**The adventures of Max.**

The missus calls me Max, short for Maximus – which is a joke. I am Maximilian the Magnificent, the Champion, the Defender of the Weak. In fact, I was the runt of the litter and I never grew very large. But, I have the heart of a lion and I learn from experience.

For instance, yesterday I went downstairs to find the cat basket sitting in the middle of the kitchen floor. I know what that means. I flee for the flap in the door only to find it’s been locked shut. I make a dash for the sitting room, thinking to hide under the settee, but that door’s shut, too. I’m trapped!

I squeal and kick as I’m picked up and thrust into the basket. I try to escape, but the missus clicks the door shut. And there I am; a prisoner awaiting torture.

And no breakfast! I’m swung out of the door and into the car. I groan and moan and scrabble but I’m unable to escape and all she says is: ‘It’s for your own good!’

On arrival at the vets I refuse to come out of the basket. I stick out my legs in every direction. The torturer gets some heavy gloves and pulls me out, despite my best endeavour and oh . . .Oh, the indignity, of being handled every which way but up, and then of being stuck with a huge needle while some foreign substance is injected into my body!

And then back into the basket. Missus says I can calm down now.

Calm down? After that! I scream non-stop as I’m carried out to the car and I keep it up all the way home. And when I’m finally let out I refuse to eat until she gives me a special treat of tuna.

I am a good fighter, but realise I must choose my targets better.

The next day I refuse to join the missus in the back garden. She likes me to play games with her but today I do not feel like it. I stalk off to the front garden, which gets all the sun in the mornings. The miss us keeps a table and a chair there although I sit on it more than she does.

But today – oh Horrors! The evil ginger giant from next door is already on the table . . . in My Space! He sees me coming all right, but lifts his back leg to groom himself. This is like a human giving the finger to someone.e HeHe

The gate creaks open and a strange man steps inside the garden. The Ginger Giant neglects his toilet to preen himself. “Look at me! Aren’t I the handsomest cat in all the wide world?’

‘You’re a fine one!’ says the stranger, and ‘Wumpf!’ He throws a nasty smelling sack over the Ginger Giant, and scoops him off the table.

I screech, ‘You can’t do that!’

The cat-napper scoops me up into a second sack.

I’m in a dark place! Tumbling over and over. Confined by the sacking, I bump into the man’s lags as he carries me . . . where?

I am dumped on a hard floor and a door clangs shut.

A voice says, ‘I got the ginger one. He’ll fetch a good price. There was a half-grown black cat there as well. Not much cop, but he might fetch something.’

Was he referring to MOI?

How dare he!

An engine starts up, shaking the hard surface I’m lying on . . . are we in a car? A van? Where are we going? It’s a rough-sounding engine, not like the missus’ car.

Oh, the missus! She won’t realise we’ve been cat-napped.

Right! I’m a trained fighter, I am. I’ll find a way out of this.

Bump, bump. The van is moving, taking me away from home. I’m not having it! For a start, I’m not locked in a cat basket. There’s a chink of light in one corner of the sack I’m in. I claw at it, tearing the fabric. I writhe and wriggle and soon I’m out into the fresh air.

Well, not so fresh. Oily, dirty, disgusting! It smells of pee and dirt.

Next to me is another sack, which is moving. Ginger is in there? Yes, I can hear him mewing.

‘Hang on!’ I say, and attack the sack with tooth and claw. If only Ginger would make an effort, he’d be out in no time, but let’s face it, he’s not got what it takes to be a fighter. Soon enough I make a big enough hole for him to clamber out, mewing.

‘What’s going on back there?’ The catnapper shouts.

A bumping as the vehicle shudders to a halt.

And that’s when I go on the attack. I spring at the back of the catnapper’s head. I latch onto his greasy T-shirt. I may be small but my claws are sharp.

He yowls and tries to bat me off him, but I’m on his back he can’t reach me.

His accomplice is in the driving seat. He aims a blow at me and I swing myself round to land on the catnapper’s shoulder and there is his ear, within biting distance . . . I latch onto it, and hold on.

They shout, both of them.

The door opens and the catnapper gets out, trying to shake me off him. I drop off onto the pavement. He bends down to grab me with his bare hands. The fool is not wearing gloves. I lash out and rake his hand with my claws.

He yowls and steps back, nursing his fingers.

‘Oh, leave him,’ says the driver, ‘He’s not much cop, anyway. Get in, man!’

The catnapper aims a kick at me, which I avoid with ease. He gets back in the van, slams the door and they drive off.

I am very shaken.

Then I see Ginger Giant is sitting on the pavement nearby, giving himself a quick wash and brush up. He must have slid out of the van during the fight.

My heart-rate slows to normal. I give myself a quick lick and a promise before turning my mind to our predicament. We are in a strange road and far from home.

Ginger looks to me for instructions.

I orientate myself. It seems to me I’ve been in this road before on one of my moonlight flits. So, home should be . . . that a way. With luck.

‘Come on,’ I say, leading the way. I hurt all over, but that doesn’t matter. We plod along, crossing over when there’s no traffic in sight, and at last turn into a road I know well.

There’s the table and chair in my front garden.

The Ginger Giant leaps onto the table and lays himself out in the sun. In my favourite spot, in my garden.

Ah well. He’s a poor sort of creature but he’s my responsibility and I’ll defend him from all comers.

I am Maximus the Magnificent, Champion of the weak.

I leap onto the chair next to the table, and give myself a thorough grooming. It’s good, sitting there in the sun.