

Cat-a-tonic

By Terry R A Eissfeldt

"Mom," my daughter's voice hummed across the phone line, "can Ceaser come live with you while I'm in England?"

"But...but... Jill," I stuttered, "you're going to be gone for 2 years." I laughed nervously. I didn't want Jill to hear horror trying to creep into my voice. Her cat was psychotic.

"Two years at the most, Mom." I could hear the determination in her voice. "You have 15 acres and a lot of other animals. It's not like he's a problem or anything."

Not a problem? Who was she trying to kid? My 8 year old cat, Peanut, wasn't a problem. He lived outside, caught mice and moles and purred as I pet him each morning when I fed the horses. Ceaser, on the other hand, dismantled Christmas trees faster than the Grinch, shred furniture with the speed of light, and jumped on top of unsuspecting sleeping victims with morbid delight. He was definitely a problem but, being a supportive parent, I agreed to take custody of the frenzied feline.

"What do you mean Ceaser is coming to live here?" My husband didn't even try to hide the horror in his voice. "He's a monster! He'll destroy the place."

"Now, Tom," I put on my calm-in-the-face-of-the-storm voice, "he's not that bad."

"Not that bad? You saw the state of the apartment." He shuddered then added, "And what about the stories from Jill's roommates? Ceaser is Jack the Ripper of the animal world."

"Tom, be reasonable," I pleaded. "The guys in the apartments were mean to Ceaser. Maybe we can help him become a good cat, like Peanut." I smiled sweetly at my husband, "Let's just do it for Jill."

"Well, okay. I'll agree, but only for Jill." He pointed his finger at me, "This cat is on a short leash. If he messes up he'll wish Jill never rescued him from being duck taped to the wall." He turned and walked to the door.

"Where are you going?" I enquired.

"To see how much duck tape I have."

Two weeks later we bid goodbye to Jill and picked Ceaser up. He howled like a condemned prisoner all the way home. He was in a dog crate. I'm sure he was incensed by the constraint and the smell. He had no idea what awaited him.

I had assured Jill that I wouldn't let the cat out for a few days and even though we patiently listened to all of her instructions, we had our own agenda. It included a water bottle.

Those first few days were helter-skelter. We locked him in the bathroom each night just to contain him. The shower curtain didn't survive the first fifteen minutes. During the day I followed him around with the primed and loaded water bottle. He got squirted for jumping on the table, the counter, climbing my curtains and leg, trying to eat the fish and shred the back of my new tapestry wing chair. It was a duel to the death. Whose will would be broken first?

Half way through the third day, the third day of accomplishing nothing other than cleaning up after the cat, (I must admit my floors were never washed that much before or since) I came to the breaking point. I had just squirted him for trying to use my couch as a scratching post. He didn't react but instead merely looked at me as if to say, "Is that all you got?" I calmly put the water bottle down, picked him up and put him out the front door.

"Ha! Take that, Ceaser! You are banished!" I gave a victory dance around the house.

When my husband came home from work, he looked around the living room, found me lying on the couch and asked, "Where's the cat?"

"Outside," I replied smugly. "I am woman. I will not be bested by a cat. I've got him right where I want him. He fears and respects me now."

Later that night Ceaser came in and I thought I noticed a new smugness about him. I didn't understand. Did we both win?

The next morning during breakfast, Ceaser sauntered over to the couch. I thought I noticed him look over his shoulder as I picked up the water bottle. Before I could squeeze the trigger he ran to the front door. I opened it for him. He swaggered out.

"Yep," Tom snickered, "I can see you've got him right where you want him."

Terry R A Eissfeldt lives on beautiful Vancouver Island with her husband and children. She is the worship leader for her local church and writes songs, stories and poetry. Her first novel, *Going Home*, was published by Tate Publishers in Jan 2007.