

Best Friends

Tess and I live in this really nice cottage. We both have our own space and are always free to come and go as we like. I wander a bit and so does she but at the end of the day we are both here for each other and that is what counts.

Tess has friends in quite often and I like them a lot. Especially Peter who used to come around regularly. He would put his feet on the coffee table, order a pizza and watch TV with me. But one evening he stood up, kissed Tess on the brow, gave me an extra cuddle and told us that he was going somewhere or other for a while. This made me sad. I also know it made Tess sad.

So it was no surprise when someone else started to visit.

The awful Brendan. I took an instant dislike to him and the feeling was obviously mutual. He did not greet me the first time he arrived even though Tessa introduced me to him so sweetly. But as much as I disliked Brendan it was Tess's behaviour that bothered me. She was up and down like a yo-yo. When he visited. The wine, was it the right one? The snacks, were they what he liked? And she giggled a lot until they went out.

She did not forget to give me a hug when she left, which was a good sign but she did forget my evening snack so I sulked a bit but when it got to be late I took up my usual post at the window and waited for her to come home which she did, eventually. She scooped me up, fell into bed and I slept beside her. It seemed the same but it was different.

Tess continued to hug me a lot but she often got a bit absent. She spent an awful lot of time getting dressed. I sat on the end of our bed watching her throw one dress after another on to the floor.

'Pushkin,' she would ask 'do you think I look good in this? Or this?'

It was impossible for me to tell her that I thought she looked wonderful in her jeans, her dressing gown or even when she had a cold in the head. I have a serious language problem.

Brendan pitched up too often after this. He took no notice of me even though Tess told him often that I was her very best friend. He took to glancing at me with hostility but I responded by fixing him with an unblinking stare. This is something I am very good at.

'Tessa dear, your cat looks odd to me.'

Tess was cooking up a storm in the kitchen for Brendan but she almost let the stir fry burn.

'Odd? My Pushkin? What nonsense Brendan, he is the dearest cat in the whole world.'

I almost purred when I heard these words but it turned out that Brendan had his own plans for me.

'Of course poppit,' he said in his silky tone. Of course he is special to you but do you really think he will settle in my large house when we marry?'

My fur stood up when I heard these words while Tess concentrated on the stir-fry.

Brendan checked that the creases in his trousers were straight and sauntered over to the kitchen.

'Come now Tess, you know how well we get on don't you? I think you are an absolute darling. And perfect for the social life we will lead'.

He moved closer to Tess. 'I mean to marry you, my pet, move you out of this pokey place and give you everything you deserve.'

'So,' he cajoled, 'be a sensible as well as a pretty girl and give some serious thought to finding a new home for your animal.'

'Animal!' I could have leapt at Brendan and ripped his tie to pieces.

Tess stood at the kitchen hatch looking scared.

'Are you saying that if I married you I would not be able to keep Pushkin?'

Goodie, goodie. Brendan was now in a position but he was not going to be a pushover for a cat.

'Let's eat darling. We'll discuss this matter another time.'

He sat down at the table while Tess waited on him.

'Brendan,' I thought, "you are an awful man, you are too sure of yourself. How dare you call this cottage 'pokey?'"

I planned my next move and this was quite easy to do while continuing to stare at Brendan. But I noticed that Tess was straightening her shoulders and looking grim.

Someone had to save her from this unctuous individual and who else but her best friend? So I launched myself into the middle of Brendan's plate, splashing its contents over his immaculate shirt and splattering rice and soy sauce onto his shiny shoes.

He was beside himself with fury. He lashed out at my evil nature and Tess's stupidity. He grabbed a dishcloth and bristled out of the door.

I sat still and waited for the consequences. But Tess didn't say a word. She scooped me up and hugged me close even though I had bean sprouts and celery clinging to my fur.

While I licked myself clean and found a few juicy pieces of chicken on the floor Tess tidied up, getting angrier and angrier with herself.

'Pushkin, I am really a very stupid person.'

I comforted her and let her know that I loved her.

And, although it was already nine o'clock, there was a rattle at the door and in walked Peter.

'Sorry to be so long,' he said as if we had been expecting him, 'but Nambia and the wild horses were tough going. Why did I ever choose to be a Vet? Darned good to be back here.'

Tess offered him some left over stir-fry.

'Stir-fry?' Peter looked surprised. 'No thank you. This is a special homecoming dinner and don't we always have a pizza?'

So he picked up the telephone, patted the couch beside him and, just as I was about to join him, Tess slipped into my place.

I am a satisfied cat.

Jean de Kok