

Cat crunch

by Chris Miller

I barely scraped the sleep out of my eyes when I heard the shrill crying from outside the kitchen window, and I recalled one of the many reasons cats can't be trusted. You see, they're evolutionarily wired to imitate the sound of a crying human baby, so when they meow, they're actually manipulating us. The sweetness they seem to possess is a ruse, a piece of bait dangling from this swift hunter's arsenal.

I thought maybe he was hurt, so I stepped out onto the front porch.

He walked across the yard and toward and the timeworn deck where I stood, and at first I thought it was a fuzzy toy dangling from his mouth, or one of the children's colorful socks. But when he placed it on the ground, to rest his jaw I'm guessing, the tiny creature twitched and turned on its own volition. In this stark second, the question on my mind was, is this mouse aware of what's going on? I hoped the movement was involuntary and a residual nervous system punctuation to a life that likely ended too early.

This gruesome display was tempered by the cat's comfortable reaction to seeing me. He slowly blinked his eyes. Sort of like he was saying, "Oh, there you are."

Oh, there I am. Nature has a way of cutting through the bullshit and setting clear boundaries, completely contrary to the ways in which we operate at the workplace, among friends and competitors, where hunter and prey are moving definitions, and your friends shake hands with you while their other hand grips a knife behind their backs.

No ambiguity here. Just a cat taking his time, allowing the life to drain slowly from this rodent, like the blood from a sizzling steak.

He looked up at me, and slowly blinked in approval, as if this contradiction between cute, cuddly, and hideous was a cruel joke manufactured in his tiny brain. And then he ignored me completely

as he put his head down and ate the mouse headfirst, the crunch of tiny bones alternating with the sound of purring.

