



An Open and Shut Case ...

(It's early afternoon on this sunny but still chilly spring day; Dave is sitting at the hori-gotatsu - the sunken table in his living room that has a small infrared bulb underneath, and which is the only place in the house where it is possible to sit comfortably to do his paperwork. There is a scratching sound at the sliding door, and a moment later, it slides open a few inches, and Boots the Cat worms her way through the gap.)

Dave: Boots-chan, please close the door behind you!

(Boots says nothing, just walks around the table, chooses a spot where the sun is streaming through the window, and begins her after-lunch cleaning routine. Dave sighs, picks up the small ruler that is always at hand just for this purpose, and reaches across to push the door closed.)

Dave: You know, I'm very happy that you've learned to open the door by yourself, so that I don't have to get up to let you in or out, but one day we're going to have to teach you how to close it too.

Boots: Do you really think it is possible to 'teach' cats anything?

Dave: No, I suppose not. But I would like to think that you could learn to be a bit more polite about this!

Boots: Why don't you build some kind of automatic closing mechanism for it?

Dave: And if I did, what then? As you came through, it would then close on your tail! Would you like that? Now that gives me an idea; if I did build such a thing, you would soon be asking me to return to this current system. I could then ask you to promise to close it every time!

Boots: Please remember Dave, I'm not trying to be impolite ... but I don't have any hands! Although I can nudge that sliding door open, there is no way that I can manage to close it.

Dave: Yes, I guess that's so. And anyway, it's such fun watching the faces of visitors who are sitting here chatting with me when you come in. They know that I live alone, so are puzzled at first when they hear that scratching sound. Then as the door opens a bit and you first poke your nose in, then push further and come into the room, they can't believe what they are seeing. "That cat opened the door by itself!" "What's so special about that," I reply, "Can't your cat open doors?"

Boots: Yes, I'm always a bit surprised that they are surprised. But I can guess what has happened in their homes; in most places, when the cat sits at a doorway meowing, the owner will get up and open it to let them through. Those cats have got their owners well trained. Unfortunately though, you never fell for that trick ...

(Boots sighs a bit in frustration ...)

Dave: Oh, so that kind of behaviour is a 'trick', is it?

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Boots: Um ... no, no, don't misunderstand! It's not exactly a 'trick', but just rather ... you know ... kind of 'training'.

Dave: I think I understand very well. I'll have to remember this advice in future ...

(Boots comes over closer to Dave and rubs against his arm. She stretches out her head expectantly, and he begins to idly scratch it for her ...)

Dave: Yep; I'll remember this advice. I'm not the kind of person who would allow themselves to be manipulated by their pet cat.

(Boots says nothing; just flops down on her back in the sunshine while Dave rubs her belly ...)

Dave: This conversation has been a good lesson for me!

Boots: Zzzzzzz Zzzzzzz