The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Wanted: Help

By Kevin O'Flynn

December 08, 2010

The old lady in the green scarf at Pushkin Square pointed down to the two rolled-up cats beside her and started explaining about their characters. They stared downward onto the snowy ground.

It wasn't easy to tell that they were feline as all that could be seen was a bunch of fur protruding from the top of a too tightly wrapped jumper. They looked more like fattened chickens ready to hatch or like Statler and Waldorf from "The Muppet Show," watching a show they had seen before and hadn't liked much then either.

"They're not cold at all," she insisted.

She said their names, but the wind shook them down into the metro. Let's say one was Batman, one was Robin. Batman was as calm as anything; you could hold him and stoke him, she said, but Robin was a demon and would scratch your eyes out if only he could get past the straitjacket of woolly love she had around him.

Her young female assistant joined in and lifted up the cats so they could pose for a picture, but

they were like newborn babes, neck muscles non-existent.

The assistant gave a hostile glance toward the person taking photos of what may have been her grandmother.

The old lady had brought her own seat; the cats lounged on top of their red cage. Above them was a simple sign made of cardboard with the word, "Help," written on it.

Pushkin Square is often a draw for animals from the days when people would hold doped-up kittens in their arms for sale by the metro.

A dozen or so meters down the road, a friend once chased one of the young women on horses who trot down Tverskaya Ulitsa looking for people to give rides, after she had used her whip on another girl's face. The horse escaped; the friend ended up in the back of a police car.

There is the homeless man who sits outside Alfa Bank with his dog and their puppies.

Her appearance was swiftly followed by two other animal sightings. The woman in a line at the kiosk with the cat on her shoulder, balanced so perfectly that it seemed as if she were taking the woman for a walk rather than the other way around.

And then the next day a man with a baby goat was standing opposite the Kurskaya metro station. The goat was in orange; he was in gray. The goat lively and curious, the man not interested. He is there often with the same sign, "Give something, good people, for food for animals."

The animals, though — once a donkey — seem to be getting smaller and smaller with each year.

Original url: https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/12/08/wanted-help-a3601