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Ch. 1 You're Not the Boss of Me

Thu, 2008-01-03 15:15 — Robin Olson

I feel eyes boring holes into me; almond-shaped, golden, desperate eyes. I won't turn to look. I already know too well what is going on. I'm going to ignore this uncomfortable feeling. I am not prey. I am an Art Director, sitting at my computer, sincerely trying to work. The tension in the room is palpable, but I stare straight ahead at the glowing screen of my monitor. "Stay the course." I tell myself, while I'm certain I feel my flesh starting to slowly burn. I don't want to look at them. I know if I look, they win. They'll prove to me that if they stare, I'll eventually cave in. My acknowledgement of their existence will begin a ripple effect of great excitement. A stir will fill the ranks. They'll be certain that my next move will be to make my way over to the kitchen and feed them. I'm not going to do that. I'm better than they are. My DNA is superior. I'm the boss. I make the rules! Now, what was I thinking? Oh yes. What font would look good on this Holiday (I don't dare say "Christmas," now, do I?) card layout? Hmm...something...scripty, but not too hard to read... ..the eyes...I feel their anxious glare growing ever more intense. I feel a flush of heat spreading across my brow. My pulse quickens. I know this familiar feeling. It happens every day. Every friggen' day I work at home (which is every friggen' day), they begin to subtly stalk me (if there is such a thing a subtle-stalking). They creep closer and closer to me, hoping to get my attention with their hungry, creepy stares. First, they assemble in small groups, maybe just one or two at the doorway to my small office. Next, they'll quietly step inside the room and place themselves strategically and evenly spaced so they'll appear attractive to me should I glance their way. They just want to be petted, really. They don't want anything unless I happen to be getting up and then it would be great if I could just stop by the nearest can opener and open up a can of turkey and herring or better yet, chicken and beef. Would I mind dropping scoops of it into their cherished bowls so they might stuff their little furry faces? Of course if the staring-thing doesn't work, they move on to the next plan. Using this cunning strategy, one of them will pretend to find another one socially unappealing, so they'll start to fight. They know I'll get up for this, but they can't count on the fact that this will put me over the edge and cause me to make it to the kitchen after I yell at them to "Cut that shit out!" Besides, they don't know what "Cut that shit out!" means, anyway. They only know I just made really loud sounds at them and it startles them...briefly. Just like a flock of pigeons, startled by a jay-walker, after a few moments of soaring into the sky, they sense it's safe again and they return to their waiting-to-be-fed-positions in my office. Sooner or later, Nicky, the 24 pound dopey white and ginger cat or his young acquaintance, Boo-Boo, the tall, skinny coal-colored cat, will begin to rub against my legs. They'll rub. They'll walk away. They'll rub again and again, causally walk away, as if nothing is wrong. They don't want anything. They're just stopping by to check in, see how I'm doing on my layout and maybe reel in a head-scratch or two, but oh no, they don't want to be fed or anything. Oh no. They can wait. No rush, really. Out of the corner of my eye, I can see at least 2 other cats, sitting stone-still in the doorway, tense, as though they're waiting to get their number called at the DMV. I can certainly say I felt a bit "tense" the last time I was at the Dept. of Motor Vehicles, so I know how they feel. There's nothing quite like waiting for something that you're not sure is ever going to happen. For 4 hours, I sat there, praying I would actually see the guy behind the counter move, as if he was really alive and more importantly on the road to helping the 56 people ahead of me. I looked at my watch and realized I needed to return to the freelance gig where I was working. They'd be boring holes in my face with their accusing glares, too, if I didn't get out of there and get back to work. Yes, I know. Good times, eh? I ended up going back to the dreaded DMV for a second 2-hour "visit" (I got there when they opened which is why it was such a blazing, short wait). The same un-moving-yet-somehow-lifelike-guy ended up helping me complete my registration forms. He must have moved, but I never saw it. It was like watching a flower blossom, only I wanted to crush the damn weed with my boot and toss it into the compost heap when it was all done blooming. They've made the move into my office. Now I can't get out of my chair without having to step over at least one of them. My office is small and crammed with bookshelves, my desk, two printer stands and FOUR CAT BEDS. There's only one way out of here. I'm trapped. I'm not going to look at them. I'm not acknowledging their presence. To do so is to fail. To do so is to send the wrong signal that food time is coming. Besides, I need to finish creating this warm, heartfelt "Holiday" message that a measured demographic segment of the population will find appealing and therefore be inspired to buy more of my client's dumbass products. And yes, before you ask, I get paid for this privilege. There's no giving up. They're still there, shifting their weight from left to right and back again. They'll risk one or more of their nine lives so that I might notice them there before I plant my foot onto their empty-bellied forms. They begin to lie down in scattered piles, nervously grooming themselves in preparation of the noontime meal that never seems to come. If they can't eat food, perhaps they could survive off of their own excess fur as they continue to bathe? They'll just lick, lick, lick...passing time and occasionally glaring at me. They don't understand. I just fed them two hours ago. I'm not getting up. I'm working. See? I found a nice font. It's a script and I can read it. Let me type out the words "Happy Holidays," then I can select the new font and apply it to the text. The size is a bit small so I'll adjust the size a little... "RIP RIP RIP!" ...continued...

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