

1 It was such a cold night that my family were all wearing jumpers, gloves and scarves indoors and when we sat down to eat our dinner, the steaming hot food turned stone-cold within seconds.

We heard a loud purring noise coming from the kitchen door, which leads to our backyard. At first, my sister and I ignored it but then we went to the kitchen door and shooed away a skinny black cat. But then, remembering how cold it was that night, I decided to give it some leftover meat, a bowl of milk and a small blanket. To my astonishment, the cat put the food in her mouth and dragged the blanket away with her paws.

Out of curiosity, I followed her. Instead of eating the food and snuggling into the blanket herself, she gave both things to two kittens nestled in an old cardboard box.

After giving her kittens the food, she stood back from them as if to guard them while they ate. I was amazed at this and realised that parents, be they humans or animals, are ready to sacrifice their own well-being for that of their young.

2 Cuddles, my Australian silky terrier, and Tiga, my marmalade cat, have been great mates for 15 years. But neither of them ever expected the arrival into their lives of Chopper, an old blue-tongued lizard.

Chopper has lived beneath our back step for the past five years. She often comes to the screen door as if to announce, 'Hello, I'm here. I'm awake and ready to play.' While Cuddles and Tiga seem to be too scared to come out and play with her, she has never shown any sign of fear towards them.

In the morning after the cat and dog have been fed, Chopper arrives to supplement her usual diet of slugs and snails with any leftover dog or cat food. She has also taught her young how to eat Cuddles' and Tiga's food when they are not around, all the while being careful to avoid being caught by birds when out in the open.

3 Our mother always reprimanded us for walking around our farmhouse in bare feet as she believed that there was always a little dirt left on the floor after cleaning. But that didn't stop us until some time in 2016, when my younger brother got a pet robin called Nugget.

Nugget was a keen observer and detected the sharpness in Mother's voice and our quick response to it by putting on our slippers. Soon enough, this particularly smart robin sided with Mother, carrying out her instructions to completion by gently pecking at our bare feet until we put on our slippers.

Nugget only ever pecks at a culprit's bare feet, and she is as gentle as can be at all other times. Now that's true motherly bird.

FILL IN THE BLANKS BELOW WITH THE WORDS GIVEN IN THE TEXT. THEN, MATCH THE MEANINGS 1 TO 8.

1. _____ : in or into a building

2. _____ : at a very low temperature

3. _____ : very surprised

4. _____ : shock

5. _____ : friends

6. _____ : frightened

7. _____ : not covered or clothed

8. _____ : not sleeping