

A Terrible Stranger

By Pete Clark

Cheetah Cat had been living with me in our house on Lansing Street since April of 2004. We were very close friends but he was an indoor-outdoor cat and sometimes, during the cold of winter, would disappear for three, four or five days at a time. He had at least one other home and would return to the house when the weather broke. During good weather I believe he partook of scraps put out by the Ethiopian Restaurant a few blocks from our home. When I would arrive home after work or from a trip spent running errands, Cheetah Cat would hear my Focus coming down the street and head for home, meeting me in the driveway.

In late 2015 I decided to sell our house and began preparing to move to Windsor Gardens. I told Cheetah Cat we were going to move, but I did not tell him he would no longer be an indoor-outdoor cat. I was doing an extreme downsizing and most of what I owned had to be sold, donated or left behind. My friend Reba spent many long days helping me sort, pack and move possessions.

The only hiccup was that Cheetah Cat did not like the idea of a strange woman coming into his house and stirring things around. With the exception of one day, Cheetah Cat was always outside when Reba arrived and when she left he would come out from under a bush, but not get onto the porch until Reba was down the steps and walking toward the driveway. The day Cheetah Cat was still in the house at the time Reba arrived was a watershed. Reba is a cat person and wanted to pet Cheetah Cat, but when she came into the house, she scared him out of eight of his nine lives. He ran for the kitchen. Reba said she would work in the bedroom while I got him to go out. I went to the kitchen door and called Cheetah Cat. He warily came to the door and hesitantly walked to the front door with me. I opened the door and he shot across the porch and into the yard.

When Reba left that day, and every day until we were finished packing and moving things Cheetah Cat would remain under the bush until Reba was gone from the porch. Then he would sit on the ground beside the porch and watch her walk to and seat herself in her car. Next he would watch and listen for her to start her engine. When her car began to move he would jump up onto the porch and come into the house as I held the door open.

I have heard many times that *lower species* such as cats cannot assess a situation, make a plan to handle the situation and carry that plan to its fulfillment. I do not believe that. Scientific studies are showing that animals and birds are far more intelligent than we think.