

Don't ever try to give a cat a bath. That's just friendly advice.

One would think anyone over the age, or IQ, of 3 would know this. My sister, who is brilliant, beautiful, athletic, the works, at one point didn't. Of course, she was probably only about 16 at the time.



Now she knows. It's a lesson she'll undoubtedly never forget, no matter how much therapy she undergoes.

Seriously, I doubt she remembers this, because she was about 16 and I was probably 9 at the time, but that's the curse of having a writer with a twisted sense of humor in the family: We remember everything! She is, as all my siblings are, pretty great for a sibling; in fact, she is one of my two favorite sisters and my certainly my favorite eldest sister. I realize, now that I am getting old and useless, that a little sand blower brother is a nuisance akin to Biblical pestilence to a teenage girl, and said sandblower feels about the same way about his late sleeping, sharp tongued, tennis star, popularity queen older sister.

But one of her quirks at the time was the fact she held a delusion – common among most cat owners, actually – that she and she alone somehow had this unique, Doolittle-esque relationship with our cat, Frisky. Often she would sweep the cat up in her arms, smothering her little annoyed and growling face with kisses, and murmur some of the most nauseating pet names I've ever heard, like, "Oh my little Bubushka!"

Oh, my stomach...

Frisky! She was okay, as far as cats go, but at the end of the day, she was a cat. That is, she never, ever, showed affection unless it was mealtime; she never came when she was called, or even gave the slightest semblance of acknowledging anyone other than whoever was holding the food bowl.

I'll give Frisky this; she never played favorites. She treated everyone with equal disdain, even my deluded sister.

Anyway, my sister decided one day that the cat needed a flea bath, and somehow impressed me into service. I think I went along with the idea more to watch the disaster I saw rapidly unfolding rather than because of any fraternal affection or loyalty. And my skepticism was to be rewarded.

As I recall, my sister's cunning plan included a piece of cheese to occupy the cat, a pair of rubber gloves to hold her, and a bucket of sudsy, flea soap- saturated cold water, and a garden hose for the final rinse.

"She isn't going to like that," I said.

"Shut up, and get the bucket!"

Shaking my head, I followed them out to the backyard and set the bucket in the grass. Having given the cat a tiny piece of cheese which it had long since inhaled, my sister now grasped Frisky firmly around her middle and proceeded to lower her slowly into the bucket, tail-first.

The way I remember it, the cat's tail twitched ever so hesitantly just above the surface of the water. My sister then went for the quick dunk, thinking she could get the cat mostly wet and sudsy and have me rinse her off with the hose as she held her comfortingly close and whispered nauseating love nothings to her.

Unfortunately, the cat no doubt thought my sister was trying to drown her. So while you can probably guess the cat's reaction, there is just no way to describe the sheer intensity and

violence of that reaction.

All I heard was this feral, high-pitched yowl, followed by a sound not unlike several samurai swords whistling through air. Then Frisky managed to turn around, and those Samurai swords – her claws – impaled themselves right into my sister's shoulder. My sister shrieked in anger and disbelief and tried to bat the cat away, but Frisky had already climbed her and was perched firmly on top of my sister's head, digging in the spikes, howling for all she was worth, and all my sister could do was keep screaming and waving her arms.

I would have helped her but I couldn't breathe, I was laughing so hard. I couldn't even get off the ground where I had collapsed. Besides, what could I have done? Yank a nail-embedded demon off my sister's scalp? No thanks. Finally, the cat launched herself like an Olympic swimmer from my sister's head, hitting the ground with her legs going so hard dirt clods hit us from fifteen feet away. She shot straight up a tall pine tree, where she would remain perched on a limb, dripping wet, yowling in righteous anger, for the rest of the day.

For all those bleeding hearts wondering if the poor kitty ever got down out of the tree, of course she did! No cat is ever stuck in a tree. They're shamming, looking for attention! What, you don't believe me? Well, how many cat skeletons have you ever seen in trees?

In fact, the only way we would have seen a cat skeleton in that tree is if my sister could have found a ladder tall enough to reach her Bubushka.