

## WHAT KIND OF DOG IS THAT?

It began when our next-door neighbor's young Cairn bitch was due to have pups and she promised one to my brother David. This promise led in turn to a great deal of excitement among us children and no peace for our parents.

Unfortunately, when the bitch had her pups only a few survived and the few that did were spoken for, thus no pup was available.

What sadness, Oh No, what frustration, what weeping and wailing!!

There was my brother moping around wanting a pup, needing a pet, and supported in his lamentations by nine brothers and sisters. It would have brought tears to a glass eye!! But unknowingly we were nearer the great event...

Seeing my brother so disappointed my mother looked at the pet pages in a number of papers and her eyes alighted on an advert ... for a cat needing a new home!

Perfect she thought, much preferring cats to dogs anyway!

The poor cat, cozy inside its basket along with its owner, arrived one evening at our home, which was its usual self, buzzing with the noise of ten children. You know the sort of thing, bodies rolling on the floor testing each-others strength, healthy arguments over the correct ownership of some item or other, a television going in the corner, and the usual "I want to watch this", "well I want to watch what's on the other side, so there!"

The tentative owner released the cat from its travel basket surrounded by ten eager faces, keen to see the new addition to the family, which on its release from its prison ... immediately launched itself under the table in a quivering heap and refused to come out!

That's gratitude for you after offering the beast a new home!

There we stood, ten stunned bodies and my mother looking askance at each other, eyebrows raised in the air with the "don't think much of this" look on our faces. Despite the offers of: "I'll get it out for you mum!", my mother being the cat lover of the family bent down under the table and proceeded to try to coax the cat from under its hiding place, supervised of course by ten upturned little faces. Her efforts were met only by a series of hisses and the odd attempt at clawing.

The owner, feeling the moment of parting was best not prolonged said her goodbyes, sniffed once or twice into her hanky and left.

This departure led to the opportunity to voice our opinions on our new acquisition, having been too polite to offer them before, and the general feeling of the meeting was not good. Comments like:

*"I hate that cat!" "It smells funny!!" and of course the only to be expected: "Think I'm allergic to cats mum!"*

While my mother was realizing that she had made an awful mistake and wondering what exactly she was going to do about it ... the doorbell rang and upon opening the door there stood the previous owners who had decided that they did not think ours a suitable home for a cat as sensitive as theirs and could they please have it back?

"Certainly" my mother replied, thinking *"Yes! There is a God"* and almost dragging the poor woman in the door, "Help yourself!"

Despite our narrow escape there was one sad face among the gathering, my brother David, who realized that was his second chance of having a pet fast disappearing out of the door.

Once more the house was filled with gloom, but the great event was even nearer ...

My grandmother now took a hand in events and announced that it wasn't right disappointing my brother a second time, and that there was nothing else for it but to get him a dog, as that was what he had wanted in the first place!

"Here! Here!" we all quietly agreed, with great sighs of relief.

When my father returned from work, he collected the paper and turned to the pet page and after studying it for a few minutes handed it back to my mother and pointed at an advert.

"That is the kind of dog to get, we had one of those while I was young, fantastic dog!" My mother duly telephoned the owner of the pups, of about four months of age, and next day she and my brother departed to collect his prize.

### **The great event had arrived!!**

When they arrived home a few hours later we all stood in as straight a line as we could manage while everyone is trying to see the door at the same time, to greet our new friend.

In they came, this white tornado thing, going round the room like a two-bob rocket, and my brother handing onto it for grim life!

"What sort of dog is thaaat?" we asked with more raised eyebrows, as we took in the scene before us, the looks on the faces changing rapidly to ones of, well puzzlement and disappointment? "It's not a dog it's a bitch actually" my brother announced.

Bitch nothing! Well, I mean, puppies are supposed to be small and fluffy and sleepy and this pup did not fit this description at any point. Undaunted by her welcome, our newest family member then set about making herself familiar with each of the others of her new pack.

This involved going up to each person in the line jumping up on them with great wags of her tail to dispense a great wet kiss on each little face. As she left one little figure and moved along the line to a slightly smaller figure, there was a remarkable change in expression of the just licked face, which now displayed a great stupid ear to ear grin, and out popped an exclamation, in what passed for a Tony the Tiger impersonation, “She’s greeeeat!”

The last body on the line was my sister, and egged on by her now enthusiastic followers our new puppy cornered her at the side of the fire and proceeded to lick and lick as she slid down the wall to thunderous applause and hoots of laughter from everyone else.

The rest of the evening passed with ten little bodies accompanying the puppy everywhere, including her not infrequent visits round the garden to do her business. And at the end of the evening, ten offers to sleep in the sitting room with her so she wouldn’t get lonely and miss her mum. “Not on your life!” my mother announced, realizing, I presume, that she would have got less sleep than us if this had been allowed.

Yes, when I think of it now, what a stupid question that was “What sort of dog was that?”

For indeed that was no dog . . . it was a Bull Terrier!

**LIZ SHEARER**