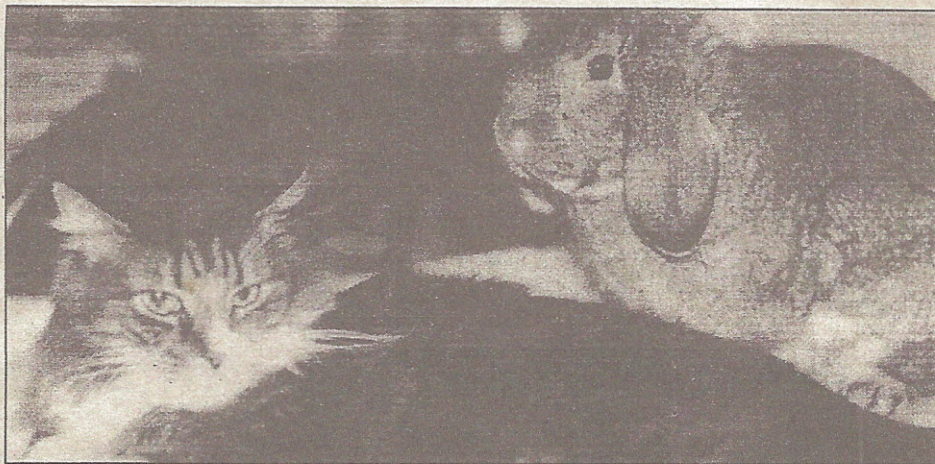




## The Cat Who Came To Stay



*Rapunzel and Riddles*

by Toni Brett

She came to me around midnight last October, her emerald eyes shining from the porch. She wore a coat of silky black fluff with a white scarf. Every whisker was pure white, as were her back legs, her "go-go boots." Though I'd never loved cats at all, this girl had me smitten from the start. "Who are you? Where'd you come from, sweetie?"

She meowed and trotted over as if I was an old friend.

Cats run wild throughout Astoria, so I figured she belonged to someone; she was too good-looking to be a stray. I patted her head, gave her tuna, and wished her well on her journey home. But did she have a home? How could her owners let this de-clawed beauty roam the streets? Or did they grow tired of caring for her, and put her out for good?

I've raised house rabbits since 1987, and a mini-lop was king at my castle. However, when I looked in my bunny's eyes, I thought I detect-

ed loneliness. Would Riddles like a sister?

For two weeks she visited faithfully. One day, I walked to my car and she pranced over to say, "Good morn!" One evening, I arrived home from work as she prowled next door. At first glance, she raised her tail in the air and in her go-go boots came hot-to-trot over.

Then she vanished for three days.

I missed her, so I set out food. Then, as I turned the corner there she was, her gorgeous face uplifted, as if inquiring of a neighbor as to my whereabouts!

I scooped her up and took her in. Though I tried, I never found her owners. What a terrible thing to be unwanted in this world!

Lovingly, I called her Rapunzel. Riddles stamped his foot and declared war. The unwilling king now has a queen. And I am devoted servant to them both. #

*Toni Brett is currently writing Rabbits for Dummies for IDG Books Worldwide. Look for it in bookstores Easter 2001!*

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