

The Beast

by Frederick Wickert

“I’m telling you Fred, that thing is a beast! It has to be the most vicious cat I’ve ever seen. I’m hoping that I can get him tamed down enough that we can get him in a carrier so I can take him to the vet.”

“Oh Tracy, I’m sure he will calm down that much. Just give him some time. He was used to the old man so he has to be tame enough to get him to the vet sooner or later.”

Tracy had explained to me how she came to be in possession of this new cat. (See *Tracy’s Cat House*.) Tracy cleaned houses and waited tables in a restaurant in Roxbury, NY to earn money enough to defray the expenses of taking care of the 70 plus cats she provides for. She learned of an old man in Roxbury that had taken in a stray cat. His wife passed away later, and his own health was failing.

The man had to be in the hospital for a prolonged period on a couple of occasions and a neighbor was supposed to be taking care of the cat. The neighbor told Tracy he didn’t have time to do it every day and asked her if she could take over. Tracy agreed to do it.

From that time on, whenever the old man was in the hospital or nursing home, she went to his house every day and provided fresh food and water and cleaned the litter box. The cat never allowed her close enough to touch him, but she always talked to him for a few minutes and tried to make friends with him.

The old man’s health deteriorated and the time came when he had only an hour or two to live. He asked to have his minister called and the minister came to his bedside in his final moments. The old man demanded the minister promise to make sure the cat is placed in Tracy’s care and none other. Reluctantly, the minister promised because he could see it was upsetting the old man.

When the old man died, the minister inquired from his daughter who lived far away, what she intended to do about the cat. She said she planned to have it put to sleep. The minister informed her of her father’s death bed request and asked permission to approach Tracy about it. The daughter Agreed to that.

The minister contacted Tracy, who certainly needed no more cats. When she learned of the deathbed request and promise, she agreed to take the cat. She went to the house with a Havaheart trap and managed to catch the cat in it. She brought the cat home.

The cat behaved so ferociously that she named him “BEAST”. She knew she could not keep the cat in the carrier so she put him in a very large cage she had placed in the middle of the cathouse floor. The cage was big enough for the cat to have a bed, room to move around and to keep food, water and a litter box in it. She worked with the cat for quite a while every day trying to calm him down. She thought he had calmed down some but had a long way to go. Every time one of the other cats came near the cage, he tried to attack it. Every time she or her husband Phil came near the cage he carried on terribly.

Tracy thought the cat was a male, but said she couldn’t tell for sure, and that something looked different “back there”. Phil said he didn’t think so. He thought it looked like a female to him, but agreed it didn’t look quite right. Arrangements were made to take the cat to the vet. When the day came, Phil put the carrier in the large cage, door open. He kept backing the cat into a corner and finally the cat ran in the carrier, sounding for all the world as though it was going to have them both for breakfast as soon as he finished destroying the cat carrier.

They nervously carried the cat to their vehicle, and then drove the 25 miles to the vet office. Both were worried about what was going to happen at the vet’s office. They could not imagine how the vet was ever going to get the cat out of the carrier much less examine him. He wasn’t called THE BEAST for nothing.

Now, Dr. Doerge has been a vet for a very long time. He has taught small animal medicine to students in the Cornell University vet college. He has many years of experience and is now 75 years old. He understands animals and he knows what he is doing.

Much to the surprise of Tracy and Phil, Dr. Doerge calmly reached inside the carrier, grabbed the cat by the back of the neck and brought him out of the carrier on to the stainless steel table. The cat behaved in a cooperative and docile fashion as the vet examined him, gave him the necessary shots and put him back in the carrier.

Tracy and Phil were astonished. Dr. Doerge looked at Tracy and Phil with a big grin on his face. He told them they were both wrong. He said the cat is neither a male nor female, but is a hermaphrodite. Tracy asked, should he be spayed or neutered? Dr. Doerge said neither one. Just take it home and put it with the other cats. There will be no harm done the way it is.

As far as I know, the cat is doing just fine in the cat house with the other cats.