

The big move back

Anna Webb's furry family handles a relocation to the capital better than expected!

My cat, Gremlin, took the three-hour drive to London in his stride. In his cat-like, superior-being kind of way, he knew that an adventure had begun.

Bull Terrier Prudence and English Toy Terrier Dexter had stayed with a dog-sitter while Gremlin and I went ahead to our new abode for the big move in. On his third home in as many years, Gremlin seemed secure in his high-tech carrier, watching wide-eyed as boxes and furniture passed by.

Gremlin was born a Londoner and had lived in Hackney for three years before we moved to the countryside. I hoped he'd realise he was back in town quickly; we had the flat all to ourselves for five days to help his acclimatisation before Prudence and Dexter's arrival.

Familiar items like the sofa, the bed, our sideboard, and the fridge (with its signature opening sound) helped him get over his initial shock of the

new. I'd barricaded the cat flap with cardboard, duct tape, and a very heavy box, hoping even Gremlin couldn't budge it.

Instead, he patrolled and prowled around his new home. He diligently inspected any cracks and gaps in the floorboards for mice, before getting lost in cardboard boxes and claiming the space as his own.

Much to Gremlin's disdain, Prudence and Dexter made a bit of a dramatic entrance. He made his disgust clear with defiant, catrobotic leaps to show he had been in the flat first.

Oblivious to the fact that Gremlin felt displaced, Prudence couldn't contain her excitement at seeing her long-lost friend. The last thing I needed was Gremlin being annoyed by Prudence — he was only on day five of his mandatory long haul 'inside'.

Dexter reserved judgement on the new place, smugly finding a spot on the bed and settling down with his halo glowing.

It took a couple of days before equilibrium was more or less restored. Without any stairs, the animals created a new game, 'Battle of the vintage swivel-chair'.

One positive aspect of the move was that it ironed out a couple of behavioural niggles, like Dexter's Napoleonic barking tendencies, and Prudence's inability to stay still.

When we eventually made an excursion outside, Gremlin sat staring at a corner of the garden almost in a trance,



ABOUT ANNA

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Gremlin wins a round of 'Battle of the vintage swivel-chair'.

calculating his exits and entrances, and sussing out that his new home had a neighbouring Mr Fox.

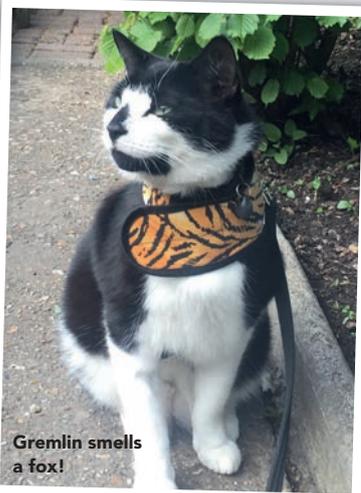
Both Dexter and Prudence's 'wees on command' were right on cue, allowing enough 'eau de pooch' to waft over the fence to deter Mr Fox.

Surprisingly (but brilliantly), Dexter didn't react to random noises from the flat above. He'd also adjusted admirably to London's hubbub of sirens, helicopters, planes, traffic, voices, barking dogs, foxes, and even cats on the prowl.

Gremlin, however, was on high alert. His natural reaction to explore, fight, or flee from

alien sounds made him so agitated that he attempted to break through the cat flap barricade. He woke me up by banging it like a drum. Paranoid about complaints from the neighbours, I had to stop him.

Once he'd got me up, he had me all to himself and calmed down. But there's no rest for the wicked — the minute I went back to bed, the banging resumed. I had no choice but to sit up with him, playing fetch the hairband, and tucking into a belated midnight feast. A bit of sleep deprivation is the price I had to pay for moving house!



Gremlin smells a fox!



Gremlin and Prudence check out the new garden.