
In Search Of Plums

THERE was nothing Coraco loved more than plums. He'd once eaten an entire punnet of plums in one sitting. It wasn't the strangest thing he'd ever eaten – he'd consumed some truly monstrous objects in his time – but it was probably the most.

Fruit was his favourite, in general. Pineapples, persimmons, peaches, not to mention the entire rest of the alphabet, a delicious roster of brightly coloured snacks. But plums just about topped the list. He loved the way their colour shifted from brown to red to purple; he loved the shine of their skin; he loved how each plum was just the right size to hold in his paw, like a lovely squeezey, cooling ball. And that was before he even thought about smelling or tasting them.

He'd put his name down for a monthly plum delivery box a while ago, but had only received two deliveries before the service was discontinued; he'd tried not to let it upset him

too much. Visiting all his friends and doling out a handwritten flyer about why plums were so brilliant and why taking out a subscription might be life-changing hadn't been enough: a couple of them had indeed signed up, but three takers apparently wasn't sufficient to keep the product going. As an apology, the company had transferred him to their pineapple subscription service at a reduced rate. That made things a lot better; he loved pineapples.

These days, Coraco had to rely on going out to buy plums himself. It wasn't a great hardship: the weather was mostly pleasant, and there were lots of interesting shops in the neighbourhood. Sometimes he would meet a friend on the way, and the two of them might exchange a few amicable shrieks of excitement, vibrating at high speed for a minute or two while passersby politely gave them a wide berth.

McElroy's Fruit and Veg, in Coraco's opinion, was the best place to buy plums. It was certainly the closest, at any rate.

"All right, boy," said Mr McElroy when Coraco entered. "How's she cuttin'?"

Coraco burred a greeting back, thumping his little arms against his sides in excitement.

"You'll be wanting a plum, then, aye?" said Mr McElroy. "Sorry, lad, we're out. Your woman from up the road just bought the last one. I can do you a pineapple, though?"

Immediately, Coraco burst into angry and violent tears, but only for a few seconds; he did love pineapples, after all. He

flailed around with glee as Mr McElroy retrieved a pineapple and carefully sheathed it in a slightly undersized paper bag.

“There you go,” said Mr McElroy, handing the bag to Coraco and taking his few eagerly proffered coins in return. “Keep ’er lit, son.”

Coraco hurried home in delight, and spent the next few hours basking in the bright sun, munching on his delicious pineapple. It was possibly the best day ever, he considered; but when he returned to the shop the next morning and discovered that Mr McElroy had reserved a plum just for him, he found himself obliged to revise that opinion.