

## Lost Humanity

By Marvin Pirila



On March 13, 2020 a tenant said he found a stray cat living in a window well outside. He fed and watered it and asked if anyone wanted to give it a home. He said it was a young, beautiful tabby who was very friendly. Another tenant visited him and gave him some attention. Both already had two cats and didn't feel like they could take another. I didn't think much about it because I was at work and we already had a tom and two tom's living together usually didn't work out.

The next day my daughter called me at work to say it was in the front of the building next to the condenser. She provided it shelter in the form of a covered kennel with a towel for bedding. She also fed and watered it. She said he was beautiful, looked just like one she already had, and affectionate. Her and her boyfriend planned on bringing him to a shelter the following day in hopes he would be adopted. I told her to wait on the shelter because too many were kill-shelters and he deserved better than that. I called her later and said she should bring him in from the cold and put him in the sauna room until she could bring him to the vet on Monday.

When I got home that night I checked on him and found he didn't move much from his place tucked up in the kennel. My thought was that he was exhausted from days of being cold, abandoned, and afraid. I didn't think any more about it because everyone said he was active and affectionate just hours earlier. I thought I would see him in the morning up and about, happy and moving.

My daughter planned on keeping him, named him Jesper, and hoped to have him cleared by the vet the following day before joining her family.

The next day he still wasn't moving, his breathing was shallow, and his lower extremities weren't reacting to touch. I thought he might be dehydrated because the litter box had nothing in it. I gave him water by syringe hoping it would stimulate his kidneys. It didn't. He was slipping away so brought him to the emergency vet office on Michigan Street.

The first report from the vet was that his blood sugar was high, there was no bowel or urinary blockage, he had fluid in his body, and he was cold and in shock. More testing showed crystals in his kidneys, the result of antifreeze poisoning. He was dying and if he wasn't euthanized he would die a horribly painful death. It was the only humane thing to do, yet it was upsetting. This beautiful cat was dumped, left to its own, survived the cold, and now that he was going to get a home, was poisoned by antifreeze. The vet said cats are drawn to it because of its sweet smell. And even a small amount was enough to start crystalizing in its kidneys and result in its failure. Unless it is caught immediately and the cat brought to the vet, he or she will die.

He was with us such a brief time, but he left a profound effect. He was instantly loveable and deserving of a home. His demise was untimely, sad and tragic. This young, affectionate tom saw his life tragically cut short due to the callousness of his owner. Who drops their pets off in a strange area to die? He was young, likely between seven and nine months and had many years to live. He was obviously loved and then discarded like waste. Why?

He deserved a home, so I brought his body home and had his paw prints taken. In the end, Jesper found home and his final resting place.

The lack of humanity disturbs me, leaving me wondering about the society we live in. He was more than just a cat; he was someone's beloved pet or should have been. He just wanted a home to belong to.

*Approximately 71% of cats and kittens entering shelters are killed, based on reports from 1,038 facilities across America. Source: National Council on Pet Population Study and Policy - Shelter Statistics Survey.*

*An estimated 6 to 8 million dogs and cats are euthanized in shelters each year. Millions more are abandoned, only to suffer from illness or injury before dying. Source: Doris Day Animal League.*

*The Humane Society of the U.S. estimates that up to 10,000 cats and dogs die each year from exposure to ethylene glycol containing antifreeze. One lick of this highly poisonous substance can be enough to cause irreversible kidney failure and death in a cat, and it doesn't take much more than that to have the same effect in a dog.*