

# The Cat's Side of the Story

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The newscaster is calling me the "Miracle Cat" but if I could just speak human I could tell them plenty, starting with the fact that I was kidnapped. Catnapped, I guess.

It all started back in September of 2020 when I was in the backyard enjoying an unexpected burst of summery weather with plenty of sunshine and warmth. It was great.

I decided to check out the neighbourhood in my usual way by slipping through that gap in the far corner of the fence. After some pleasant strolling I came across a couple of kids playing on a swing-set in their backyard. I enjoyed their fawning admiration and cries of "oh so pretty, pretty kitty" and foolishly allowed myself to get within grabbing distance. Next thing I knew those girls had whisked me into their house and smuggled me down to the basement.

I got pretty vocal about my enforced captivity. The girls tried to shush me but before long the door at the top of the stairs opened to an old woman calling out to them. I couldn't understand a word she said. The girls called her Nai Nai which I figured was probably something like Nana.

After lots of yelling on both sides it must have been okay because the door was left open and the three of us hurried up the steps: me looking for an escape route and the girls looking for milk to give me. Now milk, especially the homogenized stuff, is something I don't get at home so I figured since I'm already here I might as well let them make it up to me for my ordeal. Plus I'd missed lunch.

Unfortunately this unexpected treat made me let my guard down. I'd barely finished lapping up the last remaining drops when I was whisked away downstairs - again!

A cat used to live in this house. The girls dug through boxes stored in the laundry room and unearthed cat supplies. I had to help them look because, well, basements mean spiders and I was still hungry.

Long story short I lived at that house for weeks and life was pretty good. The food was different from what I was used to but tasty and – most important of all - plentiful. Then came the bad news.

As everybody knows people were dying from Covid-19. Hospitalizations kept going up, and there were variants, and plenty of panic all around. I couldn't understand the conversations in the house but I could listen to the news and that's when some idiot announced that cats could carry the coronavirus and pass it on to humans.

Next thing I knew I was very unceremoniously tossed out. The girls had gone to bed hours before so it was really late when the old woman dragged me down to the laneway and flung me as far as she could. On a chilly rainy night. 'Course every night is dank into-your-bones cold at that time of year but this night was especially freezing cold to say nothing of the wind-chill.

I ended up losing the tips of both ears but now I quite like the new rounded shape.

Can't say I blame the woman for not wanting to take a chance on the lives of two young girls, but the next few months were a harrowing experience of hunger, deprivation, cold, and fear. Although I had spent my previous life with outdoor privileges I always had a cozy bed or a warm lap to settle into whenever I wanted. And I never wanted to go outside during winter. I knew I must have lived fairly close by but everything looks so different covered in snow and I guess I have a lousy sense of direction.

People who saw me slinking along put out some food but never invited me indoors. I licked icicles and ate snow. I tried to chase squirrels and one day I almost caught a rabbit but I was too weak to make a real effort. My nights were spent searching a warm spot, like the engine of a car that just got parked, or cowering from the occasional coyote that wandered into the neighbourhood.

Eventually I was spotted by a woman who fosters cats and kittens and she took me in. I don't remember much about the other animals except that they made it clear I wasn't welcome. Although it pains me to say so I was probably dirty and smelly because grooming comes pretty far down the list when you're struggling to find food. Too bad, I couldn't care less about their hissing and spitting so long as the lady kept filling up my dish.

I put on a good show complaining about the bath but truthfully? I quite enjoyed the warm water. The lady had gentle hands and a soothing voice that murmured silly compliments and a long-forgotten purr rumbled up from my belly. Maybe even from my heart.

I later learned that she posted my photo – the cleaned-up version - to the local "Lost and Found Pets" page on Facebook and my real owner saw me. He recognized me although I had been gone for a long time and was pretty banged up. Thankfully I have microchip ID and there was no dispute.

So, return of the Prodigal Cat with many tears, much rejoicing, and plenty of delectable food. A grand reunion - in fact a miracle - just in time for Christmas.