

Eating Crow (Renamed “An Embarrassment of Riches” for publication)

By Emily Johnsen

Uh oh, now what's he got? I cringed when I caught sight of Henry, my large-and-in-charge orange tabby, emerging from the tall grass. He had something hairy, scary, and disturbingly rodent-like in his mouth. “Oh Goody,” I grumbled to myself, bracing for the inevitable. It would seem that Henry was bringing me another of his “special” gifts.

My magnanimous Henry was a pound cat for the first ten months of his life, but you'd never guess it from his imperious airs. He wasn't named after any historical monarch either, but he turned out to be a bit of a tyrant just the same. Henry is the king of the castle and ruler of all surrounding territories, which includes our backyard and the large, vermin-inhabited field just beyond it. The poor resident critters will forever rue the day that Henry moved in. Their feeble attempts to hide are no match for his sublime patience and stealth.

Through the kitchen window, I watched Henry prance toward the house with his glorious catch. Then he noticed the dog, Jed, and slowed his pace a bit. Changing course, he detoured past the dog, shamelessly flaunting the evidence of his superior hunting skills. He sashayed, back and forth, his head held so high I wondered how he could see where he was going. The dog, for his part, actually seemed impressed. Instead of indulging in his customary game of chase-the-cat, Jed stood at attention and just let his feline friend strut his stuff.

Finally satisfied, Henry turned and headed for the house, big fuzzy rodent in full view. It was now my turn to step up and get what was coming to me...literally. But Henry's gift never made it that far.

Out of nowhere, a dark shadow appeared in the sky, rapidly gaining on the unsuspecting cat. An opportunistic raven had spotted a chance for an easy meal and, in true raven spirit, he wasn't about to let this one slip away. He swooped in from behind, delivering a well-aimed smack to the head with one deft wing. *Thwap!* Henry didn't know what hit him! He yowled and jumped straight into the air, his legs pedaling wildly beneath him. The mouse tumbled from his gaping mouth and was instantly snatched up by the bird. Henry could only watch, dazed and confused, as the rook crook made off with his precious prize.

Poor Henry! He'd been burgled by a *bird!* Oh, the shame of it! And what was worse: the whole embarrassing thing had gone down right in front of the dog. If dogs could laugh, Jed would have been crowing like a rooster. As it was, he certainly had one of the biggest doggie smiles I've ever seen. And what did the regal Henry do in his moment of mortification? Did he lose face, feel small, eat crow? Not Henry. He just plopped down on his roly-poly rump and started to groom himself. I guess he figured, if you're gonna look bad, you may as well look good doing it.

Emily Johnsen is a freelance writer, blogger, social media marketer, entrepreneur, wildlife rehabilitator, animal lover, wife, and mom...in no particular order. She currently resides in historic Fort Worth, TX, with her husband and two inspiring tween-aged sons.