

## Why can't my pets all get along?



### ANN CANNON

So my editor Anna called to say the Trib had received a new dog book I might be interested in. It's called "Unlikely Friendships" by best-selling author Jennifer S. Holland, who also writes for National Geographic magazine. The book features "37 stories of canine compassion and courage."

Well, naturally I was interested. If there's one thing I don't have a shortage of in this life, it would be dogs. My husband and I have dogs (including a 90-pound Newfoundland puppy), our kids have dogs, my brothers have dogs, my neighbors have dogs, my co-workers have dogs and my mother has a dog — a poodle who barks with a French accent.

Anyway, Anna gave me the book, which features awesome photographs and true stories about dogs who are friends with everything from ferrets to geese to dolphins to monkeys to meerkats to pigs to penguins to horses to raccoons, although I personally

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do not understand why anybody wants to be friends with a raccoon.

Do you hear that, raccoons? I don't want to be friends with you guys, so stop eating my cat's food and also get off my lawn!

Anyway, I enjoyed the book. It was refreshing to read about animals being nice to each other, especially during this election cycle, which has

been characterized by candidates definitely NOT being nice to each other. Meanwhile, the dogs featured in "Unlikely Friendships" are all hey! Let's chill! I promise I won't eat you!

I especially enjoyed the story about a Belgian Malinois named Ingo who hangs out with a pygmy owl named Poldi. Among other things, the two like to "rest together on a bench and watch deer." I like to imagine the two of them meeting for the first time and discovering that they're both into deer-watching, and then I imagine what Ingo and Poldi say about the deer they watch when the deer aren't listening. Which reminds me ... Hey, deer! Unless you stop eating my tulips in the spring, I don't want to be friends with you guys either! So get off my lawn!

But whatever. The point is (as I said before) that I enjoyed the book.

I have to admit, however, that "Unlikely Friendships" also made me a little depressed in the same way Christmas letters can make you depressed when you read about other parents' children who are getting scholarships to go to Harvard while your children are getting scholarships to cut class and eat breakfast with their friends at Denny's.

Let me explain.

Not only do we have dogs at our house, we also have two cats and a parrot. The dogs (mostly) get along fine with one another, but they have a problem with the cats.

Meanwhile, the cats have a problem with each other. Whenever they accidentally walk into the same room at the same time, they hiss and

spit in each other's eyeballs. "Take THAT!" these cats have said to one another for years now.

Meanwhile, there's the parrot who sits on a perch and tells everybody "to go potty outside."

Meanwhile, I wring my hands, wondering why we just can't all get along, especially when there are Chihuahuas in this world who are friends with chickens ("The Two-Wheeled Chihuahua and The Silkie Chicken," p.25).

I think we need some good animal family therapy at this house, don't you? And once we get it, we'll totally huddle up for a big group hug.

Until then, I'll just sit back and read some more stories in "Unlikely Friendships."

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