

## CLEO

Fate had decided that Cleo and I were to come together. She had green eyes and a disposition as fickle as befitting a personage of her distinction.

Her arrival to the house was conducted as if I was up for approval. This small bundle of fur slowly inspected the kitchen, lounge and pantry in that order, then having inspected the hall, proceeded to the garden door. Being let loose in the garden was a mistake. In two minutes flat, Cleo, as she was to be known, was lost. After a search, a chance movement by a bunch of lupins revealed Cleo attacking a rather harmless twig which refused to play dead.

A saucer of milk and a little food tempted her back into the house and the twig was forgotten. Curtains now claimed her attention and reaching up to the pelmet was a game of who got there first, Cleo or the hand to prise her loose from the curtain material.

Slippers were a mystery to her. She would try and curl up in one of them but always managed to get her head sticking out much to her annoyance. Balls of paper were chased and lost. Flies she never bothered with except to give them a lazy look and stretch of the paw.

Mealtimes now claimed a routine that just had to be followed. Miss the time and there would be a rather accusing bundle of fur staring and willing one to stir oneself and get some food into the bowl.

The days, being in the Spring, became progressively warmer and the garden claimed more and more of Cleo's time. What adventures she got up to only she knew. The birds had developed a healthy respect but managed to co-exist without too many casualties and the garden became very much the territory of Cleo.

The kitten stage was passing now and a sleek young cat paraded herself around the house, full of the dreams that all adolescents have be they cats or humans. In the way of cats and humans, love started to bloom. She was being courted by an also sleek and dashing black tom. Cleo gave him more of her time than she gave to her other pursuits and were it possible to say in human terms, they were going steady, then that was the situation.

September was the month in which the kittens were born and three helpless bundles of fluff were deposited into the basket and Cleo became a doting Mum. Grooming, washing and generally fussing whilst the furry bundles nestled into their Mother and marched with their small paws to stimulate the milk of life.

The helpless stage quickly passed and there were three bundles of dynamite now careering about the house whilst Cleo adopted the role of a protective Mother, not joining in the fun but looking on as if to say I have done it all before and the energy expended could well be needed later on.

The kittens went to good homes and Cleo accepted the loss with a stoicism that was surprising, but she never raised another family. She now sat in the garden on sunny days and queened it over all.

During colder periods the hearth claimed most of her time, dozing away and perhaps dreaming of her own youthful times and the next meal to come.

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