

The story of Jason

When we were first married we lived in South Woodford, East London. Our next door neighbours had a handsome ginger cat called Jason. We mistakenly thought this was after Jason of the Golden Fleece but he was more prosaically named after the Blue Peter cat Jason!

Jason would visit us on a regular basis and our flat became his second home. We made the cardinal mistake of feeding him which meant of course that he visited us frequently. We could never understand why our neighbours had bothered to get a cat because they clearly weren't cat lovers, often leaving him out in the rain where his piteous mewing would mean that we would rescue him and bring him indoors. Sometimes they forgot to feed him altogether (or at least that's what Jason led us to believe but he might have been enjoying double rations) so we were often doing that too. It was easy to imagine that he was our cat and not theirs.

Our kitchen had a small breakfast bar overlooking the communal garden. One lunchtime we were sitting at the counter enjoying our Heinz tomato soup. It was a bright sunny day and we had left the window wide open. All of a sudden Jason jumped in through the window landing paws first in my bowl of soup. With a yelp of pain he leapt right out again. He sat outside on the patio frantically licking and licking at his once white paws which were now stained bright orange. It was weeks before the orange colour disappeared and many months before we ever thought of having tomato soup again!

When our first child was born we began looking to move and found a new home in Bushey. I could not bear the idea of leaving Jason behind and would lie in bed at night thinking of different ways of taking him with us. It even crossed my mind to kidnap him. After all, I reckoned, they didn't appear to care anything about him and he deserved a good home.

The day came for us to move and I summoned up the courage to speak to our next door neighbour. I knocked timidly at her front door. "I've come to say goodbye Kathy," I said. "We are really going to miss your cat. I wish we could have him," I blurted out. To my amazement she replied: "You can. We don't want him. We've always wanted a dog and now we'll be able to have one." So there it was. Just like that. We were cat owners.

The following day, my husband Stephen returned to South Woodford to collect Jason and bring him home. He was a much loved member of our family for 17 years.

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