

The Cat With the Crooked Neck

Peter Gerstenzang blogs about a confrontation with a street cat that has a happy ending.

By Peter Gerstenzang

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Over the last few weeks, whenever I've walked my dog, Happy, a rough-looking cat has been on the corner, waiting to harass us. Now, the cat wasn't sitting there in a leather jacket, humming a medley from "West Side Story." Mostly, this gray-and-white feline just glared. Happy glared back. Then growled. Last week, there was a confrontation. Luckily, I didn't have to call a social worker specializing in gang outreach. The whole thing ended happily. Especially so for this four-legged gangsta.

Now, what I think bothered Happy so much was that this cat always seemed to be staring at him. It wasn't the cat's fault. The poor thing had a permanently crooked neck, or as the insurance companies call it, "a pre-existing condition." It tilted the cat's head to the right and made him seem to be taking an unusual interest in Happy's affairs. Now, Hap has zero interest in linguistics. And phrases like "pre-existing condition" don't mean that to him. But whether you're a cat, puma or swamp lynx, stare at Happy and it's trouble. Last week the cat stared once too often. Happy dragged me over to him. Suddenly the two went from being animals to rival members of the Jets and the Sharks.

Mostly, it was growls and nasty purrs. The cat and dog circled each other. And circled each other. I don't know what happened after that, due to an attack of vertigo.

Happy whispered something to The Cat With the Crooked Neck. In dog-speak, I think it was, "This is a stunning example of anti-social behavior!" Then the cat exhibited a far greater one and jumped on Happy's head. My dog's look changed suddenly. He went from Golden Retriever to Davy Crockett — with a hat that kept moving. What's more, the dog was confused. He'd dealt with enemies on all sides before. But never above. Strangely enough, he looked rather sporty with the cat hat on his head.

Before I could figure out what to do with the cat whose tail was dangling on my dog's snout, out came Mrs. Silverglade. She seemed strangely overjoyed at the crazed antics between doggy and kitty. Was she a warmonger?

"I've been trying to entice him in for weeks," said Mrs. Silverglade. "The poor thing is homeless. I want him!" And with that, Mrs. S. grabbed the cat and took him in her house. Happy and I watched the adoption. I congratulated him for his part in it. Then I took him home to disinfect the scratches on his head.

The Cat With the Crooked Neck still stares at Happy, but now from behind Mrs. Silverglade's window. Hap still hates it. But that kooky kitty's now off the streets. I've told my dog just to live with it, that the occasional sneer is the bill he has to pay for a friend's happiness. And, considering that friend now has a home, very cheap at the price.

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