

Gracie Gets Clean

CatChannel humor columnist Peter Gerstanzang gives his favorite cat a bath - and lives to blog about it.

By Peter Gerstanzang

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Gracie usually does a good job of licking herself clean. Occasionally, though, if she has just eaten some tuna (followed by a mouse chaser), the results are unsettling - meaning Gracie's coat smells like a bad night in the kitchen of Long John Silver's. So recently, after reading a how-to article, then saying a prayer to The Man Upstairs, I decided to wash my cat. By "The Man Upstairs," I mean Mr. Moskowitz, in apartment 3B. He's very high-strung, and if Gracie makes noise, he calls the landlord.

After some deliberation, I decided the sink would be a good place for a bath. Gracie does everything you can mention in that sink. And a few things you can't. So why not one thing more? I ran some water, then picked up the cat.

Now, Gracie is very easy to deal with when it comes to most things. Picking her up, though, is a crapshoot. Sometimes she licks your face. Other times, she grabs it - like the "Face Hugger" in "Aliens." This day, I got the Face Hugger. After peeling her off me, she leapt into my arms, which was no bargain either. Now, the article had clearly said, "Wear a long-sleeved shirt" when washing a cat. I did. Unfortunately, the sleeves were cotton. And Gracie tore them up. Perhaps the piece should have specified that the shirt be made of something stronger. Like titanium. Next time, I'll split the difference and wear my fencing jacket.

Once I got Gracie into the sink, things didn't improve much. She conveniently forgot all the time she'd spent there and started acting like an inmate in an old prison movie. You know, meowing like, "Let me out of here, or I'm busting out in the next laundry truck." I sprayed her gently and lathered her nicely with kitty shampoo. I then chuckled at my cat, all covered in this goo. With that, Gracie flung a fistful right in my face. A cat version of, "Yeah? How do you like it?" I rinsed her off and then applied Garnier Fructis conditioner. Yes, I was skeptical, too. But that's what my article had specified. Unless, I had skipped a page and was now reading, "My Beauty Secrets — By Tyra Banks."

Eventually, I got Gracie rinsed off. Then got the blow dryer. Another hurdle to overcome. My cat decided that this harmless gadget was really a ray gun. In keeping with this sci-fi theme, Gracie then jumped up and did her Face Hugger move again. Suddenly, we were re-enacting, "Alien 3: The Resurrection." I managed to unpeel Gracie and dry her. I sniffed her coat and found she was as fragrant as a plug-in air freshener. While I sniffed, Gracie gave me another swipe on the cheek. I promised her this was the last bath for a while, and that I didn't mind that last scratch. Then told her this: That, considering what I had put her through, she had a right. And she definitely owed me one.