

IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A PET

By Steve Garry

info@integerentertainment.com  
© 2018

IT'S GREAT TO HAVE A PET

FADE IN:

EXT. SUBURBAN STREET - DAY (DAWN)

An avenue of lower-middle-class but well-maintained homes, none much like the other, with colorful gardens and trimmed trees, average cars in the driveways, welcome signs on doors and senior citizens already sitting on some of the verandas.

There's no road traffic, but a woman pushes a baby carriage on the sidewalk. Till she smiles and moves aside, to let a boy on a skateboard - pulled along by a large dog - go past.

We follow the lad until he reaches a quaint little bungalow. It has a tree, a flowery garden, and an E-car in the drive.

And here we stop. As the dog leads the boy off the curb and down the street, let's move closer and prepare to go inside.

INT. HOUSE/BEDROOM - DAY (DAWN)

This wee place belongs to PENNY, 30, its solitary occupant.

And here she is, a pretty young woman asleep in bed, bathed in intermittent shade and light through her window slats.

Penny may be the sole human, but she's not alone...

For she is the owner of three cats. We see two of them:

JULIUS, a 15-year-old chocolate point, is old and angular, but still contented and regal as he sleeps to the left of Penny's bed, upon a pillow on a tall dresser at the window.

CAESAR, a darker, 10-year-old seal point, sleeps on a pillow on a step table to the right of the bed. He isn't eating properly these days, but was so fat he's still a bit chunky.

And now we assume a low, stalking p.o.v., maybe accompanied by the spooky Jaws® theme: Da-dum-da-dum-da-dum-da-dum.

From the floor, we glide up to the bedside, where we rise to glimpse at Penny, lying motionless there. Then back down to the floor we go, to slink to the foot of the bed for another lean up to peek at Penny. Down again, toward the head of the bed, stop, closer, stop, at the floor right at her face.

Above, Julius head pops up to catch what's going on. Over yonder, Caesar's head too rises to see what's happening.

For there on the floor is the third cat, GUS, a name derived from Augustus, and sometimes modified as Stav, Gustus, etc.

He's a one-year-old frost point, pale in color, muscular and frisky. He defers to old Julius, but will torment and tease sick Caesar, who usually responds grumpily or sarcastically.

But for now, as the hunters that cats are, Gus and his pals freeze - awaiting something's, or somebody's, next move.

A bird chirps outside the window, and all three cats' ears flick back, even as they keep up their unblinking stares.

Though all the cats are Siamese, their various points, ages, lifestyles and states of health give them different shapes.

Their tails are each a bit unique, too, as we'll now see:

Skinny, pointy-tailed Julius drops down onto Penny - a one foot drop - to awaken her. She groans, and pulls up a cover a split second before he sneezes noisily right at her face.

They're joined by bushy-tailed Gus, the floor stalker. He's huge, but hops up gracefully and lands right beside Julius.

Caesar, with a droopy snake-like tail longer than any of his pals', rises and skulks over from his pillow on the table...

Where a foot taps a button to start music on a clock radio.

Without even showing her face from under her blanket, Penny stretches over to shut it off - the clock displays 5:59 a.m.

Let's hear from the cats now, as they await the alarm that they know is the official rise-and-shine time for the owner.

[For this story, the cats speak perfectly legibly. However, while it's done with voice-over, without the "moving mouths" thing, we won't bother to mark every dialogue with "(V.O.)".

As for voices, Gus is an enthusiastic adolescent so consider a young boy's sound. Caesar is satirical, so imagine Billy Crystal. Since Julius is the elder, how about Liam Neeson?]

GUS  
She's not waking up. Get up,  
Owner. Get up! Get --

CAESAR  
As if when you two landed on the  
bed, that didn't wake her up.

JULIUS  
We're the back-up alarm, Caesar.

GUS  
What's wrong with her? Our food  
bowls have been empty for hours.

CAESAR  
A national emergency, eh Gus?

The clock hits 6:00 and the music resumes. The cats scatter as Penny stretches and climbs out of bed in her pyjamas.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Still in p.j.s, Penny prepares cereal as her cats pig out on tin food in separate bowls which, with one bowl of hard food and three for water, occupy a Rubbermaid mat to trap spills.

And alongside it is a large, plastic, covered storage hamper with an entry hole cut into the front: Their litter basket.

CLOSE-UP - THREE BOWLS, AS THE CATS EAT

Each has flowery lettering: "Gus", "Caesar" and "Julius".

Gus gorges, with his face buried in his bowl.

Julius, the elder, pecks away not quite as enthusiastically.

Caesar, on the other hand, merely sniffs at his food, then crouches down on his haunches to stare at it.

ANGLE ON Julius, as he peeks over to his ailing pal.

JULIUS

Eat, Caesar, eat! You'll get sick  
and have to go to the vet's again.

GUS

I'll eat what he leaves behind,  
Julius.

JULIUS

You were always too fat, but now  
you're getting skinny. Eat!

It's time to hear from Penny, known to the cats as "Owner".

Since her pets have our p.o.v. for the story, and naturally understand only so much English, her words come out mostly as gibberish. However, certain terms are distinguishable:

These include the cats' names, words such as water, treats, brushing, no!, plipp and plup - referring to the functions in the litter box - and exhortations such as "Holy!", though the cats don't know what it means. Lastly is a silly meow imitation that elicits ridicule from her feline companions.

So, as Penny sits down for breakfast, she prattles on non-stop and usually cheerfully, to or about her household pals:

PENNY

Bluh bluh *Caesar*. Bluh bluh bluh  
bluh bluh bluh bluh bluh *Gus* bluh  
bluh *Julius*. *Julius?* Bluh bluh  
bluh bluh bluh bluh.

Penny is one seriously-optimistic and happy young lady. It shows in her temperament and endless patience with her pets.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Penny, nicely-dressed and ready-to-go to some mid-management job, pats Julius and Gus as she slips her shoes on. She reserves a specially-attentive stroking for sickly Caesar.

PENNY

Bluh bluh *Caesar*. Bluh bluh!

She does a rattle of a pet carrier that sits beside the door, before she makes a retching sound and wags her finger.

All directed at Caesar.

He dips his head and crouches as low to the floor as he can.

Gus wanders off, but the other two stay to watch her depart.

With a hand at the doorknob, Penny does a last minute check: Bag, briefcase, umbrella-in-case, then arches her head at...

The sound of intermittent PLUP PLUP PLUP from somewhere.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Penny scurries in, trailed by Julius and Caesar at her feet.

As his head protrudes from the litter box, Gus finishes a serious dump and kicks out some of the litter when he exits.

PENNY  
Arrgh. Gus! Ohhh...

Meowing loudly, he disappears. The other two rowl away and criss-cross at Penny's feet as if it's a chemical spill.

Penny removes the litter box lid, scoops out a dump we don't have to see, and trots it away. Then we hear a flush.

All three cats peek into the room around the doorjamb, as...

Penny returns, drops the scooper, replaces the lid, and disappears - wherein we hear the front door open and close.

INT. FOYER - DAY

Motionless and silent, the three cats sit at the door to wait for Penny to return in case she forgot something:

CAESAR  
Briefcase?

JULIUS  
Coat.

GUS

Keys?

We hear her car start, back down the driveway, and depart.

JULIUS

(sighs)

I guess she didn't forget anything today. Let's get down to business.

MONTAGE - INT. PENNY'S HOUSE/CAT ADVENTURES - DAY

A day in the life of three cats stranded home-alone:

- A) Shredding competition in the living room: An arm of the couch, the carpet, the seat of a recliner, the curtains.
- B) Gus initiates a play-fight with Julius, in the hallway.

CAESAR

Gus, leave old Julius alone.

Gus then hip-bumps Caesar, and dips and darts around him to start something, so that now it's Julius who reacts:

JULIUS

Gus, leave sick Caesar alone.

- C) Julius exits the litter box, and inadvertently shakes litter from his toes into Gus's food bowl as he nibbles.

GUS

Hey!

- D) A race and chase throughout the house: On carpet their claws grab, on hardwood or linoleum the cats slip, and at one turn old Julius is so slow it forces young Gus to do a 180° U-jump right over him before he continues onward.
- E) The weary cats curl up into a tangled pile on the couch.
- F) Later, Gus steps over the Rubbermaid food mat to tip the water bowl that Caesar laps from, splashing his face - to make the latter swat at Gus before resuming his drink.
- G) At the entrance to the kitchen, Julius then Caesar then Gus rub their heads against the doorjamb as they pass by - the wood is now almost black from the oil in their fur.

H) Gus then Julius then Caesar arrive at the glass veranda door to watch a worm make its way slowly over the stoop.

I) Later, as the cats saunter off, bored, a robin dives down to dab up the worm, so Gus leaps back and bounces against the glass, jaw quivering, while uttering a fierce cackle:

GUS

Ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya-ya.

J) Julius and Caesar play under a blanket on Penny's bed to come out all static-y with fur standing on end, and Gus arrives to touch noses with Julius, to generate a spark.

K) More shredding, in a clothes hamper at a washing machine.

L) In sleep-time Part Two, three cats in a pile splay out on the carpet, within a ray of sunshine below a window sill.

M) Julius and Gus make lots of noise, as they eat hard food from one large bowl - but Caesar merely sits and watches.

JULIUS

Eat. Eat, Caesar!

N) Kitchen adventures: Caesar opens a drawer by hanging off its top edge and pushing below with his rear legs, Julius tugs open a sliding shelf, and Gus flings open a cabinet.

O) It's Day's End, and the three sit patiently at the door, as silent and still as statues, while they await Penny.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. FOYER - DAY

Penny returns: The three cats silently circle and bump her ankles, and receive pats, toe nudges and strokes in return.

PENNY

*Hi, bluh bluh Gustus! Julie!*  
*Caesar Caesar Caesar, bluh bluh*  
*bluh bluh. Hi! Gus. Julius!*

This is no mundane task and requires skill and coordination!

Penny is thrilled to see her pets with every homecoming, but all good things must reach an end, and after dancing a few times she doffs her shoes and gear and aims for the kitchen.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Penny ambles in and hits the brakes: It looks like a scene from "Sixth Sense" - with all the cabinets and doors open!

Again, the Jaws® theme is appropriate: Da-dum-da-dum-da-dum

LATER

Penny eats dinner at the small table in the center of the room, as the cats preen away down at their food area - till Gus rises and saunters over below the edge of the table...

CAESAR  
Look at him.

Penny eyes Gus as he shakes his rear-end, ready to jump...

PENNY  
Nooo.

The cat concedes, and ambles back to his mates.

GUS  
I don't like that word, "no".

CAESAR  
You still haven't learned, Gus.

JULIUS  
Remember last week?

INT. KITCHEN - NIGHT (FLASHBACK)

Penny puts out a dinner: Main meal, salad bowl, utensils, and a glass of juice, till Gus gallops in from somewhere with a stuffed mouse in his jaws and leaps atop the table!

JULIUS (V.O.)  
She had all her meal bowls laid out so nicely.

Penny screeches, the juice spills, and the main course crashes face-down to the floor - as Gus flees for his life.

But he does leave the stuffed mouse behind.

INT. KITCHEN - DAY

Back to the present, Gus preens and is innocently oblivious as Penny points an icy finger at him from over at the table.

CAESAR  
You broke her favorite plate. And remember the scream? You were in such trouble.

GUS  
No.

CAESAR  
Yes. Julius and I never did that.

JULIUS  
Yes we did. Maybe not that bad. But we outgrew it, as Gustav will.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Curled up on the couch in her pyjamas, Penny finishes a brushing session of all three cats using a tiny brush.

PENNY  
*Caesar Gus Julius.* Bluh bluh.

She bags up the brush, stashes it under the floppy armrest of the couch, slaps her hands gently, and the cats take off.

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

The cats find comfy spots up on Penny's unoccupied bed, and begin a dialogue about their breed's different varieties.

Gus starts off, and smirks at Caesar's seal point coloring, even as the latter preens a paw and ignores his younger pal.

GUS  
Look at all his stripes and spots and swirls. There's no sense to it. That's why he's so mixed up.

JULIUS  
Seal points. They're like that,  
when you look up close. Very --

CAESAR  
Elegant.

GUS  
He stuck his nose and tail and feet  
into a bowl of mud somewhere.

Gus's pale frost points are in stark contrast to Caesar's.

CAESAR  
At least I'm not you. Talk about  
faded. Colorless. Gus, Gustav,  
Gustavus. He's overactive, too.

JULIUS  
We were hyper when we were kittens.

CAESAR  
Not I.

GUS  
You look like a bandit, more than  
us, with your dark face. Should'a  
called you Bandit.

CAESAR  
Well, they must have run out of  
color when you came along. Right,  
Julius?

Julius blinks softly, and lowers his head to rest.

JULIUS  
Gus is immature, that's all.

CAESAR  
You said it.

JULIUS  
You'll grow a mask too, Gustav.