

Secret tryst



Katz Tales

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Living with a jealous cat can lead to some awkward situations.

TARGET IS a little snuggle fluff who sees me as his mummy cat. He rarely strays more than a few feet from my side, and his day isn't complete unless we've had a dozen cuddles, complete with purry furry headbutts.

As I am completely under his paw, I rarely deny him – even at 2am.

Apart from the odd rude awakening, there is a dark side to Target's love. He is very possessive. When Guido moved in last year, I had to reassure Target a dozen times a day that he would remain my favourite.

Even now, when Target and Guido have become firm friends who share bowls of cat food, delicious treats and fun games of race-and-chase that end with wrestling matches, Target still becomes nervous if Guido and I spend too much time together.

Some cats sulk, but Target believes in direct action. If Target thinks Guido is getting too much attention, my green-eyed pet marches over and whaps his junior col-

'Hug me! Hug me!' Target appears to be saying. –
Pictures by
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league on the nose.

Luckily, Guido is a very nice cat. He understands Target suffers from jealousy so he never hits back. He just gently effaces himself. Interestingly, Guido can spend as much time as he likes with my other half, the one Au refers to on his Twitter feed as De Male – Guido can sit on him all night long, and

Target wouldn't twitch a whisker.

If Target were human, we'd tell him to get over himself. However, our little cat has feelings but he can't control them. To keep the peace, I choose to hide the time I spend with Guido.

Guido and I have gradually developed a pattern of secret trysts.

Guido sneaks into bed in the middle of the night and wakens me by kneading, a kittenish habit that led to his nickname Mr Stampy. As Target is usually fast asleep on my pillow at this time, we can cuddle undisturbed. Still, as I'm not fully *compus mentis* at that time of day, you can't really call it quality time.

Proper canoodling comes in the morning.

Guido is an early riser who is out at first light whereas Target likes to lie in. When Target gets up and goes for his early morning walk, Guido comes back, has a quick morning biscuit, and then throws himself into bed and on top of me for a cuddle.

I stroke Guido's chin, rub his ears and he purrs up a storm. Sometimes Guido is so purry that he starts his Mr Stampy act again.

Thanks to my working from home, we also have the occasional afternoon tryst. These take place when I have a

short inspiration break. To the untutored eye, this looks like a post-lunch nap. However, although I am lying on the bed with my eyes closed, underneath that outer calm, the brain is working overtime.

At this time, Target is usually out cold on the treadmill downstairs because he's too lazy to walk upstairs after his lunch. In the past, I'd be alone at this time, but these days there's

a soft plaff sound the second I close my eyes – as Guido jumps into bed and slides up to join me.

As it's very much stolen time, these moments are extra sweet. Guido and I chat, cuddle, and sometimes we play a wild game where I run my hands under the bed sheets and Guido pounces on them like a little furry tiger cat.

It's all great fun but the thing is that when you indulge in clandestine behaviour, you are almost certain to be caught. Just the other day, Guido and I were having a good giggle when Target walked in. For a moment, we were all horrified.

As Guido stiffened in surprise and Target glared at me, I felt like I was taking part in one of those French bedroom farces.

Target has certain

THERE are huge arguments over whether animals have emotions or not. When the argument comes to mammals, we know they have similar brain structures to ours.

We see them happy, aggrieved, and depressed, among other familiar emotions.

However, hardliners insist this means nothing. They say that the emotions we think we see in horses, dogs, cats and other familiar pets are simply hard-wired responses to external stimuli.

Animal lovers argue that you could say the same thing about humans, except perhaps for certain hardliners.

If you adopt the approach that we can never know what goes on in another living creature's mind, then a practical way to relate to your pet is to assume they share your emotions but that they don't have your control.

histrionic talents, and at this moment, they came to the fore. There was no doubt my pet considered himself an injured party: expressions of hurt, horror and outrage flitted over his furry face.

As Guido began to gingerly retreat, I decided to put an end to this ridiculous situation. I put one hand on Guido to keep him with me, and reached out to pet Target. To my surprise, my little cat relaxed and came over for a snuggle.

I'm almost certain it was totally accidental that while Target was settling himself into a comfy position, he shoved his tail in Guido's face and then trampled all over him.

■ *Ellen Whyte can't remember a time that she wasn't ruled by cats. She read animal behaviour at university but it hasn't helped her gain the upper paw. When not writing Tales, she blogs about her cats at blog.lepak.com.*

Your emo cat

As you can't tell your pet to pull his or her metaphorical socks up, the kind pet owner recognises and works with an emo pet to overcome uncomfortable feelings. A useful rule of thumb is to treat your pet like a two-year-old child.

A cat who is jealous of a new pet/baby/lover needs assurance that he or she is still loved and wanted. A cat who is humiliated after falling off a sofa should be petted afterwards and consoled. And a cat who is afraid can't be faulted for sticking out a claw or hissing.

Crossing the communication divide of the species isn't always easy but the rewards are fabulous – a happy, healthy cat has a bottomless well of love to give.



Adopt us!

DOLLY and Donald are five months old, and looking for a home. Dolly loves to "talk" and cuddle while Donald is more reserved but secretly loves being scratched and stroked. Interested parties can call Alicia (012-331 3318).

Green-eyed: Jealous little Target wants all the attention.