
SUNDAY WOES



Sundays are my favorite days. The family goes to church in the morning, but Kaden spends the rest of the day with me.

Not this Sunday.

As the family left for church, Mom told Kaden, “Let’s put Hank in his kennel so he doesn’t bother the kitten.”

What? I’m a good boy now. Why do I need to be in a kennel? Why didn’t they put The Varmint in a cage? After they all hurried out, the garage door opened, and the kennel-on-wheels backed out. Then the door closed, and we were alone.

The Varmint paced around, making a squeaky-ow sound. Then it hopped onto Dad’s chair—what nerve!—and proceeded to lick its paws and wash its furry little face. And then it slept. A lot of help it would be if someone tried to break in. I lay awake—at least most of the time—and guarded my family’s house.

When the family returned home, they all rushed over to The Varmint. The Girl spoke in a sugar-sweet voice. “Did you miss us, Princess? What a sweet little kitten. You slept in Dad’s chair.”

I pawed at my kennel door before Kaden opened it and let me outside. I took my time sniffing around to make them miss me a little bit. But no—when I came to the door, no one let me in until I barked like a German Shepherd seeing a stranger.

“Hush, Hank.” The girl cuddled The Varmint close while she opened the door for me. “Your barking scares Princess.”

Mom ladled something into bowls from her cooking pot on the counter. I’d smelled it the whole time they were gone—chicken, veggies, noodles, and a delicious broth. I couldn’t wait to taste a bite of it.

After the family sat and Dad said a prayer, Mom asked, “What do you think about Pastor Gavin saying we should love our enemies and pray for them?”

Kaden spoke around his mouthful of noodles. “I can pray for them.”

Dad reached for the plate of crackers. “But can you treat them the way you want to be treated?”

Kaden sucked another noodle into his mouth. “That’s harder.”

The Girl nodded. “I’d rather ignore people I don’t like.”

The Varmint was my enemy. And I knew how I planned to treat her if I could just get a hold of her. But I was currently concentrating on noodles.

As the humans’ spoons scraped the bottoms of their bowls, The Girl asked, “Can I give a bit of my broth to Princess?”

Mom wiped her mouth with a napkin. “I suppose so. It’s kind of rich, so only a little.”

The Girl poured the leftover broth from her bowl into the pink dish. The Varmint yawned and stretched, jumped down

from Dad's chair, and minced out to the kitchen, walking wide around where I lay.

She took a few laps out of her bowl, then walked away.

The Girl set the bowl out of my reach on the counter. She spoke to Kaden. "I have the flyers all done. Want to help me put them up?"

Kaden shrugged. "Sure. I don't have anything else to do."

What about a walk with me? Or shooting hoops at the park? Or even gaming while I lie on the bed?

Kaden scooped up his dishes and deposited them in the dishwasher. No little dribble of broth went into my dish. No tiny bite of chicken stealthily handed to me. He and The Girl grabbed their jackets, a stack of papers, and some of Dad's super-strong tape, then they left. I flopped down in the middle of the family room floor for a nap. When The Girl and Kaden returned, the papers were all gone.

The Girl picked up The Varmint. "We put them all up and walked as far as the convenience store in one direction and the park in the other." She went to her room.

I followed Kaden downstairs. When he turned on his Xbox, I knew we weren't going on a walk or shooting baskets.

Later that night, we watched a TV show together. The Varmint chose to be on Mom's lap, and Mom smiled and petted and cooed over it just like The Girl had. I lay next to Kaden on the floor.

When the show was over, Mom spoke as she rubbed under The Varmint's chin. "Tomorrow, I'll pick you two up from school, and we'll take the kitten to Dr. Tate. He can check for a microchip and let us know if anyone has contacted him about a missing cat."

The Girl stopped on her way to her room. "And if there's no chip and no reports? Can we keep her?"

“Let’s see what Dr. Tate says.”

Uh-oh. It sounds like Mom is waffling. She wouldn’t consider keeping The Varmint, would she? What happened to “Hank is enough pet?” I need to rescue my family from this scourge.