



The Nasty Cat Breeder

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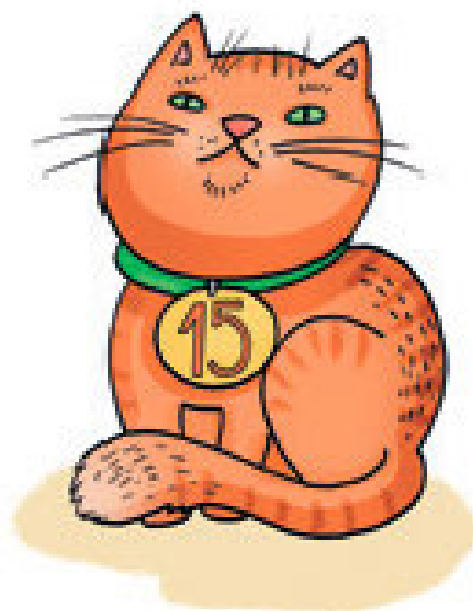
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Age: 6+

Twins Timo and Albert could not be more excited – they have managed to get their best friend Kaspar a birthday present he will never forget: a mobile phone for his seventh birthday. They spent all their savings on it, buying the phone from a lady they met on the street. But when Kaspar unwraps his present, he is far from pleased – his parents have just given him a brand-new phone of his own. Kaspar's father suspects that the boys' gift might actually be stolen; after all, no one would sell such a phone for only nineteen euros.

Determined to set things right, the children – with help from Kaspar's older sister, Mia – decide to return the phone to its rightful owner.

This book is the second in the City Kids Detective Series.



The Nasty Cat Breeder - excerpt

1.

Timo and Albert were standing outside Kaspar's flat, waiting for the birthday boy to let them in – as neither of the boys was tall enough to reach the doorbell. They only managed to ring it when Timo stood on tiptoe and Albert crouched behind him, pushing him gently upwards with his shoulder.

The present the boys were very proud of was set down on the hallway floor while they rang the bell. It was packed inside a large brown cardboard box. The gift itself was quite small, but the twins were eager to see the look of excitement on Kaspar's face as he first lifted it out of the big box.

Inside the large box were two smaller boxes, then a plastic bag, and inside that a little box made of thick paper, specially crafted just for the present.

The doorbell rang, and the twins heard footsteps approaching. Kaspar, who had been waiting for guests all morning, opened the door and let his friends in.

"Happy birthday," said Albert.

"Happy birthday," echoed Timo.

The boys stepped in and Kaspar closed the door.

"Can we have cake now?" Albert asked.

Kaspar nodded.

"Soon," he explained. "First we'll eat some salad and sausages, and then it's time for a cake."

The guests took off their shoes and headed towards the living room. Kaspar looked puzzled.

"When you were standing outside, there was a box on the floor," he reminded the twins.

"Was that yours?"

"Yes, that was our box," Albert confirmed, went into the room and sat down at the table.

"What's inside the box?" Kaspar asked.

"Your present," said Timo. "It's a really cool present."

"But why did you leave it outside?" Kaspar didn't understand.

Albert and Timo stared at each other in surprise.

"I thought you took it in," said Albert.

"I thought you did," said Timo.

"What do we do now?" Albert asked.

"Let's see if it's still there," Kaspar suggested.

The boys ran to the door. Kaspar opened it. Luckily, the box was lying exactly where the twins had left it a few minutes earlier.

"You got lucky," said Timo, handing the box to Kaspar. "It's your birthday present. The gift is inside the box."

"Such a big box," Kaspar marvelled. "What is it?"

"You'll find out when you open it," Albert said wisely.

Kaspar led the twins into the living room, where the birthday table was set. On the table stood a large bowl of grilled sausages, next to it a slightly smaller bowl of potato salad. There was also a big bottle of ketchup, some bread and a bowlful of Kaspar's favourite food: carrot and swede sticks shaped like chips. They looked just like French fries, but were much better to eat, because they didn't make your fingers greasy.

There were four empty plates on the table, four glasses and two large cartons of juice.

"Why are there four plates if there are only three of us?" Timo asked.

"Mum, Dad and Mia will be home soon," Kaspar replied. "They went to the shop to buy the cake."

Timo lifted his hands in front of his eyes and began counting on his fingers.

"If they're coming too, there should be six plates," he said. "But there are four."

"That's because today is my birthday," Kaspar explained. "Mia eats with us, but Mum and Dad go into the other room to watch TV."

"How?" Albert didn't understand, pointing at the television fixed to the living-room wall.

"The TV is here. How can they watch it in another room?"

"There's another television in the other room, a bit smaller than this one," Kaspar explained.

"Oh," said Albert. "That's so cool, having two televisions."

Kaspar didn't know what to say to that and merely shrugged. He had long been used to having two televisions in their family. To him, there was nothing strange or surprising about it.

There was a rustling sound in the hallway. Mia, Mum and Dad were back from the shop.

"I see your guests are already here," Mum said, peering in through the doorway.

"They are," Kaspar confirmed. He then picked up the large brown box from the sofa and held it out to his parents.

"Look how big a present I got," he said, his eyes shining. "Such a big box."

"What's inside?" Dad asked.

"I don't know yet," Kaspar said, "but I'm going to open it right now."

Kaspar was very excited about the present, but even more excited were the twins, Timo and Albert.

2.

The twins had bought Kaspar's present with the money they had saved, without their parents knowing anything about it. Kaspar began opening the gift. To his surprise, there was a slightly smaller box inside it, and inside that yet another box.

"Why did you use so many boxes?" Kaspar asked.

"So it would be more exciting for you," Albert replied.

"If I'm excited, it's because of the present, not the boxes," Kaspar said, pulling a crumpled plastic bag out of the final box.

Inside the plastic bag was a little box made of thick white paper, wrapped with thin red wire.

"I wrapped that one," Timo said proudly.

Kaspar unwound the wire, opened the box, and only then reached the present itself. He took it out, examined it from one side and the other, and couldn't think of anything to say.

While Albert and Timo waited for Kaspar to squeal with delight, the birthday boy's face grew sullen. In the end, it darkened completely. Kaspar's mouth turned into a straight line, and tears appeared in his eyes.

"Don't you know what it is?" Albert asked in surprise.

"I do," Kaspar muttered. "It's some kind of mobile phone."

"Of course!" Timo confirmed. "It's your very own phone now."

"I already have a phone," Kaspar said. "I got one from Mum and Dad for my birthday."

"Two phones are much better than one," Albert declared. "With one you can talk, with the other you can take pictures."

The birthday table was set, the salad, sausages and cake were waiting, but Kaspar had completely lost his appetite.

"Aren't you happy about the present at all?" Albert asked.

Kaspar shrugged.

"I'm happy that I got a present and that you came to my birthday," he said, "because apart from you I don't have any friends. But I'm not happy at all that the present is an old phone."

"We didn't have money for a new one," Timo explained. "We gave that lady all the money we had."

Dad, who had been in the other room, opened the door. He had been listening with half an ear, and Timo's last sentence struck him as very odd.

"What lady?" Dad asked. "Did you buy the phone from some lady?"

"Yes," Timo replied. "We gave her all the money we had with us."

"How much was that?" Dad asked.

"I had twelve euros," Albert said. "I've been collecting empty bottles across the road. You get money for them at the shop."

"I had seven euros," Timo added. "Whenever Mum or Dad gave me money for ice cream, I didn't buy any. That way you can save quite a lot."

"You're very good boys," Dad said approvingly, then turned to Kaspar. "May I see the phone?" Kaspar handed it to him. Dad examined it, grumbled a little, and then said, "This isn't a very old phone at all — maybe a couple of years old. It's hard to believe you got it for only nineteen euros. Which shop did you buy it from?"

"It wasn't a shop," Albert replied. "When Timo and I were looking for empty bottles across the road last weekend, a lady asked if we wanted a phone. At first she wanted three hundred euros. But when we counted our money and said we only had nineteen, she said that would do, because she was in a hurry."

"So am I right in understanding that you bought a two-year-old iPhone from a lady who was standing where you collect empty bottles?" Kaspar's dad asked.

"Yes," said Timo. "She was very nice. She kept joking and laughing a lot."

"Then it's clear," Dad said. "I'm afraid, boys, that you bought a stolen phone."

The twins went completely pale. They had thought they were giving Kaspar an amazing present. Now they felt as though they themselves were guilty of stealing.

"Are we going to prison now?" Timo asked, fighting back tears.

"Certainly not," Dad reassured him. "You haven't done anything wrong. But we do need to find the owner of the phone and return what was stolen."

Mia, who had been listening to the conversation, suggested that if she were allowed to examine the stolen phone a little, she might be able to find out who it belonged to.

Mum and Dad decided, however, that before dealing with the unfortunate birthday present, they should at least celebrate the birthday a little.

Mum picked up the bowl of cooled sausages to warm them up again in the microwave. Then the four children sat down at the table and began tucking into the salad and sausages.

3.

"You've got such a cool birthday," Timo said admiringly.

"Why do you think it's cool?" Kaspar asked, still feeling a little sad about the present.

"It's cool because you've got a giant bottle of ketchup," Timo replied. "If we had a ketchup bottle that big at home, I'd always make my sausages swim in ketchup."

"Why?" Kaspar asked.

"Because I don't actually like sausages very much. But if you put loads of ketchup on them, they're kind of fine."

"Then put on as much as you like," Kaspar said.

Timo didn't need to be told twice. He poured so much ketchup onto his plate that it almost spilled over the edge and onto the table. Luckily, the ketchup was runny enough for him to slurp it up without much trouble.

When the salad and sausages had been eaten, Mia brought in the cake from the kitchen and cut it. Mum and Dad joined them for the cake.

The cake was very tasty, with lots of cream and several fresh strawberries on each slice.

After eating half his slice, Timo put his spoon down beside his plate and began looking around.

"Do you need something?" Kaspar's mum asked. "Shall I pour you some more juice?"

"I've got juice," Timo replied.

Mum noticed that Timo had stopped eating, even though half the slice was still on his plate.

"Don't you like the cake?" she asked. "We've also got sweets, if you want something even sweeter."

"It's a very good cake," Timo said. "But I wanted to know where the ketchup is."

"Ketchup?" Mum asked in surprise. "The salad and sausages are finished. What do you want

to put ketchup on?"

"I'd like to try it on the cake," Timo replied. "At home I'm only allowed to put ketchup on savoury food. I get told off straight away if I try to eat it with sweets or other sweet things."

"I agree with your parents," said Kaspar's mum. "Ketchup only goes with savoury food — sausages or grilled chicken, for example. With sweet things it's very strange."

"Have you tried it?" Timo asked.

"No," Mum said. "Because it would be silly."

"Maybe," said Timo. "But to find out, I still want to try ketchup with cake. This is a good time, because my parents can't see."

"I'm not sure..." Mum hesitated. "Cake is a dessert, after all."

Kaspar's dad disagreed.

"I don't know of any law that says you're not allowed to put ketchup on cake," he said.

"Mum, please bring the ketchup bottle back from the kitchen."

Mum went to the kitchen and returned with the ketchup bottle. Dad took it and read what was written on the label.

"What does it say?" Mia asked.

"I'll read it in Estonian, because I don't know Finnish or English," Dad said. "It says this is ketchup. Ingredients: tomato purée, sugar, vinegar, iodised salt, natural flavourings, allspice, cloves, white pepper and ginger. Store opened bottle in the fridge. That's all it says. Which means everyone can eat it however they like."

"If there's sugar in it," Mia said, "then Timo can definitely put it on cake."

Everyone was excited to find out what cake with ketchup would taste like. Timo squeezed a dollop of ketchup onto his slice and gulped it down in a few big bites. After swallowing the last mouthful, he shuddered, shut his eyes and said nothing for quite a while.

"Well?" Mum asked at last.

Timo looked as if he had just drunk half a litre of strawberry syrup and then spent fifteen minutes on a roundabout. Gagging slightly, he grabbed his glass of juice and swallowed the whole thing in one go. It was clear he wanted to say something, but the cake and ketchup were trying to come out at the same time as the words.

"Was it good?" Mia asked.

Timo shook his head.

"Was it bad?" Kaspar asked.

Timo wrinkled his nose, covered his mouth with his hand and made a clunking sound.

"Then tell us what it tasted like," Mia demanded.

"It was horrible," Timo admitted. "I didn't know that two very good things together could be so horrible."

"Do you feel sick?" Mum asked, as Timo rolled his eyes and kept his hand over his mouth.

"Yes," he said. "Very sick. If I could have something really sour, I'd feel better. Right now I feel like I'm going to be sick."

Mum rushed to the kitchen and returned a moment later with a jar of pickled cucumbers.

Timo drank a few gulps of the liquid and then ate a whole cucumber in a few bites.

"Ahh, that's much better," he said.

4.

"Is the birthday over now?" Albert asked.

"That depends on you," Mum replied. "If you want to play some more, you can."

"I don't want to play," said Mia, as if she were the birthday child and had the right to decide.

"I think we should try to find out whose phone this is."

"Go ahead," Mum said. "You could go to Mia and Kaspar's room, because I'm going to clear the table and do the washing-up."

"And I want to start watching the news on the big television," Dad added.

With Mia and Kaspar in front and Albert and Timo following behind, they went to the children's room.

Mia picked up the phone Kaspar had received for his birthday and began examining it.

"It's a perfectly decent iPhone," she said. "The screen is black and covered in fingerprints, there's a small scratch in one corner, but otherwise it's quite a good phone."

"Shame," said Kaspar.

"What's a shame?" Timo asked.

"That I don't need it, because I already have a phone," Kaspar replied.

"Don't get your hopes up," Mia said sharply. "Even if you didn't have a phone, you couldn't keep this one, because it's stolen. The phone belongs to someone, and we have to give it back."

"How will we find out whose it is?" Kaspar asked. "There's no name on it."

"Phones don't have names written on them, but inside a phone there are usually lots of names. They're called contacts."

"How do you know there are contacts in this phone?" Albert asked.

"If the phone has been used even once to make a call, then there's at least one contact — the person who was called. Then we can ring that person and say we have someone's phone and want to return it to its owner. That's how we'll find out who it belongs to. It's very simple," Mia explained.

"But how do we unlock the phone?" Kaspar asked.

"I don't know that yet," Mia said. "But I'll figure it out."

"How?" the boys asked.

Mia went to her desk, pulled open a drawer and took out her smartphone.

"Are you calling the police?" Timo asked anxiously. He still thought that because they had given Kaspar a stolen phone, the police would arrest them.

"I'm going to google it," Mia replied. "I'm certainly not the first person in the world to have a phone they can't unlock. I'm sure that if someone has worked out a trick, they've put it on the internet."

"Why do you think that?" Albert asked.

"Because people like to show how clever they are," Mia said. "And some people even make money from things like that."

"Cool!" Albert said, impressed.

Mia typed something on her phone and then scrolled through the results with her right index finger.

"I think I've found a tutorial," she said at last, tapping the screen.

English speech began to play from Mia's phone.

"Do you understand English?" Albert asked.

"Of course I do," Mia said proudly. "I've been learning English at school for three years."

"We're starting school in the autumn," Albert announced. "We'll learn English too, and then we'll be able to break into strange phones as well."

Timo jabbed Albert in the ribs with his elbow. He didn't like his brother saying something so silly.

"You'd definitely go to prison for breaking into other people's phones," Timo said firmly.

"Do you think Mia will go to prison?" Albert asked.

While the twins argued, Mia watched the video carefully. A man was explaining how to unlock a phone if you had forgotten the screen lock password.

But Timo and Albert had forgotten all about Mia and the stolen phone and were now arguing quite fiercely about which of them would go to prison if the police arrested them.

"I think it'll be you," Timo declared. "You had more money than I did, so you're much more guilty than me."

"You're more afraid of the police than I am," Albert shot back. "The police know very well that the ones who are more afraid are more guilty. In one film there was a policeman who could tell who was guilty just by the smell."

"Boys!" Mia snapped. "Stop arguing. You're distracting me."

"Do you know how to unlock the phone yet?" Albert asked.

"Almost," Mia replied. "I'm halfway there."

"Halfway to what?" Albert asked.

"That I can't tell you," Mia said seriously. "You're not allowed to know, in case you start breaking into other people's phones yourselves."