

One Lucky Cat!

by LILKA RAPHAEL



(an excerpt from *God, autism and me*)

One autumn morning, as I prepared breakfast for my boys, a visitor came boldly calling at our door. At first, I thought I was hearing things, but lo and behold there really was a cat very loudly meowing at my back door.

I don't like cats.

To my dismay, the children I was desperately trying to get ready for school abandoned their oatmeal to see the pretty kitty.

Annoyed, I began shooing it away with a broom, and trying to coax it down the steps and off my deck. I glanced beyond the cat only to find both boys staring at me like I'm Cruella Deville. Cam very emphatically yells, "Mommy, that's mean!"

I take a deep breath and bite my tongue. At this point in my life I'm mentally fried. Two kids under the age of four, a husband who travels all week and I'm running late for my new full-time job!

I grudgingly decide I can teach my kids a lesson in compassion. Besides, the last thing I need is for them to go marching into their Christian school and telling everyone how I tried to kill a cat that morning. From previous experience, I'm quite confident that would have been Cam's translation of the morning's events!

So... I grab a can of salmon from the pantry, put it on a paper plate and stick it outside the door. By this time it appears that the cat is gone. I'm grateful, yet annoyed that I just wasted a can of salmon.

When we return home that afternoon, the first thing both kids do is run toward the back door. No cat, but the food is gone. I'm thinking the cat has found its way home.

No such luck.

Over the next couple of months this cat increasingly comes to my house. It doesn't just come, it lingers.

Reluctantly, I finally concede. How much trouble can one outdoor cat be?

I never get to find out.

I come downstairs one morning to find my husband standing in the kitchen holding the cat...and a litter box!

By the way, he doesn't like cats either.

One week and one huge vet bill later, I name the cat Lucky. It's a bit of a stretch for a black cat, yet it saves him from being named after a Ninja Turtle.

By now, you're probably thinking what does this cat have to do with God, autism and me?

I have since learned that God sometimes answers prayers in the most unexpected ways. It is around this time that my four year old prays for his brother Lan to talk. This wasn't anything we prompted him to do. My four year old thinks this up all on his own.

Lan would occasionally say a word here and there. Yet, once Lucky entrenched himself into our home, Lan became more talkative. "Where's the cat?" "Can I feed the cat?" "Lucky where are you?" Landon, who was painfully shy, even began telling strangers about his cat!

Lucky helped draw Landon out of his shell. He hasn't been a perfect cat but he's come close.

As the kids were watching Christmas specials on television, I was horrified to find Landon's pillow wasn't a pillow at all. It was the cat!

I started to fuss but then realized Lucky wasn't trying to get away. He looked up at me with those big yellow eyes as if to say "it's okay. I don't mind." He then he turned away from me and back to the kids.

His kids.

Lucky worked his way into my heart.

The world didn't end when I found him snoozing on my "good" sofa. Or, when I woke to find him asleep beside me... in my bed!

Did I mention, I don't like cats?

I don't know that I'll ever consider myself a "cat lover" but I certainly love this one.

I have learned God's answers to our prayers aren't always what we expect. Our blessings and miracles often arrive in disguise.

I almost chased away one of mine.

Not all angels have wings. Some have paws, of this I am sure.

Lan is now a teenager. He talks up a storm. His questions are endless!

And he is still loves the cat.

I think back on it now and realize we didn't do the cat a favor. You could say we're the lucky ones.

But I know better. I know now, we're blessed!

