

The Cat's Got Your Tongue

By Art Stevens

My eleven-year old cat decided to speak to me after all these years. I was astonished, of course, as you would be too if real words came out of your own cat's mouth instead of "meow."

My wife had taken the car to Periwinkle to go shopping and I was alone in the house. It was around 3 p.m. on a Saturday afternoon. I had just settled into my favorite chaise lounge facing the gulf, and was about to plunge into a James Patterson suspense mystery when Tiger (our cat) entered the living room.

He did a long, low stretch, as cats do right after a fitful nap, gave a deep yawn and slowly walked toward me. He paused right in front of me, and as was his longtime custom, appeared to set himself for some solid stroking and petting. Absentmindedly, my left arm started downward while my right held the paperback.

"Hold it right there, Art," came this voice from nearby. I looked down and saw Tiger grinning at me.

"Yes, it's me." Then noticing my jaw dropping to the floor, Tiger said, "What's the matter, cat got your tongue?" Whereupon he started to giggle and turned several somersaults.

"Is that you, Tiger?" I blurted out.

"Who did you think it was, Paris Hilton?" More giggles and somersaults. Suddenly he sat up straight and became all serious.

"Listen, Art. I decided to talk to you today because we've got to change our relationship. It's not working."

"What do you mean it's not working?" I stammered.

"First of all, I don't like the name Tiger. Why did you ever give it to me?"

"Well, you're an orange tabby cat with a white chest and a white nose. We thought it would be cute for a cat with your coloring to be named Tiger."

"Cute, cute. That's all you ever thought of me. Cute. Don't you think I have feelings too?"

"Well, yes, but..."

"Yes, but nothing. There have to be some changes around here if you want me to be a card carrying pet. First of all, my new name from now on is Bob."

"Bob?"

"Yes, Bob. We cats feel that since we live with humans, we want to be treated like humans. Would you name your own child Tiger?"

I quickly thought about Tiger Woods but let it pass. "No, I guess not."

“And another thing,” Tiger – or Bob – continued. “Why do you put me in that God awful carrying case when we go somewhere in the car?”

I had him there. “Because you’re always throwing up. You and cars don’t seem to get along.”

He was stumped on that one.

“Well why do you always put me in another room at night? Why can’t I stay with you?”

I was ready for that one too. “Because you always nibble on our arms at 2 a.m. when you decide you’re hungry. We don’t like to be awakened like clockwork every night.”

Tiger started pacing. His voice was heating up. “Well, if you fed me more at dinner, I wouldn’t have to wake you up at night.”

“My dear Tiger ---“

“Bob.”

“Yes, Bob. If we fed you as much as you always like to eat, you’d be an overweight, obese cat. In fact you’d look like a bob-cat. Get it? Bob-cat.” Whereupon I started to giggle myself, tried a somersault or two, strained my back and got back into my chair.

“That’s not very funny,” Tiger said.

“You mean you decided to talk after eleven years just to bicker with me?” I asked exasperatedly.

“No, that’s not the real reason.”

“Then, what is?”

There was a long pause. Tiger looked up at me with those great big cat eyes.

“To tell you that I love you.”

Tears welled up in my eyes. “I love you, too.”

Tiger jumped up into my lap and started licking my face. And there we were unashamedly hugging each other when my wife walked in with her groceries.

I looked up at her. “Bob and I were just having a little conversation.”

“Bob?” she said with raised eyebrows.

I looked at Tiger. “Tell her, Bob.” Nothing. Silence. Tiger was purring in my lap and closed his eyes.

“Bob?” my wife said again breaking the silence. “Who’s Bob?”

Tiger was fast asleep. I sighed deeply.

“Never mind, dear. Could you make me a double vodka martini on the rocks when you’ve put the groceries away?”