

Cultural Daily

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Dog Fight—For Our Lives

Mish (Eileen) Murphy · Wednesday, November 1st, 2017

Pre-breakfast encounter

It's about 6:30 a.m., still dark, when my three dogs and I exit the front door to our fenced-in front yard. My three race to the front gate and start barking at some shadowy dogs outside the gate. In a flash, chaos erupts.

This is unincorporated Lakeland, Florida, a quiet, semi-rural area. I hold a metal flashlight. My dogs—a black Lab (65 pounds), a Spaniel mix (50 pounds), and a Chi-Spaniel (15 pounds)—don't bark long.



Pit bulls out of nowhere

Site of the fight for Cookie

The dogs outside the gate are now inside our yard. They attack my dogs immediately. They are giant pit bulls. Three against two-and-a-quarter (little Cookie doesn't count as a full dog). They're about 70 pounds of muscle each. I start kicking and hitting at them with my flashlight, but they're stubborn and strong.

A dog chases Cookie. Our Alpha dog, York, circles around the attack dog and tries to help. But another dog tears into York's flank, so his protection effort fails. I chase after my little dog and her attacker.

Cookie fights for her life in the bougainvillea bushes

Fleeing into the relative safety of the bushes, Cookie squeezes her mini body deep into the depths of the bougainvillea with its massive thorny clusters. But the pit bull can still reach her. It's got her body in its teeth, shaking her. I'm on the other side of them. We are in a kind of cave. I am kicking the pit bull and hitting its eyes and nose with the metal flashlight while Cookie squeals. I do this for an eternity.



Dog's teeth displayed at the vet's where the team saved our dogs' lives

It's odd that I haven't gotten bit. The one and only previous time I tried to break up a dog fight, I got my finger almost taken off. That's why, for example, I'm not trying to grab this dog by the collar (this is the only one of the pit bulls that has

a collar). I've been expecting dog bites, no matter how careful I am. But apparently, these dogs are trained. "Fighting other dogs is okay—but no aggression against humans" is an evil philosophy in my book. Don't canine lives matter?

At last, the dog releases Cookie for an instant. She escapes and dives under my car. Now I can see Savane, our senior Spaniel mix, on his back. Two pit bulls hunker over him, pinning him to the ground with jaws on his neck.

I open the front door to the house to yell "Help!" at the top of my lungs to my sleeping husband (I had no chance to do this earlier—I had to save Cookie). Then I open the front gate so the pit bulls have a big opening to leave through.



The pit bulls' finale

Cookie barely manages to drink water

York, the black Lab, has disappeared, hiding somewhere. I start kicking and hitting the (now) three dogs savaging Savane—yelling, "Out! Get out!"

The whole time (as crazy as it sounds), I don't feel fear. I am in a zone outside of time or space. The life or death zone.

When my husband opens the door to the house to look outside, Cookie dashes in and hides behind the dresser in the bedroom. My husband starts kicking the pit bulls along with me.

Finally, it's getting light out, so I can see where the fighting dogs pushed against the wires of our chain link fence at a place that had pre-existing weakness. They created a gap and forced their way through. Two of the pit bulls are white and brown, and one is chocolate colored. They're clean, well fed, sleek.



The gap in the fence

My husband gives one of them a powerful kick, and the Hounds of Hell finally abandon Savane. They dance away, not even tired.

Everyone licks his or her wounds

Forty-five minutes later at the veterinarian's, I'm asking the doctor if my babies will live. After a preliminary exam, the vet says, *Yes*. All three are sedated and sewn up. Cookie and Savane have drains.

The day after the fight, I realize I'm hurt, too. The bougainvillea where the pit bull and I fought over Cookie did a number on me. Bougainvillea are vines with beautiful purple blossoms and horrible sharp thorns. A thorn pierced my right middle finger. There must be an irritant or poison found on the thorns. My finger has swollen to twice normal size. I also have gashes on my ankles and thighs. My hands and arms are scratched up. My back and neck ache.



Black Lab York rests after the ordeal

I spend the night on the sofa so I can watch the dogs. Judging by their moans and whimpers while

slumbering, both Cookie and Savane have nightmares. I feel like I've been in a bad car crash or like someone broke into our house. I've never been in a real fight before. Yet a friend of mine compares me to a mother lion defending her cubs. I didn't know I had it in me.

Overly aggressive dogs

Humans trained those pit bulls to be aggressive. As a dog lover, I do love pit bulls. My family member has two pit bull mix dogs that are pack-mates with my dogs; they're sweet and non-aggressive.

Yet almost any dog can be trained to bring out the aggression. It could be the attacking dogs were hunting dogs, fighting dogs, or simply home protectors, but in any case, turned aggressive by their owners. Supposedly, folks around here use trained pit bulls like the ones that attacked my dogs to hunt wild boar. Could it be that humans who train their dogs to be overly aggressive are pathologically attracted to cruelty and violence?

If the dogs that attacked mine are ever caught, they'll be destroyed. But the people who made them that way, not a chance.

What a world.

Top: Cookie begins her recovery.

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