

JOURNAL OF A QUILT STORE CAT

In a previous story, “A Venture into Needle and Thread”, Mike and I spent time on the front porch rocking chairs of their family’s quilt store. What follows is a continuation of that time. My wife is always telling me about this cat that the Moore’s have. I must admit some of the things she describes are humorous. I finally had a chance to ask Mike about the cat and thus confirm her stories. Just to give some level of understanding to the cat’s history, I thought perhaps I should give a brief account from the cat’s perspective. I accumulated all known facts and uh ... their variations, listened to first, second, and third hand oral communications, used my direct observation and, of course, took into account Mike’s testimony. I used liberal literary license in interpreting anything the cat had to say.

One last point—cats and dogs are part of God’s wonderful Creation and trying to understand them is a noble endeavor. Whether this story fits with that effort or not is left up to the reader to decide.

Pastor Arnie Schmidt

My first year of life, I was pretty much a nomad. I don't know who my parents were, but they must have been quite attractive. Apparently, I inherited whatever genes account for that. One day, though, I looked in a puddle and saw some most unattractive ribs. I decided, then and there, that I needed to find a suitable home and settle down.

I stopped at several places in town, but the chemistry just wasn't there. Then one day, I followed a little old lady in an antique-looking car leaving town and heading into the country. (She was only going about 20 mph and she accelerated very slowly, so I could always keep her in sight.) Pulling into this place with a long rock driveway, she parked and went inside this red building. There looked to be too many people in the building at the moment, so I moseyed on over to the quaint little house on the other side of the driveway.

I made my way up onto the back porch and saw a chest of some sort underneath a window. I don't know what was in the chest, but it was just the right height for me to hop up on and peek inside

the window. There didn't seem to be much going on, but then I saw movement. It looked like a big human going into the kitchen, so I decided to put on some charm and let out a pitiful meow. The young man turned, walked over to the window, and smiled. For me, it was an opening. I let out another masterful meow. He brought me a bowl of milk and I knew this was going to be my home.

Every day, the people (some prefer to call them staff, but I didn't quite feel comfortable with that yet ... yet) would leave the house and walk over to the building across the driveway. Eventually, I got curious—you know what they say about cats and curiosity. I postponed trying to get into the building, because there was way too much to do on the outside—gardens to explore, cows to watch across the fence, butterflies to chase, and so on. This hard work gained me the position of chief of outside security.

Becoming an employee had its share of perks. Perhaps the most rewarding consisted of a baby crib filled with cuts of fabric sitting next to the front door. I found it a comfortable spot for my early morning, mid-morning, late morning, early afternoon, mid-afternoon, and late afternoon naps. I still hadn't been inside and didn't know it was a

quilt shop until one lady paused at the crib, looked around me at the fabric rolls, and then asked if I was the quilt store cat. What could I say, but meow. Not that I knew what a quilt store was. One morning, after completing a perimeter walk, my curiosity once again got the best of me. When a group of four ladies opened the door to the store, I casually slipped in behind them.

“Whoa,” I said to myself. “I’m liking what I see. Ample places to curl up on.”

My internal visit didn’t last long, as someone picked me up and set me back outside. Apparently, I didn’t yet have the proper clearance to be in that area ... yet. Whatever. I continued with my duties outside until winter crept in. Then one day, it seemed incredibly cold, so cold that the fabric-lined crib outside the door felt like ice. I did the only thing any self-respecting cat would do—I jumped up onto the windowsill, looked in the window, and let out a pitiful cry. I’m writing this today to tell you it worked. I assumed security duties for inside the store as well.

I found the chenille fabric to be exceptionally good for taking a nap. It occupied two shelves in the corner, away from any distractions. One day, I slept on the second shelf of chenille rather than the

one above it. It was a random decision, and we cats don't feel we have to give explanations or reasons for such things. Anyway, waking up from my nap and stretching, I heard a scream. Some lady thought I was just part of the store décor, and it scared her when I moved. I later heard from reliable sources that she had been binge watching *The Twilight Zone* all week.

Last Thursday, I heard my bosses talking about an inventory problem with the Pearl Cotton Balls. There appeared to be a serious shortage in the count of store stock. As head of security, I offered no satisfactory answer, other than I would monitor them. I do know that Pearl Cotton Balls are fun to bat around, and I would shudder to think that the bosses might consider ceasing to stock them for sale. In one of those strange instances of coincidence, when the owners rearranged some shelving, they found fifty-three balls of Pearl Cotton behind and underneath the furniture. They looked at me and I did the only thing I could think of to do—I walked over to them, rubbed on their legs, and started purring. About a week after the reorganization, I woke up from a nap on the shelf and casually reached down on the shelf below me to bat at a ball of Pearl Cotton and I came up empty-handed (or

more precisely, empty-pawed). They had moved the Pearl Cotton Balls to a more secure location—without consulting with me, I might add.

Speaking of naps, on Friday, I tried a different spot to relax. I chose some dog fabric that had been cut in panels. At some point during my relaxation, I became so relaxed that I turned over and fell off the shelf. Had I seriously miscalculated how close I was to the edge, or was it some kind of subliminal message from the dog fabric? I don't know. I do know that it is exceedingly difficult to maintain any form of princess-like dignity when falling off a shelf. (I do not recommend you trying it just to see if I am correct.) The Feline Institute of Longevity, using advanced calculus and statistacat data analysis (these guys are some cooooo-l cats), determined that I lost .483% of one of my lives with the fall.

Yesterday, a lady came into the store and purchased a sizable amount of fabric. She set her purse down on the counter and started to pull out her wallet. Then she said something about needing some thread, too. When she came back to the counter, I had my head down inside her purse. Merely doing what my job required, I heard a loud voice that said, "Princess, get out of there." The lady said,

“It’s okay. I have two cats myself.” When I heard that, I did not feel the need to do any further security inspection. A lady with two cats is good enough for me.

I have always tried to help the store in other ways, too. Today, I brought in a customer for them. Apparently, headless mice are not big spenders, so they quickly booted us out. Next time, maybe I’ll try a mole.

You would think that, after working there for over three years, these people would begin to anticipate the needs of a cat. When I want to lie down in that chair, I should have immediate access to it, whether they are working on a money-making project or not. It also doesn’t matter if there is another empty chair right next to them I could use. It is the principle of the matter. So, I have to just sit there and wait. If they give even the slightest hint that they might get up, I must be ready. The seat area of that chair shall never see the light of day. When they come back, I always hear, “Princess, you little stinker.” But they always move my chair over and use the other one. We cats must fight our battles one at a time.

Along that same line, When I’m ready for love (at a time of my own choosing, of course), I

expect to get it quickly. Sometimes, when they don't respond in an appropriate time, I am forced to jump up on the cutting table and lay down in the middle of the fabric. This causes them to stop what they are doing immediately and give me what I deserve. I must give one especially important word of caution, though. When you jump up on a cutting table, always keep your tail tucked in, I've heard those rotary cutters can be mean. When I was young and still traveling, an old alley cat once told me about this cat that had a similar experience with a human using a pair of scissors. Apparently, the whole timing thing lacked coordination, and they had to rename the cat 'Manxy'. Of course, you can't believe everything an old alley cat says.

Some of you might think that being a quilt store cat can lead to laziness. *Au contraire, mon ami*. When you must get across the driveway to the store in the middle of winter, you must be able to get across quickly with the minimum number of times that your paws touch the snow. My best, according to my bosses, for the fifty-yard sprint, was in three strides. I get ample exercise every morning chasing the squirrels out of the strawberry patch. I enjoy making those intruders go up the tree, get out on a limb, and chatter away at me, like I'm really

supposed to be scared. My humans always reward me handsomely when I do this, because they say the squirrels are always eating all the strawberries.

Now that I've reached cat middle age and have gained a wealth of worldly experience, I can honestly say there is still one indisputable fact. Dogs are dumb! We have this beagle that runs off into the neighbor's cow pasture on one side and then the other neighbor's corn field on the other side. There's no telling what he might have stepped in, or worse, rolled in. We don't know who he might have associated with. I used to sit on a shelf of fabric, watch this dog out the window, and worry about him. And I once had delusions that I could teach him some refined manners. But not anymore. I figure God must watch out for him, so there's no need for me to. He comes back with muddy paws and a joyful look on his face. Then he goes to his water bowl and slurps away with half the water spilled out and what's left in the bowl all dirty. I am exceedingly glad that the owners of this little quilt shop have the wisdom to not allow dogs in the store. Okay, some lady brought in a little frou-frou dog the other day, but she was holding him, and he looked like he didn't have the slightest idea what a cow pasture was. Without dogs, this quilt store can

maintain an air of dignity and class. With dogs, well ... who knows what chaos would follow. It's bad enough to have dog fabric in the store.