

Katten Börje

November 1990 Börje was born and getting close to his 18th birthday he enjoys retirement and peace in our home in suburb north of Stockholm.

His favorite pastime is to lie in the bushes in front of the house and walk out to strangers passing on the small path to get petted and on a rare occasion jump an innocent dog scaring the wits out of the dog owner.

He goes out for 1 hour, at most 2 and then returns for food and many naps, and like the old cat he is, he never ventures far anymore. He suffers from arthritis and needs to jump on a chair first to get up on a table.

But in the last week Börje used up one of his 20 lives (normal cats have 9, special cats like Börje has 20)

First a little background....

The neighbor:

Across from our house lives a woman who is mentally ill and is often seen walking around talking to herself. She used to have 4 cats, but when she was committed, they would run starving and crying for a week outside. She was forbidden to keep the cats and she took them somewhere. The contact people at the psych ward says she never told anyone where she took them, which in itself is a sad thought that no one followed up on the cats well-being, given what later happened to Börje.

First disappearance:

A few months ago Börje disappeared for more than one day. We were scared and went looking and calling everywhere. I thought I heard vague cat cries near our home and went door-to-door calling, but no luck. In the evening I could hear the faint cries, but unable to determine if it was a cat or where. When I woke up next morning after a night of little sleep and nightmares, I said to Tomas, that I think the mentally sick neighbor took him.

I met the woman outside on the path walking towards the bus and I asked her if she had seen our cat. While looking away she said she had not seen any cat, and then she walked to the bus.

I immediately went to look through her windows and into her apartment, and there sat Börje quite unhappily. I called Tomas to come help and while he held out the window that she had left ajar, so there was just enough space for a cat head to get through, I put my hands on the ground creating a landing spot for the cat to jump to.

He was drinking water 10 times in the next couple of hours and suffered from terrible

diarrhea, so who knows what she had been feeding him and she certainly had not given him any water.

We didn't file charges with the police in fear of what this crazy person would do next.

Another neighbor, who had previously complained about her putting smelly dirty cat trays in the hallways outside the door, had ended up with black crosses painted on her door every day for a week.

So we stayed quiet and watchful, so she wouldn't steal Börje again.

New encounter:

A few weeks passed and I was sitting in the grass with Börje and she walked over and approached us. She had a clear look in her eyes and seemed very friendly and at peace with herself. She asked if she could pet the cat and I told her she was welcome. She petted him for a minute and then thanked me sincerely for the kindness. I asked her about her 4 cats and she said that they were with a friend and she was too busy to be taking care of them. I felt nicely comforted that this person was no longer a threat and started letting Börje out of my sight again and let him go about his 'catting around' and picking up strangers to pet him.

This brings us to the sad day of Wednesday July 16th, 2008

Börje had gone out around 9 and when he hadn't returned around noon I started to get worried. I went out and called in all the areas around our neighborhood, but no Börje.

I could have missed him sneaking in grabbing a bite to eat and running out again, but when we call he usually shows pretty quickly. I went to the neighbor's windows looking into her apartment, calling through cracks in the windows and leaning my ear to hear any cat cry. But silence was all I was met with. I noticed the woman was in her bedroom sleeping and I stopped calling for the cat and instead started to walk around asking neighbors if they have seen Börje.

One neighbor then said she saw the mental ill neighbor walking towards the bus around 10.00 with a red cat transport. Her immediate fear was for the cat she was cat-sitting for (her upstairs neighbor's), and she had run and located their cat. So suddenly dread and fear washed over me. She took my baby in a cat transport away from here! I went to knock on the window of the bedroom and woke up the woman. I politely asked her if she had seen our cat and she denied having seen him. I then said that she was seen carrying a cat transport to the bus. She claimed that was her cat and that she had taken it to a friend in Jakobsberg. I asked her if this friend was somebody one would know, to which she answered unlikely and I asked her for a name, which she gave me.

She went back to her bedroom to sleep and I ran home and had Tomas search the name in the computer. It turned out that there were only 2 such people in all of Sweden. One south and one north, so no one even near to Jakobsberg.

More dread and fear!

I ran to her window again and started knocking and woke her up and started pleading with her to

tell me where she had taken the cat. She refused and turned annoyed and ugly.

I stood by the window crack for the next hour begging, pleading and crying, while Tomas called the police.

An "ärende" was then opened, but as it was starting to be late evening they were not able to send out any patrols to deal with this. As they pointed out they did have rapes and violence to deal with first, so not to be insensitive they had to prioritize these matters over a half day missing cat.

The night was horrible. The thoughts of what had happened to Börje, the images of the kind of abuse or neglects such a mentally ill person could be capable of. Sure it is involuntarily and part of their psychoses and when they are well, they can be nice people, but understanding this does not ease your concern, rather the opposite.

The evening I spend talking to the NOA psych hotline asking for advice on how to tackle this and who to talk to. They said that they could do much unless the sick person actually wanted the help, but advised us to visit an open psych clinic in Jakobsberg.

Night 1 – No sleep, many tears, many horrible thoughts

Thursday July 17th

Before 08.00 we drive to the clinic and ask to see the doctor who is responsible for the treatment of our neighbor, so we can ask on how to get the information of the cat from her. The clinic says that she is not a patient there, but to contact the Psychosis office in Kungsängen and we go there. They send 2 nurses to her home to try and talk to her and when asked about the cat and the cat transport she says that her cat had come home and it was red and not black like ours and she took it to a friend. When asked who this friend was she started behaving hostile and at some point we could hear her screaming high-pitched screams all the way over by our front door. The nurses left and it was now going to be a matter for her doctor to decide if they would ask the police for "handräckning" to have her committed and they would get back to us.

Daytime was spent taking shifts watching if she would leave her apartment and possibly lead us to the cat. The police seemed to be taking a "Just a cat" attitude, which got me even more upset. I started using my only available weapons in a very poor odds battle – Internet and the phone.

One of my many calls went to the organization "Djurens Rätt" where I got to speak to an exceptionally sympathetic and bright person. I complained and asked if a cat had no legal rights and she explained that for the police to treat the case with some importance we had to make sure of 2 things.

- 1) That the police charge contains the wording "egenmäktigt förfarande"
- 2) Put a value on the cat in Kronor.

By luck or fact, the above actually worked. The police no longer referred to our stolen cat as a minor matter and was exceptionally helpful. We wanted them to look in her address book, but this turned out to be a more complicated matter as it would take a warrant and those are hard to obtain on a lost cat reason.

AHA! She leaves the apartment. Sneaking out the back way, taking a long walk around behind a road with trees instead of just the path leading straight to the bus.

I grab a few horrible disguises, which includes a few scarfs and a woolen hat. Given the 20+ and sunshine I later decided I could have done without the latter, but only after a half meltdown of my brain. We followed her to Jakobsberg and the next 2 hours was a chase of indescribable dimensions. She would go into the pharmacy for 30 seconds, just to come out and go somewhere else. She could go in and out of every store inside the Centrum and I managed to lose her for 20 minutes before I spotted her again. Earlier in the day, the police detective in charge says that if she leads us to the cat's location after his work hours, to simply dial 112 and give the psych care number and a patrol would arrive to rescue Börje.

At this point Tomas gets a phone call from the police informing him that they are to pick her up on "handräckning" to be committed to hospital, but are unable to locate her on her private address. Tomas informs the police that we have her in sight in Jakobsberg and we will keep an eye on her until they arrive. This of course turned out to be a real challenge.

She would take the elevator down to the train tunnel, just to walk up the stairs to arrive almost next to the elevator she just took down and it becomes obvious that she is never going to lead us to the cat and we ask the police to go ahead and grab her as soon as possible. They approach her and quietly she went along and the police take her to a closed psych-ward at the hospital, trying to pry from her the location on the cat while transporting her. But no luck in getting her to disclose where or with whom Börje is.

We later contact the hospital and inform the ward to make sure they would be alert about any information about the cat.

We start posting hundreds of A4 sized wanted posted with descriptions of the theft and a phone

number. We interview the pet store where she went in for a minute and then ask around for any hints or help. This is the scenario from a bad horror movie and everyone we encounter is most helpful and kind.

Night 2 – It is now Thursday evening and the pain is unbearable. Where is our poor old guy? Is he getting food and water? Is he scared? Is he alive?

Friday 18th

A woman calls. She has found a black cat in Jakobsberg near Statoil. Very social cat and she took him in some days ago. We couldn't get an exact time, but the need for it being our cat got us in the car and to her apartment instantly. I had been calling for him the night before, when putting up the posters and this was the only place in Jakobsberg where I said I heard a response. Just outside that building, so the mood was high and anticipating.

There he was! Lying on a sofa, looking prettier and healthier than ever. Tears were so many that I couldn't really see much anyway and I picked him up. But the cat didn't respond with any joy. He was docile and I was worried something was wrong. I took a closer look at him and found he was a much younger model, perhaps just 4-5 years old and a total look-alike to our Börje. The cat looked at me as thinking "Nice hug, but who on earth are you?" It was heartbreaking.

We contact "Svenska Internationella Detektiver" and arrange to call again when it is possible to follow her to Börje's possible location.

Back to the phone and Internet again calling vets, cat pensions in the area and areas where she might have taken Börje. While talking to the police detective, he brings up that she is not available for information, at the hospital as they have given her a leave to go pick up clothes from her home. So the sick woman is now let out for 5 hours, just the day after the police brings her in, for enough time to feed, move or even steal another cat in her psychosis. We are of course outraged that not only have they allowed this, but also neither the neighbors nor us were warned and had time to grab hold of pets and kids for when she was at the home. A neighbor confirms having seen her leave with a carry-on bag and no cat transports on Friday 13.30 and the hospital confirms she is back with them after 16.00.

Given the difficulty in transportation from here to the hospital, it sounds like she has taken a straight path back and forth and no cats have

been given a visit. But still it is aggravating that this time could have been essential for disclosing the location and if we had gotten ample warning, we could have initiated the detective surveillance on her leave period.

There is no end to how much a parent will go through to get a child back and that Börje was our child and no stone would be left unturned and no coin be saved.

Policewoman Annika now conducts an interview with us and gets all the details of the case. The police ran a search on the made up name of a friend in Jakobsberg for any relatives to that name in the area and it came up empty. They also apologized that given the severe load of criminals, filled jail cells they were having their hands full and in addition to that, they were all going on vacation, so from Monday we would be given a new police detective and a new police investigator to our case.

We get the information that the sick neighbor was supposed to have moved in these days to Bro, so we venture to Bro and call for the cats for hours, in the odd chance that she has brought him there and released him. And we of course hang lots of more wanted posters and talk to people. We run into someone we know who works in our local COOP and he points towards a row of houses explaining that those seem to be connected to the state and usually the mentally ill people are living in those. But no Börje and no calls on the phone.

Friday evening, offices are closed, people gone home or on vacation, no one to contact until Monday. So back to the Internet.

Night 3 – Exhaustion takes over and 10 hours dreamless sleep charges the batteries for more searching.

Saturday 19th

By scrutinizing detective work we find out that she is using at least 2 names and have 7 cell phones registered to her address. The last name brings us to a search of all people in Jakobsberg with same last name. We go to their addresses and a call for Börje, knock on their doors and in case nobody is home call their phone numbers. Posters go up in Kallhäll. More phone calls to the cat phone with descriptions of cats found with white chest, long hair and any description not Börje like.

The new last name information gives us a lead and it turns out she was a client at the vet clinic in Upplandsväsby 1½ year ago.

The hospital is not volunteering any information and is starting to get annoyed with our frequent calls making sure that all the different nurses are informed of the situation.

On nurse gave the “it’s just a cat” reply and pretty much hung up on us.....

The waiting and not knowing is devastating, but we are not going to give up. Cats go missing, they get lost, they get hit by a car, they get adopted by a family with better food, but in Börje’s case he was seen being taken from his home, and he is out there somewhere.

Night 4 – Nightmares are back and sleep difficult to find

Sunday 20th

Just sitting at home waiting for the phone to ring is not an option.

Armed with 250 more posters and extra scotch tape I take a 4-hour walk around Kungsängen and put up more posters and call for Börje in every bush and forest and neighborhood. We change the Reward Given, to an amount of SEK 3000,- in the hope that this might make someone turn themselves in or motive kids to whistle for the cat when out walking or notice any social black old cats running about.

We now get a few phone calls and drive to the areas to look and call, but to no avail.

One tip was a guy who called saying he was seeing a black cat matching the description now and while talking on the phone with him we ran to the car, started the engine and then he said, that someone just let the cat in. So another dead end. Days passing and no sign of our Börje.

Night 5 – It feels sad and numb. But we keep the hopes up that wherever she put the cat, he is being treated ok.

Monday 21st

People are back at work, phoning is again a valuable pastime. With the new last name we found on the sick women, I start calling vets again looking for a more current visit, if would still be taking one of her 4 previous cat to a vet. All the vets are exceptionally helpful, but no information on that name at all.

We create a document for the new police detective detailing everything that has happened and the information that we have managed to obtain so far and listing a few things we would like the police to help us with in our search. We explain that we do not expect the police to prioritize finding the cat, but things as contacting the mother of the sick women and doing a relative search in our area would be helpful.

We then call the police detective. He explains that he has just returned from 8 weeks vacation and the others from 4 weeks vacation and has 150 emails waiting for him and many cases to see to and asks if there is something small he can do for us today. We tell him that if he would read the document over a cup of coffee when convenient for him and that we have a few small issues like contacting the mother and the possible relatives in the area that would be a great help in our search. He was exceptionally empathic and promised to get back to us.

The daytime started dwindling by and the late afternoon came much to fast and still no calls or information, when suddenly the phone rings.

It is Annika from the police, who did the interview with us Friday. She had contacted the mother and during their conversation she had mentioned that her daughter had previously forgotten a cat in Nacka. This got Annika to search for reports of found cats and one report stood out.

Red cat transport with cat found on Sundbyberg station on Wednesday 16th. Cat had been delivered to the reception and then processed by the police as "Hittegoods" (Found item) and was

put in jail in a cage over night. Since late last year 2007 the police has had a deal with 3 KattPensionat to receive found cats and the cat was delivered Thursday to Solgläntan's Kattpensionat in Sollentuna. The cat was a matching descriptions to our Börje down to the smallest detail like flossed ears, unreadable ear tattoo and a few gray hairs in the fur and very social.

We were sure! Same color cat transport, same personality, same looks, unreadable ear tattoo and the time fit also.

The drive seemed endlessly long. Finally we arrived at the most idyllic place in the countryside. When we came out of the cat I whistled and he meowed and I was quickly guided to his cage where I instantly picked him up and held him. He pressed himself as deep into my chest as he could and I kept kissing his ear and whispering to him. Then both Tomas and Lena wanted us to pose for photos and the hugging session had to come to an end and we had to focus on getting home. Tomas asked me to wait inside his cage while we settled matters, but Börje let us know that being back in that cage was not a popular option and he wanted home now.

The cage he had been in was huge and nice and it was clear that he had been on a real luxury vacation, however involuntarily. It warmed me tremendously to know that he had since Thursday not suffered from anything but homesickness and gotten the best care a cat away from home could wish for. We happily paid for his hotel nights and donated an additional 300 Euro to the cat fund at Solgläntan.

While at Solgläntan we read the original lost-and-found police report. Somebody had written the following line that I found extremely entertaining:

"Katten har placerats i arresten i bur"

I hope the writer put the words together intentionally.

The ride home was one of extreme joy, except for Börje who is real squeamish when it comes to car rides. When we arrived home Börje was visibly happy. In and out, eating a little but mainly he wanted to be outside our house in the grass enjoying freedom and home. We brought out a couple of bottles of champagne and glasses and sat on the lawn in front of the house celebrating with neighbors, including our most precious witness who had seen the mentally ill woman leave with the cat transport. Without that information Börje would just had been another cat who failed to return home one day and the truth most likely never been found.

From all this I have learned a few things of the obstacles that a cat owner runs into when a cat goes missing and I have pledged to try to make a difference for us cat owners in the future, so we can better find our lost children.

Epilogue

It is now Tuesday the 22nd and we are shortly leaving for the police to give them a huge cake and thanks for their incredible help and especially a thanks to Annika at Norrortspolisen, who connected the dots and reunited us with Börje.

We have confiscated the other three cat transport boxes from the sick neighbor's ground floor balcony. We have also sprayed the area outside her balcony with Ajax and vinegar to discourage any cat visits.

Thank you to everyone for their help and support through this.

Laila, Tomas and Börje



Laila and Börje at Solgläntans kattpensionat