

CHAPTER 7

As 1995 moved into summer, more kittens were being born, and then kicked out or just abandoned. It is perhaps more prevalent on Fyn, where we live, as our island is the food basket of Denmark. In farming communities, the cat is seen as a useful animal, and also as one that can look after itself, so few are sterilised or neutered. If any place has too much of a problem with numbers not decreasing naturally, then KV and other organisations are looked to to reduce the population. Often the numbers can be so great that humane destruction is the only practical answer. As that attitude is so prevalent, it even rubs off on the non-farming residents. Here though, their individual problems are often 'solved' by just abandoning the next litter for someone else to sort out. It is not uncommon for KVO helpers to find a new box on the doorstep when they come in in the mornings! It makes us all wonder why, as they could easily come later in the day, and would not be refused. Perhaps it is because KVO expect a donation!

About this time, I started using one of the computers to write regularly to Eric and Noa, Colin and Olwen, as we had sent them KV calendars for Christmas. Each month had a good picture of a cat and it's own story, so I started each letter with a translation for them. I started saving the files, and can nowadays use them for very accurate recall of events of the times. This is one of the translations:-

THE CIRCUS CAT LOTTE LENYA

The circus cat Lotte Lenya
is

 a cat with pep
 a capering cat

On curving sprung spring
 Tarot run
and runnnng amok
she practises
with witches howl
and nail-biting howl
after her daily mouse.

But suddenly: Bang!
 potters about
 a purring snooze
shall she have
under the duvet, zooooom!.

Here is another, but sad story, as I wrote it in letters at the time: Picture this:

"A restplads (secluded parking area) by a main road some way out of Odense. A motorist stops to relieve himself in the bushes and sees a cardboard box, lying at the side but thinks nothing of it until he thinks he hears something. It is a very, very hot day in July. He opens the box and is horrified to find two kittens in it, stinking, thin and flea covered. Being a caring man, he takes the kittens out, holding his breath, and finds something in his car to put them in to take them to Kattens Værn about fifteen miles away. Sonja takes them in with the possibility that they might be too sick

to be kept and says that she has never seen so many fleas to kill off! Peder the vet looks at them and is surprised to find that they do not actually have any illness, so they are quickly cleaned up and put in a cage with food and water. All the food vanishes overnight and within a few days they are so much better that it is obvious they can survive and so we ourselves named them, Peder and Vipse. They are two lovely kittens and in no time, both have proper homes."

"Thus these little cats (about 3 months old) now have proper names - Peder, after the vet, and Vibeke (Vipse for a nickname) after his wife. Peder (the kitten!), went to a new home so Vibeke was by herself and took a great shine to us while we were doing the cleaning on the next Friday - a great help everywhere. There were also two lovely boys, one pure white just like Snowy who we liked, but, again, both boys. Vipse in the end won us over and so we brought her home with us straight away. She is a self-confident little madam and the rest did the usual worry, worry bit, looking at her as she explored. I am writing this bit just before feeding them all at 10pm and since coming home at 4pm, we have kept them all in so as to get used to her. No fights or quarrels so far, but Sashkin astonished her with a series of Siamese shouts and spits! She has also seen her first television programme and was quite fascinated. She has ears and a purr like Skimbles but has a sort of brindled back and a white front and belly, a bit like Ptolomey but short haired. In a few minutes I will feed them all as usual and she will be given her own dish and place in line. She won't be coming to bed but has a temporary loan of a KVO transport box to sleep in if she likes. (she didn't!) So far she has used a litter tray twice, so that should be OK. Sashkin is still doing well on cat meat leavened with fresh chicken, so we can give her some of that as she is young and needs a little special food for a while yet."

We decided that her official birthday should be the 6th of May 1995, and she came to live with us on the 1st of September 1995. At that time, Twinkle had only just died, on the 2nd of July, so Vips never met him, and I think I had better say some more about Twinks year in Denmark before I write further about Vips.

He was ill in December 1994 and we wondered if he would last until Christmas. I took him to see Kirsten and she and Peder checked him over carefully and agreed with our ideas that his earlier loss of weight was probably due to his kidneys starting to close down at his age of 15 ½. They both thought that just some simple checks should be all that we should do, just to confirm that it was not some sort of infection that could be cured, but those tests confirmed that there was none. They did find that he had a high heart rate and so Kirsten suggested a homeopathic dose in liquid form plus a change of diet that would be less stressful on his system. That certainly did not suit Twink! The medicine improved his general condition and helped the heart rate and breathing but the special diet cat food went down like a ton of bricks! He simply shoved Ptolomey over and stole his, so that I had to mix it in with normal cat food to use it up on him. It probably did him some good, despite himself!

He kept going well for another six months and then started to eat less and get easily tired. Within two weeks, I had to tempt him with a continually changing diet and he had stopped rushing around like his usual self and even stopped hitting Ptolomey while I got their evening meal ready. He even stopped shouting at us every time he came back in. At that time, we had our first Summer Party in Denmark and I let him

and Ptoloy out once the guests were all settled and most of the food eaten. The cats had all been interested in the marquee being erected and those two welcomed it as an old friend. They really enjoyed their evening and were given as many bits of meat as they could eat: Twink didn't have to exert himself, so felt quite well. However, that was the last time that he ate more than a few tiny scraps, so we were pleased that he had that good evening.

He deteriorated fast after that, and existed mainly on those tiny scraps and some cat milk. I tried the remedy again, but this time it had no effect at all. Ten days after the party, two days before he died, he could only go a few steps without getting exhausted. I had to keep wiping his chin to keep him clean, but he still used the litter tray, even though it meant several pauses on the way there and back. When I got up that morning, Sunday the 2nd of July, I found him more or less where we left him and I cleaned him up a little, but I was too much for him and he got very distressed with it. He then tried to get to the litter tray but wet on the floor for the first time in his life and while I was drying him a little, he convulsed a couple of times and then just stopped. I stayed on the floor with him for a few minutes but it really was the end. I will always feel that I pushed him over the edge, but he could not have lasted for many more hours that day.

After Myrtle got up, we found a Twink sized box for him and left him on the terrace for the others to see, before burying him next to Shelley. He was sixteen years and four months old. He only suffered a little distress in the last couple of days, so my usual guilt of "should I have done so much, or could I have done more?" was not too strong, and quickly overridden by fond memories.

As usual, the surviving cats missed him in different ways. Within a couple of days Ptolomey stopped waiting to be hit at evening meal time and just jumped up on to their table besides Sashkin as soon as I got the dishes out. Skimble still had to have someone to greet when he came in from the garden, so transferred his greetings to Sashkin, which looked ridiculous as Sash was so small in comparison, and Bella and Gus both had to come to bed with us for a few nights for reassurance.

After Vips arrival, a new arrangement of cat hierarchies took place, and soon we had another cat from KV. Her name was, and is, Snehvide, and more came steadily after her! After all, working at a cat rescue centre every week!!! But before that, I must tell you some more about Sashkin.

as I said, after Twink died, the other cats all mooned around a bit as usual but the only one who gave us any cause for concern, was Sashkin. Maybe he missed Twink more than we thought or maybe he was sick for another reason, but he gradually started to lose his appetite about a week later and I had to try all sorts of things to tempt him He also seemed very thirsty and drank from one of our, very dirty!, ponds. Cats seem to have a strange habit of doing that even though fresh water is always available. It also seems that they do it much more when they are ill although we have only realised that when talking about it later.

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