

Episode 13 – A Case of Mistaken Identity

“Oh gosh, I am so thankful you will look after Rufus for me, since I can’t take him when I move to an apartment. I just love him, and he’s a great mouser. He catches at least 5 mice per day!” This mousing prowess was music to my ears, as the old barns were overrun by scurrying critters. Just the day before, upon filling a bowl of grain from the feed bin, I had been traumatized by two mice which ran up my arm as I delved into the bag. Match point to the mice, as the grain plus two mice went flying into the air, thrown off by furious arm shaking along with my ear splitting scream.

My friend drove away feeling confident that Rufus had found a good home and I couldn’t wait for the mouse harvesting to begin!

Rufus was never again to grace my barn. On moonlit nights, he could be discerned flitting between trees as a self-possessed feral shadow, and I eventually figured out that the daily reduction in cat kibble was solely due to the ever growing families of mice happily living out full and productive lives! Darn!

One icy morning, our neighbour leaned over the fence and inquired, “Hey, did you lose a cat?” As the deep freeze of winter had descended upon us, Rufus had taken up residence in his woodshed, and was now happily ensconced in a cosy cardboard box bed. I felt relieved he was protected for the winter and let his owner know Rufus was alive and well.

Two weeks later, I agreed to watch over the neighbour’s property while they travelled to India. Of course, I had to check on Rufus. Upon entering the woodshed, I spied the cardboard cat house and peered inside – yes, it appeared Rufus was in there, sound asleep. Thinking he might welcome a pat, I inserted my hand, but Rufus didn’t even twitch. He felt totally cold and still. I quickly opened the top of the box and peered in, poking him with a finger – oh dear, it was Rufus all right, perfectly composed and perfectly dead. His demise had obviously occurred while the neighbours were on holiday, and now here he lay, frozen solid in the minus 20 weather with nobody to mourn his passing. I decided it was right that his owner learn of his fate, in case she wanted to give him a decent burial.

It was a traumatic call –tears of loss were wept for her dear departed friend, but she told me it was easier if I would please dispose of his earthly remains. The neighbours were due back later that day, so I quickly removed the ever cold Rufus in his cardboard coffin to relieve them of such a sad discovery. Later that night, as a courtesy, I phoned the neighbours to let them know that Rufus had passed away and was gone from their woodshed.

“What are you talking about? We just saw Rufus and he is very much alive.” Stated the confused neighbour. “But Rufus is dead.” I contradicted “I have his body here in the box from the woodshed.” After a head scratching pause, he said “It’s not Rufus in that box. That’s my wife’s most precious cat of almost 20 years, and yes, he is identical to Rufus. He died in his sleep the day we left for India and we want to bury him in a special gravesite once the weather warms up.”

Two things happened immediately. The most precious “frozen” cat was returned to its rightful owner, and a phone call was made with the glorious news that Rufus, another most precious cat, had fallen victim to a case of mistaken identity.

I am done with cats for now. Advantage set and match win to the mice.

Una St.Clair, No Cat Barnyard Boss
HighCroft Off Grid Permaculture Farm
Pasture Raised Organic Meats & Eggs
una@highcroft.farm.com