

Having a Talk With the Kids

Peter Gerstenzang tries to make peace between his cat and dog, but it ends up backfiring.

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About a month ago, I noticed that Gracie and Happy, my Golden, were not getting along. It wasn't open hostility, like the United States and Iran. A bit more like the U.S. and North Korea. Things were unfriendly, with the odd moment where one party threatened to hit the other. Knowing there is no U.N. for cats and dogs, I wondered how to get them to be friends again. So, I found them together and talked to my pets. I said there was enough trouble in the world without them adding to it. Some of my speech must have gotten through. Gracie and Happy soon started to work together beautifully. They had found a common goal. Which was? To torture me.

My first suspicion that Gracie and Happy had teamed up, came the night I got home and knew something was askew in the living room. Remember Julia Roberts in "Sleeping With the Enemy"? How she sensed her crazy husband was stalking her, and knew for sure when she found her cans rearranged in the kitchen? Well, for me, it was the rubber plant. I looked and realized it had been knocked over. That had to be Gracie. But how did she fly 6 feet to topple it? Well, like a plane on the deck of an aircraft carrier, she must have shot off from Happy's back. The idea scared me in a Julia Roberts sort of way. But I dismissed it. I shouldn't have.

The next sign that cat and dog had taken my talk literally? It was when the sirloin steak turned up missing. I put it out to defrost in a place high enough that to Happy it might as well have been the Himalayas. But when I went to see if it was ready to cook, it was gone. Hap tried to look innocent and nearly succeeded. Except for the 9-inch piece of gristle caught in his teeth, like a piece of dental floss. I figured that Gracie must have taken off from Happy's back again and knocked the steak to the floor. With the promise that Happy would reciprocate. Like, the next time I was defrosting some salmon.

It all came to a head when I was standing in front of my closet, trying to pick out a shirt. I didn't hear Bonnie and Clyde sneak up behind me. Bonnie – I mean Gracie – must have put extra oomph into her leap. She jumped up on my shoulders, scaring me and knocking me into the closet, causing enough hats to fall on my head for eight different people.

So, be careful what you ask for. Cats (and dogs) will listen to you when you talk. But there's a good chance they will miss a vital piece of the information. I'm glad that Gracie and Happy are getting along well now. But I'm going to have to get them to cool this naughty behavior. Maybe I'll try another lecture. I know that sounds crazy. But I'm running out of options.