

A Cat Sleepover

CatChannel's Peter Gerstenzang blogs about having the neighbor cat, Tinkerbelle, over to spend a few days with Gracie. Did anyone get any sleep?

By Peter Gerstenzang

Posted: April 2, 2009, 3 a.m. EDT

Not long ago, my neighbor, Mrs. Morrissey, told me she had to go away for a while. As far as I know, this wasn't a euphemism for doing jail time. The worst crime I've ever seen her commit is not separating her glass and plastic bottles for recycling. Mrs. Morrissey really wanted to know if I'd baby-sit her enormous cat, Tinkerbelle. I understand that some people can't board their precious babies when they travel. So, even though I have a jealous cat at home, and a dog who thinks my having a cat is just a phase, I said yes.

Well, we survived this weekend sleepover. But Gracie is just starting to recover. Plus, she and Happy have formed a dangerous alliance that now rivals that of Germany and Japan.

Things began inauspiciously. When Tinkerbelle arrived she displayed what therapists call "inappropriate behavior." Translation: She went over to Gracie and sat on her. This is what therapists call "a manifestation of insecurity." But Tinkerbelle was still sitting on my cat. Did I mention that the visiting cat weighs about 49 pounds? Anyway, bedlam ensued. Gracie tried to free herself. I told Tinkerbelle to behave, uh, appropriately. I think Happy is studying Zen Buddhism. He watched the whole thing with an air of detached bemusement. Things seemed bleak.

But the turnaround was quick. Both cats realized they each love to play the piano — meaning, running along the keys until it sounds like really bad Philip Glass. Or is that redundant? Happy, who can't get up on the piano, settled for the role of conductor. This was particularly unfortunate; he has the rhythmic sense of Vanilla Ice. Later that night, as Hap howled along to the cats, I realized he has no sense of harmony either. But at 3 am, would it have mattered?

After bonding over their love of the keyboard, Tinkerbelle and Gracie were inseparable. They even ate and drank from the same bowl. Of course, the latter took place in the upstairs bathroom. Hey, I said Gracie was a good cat. I didn't say she was the best influence. This camaraderie went on for two days.

When Mrs. Morrissey finally came for Tinkerbelle, the cat was a bit miffed to see her. She ran off and tried squeezing her size 6 frame under my size 3 ottoman. Only after my solemn promise that she could come back and visit did Tinkerbelle emerge. You have no idea how stupid you feel, leaning down and talking to a piece of furniture. Gracie and Happy gathered to say goodbye. Tinkerbelle went over to Gracie and sat on her again. My cat took it very well, though — considering it took her most of the next week to return to her normal shape. Mrs. Morrissey seemed so offended that her cat wasn't pleased to see her, she hasn't called since. I'm not too crazy about her, so that's a bonus. So, Tinkerbelle, if you're out there, listen: Babe, I owe you one.