

“Yes, because the dog has a highly developed sense of smell. The amount of surface area in the skull of a dog that is devoted to smelling is close to the amount of surface area of all of the dog’s skin. We have an area about the size of a half dollar that is devoted to smelling. That’s why the dogs are so good at it. They’ve got the big guns.”

“Wow, I didn’t know that,” Ricky said, leaning back in his chair, getting comfortable.

Just then, Janet came in with two Marrek Khristof Institute coffee mugs. She demurely set the coffee on the desk in front of Ricky. Maureen could see that Janet was blushing slightly. Janet said, “Would you like cream or sugar with your coffee?”

Janet was the newest member of the institute. She had been working here since she graduated from Trinity High School for Girls last spring. She was the receptionist and helped Carmen and Cathie, the office manager. She had been taking courses at Oakley community college since the fall and had been doing a wonderful job, always asking what else she could do, but she was very shy. Carmen and Janet drew straws to see who would deliver the coffee to the “celebrity.” Janet put her shyness aside for a brush with fame.

“No, thank you, I take it black.” Ricky said while looking straight into her eyes.

Janet blushed feverishly, turned, and left the room.

“Most people don’t know the importance of the dog’s sense of smell.” Maureen said. “It has to do with survival and hunting. The dog’s brain has evolved to help him differentiate smells and to remember them easily.”

Ricky Ricardo sipped the black coffee and held the mug in both his hands and said, “So you’re saying that dogs can’t see well and they do everything by smell?”

“No, not at all. The dogs’ eyesight is as good as ours, but they just don’t remember what they see as well as we do. They remember things with their noses. We are better remembering things that we have seen and they remember things better that they have smelled.

“It’s like dogs sniffing trees. The dog sniffs a tree or fire hydrant before he urinates on it because he is smelling who is in the area. Who has urinated on that tree recently. Each dog has his own personal smell in his urine so after he sniffs to identify who’s around, he urinates so that the dogs that come after him will know that he is in the area. It’s the canine equivalent of a calling card. Again, this has to do with survival. How many dogs are hunting in the area? Are these dogs that he knows? Are these dogs that he has had fights with, or, are these friendly dogs? Sometimes you can watch a dog sniff a tree and then his tail begins to wag because he has recognized a friend. Again, it’s about survival.”

Ricky nodded in agreement and crossed his legs.

“At eight weeks, the pups are separated from their mothers and begin training. We have chosen to train females because they are less aggressive and are able to focus better.

“We use German Shepherds because of their intelligence and their ability to learn easily. They are patient and they get along well with other animals.”

“What do you mean, ‘get along well with other animals?’” Ricky said, arching his eyebrows.

“They have been bred as sheep herders, so they don’t mind being near other animals. They can live peacefully in a lab environment.”

“I see.”

“The machine that we are using to teach them is called the ‘communicator.’ It is made up of a series of boards with photos of objects on them.”

“Wait, Maureen. Didn’t you say that they don’t see as well as they hear and smell? How can they recognize the photos?” Ricky asked after sitting up straight in his chair.

Maureen looked at her hands that were folded in front of her and said, “That’s a very good question, Ricky. They recognize certain objects by sight, and they have already exhibited this skill on the communicator. But if we could incorporate smell into the machine, it would make the learning easier for the dogs and we could probably add many words to the list to teach them. We are working on incorporating smell—and hearing—into the machine but, at this time, we only have objects that use sight for recognition. It’s still on the drawing board, so to speak.”

“I see,” Ricky said. “Please go on, this is good.”

“The first symbol they learn is for food. This is a photo of a food bowl filled with dry dog food. Whenever the dog wants food, she must go to the communicator and push the symbol for food with her nose or paw. The boards are about a foot from the floor and are mounted on the sides of a box. As the training progresses, we add other symbols to the box sides. After a few days of correct selecting, another photo board is added. The second board learned is a photo of the leash that is used when taking the dog for a walk. The same procedure is used for all of the simple words or commands. For words like scratch, or tickle, a photo of the trainer’s hand is used. Whenever possible, a glossy black and white photo is used to show the object.

“Why black and white? Why not living color?”

Maureen smiled at Ricky’s phrasing. He smiled back at her.



“Because the dogs can only see in shades of gray. But you might have a point there. Even though the dogs see the objects in gray, the objects do exist ‘in living color’ and maybe they would be more recognizable in color. I’m going to talk to Marrek and Tom about that. Good Point.” She wrote something in her ‘tour notes’ and continued her discussion.

“The program works because the dogs are taught only to communicate by using the boards. Barking or jumping up and down does not get a response from the trainer. Each successful use of the boards is reinforced with verbal praise, hugging and petting the dog and making her feel good about her success. Also, the dog receives nothing unless it is asked for with the boards. There are three dogs in the program now.

“Shall we go to the lab and see the machine?”

“Sounds good to me.”

They both got up. Maureen led the way to the machine. Ricky stretched and then followed her.

They walked to the front of the lab where the machine was on the floor. It looked like Maureen described it: a shiny square steel box about a foot high with sides three feet long. There were fourteen boards on it. Some were photos like Maureen had described and some were abstract designs--swirls and slashes of black on a white background. On the top of the box, above each board was a light, like a Christmas tree light, or maybe, a small light like you would find in a refrigerator. There were spaces that didn’t have a board. There you could see the switch that lit the light when the board was pushed.

“It doesn’t look like much,” Ricky said bending down and pressing one of the switches.

The light went on. He pressed it again and it stayed on.

“You’re right. It isn’t a big thing. But it took Marrek, Tom Gerry and me over two months to come up with this design.

The light went out.

“The boards clip onto the railing on the top so a board can be added or removed easily, without tools, just snap it on or snap it off. We can remove the boards but, so far, the dogs haven’t figured it out yet. It would be a totally different story if we were working with chimps or monkeys. They can figure out anything.”

Ricky smiled.

“By the way, we have plans to train McCaws and Rhesus monkeys on the communicator. That is, if we get favorable results with our puppies.

“The words are learned in groups for better understanding; some groups can be learned in a week. Early in the course, the dogs learn quickly because once the concept of using the boards is learned, they easily understand the words that are taught—practical words that are needed many times throughout the day. Later in the course there are some concepts that might never be learned.

“Like what?” Ricky asked.

“Like ‘need.’ ‘Fear’ is another difficult one, and ‘understand.’ We haven’t tried these yet, because the dogs are not far enough along in their training. But now Marrek, Tom and I, can’t figure out boards that could be used to convey these meaning. We don’t want to scare the animals to teach them fear.”

“I see,” said Ricky, as he looked at Maureen’s big blue eyes.

“So far, our puppies have been responding to the training just like we expected them to. They’ve been using the communicator when they need to go out and when they are hungry. They are still on group 1:

basic words and commands that most dogs know. When we start on the advanced concepts, then we will know if we'll really be able to 'talk to the animals.'"

Riches walked over to Ricky and sniffed at his leg. Both Maureen and Ricky looked down at the new arrival.

"Ricky, let me show you one of our dogs in action." Maureen said as she bent down and patted Riches between her ears.

"Riches, are you hungry? Hmm? Do you want some food? Hmm?" Riches looked at Maureen.

"Riches, show me what you want. Come on, show me. Show me!"

Riches with her tongue hanging out, looking like she was smiling, walked over to the communicator. Then she sat down.

"Riches, show me. What do you want, baby? Come on, show me." Maureen said in a cheerful voice, like a kindergarten teacher.

Riches stood up and walked around the communicator. She found the board with the food picture and sat down in front of it maintaining her doggy smile.

"Show me, puppy. Come on, show me and the nice man what you want."

Riches stood and walked a step closer to the communicator and pushed a board with her nose. The light lit. It was the board with a picture of a snack held in Maureen's hand. It was Maureen's hand because the photo showed the same bracelet that Maureen was wearing today.

"Good dog! Riches is a good dog." Maureen went to Riches and ruffled her ears and said, "What a good dog you are, Riches. Good dog!" She reached in her skirt pocket and brought out a snack that was identical to the one on the board. She offered it to Riches who immediately gobbled it up. "What a good dog!"

Maureen, still bent over and holding Riches' ears, with a smile on her lips said to Ricky, "That's how it's done. They love food and they love praise. They will do almost anything for praise. That's what makes them easy to train—their love of praise, and food.

"Riches, show me the leash. Show me the leash. Come on girl, show me the leash." Maureen smiled at Riches while asking for the leash.

Riches turned and walked around the machine, her nails clicking on the tile floor. She looked at the boards while walking. Then she stopped and pushed a board and the light when on. It was the board with a picture of a leash.

"Good girl. You are so good. Yes you are." Maureen said as Riches trotted to her expecting to be petted.

Riches came up to Maureen with her mouth open, a big doggie grin on her face. She was patted on the back by Maureen, then hugged around the neck. She shed some of her hair on Maureen's nice TV blouse and skirt.

"What do we do with the leash, Riches? Hmm? Do we go for a walk, hmm?" Maureen asked.

Riches walked back to the machine and pushed a board. The light went on above the board with a picture of Maureen walking a dog, not Riches but a toy poodle, on a leash. And Maureen was wearing a gray felt skirt with a pink felt poodle on it.

Ricky looked at the picture and smiled. She said, "Gerry made this one during his artistic period." She blushed a little.

Riches trotted back looking for praise. “Good girl, Riches, good girl,” Maureen said and ruffled her ears. Then she stood up and faced Ricky.

“Well, Ricky, that’s pretty much what we have,” Maureen said while brushing away the dog hairs on her skirt. “Any questions?”

“Nope, you did a good job, and perfect timing. I see Freddy’s here with the equipment.” Ricky pointed to the door where two young men in jeans were wheeling something through the door.

“The lighting crew is here. The sound crew should be here too. On shoots like this, we try to have everyone in one van.”

Another two came through the door with big coils of black cable on their shoulders.

The dogs went to the back of the lab when they saw the strangers coming in. The animals in the cages were hustling around making sounds like the end was near.

“Where’s the electricity?” one of the men said to Ricky from the front doorway.

Ricky looked at Maureen. She said, “I’ll have to find Gerry. That’s his job.” She went off, toward Gerry’s office, which was next to hers at the back of the lab.

A minute passed and she walked out of the office behind a medium size guy with thinning hair. Gerry smiled and waved at Ricky and his crew. “It’s over here in the store room.”

The one that Ricky called Freddy went over to Gerry and motioned to one of the guys with the cables to follow him.

Ricky said to Maureen, “I need a little quiet while the guys are setting up. Do you have a room I could use?”

“You can use Cathie’s office. She’s not here today.” Maureen said while picking up a small potted plant that was on the window sill before Riches knocked it off with her wildly wagging tail.

Maureen was leading Ricky to Cathie’s office when he said, “Now that you’ve told me what you have here, I have to write a script that we can use. Also, I have to plan what shots we’ll need.”

“If you need anything just ask for me. I won’t be far. You can use that phone if you need it. Dial 9 before dialing out.” She said.

“Thanks,” Ricky said and sat down behind the desk.

Maureen left him in Cathie’s office and was heading back to hers to see if there was something she could do before the “shoot,” but she didn’t make it. When she went into the front office, she was accosted by Carmen and Janet.

“What’s he like?” the two asked her before she was through the doorway. “Is he nice,” Janet asked. “Did he ask you out yet?” They were bunched up next to Maureen in a conspiring way.

“You’ve been alone with him for almost an hour. What was he doing in there?” Carmen said with an anxious look on her face.

“Stop! I just met him, and besides, he probably has his pick of TV stars to date.” Maureen said in a hushed voice. “We were talking about the ‘shoot,’ that’s all. What do you think we were doing? I filled him in on the background of the project.”

“Don’t waste this chance.” Carmen said. “Flirt!”

“Yeah,” Janet said. “Show him how fantastic you are!” Carmen and Janet looked at each other and nodded and squirmed in agreement.

“Please, this is an important step for the institute. I don’t want to blow it by bothering Mr. Ricardo. Maureen said looking down.

“He’d be a great catch, Maureen. This is the chance of a lifetime!” Carmen said, not giving up. “You go girl!”

Maureen nodded her tacit approval and said, “Well, ladies, I’ve got to find Tom. See if he needs me.” She smiled at them and went through the doorway into the lab where the crew was laying cables from the store room to the area of the communicator.

“Ask Ricky if he thinks there’s enough natural light so we won’t have to use the floods.” Freddy said, staring at Maureen with his big dark eyes and serious face.

“OK.” She said while thinking, “Is everybody connected to TV so gorgeous?”

Before “the shoot,” Janet was in the lab delivering cokes and coffee to the men in jeans and tight tee shirts, blushing and giggling at their remarks. She was going to get at least one date out of today’s work. Maureen was also there, watching the crew set up.

“I don’t know if it’s the coffee or your pretty eyes that are getting me so hot,” one of the guys said. The other guys laughed. Janet responded with a little blush and a smile on her down turned face. The setup men loved it—and her wrap around skirt and her platform sneakers.

Maureen saw Carmen peeking behind the lab door from her office, pretending to have some errand to do in the store room. Gerry was working with the technical part of the shoot so he had a reason to be underfoot. Cathie and Marrek were out of town. Tom stuck his face out of his office a few times to see what was going on. “Tell Brokaw I’ll be ready as soon as I get my make up fixed.” He said to the setup men while on his way to the lobby to make copies. They looked at each other agreeing that he was goofy. It was a circus.

Ricky was directing the cameraman on the scenes to shoot. He and Freddy were conferring about backgrounds and light levels. Ricky would stand in front of the camera and they would film for a minute, gather into a huddle, some of them nodding, then do it over again. Ricky Ricardo was a real professional.

Ricky and Maureen discussed for a few minutes what they were going to say on camera. Not exactly a script, more like what areas they would discuss at what locations in the lab.

She was getting nervous; it was just before she was to be introduced on camera. She was standing next to Ricky. They were filming and he was talking to the camera, the mike in his hand. He quickly glanced at her, while continuing to talk, and sensed her nervousness. He felt for her hand, which was out of the camera’s view and gave it a gentle squeeze. That was all she needed. The warmth and understanding of another person who knew how she was feeling; and a good looking guy and TV celebrity at that. A big smile lit up her face, and she was ready. Ready for her fifteen minutes of fame.

After it was over, Freddy and his crew disassembled their equipment. They had taken at least two takes of all of her scenes, a short take and a long take. Ricky came up to her. “You did a great job. We have about seven or eight minutes of useable tape. We’ll probably edit it down to a six minute and a four minute segment. Then we’ll air it locally, probably before the weekend, and then we’ll try to sell it to the network for national broadcast.

“Of course you don’t get any money for this, but it’s great free publicity for the institute. Maybe it’ll bag you another sponsor. This might hit the satellites and go global. Who knows?” He said looking at her shrugging his shoulders.

