

Cat vs. Girl

I can't decide if I have a cat or a cat has me.

~Esther Marton

My cat and I have always had a special relationship. As a child, I remember thinking that we had mutual respect for each other, and that we each held an equal amount of power in our relationship. Now that I am older and wiser, I realize that I never had any power. She had a way of making me feel like I was in control when I really wasn't. Our interactions were always of this nature, beginning from the first day we met when my mother brought her home from an animal rescue shelter.

My mother delegated the job of naming her to me since I had named our previous cats, brilliantly calling them Miss Kitty, Gato (Spanish for cat) and Little Girl. This time around, however, I was determined to come up with the most incredible and original name for my new black-and-white tuxedo friend. I sat in the bathroom with her and watched her scoot around as she exploring her surroundings. I was waiting to find the name that would reflect her personality. Nothing was coming to mind, so I decided to throw out some names to see if she would react.

"Sheba?" I said. She stopped her exploration and looked at me, her face expressionless. Then she turned and walked away from me.

"Spike?" I tried again. She didn't even bother turning and looking, she just twitched her tail. I should have known better. Spike is clearly a dog's name. Speaking of which:

"Dog?"

She definitely wasn't interested. I wrinkled my nose and gave in.

"Socks?"

She turned and padded lightly over to me as my heart sank. She would like my least favorite name. She stepped onto my lap and stretched up her body so we were eye level, her front feet on my chest. Then she smacked me across the face with her paw.

"Okay Kitty, not Socks," I said, and she started to purr. I look down at her and cautiously patted her on the head. "Good, Kitty..." I said, using the name again. She purred louder and snuggled into my arm.

"Kitty?" I said one last time. The now curled-up ball of purr settled in. "Okay, Kitty it is!"

The name of Kitty actually worked well, because she usually came when we called her. The key word being "usually," because whenever we called her, you could actually see her weighing the amount of effort required. Her eyes would blink slowly and deliberately whenever we made kissy noises at her or patted our laps enticingly. She knew that after a while if she didn't come to us sooner or later we would get and up and come to her.

The last time I ever challenged her authority was my sophomore year in high school. I was convinced that if I put my mind to it, I would be able to take control. She walked into the bathroom where her food bowl was kept, and paused when she realized that I had put her least favorite flavor of cat food in her bowl. I was standing at the sink, pretending to focus on brushing my teeth so I could watch what she did without her noticing. She turned and looked up at me, her tail twitching with warning. Quickly I turned my eyes back to the mirror and leaned forward, pretending to check my teeth for spots I had missed. She gave one short warning meow. I pretended not to hear her. She tried again, louder this time, and I felt her paw bat me lightly on the back of my calf. I turned and looked at her innocently and waited. I could see her debating

whether or not to hit me again, but I remained firm. She turned around and walked out of the bathroom without another sound. I released the breath I hadn't realized that I had been holding.

I leaned against the sink, savoring my victory in my quest for power over my cat. This was going to be the first of many. Then I heard it: the unmistakable sound of a large amount of liquid splashing onto the floor. I ran into my room just in time to watch Kitty delicately step out of my closet, shake her back paws off, and trot by me back to her food bowl, tail held high.

~Rebecca Davis