

David Wilcox "The Carpenter"

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I don't know how long it had been, since these neighbors had even talked to each other.

I think it had been about two years, maybe.

And it started over the dumbest thing. It was just that stray cat.

I mean, one of them thought it was theirs and then it went over to the other porch there, across the little field, the valley there.

And the other farmer took it in. Each of them thought it was their cat, and every time they'd start talking, they'd start arguing about it.

And then they just quit talking.

And so that when the traveler came through looking for work, one farmer said, "Well, yeah. You say you're a carpenter, I've got some work for you."

"You see that house across this field here? Well, that's my damn neighbor!" "You see this little ditch here in the middle? Well, he calls that the creek!" "He dug that with his plow! He went up on the hill and changed the way the spring comes down!" "The creek! It's got a little trickle running through there."

"Well, if he's gonna try to divide us up with that thing, I'll jus' as soon finish the job. I want a fence - all the way across. I don't even want to have to look at him! Can you do that?"

And this carpenter says, "Well, yeah, I could do that. I would need a whole lot more wood. But I could get started with what you've got in the shed there, you'd have to go into town."

And by the time that farmer comes back, driving up

that ole rutted road in his truck, full of that lumber. And he looks out into that field, where his new fence ought to be, and that carpenter has built.. a bridge.

Out of his wood! Onto his land! And here comes his neighbor! Walking across his bridge, walking onto his land, hand out-stretched, big ol' stupid smile on his face.

Coming right up to his truck, and his neighbor says, "You're, you're a brave man, I didn't think you'd ever want to hear the sound of my voice again." "I feel like such a damn fool, can you, can you forgive me?"

And this farmer finds himself saying, "Awww, hell, I knew that was your cat!"

And he looks over, and the carpenter is walking away, and he says, "Hey! Hey, I've got some more work for ya, if you ah....What?"

The carpenter says, "You'll be fine... I'm needed elsewhere."

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