

Danger!



SEEING MOVEMENT out of the corner of my eye one day a few years back, I turned and peered through the glass of the library window. There was our outdoor cat at the time, Thornton, his gray bulk crouched and curious, tentatively stalking something. I was unconcerned until I saw the object of his attention. I leaped to the door, shouting, "Thornton! No! No! Thornton!"

It was a huge snake, perhaps four inches in diameter and about four to five feet long, moving across the back patio. The pattern on its back was unmistakable—as was the diamond shape of its head and the rattle at the end of its tail. It was moving toward the west workshop door.

I raced out the opposite door of the workshop, outside, around to where Thornton still crept toward the snake's tail. Keeping my distance and struggling to keep my voice calm and inviting, I knelt down and called to him. "C'mere Thornton. C'mon boy. C'mere." He turned toward me, his expression one of inquisitive naiveté. *What do you want? This looks really interesting*, he seemed to say. He took a step toward me, but then angled back to where the snake had stopped. The shaking of its rattle sounded like a loud, angry cicada. It was a warning from the snake for Thornton to back off, but he didn't know how to interpret the language of an irritated rattlesnake. He took another step in the snake's direction.

"C'mon kiddo. Let's go. C'mere Thornton," I pleaded. My heart pounded in my chest. It would take only a fraction of a second for that huge snake to turn and strike.

At last, after what seemed an eternity, Thornton turned and came toward me. I swooped him into my arms and retreated through the east workshop door. Only then did I realize how much I was shaking.

Thornton appeared calm as I let him down to the floor, but a few minutes later, as I attempted to carry him through the house to the garage, the sweaty anxiety of the episode caught up with him and he violently insisted that I put him down. I didn't dare release him in the house—especially in this state—to terrorize his sisters. When a female cat shows temper, she can be subdued with a firm grasp at the back of the neck. But when you do that to a mature male cat, it just makes him madder. Thornton was screaming at me, hissing, biting, but I didn't dare put him down.

So I hurriedly returned to the workshop with him sinking his teeth into my hands and wrists the whole way. I heaved him through the door and slammed it shut.



Every day we go about our rather ordinary lives. We go to work, clean the house, go shopping, take our children to school. The sheer normalcy of it lulls us into a feeling that everything is all right. Goodness prevails. Love is in the air.

**The Lord God said
to the serpent,
"Because you have
done this,
Cursed are you
more than
all cattle,
And more than
every beast of
the field;
On your belly you
will go,
And dust you
will eat
All the days of
your life."**

Genesis 3:14

But there is evil in this world. There is sufficient evil to be seen, but there also is evil that we typically do *not* see. Most of the time it remains skulking in the shadows, waiting patiently, biding its time as we become lulled into a false sense of security. Then one day, while we are encumbered by our own inquisitive naiveté, evil strikes.

During supper, the devil having already put into the heart of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, to betray Him...

John 13:2

Rattlesnakes are not evil, but their instinctive actions can bring evil into the lives of their unwitting victims. The rattlesnake was telling Thornton to stay away, but being unfamiliar with the snake's language, he drew closer than he should.

Satan's evil is more insidious, for instead of warning us away he entices us into his lair with sweetness, lies, and light. Those who become his victims fall prey to his lies because they are unfamiliar with his deceitful language. Thinking they are beyond harm, they draw closer, and closer, until he strikes, injecting his poison into their veins.

Truth is, Satan's venom is of such potency that it can do us harm even without contact with his fangs. Just being in close proximity to him or his minions can bring poison into our lives. We can become, like Thornton, short-tempered, turning viciously on those we love, spreading the venom beyond ourselves.

What should we do? Learn to recognize the sound of Satan's voice.

Then stay away.

