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Our Newest Aggravating Family Member Was Ravaged By Ticks When We First Met Her

BY JOSEPH WILSON

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One night a few months ago in the Township of Tiny, a friend found four kittens in her barn.

There they were, abandoned in a cardboard box.

Dirty, infested with ticks and shivering from the cold country air, she took them in. My friend and her four-year-old daughter painstakingly removed each tick, gave them a bath, then gave them another one — and then another one.

Deep into this endless pandemic lockdown came the offer: a free kitten. Deloused, washed and newly vaccinated, it was hard to think of a reason not to take one. So we took one.

Joseph Wilson and his family encounter many animals in their travels. Here is what happened when his girls came across a hawk (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/coopers-hawk-parenting-lesson>).

The Arrival

She joined our family on a sunny Saturday afternoon and wobbled through the long grass in our backyard while we took pictures. Within minutes there were hawks circling overhead so we took the party indoors. Our kids followed her around the house like a brood of ducklings.

“What’s her name?” one of my daughters asked my friend.

“Angel,” she said, a name chosen by her daughter. “But you can change it if you want.” I went to the grocery store to buy some food and some cat litter. By the time I got back to the house, the tone had changed.

The girls rushed to meet me at the front door. “She’s gone!” they said, tears in their eyes.

"Within minutes there were hawks circling overhead so we took the party indoors. Our kids followed her around the house like a brood of ducklings."

“What do you mean?” I said.

“We can’t find her!”

My wife confirmed that she hadn’t snuck outside, so the hawks were off the hook.

“She probably just went to find somewhere quiet to sleep. She’s pretty stressed,” I said, as casually as I could.

Read about Joseph Wilson's frank and open conversation about death with his daughters — prompted by a happy squirrel (<https://www.cbc.ca/parents/learning/view/were-all-going-to-die-how-i-explained-that-to-my-5-year-old>).

Our Tiny Kitty

She was basically the size of a dinner roll, so there were a lot of places she could hide to escape the grabby hands of the children.

We put some food out and waited. Sure enough, a couple hours later, the cat wandered up from the basement looking for something to eat. I took her up to the kids and they squealed with relief.

We had a good discussion about what to name her.

There were lots of possibilities: Shadow (she was almost entirely black); Vega (with one white splotch on her chest); Crookshanks (Hermione's cat in *Harry Potter*); Sara; Midnight....

"She was basically the size of a dinner roll, so there were a lot of places she could hide to escape the grabby hands of the children."

In the end, through a family version of ranked ballot voting, we decided on Ninja because she was essentially wearing black pyjamas, was stealthy when she moved and was an expert at hiding.

Over the next few days, the children all took turns presenting our new feline to their classes over Zoom. Whatever lesson plans the teachers had planned for the day quickly turned into a version of a Reddit "Ask Me Anything" about Ninja the kitten. (Note to *Mademoiselles* Rose, Ingold and Turabi: deepest apologies for any disruption.)

Their classmates had some decent questions:

"Does she sleep?"

"Does she catch mice?"

"Does she fart?"

All valid questions. And to be clear, on point number three, the answer is yes. Fart she does. When our kids realized this, I knew she was part of the family. She had moved past being a novelty, a plush toy that walked and made noises, to being an eating, sleeping, farting member of the household. Welcome to the club.

Our kids now know it's important to give Ninja some space when they see her coiled in a corner trying to get some sleep. If she disappears for a few hours, they know she's not lost, but just trying to find some solace from the monotony of life indoors.

Ninja alternately delights and annoys the kids now. She plays with stuffed mice but also attacks the kids' feet in the middle of the night when they're trying to sleep.

She is a lovable, aggravating creature. Much like the rest of her family.

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