

MUSINGS OF A CATSITTER

What one does in the name of Mother Love!

Last July, daughter Sallie had a short spell in hospital and I went up to darkest Oxfordshire to help out while she convalesced for a couple of weeks. I then stayed on while she went for a three-week holiday to Spain. My brief was to guard the Homestead and its treasures with my life; to ensure that granddaughter Rebecca had the occasional early night and nourishing meal and got off safely for her holiday in France and lastly and most important of all, I should be companion and guardian to Sallie's elderly Siamese cat - a prima donna if ever I saw one!

Mitten has been the most important member of the family since her birth in our airing cupboard fourteen years ago. She has ruled with a rod of iron from that day on and Sallie's whole routine revolves around her needs.

So there I was on August 11th in sole command of a desirable residence and an abandoned cat who immediately registered her disapproval of Sallie's absence by yowling the entire day. She tired herself out at last and slept well until six o'clock the following morning when she awoke feeling a little peckish. She miaowed piteously until in desperation I dragged myself from my dreams, went downstairs and gave her some Whiskas. I crawled hopefully back to bed but within minutes she was enthusiastically expressing her thanks, saying it was a lovely day and why wasn't I up and doing! This routine continued for the entire three weeks and was not appreciated by my Mother and Sister when they came to stay for a few days. In fact Mitten just does not know how near she came to being a victim of Catricide!

One of her other irritating habits was to always leave some food in her dish however little I gave her and refuse to touch the left-overs. I think she must have read some Victorian book of etiquette which emphasised that this was ladylike behaviour. Anyway, I swear I threw more of her food away than she ever ate, though occasionally I cheated and mixed the old with the new when she wasn't looking. She kept up non-stop conversation from morning to night except for brief periods when she curled up and went to sleep.

But maddening though she is, Mitten is still, despite her great age, so pretty and graceful and so affectionate that she gets away with everything. She definitely thinks that the human race was put on earth to make a great fuss of her and minister to her needs. In fact she thinks she's human herself and a Princess at that!

I don't know who was more pleased to see Sallie back home. Mitten in expectation of lots more spoiling or me out of sheer exhaustion! What I say is "Greater Love has no woman than this; that she takes on her Daughter's cat and keeps smiling".

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