

In the Beginning

By Vada Dolph

In the beginning there was a man and a woman....

No, that's not right.

In the beginning there was a cat. When she was very young she went to live in an apartment with two women, an old one and a young one. It was claimed that the cat belonged to the young one, but that, too, is incorrect. The young woman belonged to the cat. The cat was, by right, queen of her household.

The years went by, her position unquestioned, and all was peaceful until that terrible day of the first invasion. Without warning, or permission of the queen, another cat was unceremoniously forced upon her hospitality. Tiny and oh-so-cute, he not only absorbed much of the attention that was her due, her space was no longer sacred. It was barely tolerable. But the queen eventually relinquished, and suffered a wary truce.

Time went by and the old woman went away, taking the oh-so-cute one with her. But then the cat, excuse me, the queen, and the young woman were joined by a man. A man, with his deeper voice and heavier step! Life became even more complicated with the arrival of, would you believe, another cat!! This one was 'his', they said. Well, eventually she accepted their presence, and again all was well. The growing household went to live in a larger house, which provided many places to seclude herself in peace.

That is, until the Black Plague arrived. A Dog! A young Dog! A Scotty, they said! A terrier. Ha, he was indeed, a terror. And oh, so noisy! Thank the gods for that big house, with its cozy hiding places. But what was she thinking? She was the queen! And remembering that, she regained the upper hand. It was, after all, *her* household.

When she and her household moved 'to the country', she enjoyed the quiet fields and hunting grounds. She had, in her youth, been an avid hunter, and brought many wonderful gifts to her 'person', who often did not appreciate those gifts and released them from their captivity. And country living had other 'bonuses'. Proof came in the form of the vagabond cat who soon learned where he was well off, for hers were good servants and the hospitality was unsurpassed. The queen would have it no other way! The spotted one was congenial company, jolly and full of life. She willingly grant him a place in her household.

Then, in the curious habit of the human species, yet another new residence was announced. The young woman, the man, 'his cat' the calico, the dog, the queen, and yes, the spotted one, would once again live in 'town'. But there were many rooms, and a lovely secret garden, safe from invaders, full of small living things, bushes to conceal the hunter. It would serve.

Meanwhile, the old woman had returned, without the oh-so-cute one, now sharing her home next door with a grey torty, who was, of course, ruler in her own cozy realm. A dictatorial, picky, selfish sort of queen. Fearful of invasion, the grey one protested the occasional visits of the black queen of the larger

household, and simply avoided the dog. The terror. Only on those occasions when the young woman and the man, and the dog, were away, would the two queens agree to dine together, in company with the others. The spotted one, being congenial and active, visited the neighbors and felt at home with many of them, often spending his days in this smaller domicile.

And life went on, as it does. The day came when 'his cat' the calico, went away and would not return.

The black cat continued to reign over her household, as she had done these many years. She could now enjoy her senior years in relative peace, in spite of the terror, who was himself, mellowing; the spotted one, being friends with the grey queen, spent much of his time next door. Life was good.

Alas! Disaster struck! Unbelievable! Incredible! Unthinkable! Another DOG! A baby, they said! Humungus! Rowdy!! Oh, this was just too much! The queen had not been consulted, and she most certainly did not approve!

And so, while the big spotted fluffy bundle of energy grew and grew, the cat determined to retain the remnants of her dignity. Even a queen must be gracious, or so she had heard. Best to quietly retreat. She still had her 'own room', that sanctuary where no dogs were allowed. The man and the young woman assured all that life together was possible, made an effort to establish a truce, with spaces off limits to the great pests. And then, too, there were those times when the terror and the giant were away, and the man and the young woman were away, and the house was all hers. Even a little lonely, as she was visited only by the old woman who came to attend her needs.

Most recently, she and the spotted one were hosted at the home of the old woman. The grey queen of that household was, indeed, most ungracious, but the food was good, and the beds were warm. The grey one could protest; the spotted one could stare at her while she dined; the giant and the terror could return as they wished! The man and the young woman would return, and she, herself, would reclaim her private sanctuary.

In the interim, she would stay!

She was, after all, The Queen. The elderly, but unmistakably, High Queen of this combined realm. Households grew. Households changed. But a queen remained a queen.

She chose the best bed, curled up, and slept.

In the beginning, there was a cat. In the end, there is a cat. And that's that!

