

LIFE'S PURRFECTION

The Standoff

A resident cat doesn't take kindly to her new kitten companion.

NO ONE WAS PREPARED FOR WHAT was to come when my daughter Cherri and her husband, Nick, brought home a tiny gray-striped bundle of fur as company for Izzie, their incumbent cat.

First off, Izzie didn't buy the playmate defense and instantly lowered up, filing objections to the intruder, naming alienation of affection, intrusion of privacy and a host of other feline issues. Normally a very meow, slightly timid tabby, Izzie suddenly found her inner voice, which she put to use in growls of protestation.

Introducing a new feline into a household is never straightforward. Behaviorists will tell you that you have to keep the two cats separated, and first introduce them by smell before any physical get-togethers.

The kitten, named Mr. Poopy Pants (that's another story), wasn't programmed with a "sleep mode" button. And when Cherri and Nick finally climbed into bed at night, he continued bouncing, stopping every so often to pant like a dog and recharge for the next round of fun.

He chased their toes and tried to lick their eyelids open for more games. Then he wrapped himself around their necks and lay purring for 20 seconds.

After a couple of nights of this, Nick couldn't stand it any more and decided to sleep on a mattress on the floor in the living room. Cherri was left in the bed with the bouncing furball.

Izzie, of course, curled into Nick on the mattress as if to say, "I told you so. What were you thinking?"

When it came to the initial introductions, my friend Darlene Arden, an animal behaviorist, suggested that Cherri and Nick put vanilla essence on both cats so that they would smell the same to each other. For good measure they dabbed a little on themselves, too.

THEN I DECIDED TO PLAY DEAD, WHICH IS REALLY DIFFICULT WHEN YOU'RE BEING NIPPED AND WASHED.

Now the entire apartment smelled like a Mrs. Fields store.

Izzie wasn't convinced. Didn't these humans know they already owned a cat? Why were they trying to disguise this interloper as a cookie?

Eventually I was called in to help. By this time, Nick and Izzie had spent 35 nights "camping." So I offered to sleep on the floor with Mr. Pants.

I tried spraying Mr. Pants with water. Now I had a wet kitten coming back for more. Then I decided to play dead, which is really difficult when you're being nipped and washed.

Forty days after the new kitten came on the scene, Izzie and the kitten spent positive time together over meals, but Nick and Izzie still slept on a mattress on the floor to avoid the kitten's nightly escapades.



By day 50, nothing had changed. Cherri looked very worn out.

It's tough to get really mad at Mr. Pants. After all, he's simply living up to expectations encompassed in the expression "as playful as a kitten."

But in Izzie's defense, she never carried on like this.

Mr. Pants is off to be neutered soon. Hopefully he will come back groggy enough to want to sleep. And with a bit of luck, he might realize that sleeping is a very acceptable feline pastime. Lots of cats do it — sometimes for 23 hours a day. ☺



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