

It was love at first sight. He had beautiful yellow-green eyes that bore in to my own, as he was desperate to escape from the prison that was holding him. His face was pointed and angelic with a permanent sweet smile etched on to it, but not too pointed for he wasn't pure-bred. He was adorable, and I had to take him home with me! The information next to him told me that my love's name was Marvin, and he was four months old.

I asked the lady at the Cat's protection league if I could have a better look at this one. He welcomed the opening of the Perspex door with a loud, shrill cry which I would quickly get used to. Unfamiliar with the hands that were reaching in to his home to stroke him, he gave me a curious sniff before I was allowed to stroke him but with a small purr I knew I had gained his approval. Scratching him between his ears caused a louder purr, so he sat down in expectance of more attention. He was in search of attention and love, so because I would do anything for the one I love, I had to oblige. The white fur between his ears was decorated with two large black blobs and was so soft that I wanted to hug him and stroke his fur forever. When he was fed up of having his head stroked, he rolled over and let me stroke the deliciously soft fur on the underside of his belly. This caused louder purring still, his eyes closed in obvious enjoyment. I knew he was the one. Finally, my Mum asked the question:

"So what do you think of this one?"

"I've fallen in love with Marvin!" I replied.

I had to wait four whole days before I could take him home and officially claim him as mine. He didn't like the car journey home; crying and complaining all the way. I didn't like hearing his cries because I didn't want to see him upset. When we got him home he was terrified and sat in the back of the carry-case, unwilling to venture out. Finally he did, but only because he was hungry and the smell of Felix kitten (cod flavour) became too tempting to resist. After venturing out once, his inquisitive nature got the better of him so he proceeded to explore this big new playground, under my watchful eye so that he wouldn't get hurt of course! Within the next day he was ruling the roost. Marvin had moved in with me!

We established a ritual on weekend mornings. He didn't like being shut in the kitchen at night, so after gobbling the food that Dad put out for him he would venture in to the hall; sit at the bottom of the stairs and meow at the top of his little lungs. He would quickly realise that he wasn't going to get any attention this way, so he would bound up the stairs and sit in my bedroom meowing at me in order to get some fuss. Unable to resist his call, I moved over and invited him on to my bed. Gracefully yet clumsily he would jump up on to this soft, cushiony terrain and sniff my face. He smelled sort of damp yet clean with a hint of cat food (well he would lick himself to wash!) but when he put his face up to mine right after he's eaten, the stink of chicken chunks and gravy (with essential proteins to help your kitten's growth) was overpowering and I was glad when the experience was over. Upon establishing that the person in the bed was me he would flop down without much grace right next to me so that I could share his warmth and he would purr. Without much hesitation I would stroke the soft fur on his tummy and he would purr louder to show that he was happy. When he settled in, he would purr slower than when he was at the Cat's Protection place but a lot

louder. I loved the sound of his purring. Loud and continuous yet soothing; he would tell me that he loved me without speaking a word. Often we would fall asleep for another hour or so (with no consideration for how long I wanted to sleep, he would wake me up at around 8) before we were woken up by my brother shouting "Bex, where's the cat?"

He could be a very good boy sometimes. He went in the litter tray, and learned to go outside (which saved my Mum and me a very smelly job). After much training he learned to go through the cat flaps so would happily travel back and forth from the kitchen to the garden, and then back in to the kitchen to the garage. He would also sit very still right next to you on the sofa either with his head on your lap (he never sat on laps) or on the arm of the sofa next to you. He would lick your hands, but never bite. A few times, he stretched up with his fore-paws on my leg to plant a kiss on my cheek by pressing his nose against my face which was also accompanied by a purr.

He could also be a very naughty boy. One time he came in to the house after a venture outside covered in oil! The black splotches on his fur and black tail were indistinguishable from the splotches of oil that were on his body. We called the vet immediately and were advised to purchase a non-toxic oil remover from Halfords. Eventually the oil came off and he was restored to his usual beautiful self with white fur, black blobs between his ears, symmetrical black blobs down either side of his body and a Siamese like long black tail. Despite his faults, I loved him.

Sadly it was never meant to be. On a cold evening in November the news was brought to the door by a friendly neighbour who goes to my church that "there is a cat in the road, is Marvin okay?" Mum and Dad went out into the darkness to investigate leaving my grief stricken brother and myself alone to wonder who the owners of the poor cat were, my brother already fearing the worst. I don't like remembering that evening. I'd had bad news during the day that one of my friends had been taken to hospital and had to have emergency surgery for appendicitis, and I didn't want any more. My parents returned, carrying him wrong. He didn't like being picked up under the arms, you had to hold him like a baby or he would protest. But he wasn't protesting. My Dad put him in the garage while my Mum broke the news to us. I had to see him for myself, to believe that it really was my cat that had been hit and not a stray.

It was my cat. He was perfect. The car must have knocked his head and he crawled to the side of the road to die. You often hear stories of cats doing that. I didn't cry when I saw him. I didn't want him to see my tears. I simply stroked him, kissed his head and said goodbye. The surgery for my friend was a success, so I still had life to celebrate but before he died I bought a fridge magnet saying "cats leave invisible paw prints on your heart" In four months Marvin definitely did.

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