

Confused animals

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As I may have mentioned once or possibly twice, our household includes an alleged cat (I say alleged because it is over twenty years of age, bedraggled, crotchety and frequently filthy – I'm not convinced it's not actually a cat zombie) and two canines, one Large and Lazy named Odin and t'other Small and Annoying named Zoey. Our animals have long since given up on the polite fiction that ours is a stable household.

It was bad enough when I was the only frequent traveler among the human members of the family. They would shift sleeping habits to guard Mary's bedroom threshold and do their insane happy dances upon my return but otherwise, the rhythms were predictable and comfortable and their lives made sense to them.

They adjusted, albeit grudgingly to Daughters (One and also Two) going off to college and returning at unpredictable intervals. They even learned to accommodate our occasional vacations (the dogs love our house sitter). Of late, however, they seem to have abandoned all hope of any return to what they consider an appropriate cycle in the waxing and waning of the makeup of our living group.

Mary has begun traveling for her work and my own travel schedule, for at least the foreseeable future will be ramping up significantly. Daughter One is back living with us which gives them another human to love but also banished them from the former rec room which has become her chambre de slumber. Daughter Two has moved to Chicago but will be coming back for holidays and such, sometimes with her beau in tow (yes, intentional). And of course One's boyfriend frequents the place, just enough to keep the animals' little walnut-sized nuggets confused as to his position relative to their own.

They can't figure out what is going on. Zoey exhibits her confusion through excessive demands for loving by standing staring at us or forcing her head under a hand – whose, she doesn't care. Odin occasionally interrupts his slumbers to bark while looking at us sideways or suddenly burying his head into a crotch. But mostly, he sleeps – his reaction to the confusion in our communal pattern is subtle. The cat just hides and stares malevolently.

It's your new normal, animals. Get used to it. And quit pulling paper out of the recycling can.

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