

# Satan and the Puppy

When I was twelve years old, my brother had a cat that was the terror of the neighborhood. His name, Satan, was very appropriate. All of the other cats and dogs in the area gave Satan a wide berth.



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Satan was a huge tom with a scarred face and battle-torn ears. He weighed 13-14 pounds bone dry. His muscles were well toned and showed clearly because of his short hair. My brother would frequently walk him on a leash, like a pet dog. Those strolls often proved interesting, to say the least, if a stray dog happened by during the walk.

Cats have a way of acting as if they are the lords of all they survey. Well, for Satan, it wasn't an act. He did, however, have a healthy respect for my mother after she caught him on the counter-top nibbling on the Easter ham.

Satan tolerated no other animals and barely tolerated the members of my family. Like most cats, he seemed to think we were there to serve him. In a way, he was right, since he always got what he wanted. That's where matters stood, until Sandy came into the family.

Sandy was my first dog. There had been family dogs before this, but Sandy was mine. I'd begged for a dog for two or three years and finally my parents felt I was old enough to care for one.

He was only seven weeks old when he came to live with us - a tiny bundle of golden fur weighing less than five pounds. I worried all the way home from the kennel about how Satan would act around the puppy. My fears proved to be groundless.

Once we were home, I held the puppy in my arms as I introduced him to Satan. I was reluctant to put him down, but my father said they had to get to know each other and now was as good a time as any for it to happen.



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Sandy struggled to get out of my hands as I lowered him to the floor. As soon as he was free he ran towards Satan. He was a fearless puppy. That's what had attracted me to him at the kennel – he ran right up to me, while the other puppies stayed back.

The big Siamese stayed his ground as the puppy ran towards him in that awkward, stumble-footed gait all puppies display.

The puppy tried to stop himself before he ran into Satan, but he failed. He bounced off the big cat as if he'd run into a brick wall. That drew a hiss from the cat for the first time.

Sandy tipped his head and looked at Satan as if he realized for the first time that this wasn't like any other animal he knew. He walked around the cat as it sat there, sniffing all the time. The only reaction from the big tom was to turn his head to keep an eye on the pup.

Now the puppy wanted to play, but Satan had had enough for now. He quickly retreated to one of the bedrooms where he could curl up on something soft for a nap.

Things went that way for the next couple of weeks. Satan would put up with the puppy's antics for a while and then retreat to a spot where Sandy couldn't reach him. Sometimes, they would roll on the floor and tussle. At other times, they would chase each other around the house – first one doing the pursuing and then the other. After these bouts



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of activity, they would occasionally curl up together and take a nap. Anyone who knew the cat's disposition would do a double-take when they first saw Sandy, eyes closed, lying with his head resting on the unruly tom's shoulder.

I'd like to be able to say that the puppy's influence had a positive effect on Satan's personality. Unfortunately, it didn't. Satan was still the same

cat, except when it came to Sandy.

One day, when he was about 3 months old, Sandy was in the backyard sniffing at every patch of grass. Satan was on the roof of the garage. He liked to lie there to soak up the sun's rays. Every once in a while Sandy would look at the cat and bark. Probably inviting him to come down and play. The cat ignored him in true cat fashion and just lay there with his eyes closed.

I happened to be looking out the window at the two of them when a stray dog wandered past the yard. The stray trotted over to check out the puppy. Sandy was nervous about the big strange dog and snarled at him. The stray snarled back to show him who was boss. That's when the true boss of the yard entered the fray.

Satan came sailing off the roof and landed on the stray's back, snarling like a leopard. The strange dog went down under the weight of the flying cat and yelped as if he was being attacked by a demon. I'd felt Satan's claws and teeth and could vouch for their sharpness.

The dog was so startled and off-balance that he couldn't get his feet under him. Satan never let up his attack and I began to fear that he would do real harm to the dog. Just as I came flying out the back door, the dog managed to get to his feet and bolted from the yard. He never looked back as he dashed down the street. I stopped at the top of the porch steps and watched the two animals in the backyard.

Satan sat down and began to lick the blood from his claws as if nothing had happened. The puppy bounced up to him and stood with his feet braced and barked into the cat's face from six inches away.

Satan ignored him until he was through with his grooming and then swatted Sandy on the nose with his paw. His claws were sheathed; he never showed them around the puppy. Sandy sat back on his haunches with a startled look on his face, while the big tom leaped to the top of the rain barrel and then to the top of the garage in one smooth motion. He quickly settled back into his place and closed his eyes to finish his nap.

Things quickly returned to normal and Sandy went back to hunting for bugs in the grass. Even then, he showed his promise as a hunting dog. I looked at the dog and then at the cat on the roof of the garage, then turned and went back into the house without saying a word. I could hardly wait to tell my friend Cliff about it.



Image copyright Emma

I never saw that stray again. I imagine he avoided our street from that time on. I know I would have if I'd been him.

Sandy grew up to be one of the best hunting dogs I ever owned. He was self-assured and feared neither man nor beast. I often wondered if growing up with Satan had an influence on his personality.

Satan continued to rule the neighborhood until he retired to a farm - where he promptly declared himself king. I doubt if even the farm's bull would have had the nerve to face up to the big tom when he was in a rage.

Most of the kittens born on the farm from that time on had blue eyes and short hair. The farmer offered one of the kittens to my parents, but by that time my brothers and I were grown and out of the house. My parents declined, since neither of them was really a cat lover. Besides, as my father said, if he wanted one of Satan's kittens all he had to do was to adopt one of the strays in our neighborhood. Chances were good that it would be one of Satan's descendants.