

FROM WHERE I SIT

JOHN COONEY

Gorsebush

My wife and I have, over the years, welcomed untold pets into our household. We've gone beyond the call of duty when it comes to giving four-legged waifs and strays a place to live and food to eat. In fact, the animals lucky enough to be adopted by us have all had better food than I get: gourmet meals, with lashings of venison, salmon, rabbit and lamb! So when a tiny, furry, black-and-white orphan was delivered to our front door the other week, I said "Thanks, but no thanks ..."

It was a kitten, just two days old, its eyes still closed, its ears just bumps. It had been found, abandoned, under a gorse-bush, and it obviously needed a home.

"But SOMEONE ELSE'S home!" I insisted ...

My wife, you see, is a big softy where babies are concerned, and I've been forced to harden my heart. "We've done our dash with pets," I declared. And she knew, deep down, I was right.

A compromise was eventually reached: she would feed the kitten and keep it for a week – then give it to our daughter, who was recovering from the flu. And, in good faith, I agreed.

My wife engaged her grandkids to help find the kitten a name. But when the vet made a guess – "It's a boy!" – I took it upon myself to christen the newcomer 'GORSEBUSH'.

I remained aloof through the first day or so. But my wife, her mother-instincts on high alert, was in her element. She



Googled galore, converted a cardboard box into a five-star kitty-cot, tracked down some wonder-growth kitty-formula, and soon had Gorsebush drinking greedily from a medicine-dropper.

I made the mistake at one point of admitting that he was cute. But I quickly regretted that when she explained what was required of us: two-hourly feeds, right through the night – plus potty-training.

Aarrghhh!

Now, you probably already know this, but very young kittens can't go to the toilet by themselves. Oh no, they need help. They rely on their mother to stimulate the required activity

by licking the appropriate parts of their miniature kitten anatomy.

That's right – *licking!*

Which is why, if you'd been staying at our place that week, you might have heard me protest: "You've gotta be JOKING!"

And, if you'd come into our bedroom at two o'clock in the morning, you might have found me lying wide-awake, while my wife sat beside me massaging Gorsebush's tiny bum with a warm, wet flannel!

Gorsebush, it turned out, was a fast-learner with No.1s – but a non-starter with No.2s. Which was a worry, my wife informed me, because "the poor thing might die!" So, before I knew it, she was rushing him to the vet every few days for a tiny kitty enema!

As one sleepless week stretched into two, and two stretched into three, I sensed that my "final word on the subject" was being ignored. Little kitty toys were appearing throughout the house, the cardboard box was replaced with the cat-equivalent of a *Sleepyhead* mattress, and tiny tins of pussy-mouse turned up mysteriously in our fridge.

"I hope you aren't getting attached to this thing," I warned. But when Gorsebush finally did a pooh – accompanied by celebratory high-fives and a chorus of

"What-a-clever-wee-boy!" – I knew I was in trouble.

Two months have now passed. Our hyperactive little orphan has had its first injection – and was rewarded with yet another item of furniture: a kitten-sized, three-story, fully-carpeted playpen! And, just last week, the vet changed his mind: our boy is actually a girl – so Gorsebush has been given a more feminine-sounding name: 'Mittens'.

Mittens has taken to climbing up my leg while I'm watching TV, then falling asleep draped around my neck. And, just two minutes ago, while I was typing these words, she took a walk on my keyboard – producing her first sentence: *kkkkkjjjggkgsdddddUUU=====*.

Now, don't get me wrong. My hard heart hasn't softened, and my resolve hasn't weakened. We don't need another cat, and that's not likely to change.

But, look, I guess one more week won't hurt. ❁

JOHN (GRAPEVINE'S FOUNDER/EDITOR) RECALLS READING SOMEWHERE THAT "DOGS HAVE OWNERS, BUT CATS HAVE STAFF". AND HE HAS A FUNNY FEELING THAT GORSEBUSH ... SORRY, MITTENS ... IS PLANNING TO TAKE OVER.

THORT



There's always a lot to be thankful for, if you take time to look for it. For example, I'm standing here thinking how nice it is that wrinkles don't hurt.