

Conversations with Coal Dawg #6: War With a Mad Dog

Coal was 13 this Valentine's Day. Our old black lab/golden retriever has brought as much love as cupid to our house. Now, he's losing strength in his hind legs.

Sometimes I have to help him get up on our bed for morning and evening lovin'. Lovin' is his routine for special tummy rubs and gentle words the first and last thing of each day.

He's still a puppy about his dawn walks. Coal is slowing and I let him just decide each day how far he wants to go. We talked international politics this Tidewater 'mawnin'.

"They're about to let slip the dogs of war on Iraq," I put my thoughts out loud.

"Which dogs? Me? Going to war?" Coal's ears perked up.

"Nope," I laughed, "not you. And not this old Airborne, Ranger Infantryman either."

"Why can't we just let the inspections continue their business? Triple the inspectors? What's the rush?"

"Whoa, you actually listen when Fox news is on. I thought you were sleeping," I tugged on the leash gently. "Will inspecting for another month or another year matter? Is Saddam Hussein hiding the weapons or not? A smoking gun means someone is shot."

Coal growled, "Of course he has weapons of mass destruction. But, we need the international community and our allies to go along." Coal is a former Liberal.

"Why? We didn't ask anyone's permission to get attacked on 9-11. Do we act in our interests or as subjects of the UN? What do you do with a dog with rabies? Wait for it to jump the fence and attack? Build bigger fences? Hope it'll just bite neighbors?"

"You shoot mad dogs," Coal tucked his tail at the thought. "But pre-emptive war

is not Just War.”

“Just War doesn’t apply to Mad Dogs.”

“They haven’t attacked us. Why aren’t we going after Al Qaeda?”

“Tell the Army soldiers in Afghanistan that their not hunting Al Qaeda. We’re doing both. Just like you’d with two mad dogs.”

“We aren’t attacking North Korea.”

“Their mad dog leader has nukes and wants money. We’ll get a muzzle on him with diplomacy and get his neighbors to help put him away.

“Attacking will increase the terrorist attacks,” Coal marked more territory.

“If we attack or not, will the Islamists hate us and attack us sooner or later?”

“They’ll attack. They already did. But, it might cause a clash of civilizations – the West against Islam. There are 1.5 billion Muslims. Will we fight them all?”

“If the woods have many animals with rabies, we can either hunt down the infected ones, or do nothing and let the madness spread. The other animals don’t want to see us hunting, but they will be glad when the rabid creatures are gone. It’s hard to fight rabies. You never get it all, but you can control the outbreak.”

“We armed Saddam in the 80s. And it’s just about oil anyway.”

“Coal, b-a-d dog,” I spelled because Coal hates to hear the word ‘bad’. “The U.S. didn’t make Saddam a mad dog. We could take the oil and any thing else on earth we want. We don’t need war for an excuse. If you think this war is about oil, revenge, or anything more petty than the survival of thousands of Americans – who will be killed sooner or later by the spread of Saddam’s rabies if not his bite himself, then...”

“You have rabies?” Coal wagged his tail hopefully.

“If you think the Bush administration is taking us to war for any reasons less

noble, less important, less justified than the Clinton administration's involvement in Bosnia and Kosovo, then you are dumber than those little rat dogs down the street. Or, like a cat, you are just so full of yourself, you think nothing of anyone else. Or, you are so filled with political hate that you foam at the mouth. You have a peculiar kind of rabies."

"The anti-war demonstrators are mad dogs?"

"Some of them. Many of them are just soft, silly creatures who would live with a wolf – and hope they can just be happy longer than the wolf is hungry."

"Are they traitors?" Coal's sweet brown eyes entreated gentleness.

"Coalie, they aren't traitors, just appeasers to mad dogs, until the war starts. When our flag is in the fight, they must choose. If they protest still, they serve mad dogs."

"Our dogs of war will hunt all enemies," Coal turned to go home, "foreign and domestic won't they?"

"The mad dogs will die. Every other creature must protect them or hunt them or get out of the way."

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