

A Home for Oscar by DM Denton

What was your story before it became mine? Before each appearance out of the woods surrounding the yard where I also prowled, feeding the birds you respectfully glanced at and filling the little shell-shaped birdbath that had become your drinking habit. A rainless summer offered a bed of last year's leaves for afternoon naps; the sundial surrounded by withering sedum and aging lavender a place to sit, wash your gray but youthful face, and wonder if I would leave you food before I disappeared. You entered further and further into my hospitality, trusting the door would stay open for leaving.

I wasn't convinced that food was all you came for. Yet so many nights I shut you out—yes, tried to forget how lonely it was for you, how frightening, and what harm would come to you; and that, like other strays, I would never touch you and, eventually, never see you again.

Where was your heart before it won mine, broken or unclaimed? Either way I understood how love's absence encouraged you to wander my way, the moment your eyes revealed their gentle blue, pleading but not too much. Do you need a home? I asked expecting you would tell me. Your words were incomprehensible but understood; your patience was more certain than mine, your answer waiting for mine.

A necessary moment of capture: you panicked, were wild and confused, the door closed on the life you may or may not have chosen. Soon you were stilled into acceptance and readiness; you let me stroke your ears and rub your nose, although not to make it easy to put you in a cage.

How soon you forgave me. How quickly you were family, another lad to watch grow and learn—a teacher, too: soft, pure, playful, and ever insistent that I should be so.