



A Little Brown Cat

Ashok Vinayak Kulthe

It was midnight time. I was in full sleep and so do my daughter Radha and wife Minal in the bedroom adjacent to the kitchen. A sound of falling of a steel plate broke our sleep. Soon Julie's growling sound came along from the kitchen, Radha put her palm on the kitchen door and opened it a little only to see what is going inside there. To her dismay she saw our brown little cat that was gifted to us by our neighbor, was perched on the kitchen top and devouring milk kept in a glass jar. "Oh, my God!" she exclaimed with surprise, "How greedy the animal is! I have fed her full before going to bed and still her appetite is not satisfied."

Having been caught red handed, in fright; Julie jumped upon the fridge and smashed down a ceramic flower pot on the tiles. Then she came close to Radha, circled her puffy tail and meowed. As she gave a remorseful look to Radha, milk was drooping from her whiskers.

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Radha was surprised and angry too over the behavior of the '*Lion's mousi*' - the phrase Minal had been using jocularly about the feline.

Radha loved the cat anyway. She took her in hands and fondled her soft ears. "My dear darling, Julie" she said and kissed her. That night somehow I managed to sleep in the midst of chaos.

Radha was told by her close friend that the presence of a pet in house relieves us from stress. And that fired her mind and she persuaded her mom and me to have an animal in the house. Initially the thought of buying a puppy dog had come to our mind. But I was against the idea.

"Who will take it out? I know they are ought to take out once in a day and I haven't time to spare." Anyway I rebuffed the idea about having a puppy in the house. As we were pondering over the type of animal to add in our family, our generous neighbour thrust her little brown cat into my daughter's hands saying, "Why to think so much when a neighborhood has a solution." And the feline became the part of our life.

Radha told her *aji* (grannie) on phone about the entry of Julie in our house. But her grandma didn't like the idea of keeping cats. She asserted that cats are bad animals. They are damn opportunistic and steal food. They even think worst about their owner, that he should go blind, only to help them eat as much food as they can. That sounded weird, but today's

behavior of Julie resonated in me a feeling of reconsidering the decision of adopting the pet.

Then I searched about cats on Google. To my surprise I came to know that the Egyptians worshipped them and thousands of cat mummies and statues had been found in the tombs as the evidence of it. In the middle ages, cats were presumed to be the agents of devil, and were thought to creep around silently at night doing evil things. The information not only surprised me but startled me too.

That night I couldn't sleep well as I kept thinking about the mummified cats in the tombs and after two o'clock in the night I had a dreadful dream. That I was dead and a black mummified cat came to life and started piercing her teeth in my body devouring my flesh. I woke up screaming. Julie sleeping nearby me also woke up and growled. That scared me even more to scream! And all the members of house hurriedly woke up. My daughter thought some burglars might have entered the house. She turned on the lights and held me close to her chest. That night I couldn't sleep a little.

Next day I took leave from the office and thought to take rest. Radha called doctor to check my blood pressure. Not only that she reported the whole incident to her *aji* who reaffirmed that the cats are bad animal and said how much she hates their growling and purring at night.

Julie, while loitering in the garden around would eat anything and disgorge the content she failed to digest in the house. Minal's housekeeping work increased many fold as she has to remove Julie's toilet, potty or vomit disposed anywhere in the house. Radha appeared to have been disillusioned, and her love for Julie dwindled. It seemed, some bad spell has befallen our house. Rather than reducing, the pet had augmented our stress.

While superstitions surrounding cat feared me, I thought not to adopt Julie. We finally decided to leave her to her original

owner, and on the next day we thankfully sent her back to the neighbor's.

Over the return of the pet, our generous neighbour, I am sure, must have thought 'a golden opportunity of getting rid of the cat is missed.'

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