

Kitty and Axel
Story Two
Kitty Goes to the Therapist

People say that on a scale of one to ten, a dog's barking is up there, number 11. Kitty is having a bad time. She's barking too much, and everyone's at his or her wits' ends trying to make her stop. No amount of yelling, distracting with ball games, nothing stops her. She has an addiction, no doubt about it.

Every morning for a week she's attended the Early Morning Attitude Adjustment Hour at the Women's Club, hoping to get some pointers. And that's helped a good deal; just the other morning, she was able to think before she barked at Samba. It did not stop her, but at least she thought about it. That's not good enough; it's got to stop, period. No one likes a yapping dog. There's even the possibility her dear friends will give her back; anything but that. She has six brothers and sisters up there in Redding, two of them are also her mother and father. It's definitely dysfunctional.

Finally it comes to intervention. Kitty is given the choice of returning to Redding where she can bark her head off, or getting treatment and staying home, playing with Axel, digging to China in the lawn, everything she's known all her life. There is no choice. Besides, she likes the sound of TREATment.

So early one Friday, she is driven to the office of Marvin Fume, DVM. Dr. Fume is a specialist in helping problem dogs. He's an elfin man with a pointy French goatee, beautifully dressed in a pin-stripe suit and blue silk cravat. He smells divine of Dior aftershave.

Kitty is invited to lie down on a cushy bed while Dr. Fume asks her questions. For example, do your friends beat you? no. Do they yell at you? yes, sometimes. How does that make you feel? sad, etc., etc. This goes on and on until Kitty feels sleepy—her attention span is short, so the session draws to an end.

Dr. Fume's opinion is that Kitty suffers from Barrier Frustration Syndrome. This is not exactly a disease, rather a condition that may have a genetic cause. However, the most important element in this syndrome is the presence of a gate, which will exacerbate the condition, causing a dog to bark. But, it is not hopeless. What Kitty must do is this practice: when the urge to bark rises up, she must take note of it without barking. She must resist barking at all costs. The urge will gradually fade, like smoke in the wind. After many weeks of this practice, the barking will stop. But diligence is required. Dr. Fume gives Kitty a bone and a pat on the head. He puts his check for \$150 in his pocket, and Kitty skips out the door to wait for her ride home.

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